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Conquest, Identity, and Colonial Discourse in Medieval England:

New Perspectives on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience*

by

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Abstract

Recent scholarship has introduced the possibility of literary analysis of medieval texts from the perspective of contemporary postcolonial theory. Although a burgeoning field in medieval studies, postcolonial medieval studies has been met with significant opposition from those scholars who feel it does a disservice to contemporary postcolonial studies and the events that warranted that field's creation. Nevertheless, aspects of conquest and foreign estrangement, and the building of a national identity through political rhetoric and literary output, while illuminated by a postcolonial perspective, were just as present in medieval England as they were in recent times—for example in the colonial occupation of Wales. Using prominent theorists such as Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, and their theories of diaspora and hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence respectively, this investigation analyses *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience*—two poems written in the late fourteenth century in the Welsh Marches—with postcolonial reading strategies.

For Dr. Kenna Olsen.

I never *would have made it this far if not for your unfailing faith in me.*

Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Patricia Clare Ingham has said, "empires need to tell the stories of their pasts" (61). England proves no exception to this need. Marked in postcolonial studies as the ultimate colonizing force, England took advantage of its superiority in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries when the rest of the world was still one step behind, and conducted unforgiving economic and imperial expansion in countries with little to no power to resist. The irreparable damage to the colonized psyche is permanent, and the field of contemporary postcolonial studies is rich with voices of resistance and rebellion, however subdued. Yet while the lines between England and its modern colonies have already been permanently etched into history, what consideration should be given to England's premodern expansionist projects? When a colony was set up in a neighbouring nation, as in the colonies premodern England established in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, rather than in a foreign country separated from England by vast expanses of water, as was the case with Canada or the Caribbean in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, is the significance of these smaller-scale colonial projects somehow diminished?

Postcolonial theory's emergence is marked by an overwhelming desire for a return to what has been lost, for the recovery of an identity erased, and for entire cultures of forgotten traditions to be recaptured. But if we consider postcolonial studies only as it exists in the modern and postmodern context, emerging as a practice in the twentieth century, we are missing a substantial portion of the history that came before this. That earlier history was characterized by similar colonial practices, and was perhaps different only in terms of the scale of those practices and their impact. Until Ingham claimed in 2001, "postcolonial studies share with medieval studies a poignant concern for things fading away, and a desire to respond to loss" (69), the possibility of ties between medieval

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episodes of colonization and medieval literature was largely overlooked. However, as Ingham points out, colonization was an active practice in the late fourteenth century, and several of the effects that these practices induced are reflected in such Middle English works as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience*.

1.1 Applying Postcolonial Theory to Medieval Literature: Current Trends

Scholarship pertaining to medieval literature has, in recent decades, been strongly influenced by the still up-and-coming idea of a convergence of medieval literature and postcolonial theory. Beginning in 2000 with the collection of essays curated and edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, scholars have begun to make connections between contemporary postcolonial theory and medieval literature. In a field so clouded by lost and damaged manuscripts, vague historical inclinations, and centuries-long distances between scholars and the works they study, this new area of medieval study allows the medieval scholar to ask important questions about how political policy and rhetoric affected the perceived geography of medieval England and its near neighbours, and more importantly, how pre-modern colonial practices may have been reflected in the literature produced during their operation.

The fact that the convergence of postcolonial studies and medieval studies is a recent scholarly phenomenon should not negate the fact that colonization was very much a part of medieval political life. Bruce W. Holsinger suggests that "the intimacy between the construction of the medieval past and the conquest of peoples and territories around the globe crops up in innumerable forms" (1203). Scholars have been studying empire and elements of conquest as historical phenomena for as long as they have been happening. However, despite the recent recognition of the existence of what we now call colonialism even in the early Middle Ages, the translation from history to story is where questions arise.

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How does one know where history ends, and story begins? How can we identify when the literature of this period speaks to historical (colonial) experience, rather than merely existing as a reiteration of a fictitious fantasy adhering to Arthurian tradition, or a biblical retelling of a well-known story?

More than this, the question of applicability is raised by the temporal distance between theory and object of study: is it feasible to apply postcolonial theories to medieval texts? Is it anachronistic? Does stretching these theories as far back as the medieval period mean something is lost in the process? Are we doing disservice to the events that warranted the creation of twentieth-century postcolonial theories? Yet from the opposite perspective, one looks to what can be gained from such an application. Is the medieval reading process illuminated by the consideration of these texts from a postcolonial perspective?

In order for the convergence of postcolonial theory and medieval literature to work, one must attempt to rethink and reapply the direct connection between human experience and the theories produced as a result of these experiences. Because postcolonial theory is predicated on actual human experience, this is no easy feat. Stuart Hall's theory of diaspora, for example, came about as a result of his own struggles with his identity—one that he felt belonged neither to the Caribbean nor to England, but somehow to both. "Growing up in Kingston as a middle-class colored in a colonial society" (Farred 32), Hall's work is saturated with "the continuing history of forced black migration" (29); his discussions of identity are entirely wrapped up in his own human experience.

The theory of diaspora itself, as human experiences shaped it and as scholars have sought to define it, seeks to identify those elements or memories of one's home or culture that are replicated in another location. Hall posits, "[d]iaspora does not refer to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to

which they must return at all costs. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference" (qtd. in Cairnes and Condé: 33). These "memories of home" serve as "fluid reconstructions set against the backdrop of the remembering subject's current positionings and conceptualizations of home" (Stock 24). As these conceptualizations develop and grow in number, and individuals with similar backgrounds find themselves coming together, the strength of the diaspora grows. The ability to recognize that the human experiences that produced this theory, and others like it, were both intense and extremely traumatic is fundamental to the application of them to earlier periods of history and literature. But if done successfully, one might use a critical colonial gaze to uncover elements of the medieval period not previously considered.

Robert J. C. Young, in "What is the Postcolonial?" explains the critical postcolonial gaze as one that "reconsiders . . . colonial history from a critical perspective, arguing that there was something particular about it . . . while at the same time analyzing its political and cultural after-effects in which we all live" (18). The particularity of the colonial experience yields more than just "any old oppression, or any series of wars and territorial occupations" (Young 18). These conquests affected people, enacted experience, questioned identity, demanded solidarity, attempted to produce a partisan nationalism, conjured voices, and demanded that these voices not go unnoticed.

Young defines postcolonialism as a discipline that "involve[s] questions of history, ethnicity, complex cultural identities and questions of representation, of refugees, emigration and immigration, of poverty and wealth [as well as] the energy, vibrancy and creative cultural dynamics that emerge in very positive ways from such demanding circumstances" (13). The postcolonial gaze illuminates so many elements of culture and

identity, and many scholars now affirm that "complex cultural identities" and "creative cultural dynamics" (Young 13) were as much a part of medieval culture and politics as they were a part of modern colonization.

Although Young's definition speaks to the contemporary postcolonial experience, alluding to aftereffects that have shaped the ways "in which we all live" (18) today, his definition of the critical postcolonial gaze holds significance for the medieval period as well. I will argue that there was something particular about medieval colonization—specifically as it pertained to England conquering Wales from 1050 onwards—and that this particularity can be identified in Middle English works like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience*.

One might ask, why is a fourteenth-century ambivalent voice, buried under layers of colonial barbarism and aggressive imperial rhetoric, considered less significant than a nineteenth- or twentieth-century voice identifying similar struggles? Why are the relationships between individual and government so significant in the modern, but rendered invisible or insignificant in the medieval? Why is the depiction of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Other as monstrous, barbaric, inhuman, or inferior, considered as more significant than the depiction of similarly Othered peoples in Wales in the late fourteenth century? Do imperialism and the desire for expansion and English dominance not play into both periods of history? Is the significance of the smaller-scale territorial claims recorded in the premodern periods somehow inferior to modern expansionist projects because of their scale? because the voices pushing back against these projects are much more difficult to identify? because the colonized Other was never given the opportunity to speak up?

Postcolonial and medieval scholars alike have recently engaged in a debate regarding the legitimacy of a postcolonial-medieval scholarly convergence, and many of

them ask similar questions to those above. Encompassing most of the debate as it stood in 2002, Holsinger's "Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique" examined the relationship between postcolonial and medieval studies, and argued that up to that point the exchange had been

> largely one-sided: while scholars from certain quarters of medieval studies have begun to borrow heavily from postcolonial studies, medievalists have yet to make any significant impact on the methods, historical purview, and theoretical lexicon of postcolonialism—in large part because of the seemingly intractable modernity of the postcolonial arena and its critical-theoretical apparatus. (1197)

While postcolonial studies offers much to the medievalist, the relationship is largely imbalanced, and for some, this is problematic. While it is understood that, for example, the relationship between twenty-first century globalization and postcolonial literature and theory are a mutually beneficial pairing rather than being anachronistic, medieval studies is thought to have little to offer modern postcolonial studies because of the substantial gap in histories. But this is not a problem for medieval studies: a balanced exchange between disciplines, with an equal contribution of medieval studies to the postcolonial, seems a largely meaningless goal when one considers how postcolonial studies can help illuminate previously overlooked elements of medieval culture and human experience.

While medievalists "have long been engaged in projects that resonate compellingly with the critical impulses of postcolonialism," as Holsinger identifies (1200), the source of the scholarly debate Holsinger refers to lies with "the seemingly intractable modernity of the postcolonial arena and its critical-theoretical apparatus" (1197). Is the application of postcolonial theory to medieval literature legitimate, or is it to be looked at as irresponsible, anachronistic, and inappropriate? More specifically, scholars "continue to grapple with the

consequences of translating twentieth-century analytical vocabularies into the distant past"

(Holsinger 1198). Is postcolonial theory decontextualized when medievalists appropriate it?

Many scholars would say 'yes'. Gabriel Spiegel, for example, cautions medieval scholars to be thorough in their approach. In her review of Kathleen Biddick's *The Shock of Medievalism*, Spiegel encourages Biddick, and others, to first acknowledge "medieval society as a postcolonial world . . . or at least a 'colonial world'" (246). Spiegel here raises an important point for any scholar arguing for the application of theory to a literary period that did not directly participate in its creation: that the demonstration of a theory's relevance and applicability needs to be articulated clearly, prior to its application. "[T]o apply postcolonial theory to medieval society without theorizing the analogy in an explicit manner[,]" she says, "is to decontextualize postcolonial theory and medieval history alike" (Spiegel 246). Although Spiegel's tone errs more on the side of doubt than optimism for the workability of such a convergence, scholars must nonetheless be cautious with their approach, and responsibly and respectfully contextualize both the medieval period and the postcolonial theories they are referring to, before they begin to apply the theories themselves.

Like Spiegel, Edward Said warns of the dangers of extracting postcolonial theories from the contexts that created them. He refers to this as "traveling theory" in *The World, the Text, and the Critic,* a book that explores to what can be learned from the application of critical theory to literature, while simultaneously warning of the dangers associated with taking theories out of the contexts that created them. "Traveling Theory," the tenth chapter of Said's book, discusses the movement of theory from its place of creation into a new environment. He argues that "[s]uch a movement . . . is never unimpeded" (Said 226), and that "[i]t necessarily involves processes of representation and institutionalization different

from those at the point of origin. This complicates any account of the transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce of theories and ideas" (Said 226). Adaptation is involved in the process of reapplying theory to a place outside its original point of origin. Within this adaptation, Said argues, complications with "transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce" (226) arise.

Said is not alone in his anxiety about traveling theory. Holsinger claims "[a]n overview of postcolonialist scholarship in medieval studies reveals a widespread anxiety over the ideological and practical compatibility of medieval and postcolonial studies" (1201). The potential incompatibility between the two disciplines produces the possibility not only of incorrect application of theory, but also of the colonization of the period itself. The application process's "insistence upon the methodological forces of medieval studies in postcolonial studies is yet another 'colonizing' gesture against the latter" (Holsinger 1218). John Dagenais presents a similar concern, asking "[i]s it possible to colonize a region of history, as it is to colonize a region of geography?" (431). Furthermore, he argues that

> [t]he very moves by which European nation-based empires establish themselves
> across vast reaches of geographic space, constituting themselves by a simultaneous
> assimilation and othering of these spaces and the people who inhabit them, involves
> them at the same time in the invention of a complementary past *other* to themselves,
> a past which belongs to, but which can never be granted full citizenship in, the
> nation of Modernity. (Dagenais 438)

With the colonial relationship proposed here, consisting of a contemporary self and a past Other, Dagenais points to the dangers associated with grounding one's research in a blended medieval postcolonial space. There are risks associated with "the adoption of colonial/postcolonial perspectives as a way of getting at the 'problem' of the Middle Ages,"

one of which categorizes postcolonial theory as yet another "tool of Modern and postmodern colonization of the Middle Ages" (Dagenais 438).

Catherine Brown also discusses the potential for colonizing the Middle Ages in "In the Middle." She argues that "colonial and postcolonial theory does indeed help us see important things about the Middle Ages and about the practice of medieval studies," but she is hesitant to "appropriate or apply it" (Brown 550). She warns,

> once we start thinking about the relation between medieval people and the
> nonmedievals who might take in mind to write, think, make movies, novels, poems,
> or advertisements about them, then we see colonial paradigms even more strongly:
> if the Middle Ages hadn't existed, people might have had to invent them, just so
> that we could safely be nonmedieval, and have someplace exotic to fly to when
> modern life got too, well, modern. Or so that we could have a convenient Other
> against which to define ourselves. (Brown 549)

This warning, albeit merely a possibility, takes colonizing the Middle Ages to the utmost extreme; there is, according to many, room to write about the Middle Ages without colonizing them completely, as Brown here cautions against. But it is important to keep in mind that in appropriating postcolonial theory, medieval scholars run the risk not only of doing disservice to the contemporary creation of postcolonial theory and the experiences that rendered that creating possible, but also of colonizing the Middle Ages as a period itself, stripping this important history of its own independence by rebinding it with contemporary hegemonies.

Alternative to Brown's perspective, that the Middle Ages provides the perfect Other for the Modern self, Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren posit "colonial modernity as a problem" (1). The scholars whose works are collected in *Postcolonial*

Moves: Medieval Through Modern "meet around a common interest in how the modernity of postcolonial studies blocks certain routes to the past, and thus maintains certain nationalist and historicist exclusions" (Ingham and Warren 2). Ingham and Warren's book seeks "to unsettle the identification of colonialism with modernity precisely because the history of relations between Europe's dominant cultures and its linguistic minorities remains, in [their] view, important to later oppressive habits of post-Enlightenment colonialism" (7). Lisa Lampert Weissig similarly argues that "[s]cholars of the Middle Ages are increasingly embracing a global context, seeking historical connections between different parts of the world that have long been obscured by the constricting boundaries of nation and period" (xl-xli). So, while Brown argues that the past only exists as a complement to the present, scholars like Ingham, Warren, and Lampert-Weissig appropriately argue that the present exists because of its direct relationship with the past.

Despite anxieties surrounding the appropriation of postcolonial theory, though, the medieval-postcolonial realm of scholarship is nonetheless moving forward in new and groundbreaking ways. This adaptation forces postcolonial theory "to ask self-critical questions about the histories it uncovers and about the means by which it accounts for its own institutional development and privilege" (Holsinger 1198). Instead of looking at the application of postcolonial theory as reappropriative, we should look at it as "perfectly natural, illuminating a variety of historical and literary forces that collectively shaped the colonial contests of the Middle Ages" (Holsinger 1204). Moreover, postcolonial medieval studies "provides a rich variety of resources for understanding the colonization process itself and the ways in which we might challenge and transform it" (Dagenais 438).

For that reason, many scholars have sought to investigate the ways in which a postcolonial-medieval convergence can help uncover new medieval histories. *Postcolonial*

Approaches to the European Middle Ages, edited by Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne

Williams, seeks to "challenge medievalists from all quarters to reformulate and redefine

this growing field," and to encourage "postcolonialist readers to reexamine the historical

boundaries of their discipline" (19). Cohen's *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* is another key

example. Cohen argues that

> postcolonial theory in practice has neglected the study of the 'distant' past, which
>
> tends to function as a field of undifferentiated alterity against which modern
>
> regimes of power have arisen. This exclusionary model of temporality denies the
>
> possibility that traumas, exclusions, violences enacted centuries ago might still
>
> linger in contemporary identity formations; it also closes off the possibility that this
>
> past could be multiple and valuable enough to contain (and be contained within)
>
> alternative presents and futures" (3).

Without acknowledgement of pre-modern imperialism and expansionist projects, Cohen

argues that we disregard much of contemporary identity formation, both on the national and

on the individual scale. A convergence between postcolonial studies and medieval literature

thus "performs a double work, so that the alliance of postcolonial theory and medieval

studies might open up the present to multiplicity, newness, difficult similarity conjoined to

complex difference" (Cohen 8).

So while several prominent scholars have articulated their anxieties surrounding the

melding together of postcolonial studies and medieval literature—that one risks

anachronism, that one risks colonizing the Middle Ages in an attempt to examine it for its

colonial properties—just as many defend the importance of such a convergence because of

what scholars might learn from adopting this gaze. One can respectfully acknowledge that

postcolonial studies gained its bearings as a result of modern colonization, and then

respectfully take the theories produced from this period and apply them to medieval texts in an effort to illuminate a new perspective for medieval literature.

1.2 The Cotton Nero A.x Manuscript and the *Gawain*-Poet

    Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and *Patience*, along with *Cleanness* and *Pearl*, are contained in the Cotton Nero A.x. manuscript. Dating from the late fourteenth century, the earliest date possible for the poems is 1348, "the foundation of the Order of the Garter" (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 2). Features of all four poems, "involving sources, literary style, and allusions to such things as styles of dress and architecture all confirm the later fourteenth century as the probable period of composition" (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 3). According to Andrew and Waldron, "[a] great majority of the scholars who have worked on and written about the four poems preserved in the Cotton MS have come to regard it as highly probable that they were written by a single poet, who has regularly been termed 'the *Gawain*-Poet' or 'the *Pearl*-Poet'" ("Introduction" 5). And, many scholars have made conjectures as to the origins of this single poet.

    Clifford Peterson and Edward Wilson, for example, reflect on the mid-twentieth century scholarly efforts to "identify the *Pearl*-poet with someone named Massey, particularly with one John Massey of Cotton, Cheshire, a Lancastrian retainer" (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 4). Andrew Breeze proposes that a possible connection between Sir John Stanley and the *Gawain*-poet is less a potential connection than a synonomous relationship: not only was Sir John Stanley a "patron of the *Gawain*-poet," Breeze argues, but "Sir John Stanley was the *Gawain*-poet" (15). Although such precise identifications have typically been completely debunked ("[p]art, but not all, of the arguments for [the Massey] identification have been vigorously challenged" [Peterson and Wilson 4], for example,) scholars continue to make claims about the identity of the

Gawain-poet.

The general assumption that the four poems are by the same author is likely on solider ground. Andrew and Waldron explain that "[a]rguments in support of common authorship have . . . mostly been based on the study—inevitably more impressionistic and less exact than authorship tests—of common themes, attitudes, values, and features in the poems" ("Introduction" 6). Although the manuscript was written entirely by one scribe (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 1), that scribe seems not to have imposed a dialect on the poems different from the one in which they were composed, so many scholars have examined the dialect that the poems are preserved in as a clue to the identity of the poet. From the general Northwest Midlands (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 6), to south-west Lancashire (Breeze 15), an estimate now rejected, to south-east Cheshire (Breeze15), to the final fairly definitive *Linguistic Atlas of Later Medieval English* assignment to the Cheshire-Staffordshire border region (McIntosh et al., 3: 37; the grid reference 397 364 is corrected to 393 364 in a pasted-in errata sheet)—though this has recently been challenged by Putter and Stokes—scholars have narrowed down the location of the poems' dialect to better understand who the *Gawain*-poet might have been. This dialect area is so close to the Welsh border and to the Wirral, a portion of the Welsh Marches that figures in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as the location of Bertilak's castle and of the Green Knight's chapel, and as the host of Gawain's various strange encounters, that it seems reasonable to suspect that the *Gawain*-poet had a very particular relation to the contemporary colonial project in Wales, one perhaps inflected both with the ideology of the colonizing power and with knowledge of Welsh resistance and resentment.

Ad Putter, in a summary of the *Gawain*-poet's probable identity based on what scholars know or suspect about him, describes him as "a cleric from the north west

Midlands—probably a relatively unimportant cleric; perhaps in the service of a nobleman; and, arguably, his patron belonged to the circle of prominent Cheshire courtiers at the royal household in London" (qtd. in Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction": 12). Scholars have also argued that the *Gawain*-poet's "extensive familiarity with the Bible" means he was likely "familiar with the dominant traditions of scriptural interpretation and the most significant doctrinal issues" (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 11). He was familiar with *Roman de la Rose*, "the great French romance" whose features are echoed "throughout his work" (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 11). And *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* reflects "a wide-ranging knowledge of French Arthurian romance," and "also a creative, thoughtful, and critical view of the works and conventions of this tradition" (Andrew and Waldron "Introduction" 11-12).

The *Gawain*-poet's identity is fundamental to a postcolonial analysis of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Patience*. Although not much is known about his identity, it is helpful to note not only the proximity of at least his origins if not his residence to Wales, but also his familiarity with the Bible and the romance tradition. As my analysis of these two poems focuses in part on the ways in which each adheres to and pushes against the dominant discourse at the level of the text itself, noting the *Gawain*-poet's familiarity with these structures and examining the ways he manipulates them to his own ends is an important aspect of my postcolonial analysis.

1.3 Research Methodology

Various aspects of English history, combined with the conceptions of two important contemporary postcolonial theorists, make up the background to my colonial reading and postcolonial analysis of two important Middle English poems: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK*) and *Patience*. *SGGK* tells the story of Gawain, a knight of the Round

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Table who participates in a "beheading game" with a magical, foreign Green Knight, only to see the knight pick up his own head and invite Gawain to receive the return blow in a year. Gawain traverses rugged landscapes a year later in search of the Green Chapel, and takes up refuge in Bertilak's luxurious castle, where he is tempted by the desirable lady Bertilak while Bertilak himself is away hunting. The purpose of my analysis of *SGGK* is to draw attention to those textual elements that reflect colonization and its effects, and to suggest what the ambivalent voice present in the text might teach readers about medieval colonization. I will then look to *Patience*—a poem not previously considered from this postcolonial perspective—to examine similar reflections of colonization, and argue that many of the postcolonial characteristics of *SGGK* are also found in *Patience*.

    Patience is similar to *SGGK* in many ways: both poems feature a figure whose quest is chosen by a force largely outside of each individual's own control; both men are forced to traverse unforgiving landscapes in order to reach their final, fearful foreign destinations; both men have identities that are challenged substantially by the struggles they endure on their respective journeys; both poems feature a home—Camelot or Israel—and an arguably Othered space—North Wales, the Wirral and Bertilak's castle, and Nineveh respectively; and, both feature ambivalence—both in character depiction and in narrative voice. By first identifying how these elements work in *SGGK*, with the assistance of scholars such as Ingham and Arner, I will then look at the way these characteristics of the postcolonial function in *Patience*, and offer a new postcolonial perspective on a poem previously considered primarily for its biblical adaptation.

    As Spiegel's primary concern in "Épater les Médiévistes" was that scholars need to first acknowledge the medieval world that they are investigating as colonial (246), the second chapter of this thesis examines in detail the history of England's relationship with

Wales between approximately 1050 and 1400. Specifically, the ways that the Welsh were depicted by the English, each monarch's different approach to England's relationship with Wales, the conflicts that arose as a result of these different relationships, the way that English colonies within Wales were developed, and how the Welsh were treated once English colonies had been established—all of these historical intricacies in the English-Welsh relationship contribute to a colonial understanding of late medieval history, and will inform the ways I see this colonial history reflected in *SGGK* and *Patience*.

Once the English-Welsh relationship has been established as a colonial one, I will move to a discussion of the postcolonial theories that shape my analysis. The third chapter thus elaborates on two important postcolonial theorists and their theoretical concepts—Stuart Hall and 'diaspora', and Homi Bhabha and his theories of 'ambivalence', 'mimicry', and 'hybridity'. As was previously mentioned, Stuart Hall's theory of 'diaspora' examines the ways in which identity is formed, reformed, and transformed, through connections to one's homeland, while in a new space. Bhabha's 'hybridity' functions as a nice segue between these two theorists, as one can look for hybrid identities in the context of a diaspora, where individuals grapple with dueling, or multiple, sources of identity. Bhabha's 'ambivalence' and 'mimicry' draw attention to attempts to replicate the colonial perspective—whether that be at the level of the individual, or at the level of the text itself—that fall short in some way. The ways in which ambivalent voices can be identified in Gawain, Jonah, the poems' narrators, and the texts themselves, are a further contribution of postcolonial analysis of the two texts. A clear articulation of these theories' manifestations, their connections to the human experiences that created them, and how the theories function abstractly, will be given in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," will see history and theory come

together in an effort to build upon ideas inaugurated by Ingham and Arner. Acknowledging fully the history of the English-Welsh relationship during this time, and accepting that the connection between *SGGK* and the English-Welsh relationship is a tangible one, by applying Hall and Bhabha's theories to this text, postcolonial readings that illuminate the text are enabled. The way that Gawain's identity is shaped by his relationship with Camelot, and the way it is challenged the further he moves from this home space, will be queried. Furthermore, the depiction of the landscape Gawain traverses as barbaric and unforgiving contributes to the Othering of Wales. Finally, the ways in which Gawain's perspective adheres to the dominant colonial discourse, and simultaneously pushes against this discourse, suggest that Gawain, the narrator, and the text itself, function as ambivalent mimics of dominant colonialist discourse.

Chapter 5 examines *Patience* utilizing the same tools for analysis. How is Jonah's identity challenged and transformed the further he moves from Israel, and what is the effect? In what ways does 'diaspora' manifest itself in the text? How does Jonah's response to God's command both challenge the dominant discourse, and at the same time arguably adhere to it? As in *SGGK*, is there ambivalence at the level of the character, the level of the narrator, and the level of the text itself? And if so, what does this teach the modern reader about medieval response to the colonial discourse of the time? Can *Patience* successfully function as a representation of colonial response when it is so tightly bound within the constraints of a biblical narrative? What are the boundaries of that adopted narrative, and how can the loosening of those boundaries contribute to a consideration of the text as a postcolonial response? This thesis ultimately seeks to uncover the ways in which these medieval texts could both function as representations of the dominant discourse—adhering to the popular Arthurian tradition of the time, or reiterating biblical narratives in an

extremely Christian world—and in addition still manage to push back against the English

colonial project in Wales during this time.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

The claim that there is a connection between *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and England's conquest and colonization of Wales in the late fourteenth century is not new. In 2001, Patricia Claire Ingham published "'In Contrayez Straunge': Colonial Relations, British Identity, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," an article that very convincingly argues not only the link between English-Welsh conflict and *SGGK*, but also the connection between medieval history and postcolonial theory. Whether it be nineteenth century England, or its fourteenth century counterpart, "[e]mpires," Ingham argues, "need to tell the stories of their past" (61). "'In Contrayez Straunge'" focuses primarily on the disintegration of colonial difference within *SGGK*: the poem "can help us analyse the visibility of 'exotic' medieval 'others' because the poem is itself invested in making colonial differences seem to be mere illusion" (Ingham 62). "[T]he stranger becomes the familiar," Ingham explains, "and the foreign 'other' is revealed as close as kin" (Ingham 63).

In addition, Ingham discusses the modular familiarity of a seemingly foreign territory: "the wild geographies of 'contrayez straunge' instantly modulate into the apparently more 'civilized' space of a neighbouring region" (63). That is, elements of difference are replaced or transformed, as the poem progresses, by familiarity or sameness. The geography of this poem, the way it transforms and triggers historical truths—specifically as these truths relate to the English-Welsh relationship—is crucial. At its simplest, the *Gawain*-poet has "peppered" this poem "with historically specific English names for Welsh places, notably in the description of Gawain's journey in Fitt II" (Ingham 73). "These geographic references," Ingham explains, "situate Gawain, an emissary from a court in England, in transit through North Wales, 'contrayez straunge' yet already

catalogued with English toponyms" (73).

Ingham argues that through the *Gawain*-poet's references to the historical English-Welsh relationship, his interests become clear: "[p]oetic descriptions of a British Arthurian throne in England and descriptions of a Welsh landscape catalogued with English names simultaneously invoke Welsh margins and English centrality. That combination alludes to England's desires for—its efforts at the conquest and incorporation of—Welsh land, culture, and language" (74). What's more, the *Gawain*-poet appears to balance out England's desire for conquest with references to Welsh resistance: "the combination of Welsh names and places in a tale of Arthurian sovereignty alludes as well to Welsh resistances to English colonial hegemony" (Ingham 75). Consequently, the poem does more than adhere to Arthurian tradition; *SGGK* both emphasizes the significance of the colonial relationship between England and Wales, and also complicates this relationship by positioning Gawain between the familiar and the strange, where lines of sameness and difference are blurred or dissolve completely the further Gawain moves from Camelot.

Lynn Arner agrees that *SGGK* serves as a reflection of historical English colonization. Published five years after Ingham's article, Arner's "The Ends of Enchantment: Colonialism and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" argues that "*SGGK* was thoroughly tied to England's colonial project in Wales," and that the poem serves to "remind" readers of the colonial history within which it was created (79). Ultimately, Arner considers *SGGK* to be an item of response—a piece of historical evidence that represents how "ideologies speaking through *SGGK* attempted to reformulate readers' conceptions of themselves and of their neighbors and thus shape their perceptions of how to negotiate English-Welsh conflict" (80).

Despite Ingham and Arner's agreement on this particular point, these scholars

"disagree dramatically about how to understand the English-Welsh negotiations embedded in the poem" (Arner 80). Whereas Ingham transcribes a transformation from difference into familiarity, Arner passionately "maintain[s] that *SGGK* insists throughout the entire poem—as did, in general, the English and Welsh in the late fourteenth century—that the two peoples differed greatly" (80). She claims that Ingham is "unaware" of the fact "that the English conquest of the Welsh in the late fourteenth century was frequently bloody: many Welshmen and women were dispossessed of their lands and livelihoods; and many were killed by the invaders" (81). "Relations between the Welsh and the colonizing English," Arner continues, "were generally bitter in the second half of the fourteenth century" (81). This sentiment is reflected in *SGGK*: "when Gawain enters Wales and the frontier, he enters what is coded as otherworldly or radically alien, a wondrous and strange territory, a place of magic and marvels" (Arner 83). Thus, for Arner, the difference between English and Welsh is maintained throughout *SGGK*. The distinction between strange and familiar does not fold in on itself, as Ingham proposes; difference is always present, and Arner argues that Gawain's experiences as the poem unfolds do much to illuminate this obvious distinction.

Based on Ingham and Arner's arguments, it is clear that *SGGK* is much more than mere Arthurian legend. The poem serves the interests of the monarchy by emphasizing the English-Welsh relationship as Gawain passes through parts of Wales on his quest. More than this, *SGGK* queries some of the political decisions that perpetuated the English-Welsh distinction: as Gawain travels, his quest turns from chivalric to excessively challenging, calling into question aspects of his identity, forcing encounters with the foreign, and constantly negotiating between the strange and the familiar.

Because, as Ingham has argued, the poem is so closely tied to the historical English-

Welsh relationship in late medieval England, this chapter seeks to explore how this colonial relationship came to be, how it evolved as the English monarchy developed and changed, and what effect it had on the English and Welsh public as England sought further control of Welsh territory between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

2.1 Early Anglo-Norman-Welsh Relations

In an effort to demonstrate its superiority, England tended towards a sprawling dominion, one that conflicted with, and colonized, such neighbouring nations as Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Although conflicts between England and Wales escalated substantially between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, Robin Frame explains that a sense of English dominance and national identity had been brewing long before the Norman Conquest (8). Frame states,

> The idea of an English kingdom was a potent one. It owed much to Bede, who related how Pope Gregory the Great in 597 had sent the mission of St Augustine to the *Angli* ('English'). This concept of a Christian English people was important because it could embrace the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms within the island of Britain; it also had the effect of excluding the Britons [Welsh] who, according to Bede, were guilty of resisting Augustine's authority. (8)

The distinction of a dominant England preceded its specific conflict with neighbouring Wales. Resting on the principles of Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons fed their growing sense of nationalism, elevating themselves above neighbouring inferiors. By "the ninth and tenth centuries," Frame explains, "[t]he sense of a national identity, in the form of a province of the universal Church, had . . . already taken a firm hold" (8). With theological disagreement underpinning centuries' worth of tensions, Anglo-Welsh relations had been murky at best for several hundred years prior to England's official colonization of Wales in the late

thirteenth century.

From the Norman Conquest in 1066, to the end of the fourteenth century, Wales underwent an enormous shift in existence, from a country consisting of several individual self-governing entities, to a victim of English colonization and eventual object of English rule. The three and a half centuries I have chosen to focus on in this chapter do not represent an entire overview of Wales' colonial history. After all, as Ingham asks, when "would a 'pre-colonial' Wales have existed? At what point can we ever rightly say colonial aggressions *vis-à-vis* the Welsh began? With the Normans? the Saxons? the Vikings? the Romans?" (65). Although Wales seems to have been plagued with the invasion of external colonizing forces since it came to be, I have narrowed the scope of my focus to 1066-1400, in an effort to offer an overview of the most significant events leading up to the full English takeover of Wales, and the composition of *SGGK* and *Patience* in the latter half of the fourteenth century. Over the course of these three and a half centuries, Wales endured a tumultuous history of colonization, domination, broken treaty agreements, civil uprisings and revolts, and small-scale wars that effected major administrative and geographical changes.

To explain Wales' lack of cohesion and unified strength to oppose English colonization and rule, historians have pointed to Wales' poorly organized political structure. According to R. R. Davies, Wales' greatest political "stumbling block" was its "political fragmentation" (*Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales, 1063-1414* 14). Wales had been divided up into "forty or so lordships," all "virtually self-contained and self-governing units in administrative, jurisdictional, and financial terms" (Davies, *Conquest* 392). Because of this, "Wales had never known political unity other than the hegemony temporarily imposed by military might. It was a country of many kings, many

dynasties, [and] many kingdoms" (Davies, *Conquest* 14). Without an overarching political structure, Wales was without a cohesive defense system, one that might have been able to ward off potential invasions. This lack of political strength, unified economic stability, and military proficiency, meant that invasion was easy.

While Wales was a nation whose history had always been peppered with colonial invasions (Ingham 65), the Norman Conquest seems to have set the stage for centuries of political instability. David Walker posits, "Norman invasion and settlement in Wales added a new and permanent element to the history of Wales. The extent of Norman settlement and influence might vary, but it was never removed, and from the 1060s it affected Welsh society and Welsh politics very profoundly" (20). Davies similarly reflects on the Normans' effect in Wales, arguing that "by the end of the [twelfth] century, [the Normans] had transformed Wales—in terms of political mastery, social configuration, and cultural influence—more profoundly than any other group or movement was to do so until the Industrial Revolution" (*Conquest* 82).

Following the Norman Conquest, the relationship between Wales and England was anything but mutually beneficial. According to Davies, "Henry I and Henry II had little difficulty in showing that any qualified measure of independence that the Welsh principalities enjoyed was entirely dependent on the sufferance and goodwill of the king of England" (*Domination and Conquest* 7). "Royal expedition[s]" (Davies, *Domination* 7) taken up by these Anglo-Norman monarchies, such as those in "1114, 1121, 1157-58 and 1165," "served to remind the Welsh" that their independence was entirely dependent upon English rule (*Domination* 7).

Many monarchs took up the opportunity to display their dominance outside of England. Frame explains, "[t]he successful kings of the age – Henry I, Henry II, and

Richard I – spent more time on the Continent than they did in England" (20). Henry I had not only "established himself on each side of the sea by 1106," but was also considered "the most effective overlord Britain had seen since the days of Athelstan and Edgar, and his rule in the outer areas had a depth which no tenth-century king could have matched" (Frame 25). "Members of his administrative group," Frame continues, "organized and controlled south Wales" (25). "Secular dominance" was exerted via "the enlargement of royal influence over the church in Wales" (Frame 25). With only occasional "display[s] of force," Henry did not seek "to conquer Wales" (Frame 25); his intention was merely "to ensure that both Norman and native aristocracies were responsive to him" (Frame 25). And for the most part, "the Welsh kings accepted [Henry as] an overlord who was skilled at exploiting their divisions and attracting them to his court and the rewards of his service" (Frame 26).

After Henry II's accession to the throne, campaigns into Wales continued. He is credited for "restor[ing] the Anglo-Norman link, which had been broken during Stephen's reign [(1135-1154)]" (20). And any damage done to the English overlordship in Wales after Henry I's death was quickly repaired:

> Henry II took remarkably little time to recover the ground lost since 1135. Though his expeditions to Wales between 1157 and 1165 neither crushed the Welsh kings nor wholly restored the position the Crown and marcher lords had held in south Wales, he took native submissions, asserted his authority over the marchers, and was probably well content to preside over the fairly stable balance between the two that had emerged in the early 1170s. (Frame 32-33)

During the reigns of both Henry I and Henry II, the exertion of power and the planting of English lords in the borderlands of Wales did much to demonstrate and perpetuate

England's sprawling influence, and desire for complete control. The royal expeditions taken up by Henry I and Henry II were very much a part of both kings' successful reigns. Previous monarchs' choices to confine themselves in England, or rather to spend all their time on campaigns and not spend any time in England—"as experienced by Robert of Normandy, Stephen, or King John in his later years—signified failure and promoted discord" (Frame 20). "Presence in England," Frame explains, "was on its own no substitute for the prestige that attended an able ruler of the whole Angevin dominions, with his ability to attract and reward the service of men from far afield, assemble multinational armies, and dominate the seaways that were crucial to the aristocracy, clergy, and merchants associated with his regime" (22). Expeditions were a political power-play move; to confine oneself to one's kingdom did nothing to promote widespread dominion, expand economic growth, or display one's power and influence.

Normally taken up via "peaceful means," English expeditions were nonetheless executed with a particularly manipulative authoritative tactic (Davies, *Domination* 25). "[M]ore than [just] a military master-race," the Anglo-Normans were known to "secure their domination by whatever route was simplest, cheapest, and best-suited to their ends" (Davies, *Domination* 25). This meant everything from "baring their military teeth" to "offering themselves as allies or mercenaries to native princes and pretenders" to "easing their passage comfortably into the host society by a well-chosen marriage" (Davies, *Domination* 25).

Although considered "demonstrations of domination" (Davies, *Domination* 7), English expeditions in Wales were not necessarily taken up with territorial conquest in mind. A. D. Carr explains that even though the eleventh and twelfth centuries saw "English kings [lead] a number of military campaigns in Wales . . . not one of them, from William

the Conqueror's march to St. David's in 1081, was undertaken with the aim of conquest"
(44). Davies makes a similar point, clarifying that these demonstrations "were not
campaigns of conquest[,] nor were they followed by the installation of garrison in Wales"
(*Domination* 7). Instead, they were mere exercises of showmanship that served as "brisk
reminders to the Welsh of what power could be brought to bear against them" (Davies,
Domination 7). More often than not though, Anglo-Norman penetration "insinuated itself
along the channels of friendship, accommodation and affability" (Carr 56). And by 1154,
Henry II had set a new precedent for peaceful Anglo-Norman-Welsh relations (Carr 42-43).

It should be noted that despite these seemingly peaceful parades of power, the
Anglo-Normans actually "had no intention . . . of being regarded merely as partners or as
equals" (Davies, *Domination* 56). Instead, they sought "mastery," and therefore required
"submission" in the shape of "a clear and visual acknowledgement of dependence,
underwritten, if possible and appropriate, by guarantees – notably the surrender of hostages
and the exchange of gifts" (Davies, *Domination* 56). Although such an exchange was
clearly imbalanced, favouring the Anglo-Normans substantially, Davies reminds us that
"the relationship was mutual and not necessarily regarded as groveling" (*Domination* 56).

Not surprisingly, Welsh acknowledgement of Anglo-Norman superiority varied
depending on which lordship one found oneself within. While some territories may have
pushed against Anglo-Norman invasion, others, such as one south-east Welsh dynasty
discussed by Davies, were quick to "[come] to terms with the Anglo-Normans"
(*Domination* 62). Not necessarily emblematic of submission, this acceptance of Anglo-
Norman presence stood for cooperation that tended towards peaceful coexistence.
However, the Welsh did often take the opportunity to "rampage through lowland Gwent to
show that [their] power was by no means spent" (Davies, *Domination* 62). This delicate

balance between Welsh submission and exertion meant, according to Davies, that this "native Welsh dynasty survived for well over a hundred and fifty years[,] and could easily have blossomed into a permanent pattern of co-existence and political assimilation" (*Domination* 62). This was, however, a unique case for Wales; other lordships were less inclined to accept the terms of their submissive relationship with the Anglo-Normans.

This unequal platform for exchange obviously favoured the Anglo-Normans substantially. While peaceful coexistence was brought about and maintained by Henry II (Carr 42-43), nearly a century later—after a rocky English history of control gained and lost—the full-blown "conversion of Welsh territory into shires on the English pattern" meant that English conquest was very much a part of Welsh reality (Walker 139). Although small-scale occupation projects had taken place in Wales since 1067, "the gains were not fully secure until Edward I's conquest of north Wales in 1282-3" (Frame 50). This secured occupation culminated with a well-established court system, fully developed by 1284 (Walker 140), that included travelling judges, who "carr[ied] with them the full weight of the king's authority" (Walker 140-141).

It was around this time, in the late 1200s, that Welsh independence came to an abrupt end. In 1276, Edward I had declared war with Wales, a nation that was then divided into the Four Cantrefs. This system was the result of claims to land made by the four sons of Owain ap Gruffud (also known as Owain Gwynedd) (Carr 62). Owain's sons—Owain, Llywelyn, Dafydd, and Rhodri—"had to accept a position similar to that of English tenants-in-chief, rather than that of sovereign rulers whose authority did not derive from the crown" (Carr 62). Under the thumb of English dominance, these "thirteenth-century princes" had actually done much for Wales, "reshap[ing] and build[ing] upon what remained of Welsh kingship after the Anglo-Norman invasions" (Frame 152). Under the rule of Henry III, the

terms of this division were kept (Frame 152). The Welsh and the English could, for a time, peacefully coexist.

Eventually, the Four Cantrefs were divided—two came under the rule of Edward I, one went to Owain ap Gruffudd's son Llywelyn, and one to his son Dafydd. According to Walker, "Llywelyn ap Gruffyd came to power under distinctly unfavourable auspices" (111). Frame concurs, explaining that "[Llywelyn's] route to supremacy had involved trampling on the reasonable expectations of his brothers, of whom Dafydd was specially dangerous" (153). Furthermore, he and his brother Owain were considered "protégés of the English king" (Carr 80), and to consider Llywelyn both "an independent ruler" and also "a vassal of the English crown" was extremely problematic, as it "raised constitutional questions in a century in which political relationships were becoming ever more clearly defined" (Carr 80). This, combined with a series of spotty political decisions that left Llywelyn falling further and further into financial debt with the English crown, mistreating his family and his subjects, and vastly overestimating the reach of his power, ultimately led to his downfall as an ap Gruffyd son with any sense of legitimacy or power: "his princely standing was deliberately diminished and his power in Wales was truncated" (Walker 111). Llywelyn's loss of power under Edward I ultimately "marked the end . . . of a British political order that went back to, and even beyond, the Roman period" (Frame 152).

Following Llywelyn's downfall, "tensions were running high" between Edward I and Dafydd, each of whom now held two of the Four Cantrefs (Carr 77). Dafydd often rebelled "against English domination" (Walker 111), and this particularly longstanding tension between Edward I and Dafydd fueled Edward's desire for Welsh conquest. While "at the time of his first Welsh war in 1277 he showed no signs of wishing to step outside the established conventions of Anglo-Welsh relations . . . five further years of friction"

placed conquest on Edward I's "agenda" (Frame 144). On the whole, the Welsh seemed "willing to accept Edward as overlord as long as he did not interfere; Edward, however, saw his overlordship as involving something more and he insisted on the superiority of the prerogative and the dignity of the crown" (Carr 80). Dafydd's ultimate rebellion, an attack on Hawarden castle, triggered war, and with it, Wales' political independence was officially eradicated (Carr 77-78).

According to Davies, "Edward I meant to savour his great victory in Wales in 1282-3 to the full. The Welsh had been a thorn in his side since his youth. Even now in his hour of triumph he recalled with pain some of the humiliating defeats he had suffered at their hands" (*Conquest* 355). Edward "presented a triumphalist face," and he "marked the end of the native principality in Wales by . . . impaling the head of Dafydd . . . who had been executed after trial in 1283" (Frame 144).

Edward was sure to make his victory in Wales both strong and permanent. Despite small revolts in 1287 and 1294, Edward successfully exerted his "military dominance" via "a costly programme of castle-building"—"an effective colonial system of provincial administration" (Roberts 200). Moreover, Edward showed little sympathy for the Welsh during his conquest: he "sought to ensure that there should be no focus for any native feelings or injustice or bitterness" by disinheriting native dynasties of their lands (Roberts 201).

Notwithstanding his somewhat aggressive demeanor, Edward's reign marked an important turning point in England's history. He was highly regarded by historians of the time, and lauded for his ability to unite many nations under a single English rule. Upon his death in 1307, Edward I was described as "'king of England, Wales and Scotland, duke of Gascony and lord of Ireland'" (qtd. in Frame: 144). His reputation persisted long after his

death, and the public reveled in his successes, proclaiming, "'there is neither king nor prince of all countries, except King Edward who has united them'" (qtd. in Frame: 144).

2.2 Colonizing Wales

Following Edward's conquest, English rulers who followed—Edward II and Edward III specifically—saw Wales less and less as a political building block in their quest for domination of the British Isles, and more and more as a satellite territory of English rule, one stocked with valuable resources for English consumption. "Edward I and Edward II had depended on [leaders of the Welsh community] to govern at the local level," but when Edward III assumed the throne in 1330, he "seems not to have trusted the Welsh," and furthermore, "saw his lands in Wales primarily as a source of men and money for his wars" (Carr 91). Wales had thus transitioned from mere satellite territory, capable of governing itself through peaceful interactions with Anglo-Norman overlords, to a true colony of English rule, completely incapable of any level of political independence.

The power that the English demonstrated over the course of the three and a half centuries from 1066 to 1400 was indeed an indicator of England's expanding political and military prowess. But complete colonization is hard to maintain without individuals on the ground, effecting change on a daily basis; "without the inflow of colonists" to these satellite territories, "the impact of the Anglo-Normans . . . would have been utterly different" (Davies, *Domination* 14). Davies explains,

> The Anglo-Normans undertook a self-conscious policy of colonization, whether
> they initiated it or simply channeled a movement which had already generated its
> own momentum. They set out . . . to introduce settlers [to these English
> borderlands]. They recognized that without such settlements there would be no
> depth to their achievement: as a memorandum to the royal council in 1350 put it,

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there was little point in pouring huge sums into war against the Irish; it was far

better to conquer land from the enemy and to inhabit it with English settlers.

(*Domination* 14-15)

The political ingenuity of the English is here clearly demonstrated: to conquer via violent

measure may be effective, but to encourage the influx of English settlers into newly

claimed lands in order to quite literally appropriate Welsh[1] tradition and replace it with the

colonizer's own seems even more so. This English policy of colonization was produced "to

create substantial (at least in relation to existing population levels) colonies of settlers,

mainly English by descent and speech, in outlying parts of the British Isles" (Davies,

Domination 15). As populations trickled outward, and governance of a newly English

Wales continued to be bolstered, Wales slowly but surely lost its power to resist.

In "Designs and Designers of Medieval 'New Towns' in Wales," Lilley, Lloyd, and

Trick examine the extent of Edward's development of satellite colonies, or "new towns"

(289) in late thirteenth century northern Wales. According to these scholars, the rapid

development of these towns "in a potentially hostile environment" was executed in order

"to serve the military and financial needs of the crown as well as to meet the commercial

expectations of new townspeople" (Lilley, Lloyd, and Trick 289). The development of

these towns was "an integral part of Edward's colonisation of Wales, and its subordination

to English authority," so, "in some cases . . . existing Welsh inhabitants were removed from

existing settlements on the sites to make way for Edward's new towns" (Lilley, Lloyd, and

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[1] Wales was not the only colonizing subject to come under the rule of England during this time. Ireland and
Scotland experienced similar political instability, small-scale civil wars, uprisings, revolts, and many and
historians who discuss medieval Welsh history refer extensively to England's relationship with Ireland and
Scotland as well. For the purposes of this discussion, the historical scope has focused, and will continue to
focus, primarily on Wales. Infrequent mention of other English colonial projects will be done so only as is
deemed absolutely necessary, in order to maintain the narrow scope of this chapter.

Trick 289). As these towns developed, North Wales became "the seat of an English government" (Frame 143). As this was happening, existing Welsh populations "were excluded by the borough charters subsequently granted to the new towns, refusing them the same legal privileges as English townspeople, and [preventing] them (not always successfully) from even living in the towns" (Lilley, Lloyd, and Trick 289).

While at the outset the establishment of "new towns" allowed for the bolstering of traditional English culture, integrating into Welsh territory proved less of a smooth transition than was to be expected. Davies explains,

> these communities remained defiantly separate, cowering under the skirts of their military protectors and sponsors, jealously protective of their privileges and status. When those communities emerge into the fuller light of historical day, it is as 'the *English* community of Glamorgan' or 'the *English* people of the county of Pembroke' or 'the *English* nation' or '*English* liege people' . . . (*Domination* 15)

English national identity became "much more clearly and aggressively defined" (Davies, *Domination* 15). Not only were the English defending their "new towns" (Lilley, Lloyd, and Trick 289) from "the natives," but also, "the assimilation of the settlers into their native habitat and their adoption of its customs . . . was represented as the defense of a specifically *English* culture" (Davies, *Domination* 15). A polarized Wales developed as a result: "[w]herever we look at medieval Wales it seems to dissolve into plurality . . . Wales, or rather parts of Wales, now became a country of two peoples as well as of many regions" (Davies, *Conquest* 15). English and Welsh coexistence was thus built upon anxiety: both groups spent much of their time defending their quintessential national identities, while simultaneously worrying that the other was an imminent threat to that nation's existence and strength.

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Furthermore, the English and Welsh were divided on more than just national identity. The treatment of the two parties differed vastly in the colonies: "the two peoples were often treated separately for administrative purposes, granted separate charters of liberties and assessed separately for revenue-dues and subsidies" (Davies, *Conquest* 419). They were "treated separately at law," "paid different financial dues," and "their customs regarding the inheritance and transmission of territorial wealth" were "sharp[ly] [distinct]" (Davies, *Conquest* 420). Moreover, English settlers took full advantage of their superiority, and "exploited" it "to their maximum advantage":

> they spoke recurrently and hysterically about the 'malice', 'malevolence', and 'enmity' of the Welsh; they bemoaned their 'exiled status' as settlers in a foreign country; they insisted to the full on their exclusive commercial privileges as 'the English burgesses of the English boroughs of Wales'; and they conducted campaigns to oust Welshmen who had settled in their boroughs . . . and to prevent them from securing tenements in towns through marriage. (Davies, *Conquest* 421)

Arner also reflects on the attitude of the English, explaining that "the existence of two separate peoples was institutionalized in the governance of Wales" (82). "The Welsh not only differed from the English," she explains, "but were for many purposes considered inferior. This shift in perceptions was discernable in newly emergent pejorative representations of the Welsh in official documents—especially claims that the Welsh were treacherous and fickle" (Arner 82). The English-Welsh distinction became so significant that "men could not afford to not know where they stood racially" (Davies, *Conquest*, 419).

The distinction between the two peoples is clear, and the imbalance in how they were treated, and what the Welsh suffered as a result not only of the loss of their independence, but also of the influx of English settlers, is obvious. And while many deem it

complicated or anachronistic to impose modern political or postcolonial thought on medieval history, one cannot help but think of modern-day imperialism, and the nineteenth and twentieth century justifications for the influx of colonial settlers in situations much like this one. Jennifer Pitts, in "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism," argues that "[a] working description of an empire" (Pitts 213) combines both "a political unit that is large and expansionist (or with memories of an expansionist past), producing differentiation and inequality among people it incorporates" (Calhoun qtd. in Pitts: 213) and the idea that "[i]n the age of nation-states, imperial states generally exercise [their extensive] dominion over populations that are perceived (by conqueror and conquered) as different from (in the sense of ineligible for incorporation into) the dominant state exercising control" (Wedeen qtd. in Pitts: 213). So, while English conquest of Wales was not a dictatorial or totalitarian takeover, England's parading through—and eventual occupation of—Wales, did demonstrate the classic colonial act of exerting "dominion over populations that are perceived . . . as different" (Pitts 213).

These "different" or, one might argue, inferior populations were historically subjected to England as the "dominant [culture]," one that was considered "morally and intellectually superior in its attitude towards other cultures" (Davies, *Domination* 21). The perpetuation of the image of a civil society—one that had established norms such as "acceptable social and sexual morality, political organization and relationships, economic structures and forms of exploitation"—can only function if juxtaposed with "an image of an underdeveloped, or as they would have said barbarian, society" (Davies, *Domination* 22). "Such images," Davies explains, "facilitated domination," as it is "more readily justified and explained if the difference between dominant and subordinate groups, the conquerors and the conquered, is exaggerated" (*Domination* 22). These inferior cultures, such as Wales

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in this particular case, faced harsh comparisons to their superior counterparts; these inferior peoples "were found to be hopelessly wanting, even if some of their virtues attracted praise that is often directed toward the noble savage and the values of 'primitive' societies" (Davies, *Domination* 21). These societies were considered primitive for three main reasons:

> First, [they] were economically underdeveloped and indeed culpably backward.
> Their agriculture was primitive and pastoral; town life, trade and money were more
> or less absent; forms of economic exploitation and exchange were primitive. . . .
> Secondly, these societies were politically immature. The Welsh, it was remarked,
> were incapable of obeying anyone and seemed to exult in an anarchic love of
> liberty. . . . Thirdly, the social customs and moral, sexual and marital habits of these
> societies showed that they were at best at an early stage of social evolution . . .
> (Davies, *Domination* 21)

The English approach to colonization was built upon a foundation of superior helping inferior. To solidify a formal political system, establish a sound economic policy, and clean up the moral and religious messes, the Welsh were, as the English saw it, indebted to the English.

Notwithstanding the aggressive and insensitive nature of the colonizer and his desire to update or modernize a primitive society, certain postcolonial thinkers have argued that in theory, this type of modernization can be a good thing. Aimé Césaire argues that the interaction of different cultures can actually be positive:

> [I]t is a good thing to place different civilizations in contact with each other; . . . it is
> an excellent thing to blend different worlds; . . . whatever its own particular genius
> may be, a civilization that withdraws into itself atrophies; . . . for civilizations,
> exchange is oxygen; . . . the great good fortune of Europe is to have been a

crossroads; and . . . because it was the locus of all ideas, the receptacle of all

philosophies, the meeting place of all sentiments, it was the best center for the

redistribution of energy. (61)

Davies agrees, arguing that "[a]cculturation can be an enriching experience; it brings one

culture and its values into contact with another; it revivifies and redirects cultural energies"

(*Domination* 16). Because "[o]ccasion[s] for contact and mutual influence were many," the

English and Welsh did "learn, in measure, to live together; they also influenced each other

in a variety of ways" (Davies, *Conquest* 103).

However, it seems that despite the positive influence converging cultures can bring,

colonization still favours the oppressor. Davies therefore warns that colonization "can also

be an insidiously destructive experience, especially for the minority or subservient culture

and for the political and social order which is associated with it" (*Domination* 16). This

type of destruction is particularly potent when "the intrusive culture is aligned . . . with the

ambitions of an acquisitive kingship and aristocracy, a centralizing church and a

proselytizing and categorizing clerical elite" (Davies, *Domination* 16). As a result, the

primitive culture is "drained of its authority," and what existing political structure it was

able to sustain is immediately "undermined" (Davies, *Domination* 16). Thus, despite the

theory of colonial symbiosis, and a seemingly mutually exclusive relationship that resulted

from forced coexistence for the English in Wales, in practice, the English-Welsh

relationship was severely imbalanced.

After 1282, Welsh élites were presented "with opportunities as well as difficulties,

and their position in the post-conquest age was not wanting in paradoxes. Among the native

leaders two groups may be distinguished: surviving members of the old princely houses,

and a rising office-holding class" (Frame 207). Many opportunities were presented to the

Welsh elite to improve their status, to take up administrative roles, and to govern certain landholdings (209). Yet, Frame is quick to point out that "it is too simple to conclude that the conquest, while sounding the death-knell on the old princely houses, created conditions in which a lesser élite flourished and became harmoniously involved with their English superiors. Alongside co-operation and opportunism was an acute sense of alienation and oppression" (209). The Welsh resented the English for putting limits on their "possibilities of advancement" (Frame 210). And this resentment, in true colonial fashion, "was held in check by the sheer weight" of England's oppression (Frame 210).

2.3 Welsh Identity

Although colonization became the grim reality of late thirteenth century Wales, Frame explains that it was not necessarily "a blind uprooting of Welsh customs and institutions," but that "it did of course mark a fundamental break with the past" (159). The "tradition of English overlordship" had died, and was replaced with "direct rule by the crown, backed by the advance of English magnates into the Four Cantrefs" (Frame 159). Somewhat surprisingly, though, the Welsh appeared to unite under a national identity that now included English invasion and conquest: "[m]ost Welshmen and women were united against the English under a common feeling of oppression and under a shared political and historical identity" (Arner 83). The Welsh were known for having "a well-established sense of their national past. They were the Britons, the original settlers of the Island of Britain who had been masters of it 'from shore to shore' before the Saxons came" (Roberts 184). Alan MacColl reiterates this sentiment, explaining that "[t]hroughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period, both the English and the Welsh made the idea of an ancient British heritage the historical cornerstone of their national identity" (249). Although they used it to achieve very different means—with the English "us[ing] it as a way of advancing their

claims to dominion over Wales," and "the Welsh [using it] to give an ideological backbone to their resistance against the English" (MacColl 249), the Welsh were able to accept English encroachment, incorporate it into their own sense of selfhood and identity, and come together as a group to identify against their oppressors.

One might find it surprising that a nation whose independence rested on the idea that each individual lordship governed itself—a relatively meek defense system against foreign invasion—would be able to bolster a national identity in spite of these divisions. Historians will point out, though, that political cohesiveness is actually not a pre-determiner for the production of a collective identity. "A strong sense of common unity as a people is not incompatible with a highly particularized local identity," Davies posits, "[n]or are the institutions of a unitary polity and of centralized governance a pre-requisite for the emergence of a sentiment of national identity" (*Conquest* 15). Welsh nationalism, in spite of its political divisions and eventual downfall, continued to flourish.

This bourgeoning of identity was made up of several distinct characteristics. For example, while Henry II ruled in England, Wales took pride in its own twelfth century rulers—such as "Rhys, Owain Gwynedd and Madog Ap Maredudd of Powys," all "shrewd men who were able to deal with Henry II on equal terms" (Carr 46). Welsh rulers represented their lands and withstood the political encroachment of a threatening neighbour. Due to repetitive invasions by the English, Wales developed a strong sense of "pride in [its] frontiers . . . and conviction of the need to defend them at all costs" (Davies, *Conquest* 16). And even when English colonization became a cold element of Welsh reality, "what could not be suppressed were the ties of kinship and an awareness of family origins" (Roberts 201).

Welsh nationalism came in other forms as well: prior to the loss of Welsh

independence in the late thirteenth century, Wales "saw the beginning of one of the great periods of Welsh poetry, the age of the court poets known as the Poets of the Princes" (Carr 46). Furthermore, Wales nurtured a continued common mythology, one that

> provided [the Welsh] with a common stock of heroes, onomastic lore, quasi-historical legend, and evocative references. It was a mythology which looked back wistfully and proudly to a glorious past, to victories over giants, to links with Troy and Rome, to memories of a united Britain, to the valour of British heroes, and to the migration of the men of the Old North to Wales. (Davies, *Conquest*, 16)

Many segments of Welsh history challenged, and indeed deeply fractured, their sense of nationalism. Once such event was, of course, Edward I's colonization of their land in 1282: "[t]he conquest of Wales left a deep legacy of despair and bitterness among Welshmen. . . . [T]he trauma of that victory naturally left deep scars on the Welsh consciousness. . . . As the completeness of their defeat dawned on them, some Welshmen turned more than ever to the prophecies of Merlin as a source of consolation and hope" (Davies, *Conquest* 379). Thus, mythology aimed to "provide an interpretation of the past which was consoling for the present and prophetic for the future" (16). It offered hope, honour, pride in a unified past, and faith in a united future. It delivered a sense of camaraderie, bringing a group of individuals together in a time when the Welsh felt banished in their own territory, diminished and devalued, and obligated to adhere to English expectations, norms, and cultural practices.

By the latter half of the fourteenth century, Wales "was merely a geographical expression," completely stripped of its independence, and wholly conquered (Davies, *Conquest* 392). The fragmented political landscape that had always been a part of Wales' history continued long past the loss of Welsh independence: "the essentially piecemeal and

protracted character of that [English] conquest had only served to entrench and indeed to deepen the particularism so characteristic of medieval Wales" (Davies, *Conquest* 392). Eventually, Wales became synonymous with "disorder," and came to represent "the disastrous consequences of the absence of a uniform and centralized judicial authority" (Davies, *Conquest* 392).

In spite of their endlessly disorganized structure, the Welsh were nevertheless successful at instilling fear in their colonizers. The English were well aware of their exploitation and forced oppression of the Welsh, and as such, their "government [took] precautions 'in case the Welsh should rise suddenly'" (Davies, *Conquest* 437). Indeed, Arner explains that "the Welsh provoked constant anxiety in the English. There were occasional outbreaks of violence by the Welsh against their colonizers, including anti-English violence in the north in the 1340s" (81). The fruit of England's anxiety came in the form of anti-Welsh campaigns, taken up "by English counties bordering Wales against Welsh raids and against what the English perceived to be an alarming influx of Welsh settlers into English border counties" (Arner 82). These fears were "regularly coupled with another anxiety—that Wales might be used by England's enemies as a point of entry for an attack on England itself" (Davies, *Conquest* 437). The relationship between England and Wales that was built up over the course of these three and a half centuries ultimately solidified itself as a colonial one: the English exploited the Welsh, the Welsh pushed back and provoked the English, constant anxiety resulted, and both parties were affected deeply by the changes.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

As one might conclude, the colonial mentality so characteristic of modern colonial and postcolonial Britain was very much alive in its medieval counterpart. Medieval

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England sought aggressively to distinguish between oppressor and oppressed, to exploit the native Welsh populations for its own gain, to replace Welsh townships with English people and place names, to call traditional Welsh customs and practices primitive and underdeveloped, and to instill in the Welsh a desire to modernize ancient practices to the acceptable English standard.

By the time *SGGK* was composed, probably under the reign of Richard II, centuries of English-Welsh conflict had affected the governing of England, and the nationalistic rhetoric that accompanied it. Richard's reign included "territorial exploitation of a Welsh colony"—an "increasingly crucial . . . strateg[y] of the crown" (Ingham 76). As tensions progressed, and Richard became increasingly dependent on parts of Wales for financial security, he would "confiscat[e] Welsh lands" and give them "as rewards to [his] loyal supporters" (Ingham 76). Arner likewise describes the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries as a period that only continued to perpetuate the English Welsh conflict:

> After the widespread Welsh uprising in the first decade of the fifteenth century, the English realized that the Welsh were not the submissive and deferential natives they had feigned to be, but were a perfidious people, on par with the wild Irish. These "insights" into the nature of the Welsh were widely held perceptions among the English in the late Middle Ages. (79)

Damage to the Welsh consciousness was thus complete as the fourteenth century drew to a close. England's perception of Wales was permanently underpinned by colonial tendencies and increasingly burdensome anxieties about Welsh rebuttal or revival. *SGGK* serves as a reminder of this conflicted past (Arner 79). And it does more than simply reflect on the English-Welsh colonial conflict; *SGGK* "intervenes in the political terrain and participates in the production of the social formation" (Arner 80). As the subsequent chapters on *SGGK*

and *Patience* will demonstrate, these poems present many references to the political landscape of this time.

Welsh history is rich with details of colonization. From the usurpation of Welsh territory to the revivification of a common Welsh identity, much of Wales' past presents an opportunity for thorough postcolonial analysis. To examine *SGGK* (and by extension, *Patience*) for elements of the colonial and postcolonial is thus to be enlightened by not only colonial history, but also how this history was received and perpetuated by the *Gawain*-poet.

The *Gawain*-poet, I will argue, adopts a rather unique perspective—one that does not necessarily align itself wholly with the crown's political agenda. Instead, one can see the poet grappling with dueling or multiple subject positions, and the ways in which he negotiates between these positions offers a new and unique take on how the medieval subject might have dealt with, or felt about, England's colonization of Wales.

This analysis, however, would not be complete without a thorough discussion of a few very important postcolonial theories that will assist with a thorough analysis of these poems, and help to illuminate how medieval colonial England functioned. The following chapter will delve deeply into the contemporary nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of four important postcolonial theories: diaspora, ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity. A thorough exploration of how these theories came to be yields the occasion to respectfully and appropriately apply them to this late medieval English-Welsh history, demonstrating that not only does postcolonial theory have much to offer the medievalist's reading practice, but also, that when considered in relation to how the English-Welsh relationship functioned, these theories in particular help readers to further understand the *Gawain*-poet's very unique perspective, as it is articulated through *SGGK* and *Patience*.

Chapter 3: Postcolonial Theory

In 2000, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen published *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, a collection of essays identifying several links between postcolonial theory and medieval literature. Since then, scholarship pertaining to this convergence has continued to expand; and, as the introduction to this thesis describes, scholars have become largely divided on the issue. Of the scholarship denying or discouraging a direct connection between postcolonial and medieval studies, objections appear to fall into two main camps: that the modern West and its premodern counterpart are not related, and neither are their colonial histories; and, taking it one step further, that the application of contemporary postcolonial theory to medieval literature is actually anachronistic.

There is something quintessentially modern about postcolonial theory; the events that warranted its creation live in the present, and so should their theories. This issue has become a contentious one: what does 'modern' mean, and what are the parameters of its use? Ingham and Warren's introduction to *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern* sets out to unpack the problems associated with the issue of modernity as it pertains to this debate. They ask,

> Who gets to determine the boundaries between modern and premodern, central and peripheral, first world and third world, European and non-European, and what are the stakes of these determinations? What is occluded by the traditional ways of seeing these boundaries, and what is the impact of these formulations not just intellectually, but politically? (Ingham and Warren 2)

Believing that "postcolonial studies claim distance from premodern histories so as to deny the relevance of premodern dynamics of conquest and settlement to subsequent expansionist projects," many postcolonial scholars "question the very existence of

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colonialism in the absence of modernity" (Ingham and Warren 1). These scholars tend to

acknowledge the existence of premodern colonial expansionist projects, recognize that

there may be some similarities, and then completely debunk the idea that they could be

considered in tandem with a modern colonial project. They tend to argue instead that

modern expansionist endeavors offer something unique, something that is predicated

specifically on modernity itself.

Anshuman Prasad is one such scholar. Prasad acknowledges many important

expansionist empires—"the Aztec Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Empire of Ghana, the

Inca Empire . . . and other similar empires"—all of which, he claims, "attest to the fact of

repeated territorial conquest in world history" (4). Despite recognition of such empires, and

their expansionist tendencies, Prasad nevertheless argues that there is something distinct

about modern Western colonialism—namely, its economic impact: "the West and its

colonies [were linked] in a complex structure of unequal exchange and industrialization that

made the colonies economically dependent upon the Western colonial nations" (4-5). This,

according to Prasad, is what premodern expansionist endeavors lacked—the substantial

economic impact that left one culture dependent upon, and inferior to, the other (5).

Ania Loomba makes a similar argument. She likewise lists a myriad of colonial

projects, including the Roman, Mongol, Aztec, Vijaynagara, and Ottomon Empires

(Loomba 2-3). More specifically, she points to the unique details of each empire's colonial

history, acknowledging the significance of these premodern projects, and emphasizing a

connection between premodern and modern colonial histories. Some of her examples

include the Aztecs, who established their empire "when, from the fourteenth to the

sixteenth centuries, one of the various ethnic groups who settled in the valley of Mexico

subjugated the others" (Loomba 2); she explains that the Aztecs and the Incas "extracted

tributes in services and goods from conquered regions" (Loomba 2); she suggests that the

Vijaynagara and Ottoman empires "extended [themselves] over most of Asia Minor and the

Balkans" (Loomba 3); and, she even indicates that "racial stereotyping is not the product of

modern colonialism alone, but goes back to the Greek and Roman periods which provide

some abiding templates for subsequent European images of 'barbarians' and outsiders"

(Loomba 105). Much like modern expansionist projects, these ancient empires endeavored

to execute similar colonial ventures, all with the hope of great benefit to the superior

culture, at the expense of the inferior.

Loomba's exploration acknowledges premodern colonial pasts as significant, and in

many ways similar to their modern counterparts. And yet, her analysis is coloured by an

important statement from her introduction: "[m]odern European colonialism was distinctive

and by far the most extensive of the different kinds of colonial contact that have been a

recurrent feature of human history. By the 1930s, colonies and ex colonies covered 84.6 per

cent of the land surface of the globe" (Loomba xiii). Even in the presence of thorough

acknowledgement of a premodern colonial past, and the recognition of ancient expansionist

projects, and their economic and cultural subjugations, something about the nineteenth and

twentieth century colonial projects remains distinct.

Indeed, the territories conquered, and the distance to which colonizers travelled and

settled around the globe is significantly more substantial than in premodern colonization. It

is interesting that scholars draw specific attention to global scale as a marker for modernist

colonial projects, and that somehow, similar premodern projects are deemed less relevant,

or less significant, because their reach wasn't nearly as expansive. Loomba asks, "[h]ow do

we think about these differences? Was it that Europeans established empires far away from

their own shores? Were they more violent or more ruthless? Were they better organized? Or

a superior race?" (3). I might here add, what makes proximity to the satellite colony lessen the significance of the colonial experience?

One might here recall Davies' discussion of England's perspective on Welsh culture and economics as England's roots on Welsh soil began to grow deeper in the late thirteenth century. The English viewed Wales as inferior for reasons such as economic underdevelopment, "primitive and pastoral" agriculture, political immaturity, and a complete lack of "social customs and moral[s]" (Davies, *Domination* 21-22). When England staked its claim in Wales under the rule of Edward I, they brought with that claim a whole new realm of economics, technology, and cultural norms and practices that left Welsh culture and practice to merely pale in comparison. Perhaps the scope of the dominant culture's economic impact was smaller: Wales and England shared a border; they were not countries separated by vast expanses of land or sea. And yet, the superior versus inferior mentality is nonetheless present, and absolutely relevant here.

Despite the questions that Loomba raised, and despite substantial evidence pointing to a very relevant colonial history in premodern Europe, scholars continue to defend the significance and distinctness of the contemporary postcolonial experience. The West—less an actual location than an ideological construct—had a much more substantial hold on its colonies, both ideologically and geographically, than medieval expansionist projects allegedly did. Europe "attempted to subjugate its colonies" in order to "establish Western hegemony not only politically, militarily, and economically, but also culturally and ideologically" (Prasad 5). It is on this point that premodern colonial projects allegedly fall short (Prasad 5).

Even the vocabulary of colonization is defended as a distinctly modern construct. The idea of "nation," for example, is argued to be a modern invention. Christina-Georgiana

Voicu argues that "[n]ation is a form of collective identity which becomes possible only in the conditions of *modernity*. Hence, national identity is an 'object' of modernity" (170). Furthermmore, "[n]ation is almost certain to be more heterogeneous in its membership than a pre-national grouping, more mixed race, class, gender, regional loyalty" (Voicu 171). Once again, the debate comes down to the parameters of space, and the colonist's reach. The concept of nation is only modern because of a collective identity that cannot be produced in a "pre-national grouping" (171), one that allegedly lacked extensive integration of races, genders, and classes.

The modern concept of 'the West' also proves significant and concomitant with modernity. Gyan Prakash, a Subaltern Studies scholar, argues, "'Europe' or 'the West' in Subaltern Studies refers to an imaginary though powerful entity created by a historical process that authorized it as the home of Reason, Progress, and Modernity" (1485). To oppose the conglomerate of "the West" is the Orient, discussed by Edward Said in an effort to explain the opposition between cultures from the proverbial East and proverbial West. Said explains, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (*Orientalism* 1-2). It is thus not surprising that some postcolonial scholars cannot imagine a pre-contemporary colonial landscape that is not produced by modernity. Walter D. Mignolo sees it as "only 'natural' that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin" (50). The West produced modernity, and modernity produced the West. The West produced the Orient, and the Orient could not exist without the West.

These arguments thus lead to the conception of postcolonial theory as a creation born from modernity, one that apparently cannot defy the parameters of time. But on this point, Ingham and Warren defend a very important argument: "in believing themselves to

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be 'modernizing' archaic spaces and peoples abroad through colonial rule, colonizers enact, over and over again, their own ability to move from 'medieval' to 'modern,' from 'primitive' to 'civilized'" (2). Those medieval scholars who have chosen to adopt a postcolonial gaze have, as the introduction to this thesis describes, been up against rather significant scrutiny for it. What Ingham and Warren here simplify is the very reason why a postcolonial-medieval convergence works: because embedded within the system of colonization itself is an act of modernity. So, regardless of what period colonization exists within, there is an attempt to modernize an inferior culture, to move a primitive population into the way of the future.

Colonization is always already modernizing in this sense. To create a permanent divide between the premodern and modern forms of colonization—as many postcolonial theorists have done—denies the possibility of this progressive modernization. Ingham and Warren explain:

> The ideological force of the West's colonizing claims to be "modern," and the concomitant claim that its colonizing forces are agents of "modernization," is furthered (rather than unsettled) by defining colonialism as a "modern problem." Such temporal limits, to be sure, circumscribe in the interest of historical particularity and definitional clarity. Yet in so doing such assertions imply, if unwittingly, colonial "modernity" as a fact of history rather than an ideology of colonialism. (2)

Rather than considering the premodern as a distinct period separate from the modern, Ingham and Warren emphasize that modernization is an ideological construct, a form of transformation that does not depend on the timeframe in which it happens. In turn, what it does is not only "extend postcolonial studies to earlier periods," but also "analyze the role

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of earlier periods within colonialism and postcolonial scholarship" (Ingham and Warren 6).

The collection of essays gathered in *Postcolonial Moves* "[seek] to avoid metaphorical uses of postcolonial categories, aspiring instead to display the 'historical thicknesses' of disparate scenes of conquest, settlement, annexation, conversion, and cultural conflict" (Ingham and Warren 2). Thus, the history behind *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the preceding three and a half centuries of conquest and cultural conflict outlined in the former chapter, is an appropriate example of what *Postcolonial Moves* seeks to explore.

Using exemplary scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Arif Dirlik to counter the tendency towards a strictly modern postcolonialism, Ingham and Warren argue not only that 'history' is itself a malleable and limitless term, but also that within the bounds of postcolonial theory, acknowledgement of a history of pre-contemporary colonialism is essential (Ingham and Warren 4-5). They posit, "these kinds of overt and covert incursions of nonmodernity into postcoloniality seem to have been gradually transforming the field" (Ingham and Warren 5). Accordingly, it is evident that the once rigid boundaries of postcolonial theory are becoming evermore malleable, and that scholars continue to interpret and reinterpret the meaning of such ideas as postcolonialism, nationalism, and modernity. Quoting Vilashini Cooppan, Ingham and Warren summarize this point:

> in trying to decipher the murky process of affiliation and contestatory politics that are once old and new, post-colonial criticism may also come to reconsider its imperative to divide between what is past and what is present, what belongs to it and what can be banished. All of this is by way of saying that disciplinary histories never begin quite where you think they do, and what you leave out of them has a way of returning. (qtd. in Ingham and Warren: 5)

Cooppan's argument here renders the modern versus premodern debate always already incomplete; as long as historians and critics put boundaries around what is modern and what is not, the premodern will always rear its head, one way or another.

By acknowledging that premodern history can "permeate many contemporary critical formations, often as the unacknowledged ground upon which those forms are built," (Ingham and Warren 6), this chapter seeks to examine four important postcolonial theories in their nineteenth- and twentieth-century iterations—diaspora, hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence—and how each was manifested in history, how each has transformed since their creations, and how each functions as a theoretical entity.

3.1 The Modern Postcolonial

The term "postcolonial" has taken on, and continues to take on, many definitions, depending on whom one asks. Most simplistically, colonial history triggers a postcolonial response. Rajeev S. Patke claims, "'[p]ostcolonial' derives its meaning from a complex relation to 'colonial', which in turn derives its significance from the sense of 'colony' as a territory annexed or controlled for settlement or profit" (369). For Patke—who is of the opinion that modern colonialism did not begin until after 1492—colonization was motivated by a mixture of "curiosity, profit and adventure," leading to "a series of interactions with peoples previously unfamiliar to and separated from them by large expanses of ocean and land" (369). For Loomba, colonialism was a process with "not one but several ideologies," all of which "were manifest in hundreds of different institutional and cultural practices" (112). For others, colonization is a process of invasion, occupation, and annexation (Ashcroft 1).

According to Warren, the postcolonial "indicates both a break with colonial pasts and an ongoing engagement with their legacies and renewals. . . . [P]ostcolonial refers to

both historical and aesthetic conditions" (21). From Prasad's perspective, "[p]ostclonialism is not a narrowly systematized and unitary theory" (7). For him, "postcolonial theory is a set of productively syncretic theoretical and political positions that creatively employ concepts and epistemological perspectives deriving from a range of scholarly fields . . . as well as from multiple approaches to inquiry" (Prasad 7). Bill Ashcroft, Gabreth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, claim that the term "post-colonial" "cover[s] all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). This includes not only "national culture after the departure of the imperial power," but also "periods before and after independence" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1). Seeming to evade boundaries of time and space, the postcolonial refers to everything from personal identity to national politics.

'Postcolonialism', 'the postcolonial', 'postcolonial studies': depending on which way a scholar approaches this concept the definition tends to change. A common consideration of the term is articulated by Ashcroft, who describes the "strategy of post-colonial self-assertion" as one that "attempt[s] to rediscover some authentic pre-colonial cultural reality in order to redress the impact of European imperialism" (2). More than this, the term represents a resistance to "the power of colonial domination," a resistance that exerts itself "in ways so subtle that they transformed both colonizer and colonized" (Ashcroft 3). 'Postcolonialism' is a marker, one that indicates the alleged end of the colonial period, and the beginning of not only the revivification of culture, but also the rediscovery of selfhood and identity.

For as many scholars as there are defining the term from their own perspective, there are also as many who point to how complicated this act of defining has come to be.

Loomba argues, "the term 'postcolonialism' has become so heterogeneous and diffuse that it is impossible to satisfactorily describe what its study might entail" (xii). "[F]rom literary analysis to research in the archives of colonial government, from the critique of medical texts to economic theory," postcolonialism has come to encompass its own sense of ambiguity (Loomba xii). Neither specifically this, nor that, the term has come to incorporate history, culture, ideology, anthropology, literature, economics, and more.

However, despite its indefinite nature, a clear starting point for the term as an academic reference is nonetheless evident. It was in the 1980s that "[t]he academic invention of 'postcolonial' took place," after the impact of Edward Said's *Orientalism* took hold (Patke 369). Patke explains that the influence of Said's *Orientalism* not only established an academic base upon which postcolonial study thrived, but also "gave 'postcolonial' studies a global orientation," both of "which rapidly overtook and assimilated the more modest growth of 'Commonwealth' studies" (370). What postcolonial studies grew from, Patke continues, was a "new interest in minority discourse . . . and [from] the global development of academic curricula devoted to gender, feminism and diaspora" (370).

Said's *Orientalism* did indeed provide a sturdy foundation upon which postcolonial study could "thrive" (Patke 370). To Said, 'Orientalism' encompasses a special dichotomous relationship between European West, and Oriental East: "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, *Orientalism* 1). The Orient provided the West with the comparative model it needed to exert its superiority; the West is not the Orient, so the Orient cannot be the West. Indeed, Said defines Orientalism as a "mode of

discourse," equipped "with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (*Orientalism* 2). Ideologically, culturally, and in every way in between, the Orient exists to oppose the superior Occident.

Said explains this opposition in terms of a "willed imaginative," one produced out of such things as "[t]he boundary notion of East and West, the varying degrees of projected inferiority and strength, the range of work done, [and] the kinds of characteristic features ascribed to the Orient" (*Orientalism* 201). And from this "willed imaginative" comes overt demonstrations of superiority. Difference yields imbalance; where the West dominates, the Orient must be dominated, usually in ways such as "having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power" (Said, *Orientalism* 36). In addition to this, the imbalance led the West to treat the Orient as a learning or teaching tool during its colonial projects (Said, *Orientalism* 40). Whatever was not considered "patently inferior" was deemed worthy of "corrective study by the West" (Said, *Orientalism* 41). This meant that "[t]he Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism . . . is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing" (Said, *Orientalism* 40-41). Every element of the colonized culture was up for examination, elimination, or manipulation.

From these processes, the realm of postcolonial studies was formed. Through a multiplicity of responses to these colonial processes, the critic's postcolonial theory was born. Young defines the critical postcolonial gaze as one that "reconsiders . . . colonial history from a critical perspective, arguing that there was something particular about it . . . while at the same time analyzing its political and cultural after-effects in which we all live"

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(18). This particularity of experience produces more than just "any old oppression, or any series of wars and territorial occupations" (Young 18). "Rather than simply being the writing which 'came after' empire," Elleke Boehmer explains, "*postcolonial* literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship" (3). These conquests affected more than just the production of maps, or the name of the nation one lived in. They affected people—both occupier and occupied; they enacted experience, questioned identity, demanded solidarity, produced a partisan nationalism, conjured voice, and, most importantly, demanded that this voice not go unnoticed.

As responses were recognized, postcolonial theories were produced; the more theories that were produced, the larger a global understanding of colonization and its effects. As postcolonial studies gained momentum in academia, the distance between the postcolonial theories produced and the experiences that produced them continued to grow. This meant that diaspora, for instance, was no longer viewed only as a product of Caribbean experience, but was applicable to many groups around the world who found solace in each other. Where ambivalence developed out of modern colonization and the need to recognize that hybrid identities—made up of colonizer and colonized—were to be acknowledged and accepted, one can now apply the concept of ambivalence to a text in order to identify dual or multiple perspectives within a single voice. Acknowledging that these concepts emerged from scholars whose experiences directly impacted their creation—Hall in the Caribbean and the United Kingdom, and Bhabha in India—these theories have become important tools for identifying aspects of medieval texts previously overlooked.

In the sections that follow, diaspora, ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry are discussed in terms of their origins, their development, and how they have been interpreted

and manipulated as time has gone on. Each evokes its own unique perspective, and yet they function together to bring to light important aspects of the very real postcolonial Middle Ages. 'Diaspora' investigates the ways in which identity is questioned, transformed, and reformed, destroyed, and subsequently rebuilt, taking into consideration one's proximity to their original home and identity as these transformations take place. The struggles that accompany the task of defining one's identity while it is in a constant state of transformation, as a result of the interaction between colonizer and colonized, can be intense and extremely difficult. Bhabha's 'mimicry' quantifies the colonizer's enforcement of identity onto the colonial subject. An attempt is made to replicate the colonizer's identity, but what results is actually metonymic presence rather than full replication. Bhabha's 'ambivalence' gives a name to these hybrid identities. When the identity imposed by the colonizer and the individual's own selfhood come together, a dichotomous identity is produced that adheres neither to the colonizer's completely, nor to the colonial subject's. And, on a grander scale, Bhabha's 'hybridity' describes the multiculturalism that results from the diaspora, from ambivalent identities. Via a thorough examination of *SGGK* and *Patience*, these elements of postcolonial theory help to illuminate new aspects of medieval identity formation in the wake of colonization.

3.2 Diaspora

As a marker of identity production, manipulation, and adaptation, the concept of 'diaspora' is very significant in postcolonial study. Acts of movement, the definition of boundaries, and the notions of location and dislocation—all of these contribute to, and are affected by, the diaspora. The term 'diaspora' "derives from the Greek *–dia*, 'through', and *speirein*, 'to scatter'" (Brah 178). The concept, simplistically defined as a displaced population, is almost always intertwined with, or "precipitated by" politics: "[n]otions of

exile and dissidence, often political in nature, are inextricably entwined with the phenomenon of diaspora" (Lyons and Mandaville 91). Avtar Brah explains, "the word embodies a notion of a centre, a locus, a 'home' from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes images of multiple journeys" (178). Jaine Beswick acknowledges these populations as "victims of circumstance" who "[struggle] against prejudice and marginalization, even if they [are] willing to accept the host's social, cultural, and linguistic norms" (134).

Brubaker argues that constitutive of the diaspora are three key elements: "[t]he first is dispersion in place; the second, orientation to a 'homeland'; and the third, boundary-maintenance" (5). One or a combination of these, however they are weighted, "underlies most definitions and discussions of the phenomenon" (Brubaker 5). A diaspora community consists of such markers as "wanting to go home, to give back to one's home culture, and to help one's family members who remained in the homeland" (Johnson 47). Kabir argues that these desires "catalyse creative expression as a means to grapple with, evaluate and transcend diaspora's material consequences" (145). These products of creative expression, however, do not necessarily consist of tangible desires to return to one's homeland; "[i]nstead, it is more of an understanding that regardless of where the persons relocate, their conception of home is always with them and that it will remain a central part of their identities and that they will always themselves embody some obligation and responsibility to this home" (Johnson 47). "[T]he 'diasporic feeling'," Johnson explains, "is that one never leaves the homeland, regardless of [one's new] place of residence" (47).

These products of creative expression lead many scholars to study them in great detail. Diaspora studies, which at one time "referred only to physically scattered religious groups (peoples, churches, or congregations) living as minorities among other people and other faiths" (Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamore 1), developed away from strictly "Jewish

population[s]" and towards a broader examination of over 2500 years of "forcible dispersal and the estrangement of diasporic peoples in their places of settlement" (R. Cohen 177).

As the term developed to encompass a much larger collection of displaced individuals, so too did its understanding in academia. From the perspective of a postcolonial scholar, the term evolved to include the "'African diaspora' and 'black diaspora'" in the 1960s (Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamore 11). The 1970s saw "an amazing inflation," one that "peaked in the 1990s," at which time diaspora studies was now "being applied to most of the world's peoples" (Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamore 1).[2] Today, we reference diasporas not only in the traditional sense of the word—the English diaspora, the Samali diaspora, the Tutsi diaspora (Brubaker 3), but also in a "putative" way—"the dixie diaspora, the yankee diaspora, the white diaspora, the liberal diaspora," and so on (Brubaker 3). Brubaker explains that "[a]s the term has proliferated, its meaning has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted" (1).

Although scholars here discuss 'diaspora' in its modern incarnation, the concept is nonetheless applicable to an analysis of medieval colonial endeavours as well. Although displacement was on a much smaller scale, and populations crossed mere borders—rather than oceans—in order to colonize, the feelings of displacement, of disassociation from, and

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[2] Johnson explains that the term 'diaspora' is itself highly contested in academia: ". . . among scholars focusing on migrant networks, identity politics, cultural politics, and global movements the definition of 'diaspora' remains highly contested because not only are scholars not in agreement on a single definition, but others reject diaspora as a new theoretical lens" (44). Johnson cites Brubaker here, and claims that "the large number of scholars who have attempted to define and redefine the concept has possibly left 'diaspora' as a concept 'stretched to the point of uselessness'" (44). Brubaker claims that "[i]f everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminating power – its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora" (3). While I acknowledge that 'diaspora' has undergone significant development and change over the course of its existence, risking ambiguity or meaningless as it has developed, I nonetheless believe it to be very useful, not only to contemporary postcolonial study, but also as it pertains to investigations of medieval diasporas.

reassociation to, a homeland, and the identification of clear boundaries—that which belongs to me does not belong to you, that land from which you came is not the land which I inhabit—are important to an understanding of migration, exile, and the development and redevelopment of identity in the Middle Ages.

This last aspect of diaspora in the Middle Ages—identity—plays an important role not only in medieval postcolonial study, but also in the larger development and study of diaspora as a modern concept. Most prominent to this study is Stuart Hall, "a member of the preindependent generation of colonized intellectuals" (Farred 30). Hall grew up in Kingston "as a middle-class colored in a colonial society" (Farred 32). These influential years "determined his relationship to Jamaica and the Caribbean diaspora in Britain" for many years afterwards (Farred 32). Engaging in "identity politics," Hall was enabled to "renegotiate his own self-construction" via an "admixture of psychic contradiction and ideological linearity" (Farred 32). This process "allowed Hall to engage in public self-analysis through a paradigm sympathetic to narratives of default, contingency, unconscious processes as well as conscious ones, and personal memories long repressed" (Farred 32). Hall's thesis ultimately thinks of identity as a production "which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation[;]" identity is a construct that will never be "already accomplished" (Voicu 163).

"Migration," Hall explains, "has been a constant motif of the Caribbean story" (543). In the context of the Caribbean, Hall argues that the question of diaspora is raised "because of the light that it throws on the complexities, not simply of building, but of imagining Caribbean nationhood and identity" (543). He asks,

> [t]hirty years after independence, how are Caribbean nations imagined? This
>
> question is central, not only to their peoples but to the arts and culture they produce,

where some 'imagined subject' is always in play. Where do their boundaries begin

and end, when regionally each is culturally and historically so closely related to its

neighbours, and so many live thousands of miles from 'home'? How do we imagine

their relation to 'home', the nature of their 'belongingness'? And how are we to

think of national identity and 'belongingness' in the Caribbean in the light of this

diaspora experience? (Hall 543-544)

Hall's questions, although Carribean-specific, are rather thought-provoking for one

studying a postcolonial Middle Ages, one in which transplanted English populations living

in Wales may have experienced similar struggles. What were these transplanted populations

experiencing, and what was their relationship to their 'home'? To which culture did they

feel that they belonged, and what steps did they take to make this known?

Here, I refer back to a discussion of the steps England took to develop "new towns"

(Lilley, Lloyd, and Trick 289) on Welsh soil. A quintessentially English culture may have

developed, but not much is known about how the individual felt on transplanted soil, and

what connection they still had with home. This is why we turn to such works as *SGGK* and

Patience, in an effort to better understand what might have been going on when one is

ripped from their home under less than desirable circumstances. What effect does this have

on identity? And how does one connect or reconnect with their home?

How these questions fold into a discussion of identity is important. As an

Englishman, or a Welshman, one knows their sense of belonging. British mythology taught

both the English and the Welsh of their ancestry, and very much affected the production of

a quintessentially English or quintessentially Welsh identity. And the production of identity

is as much a part of diaspora as the sense of belonging it instills in its members. As Johnson

explains, "though [identity] is in constant fluctuation, eventually [it] results in a sense of

belonging to a common identity, and this helps to reaffirm the connection to the diaspora"

(48). Cohen echoes a similar sentiment: "[s]elfhood, the representation of one's own

community and other communities, as well as the difference between the two are, so the

argument runs, negotiated as strange, hitherto unexplored and fluid 'frontlines' and

'borderposts' of identity" (R. Cohen 129). Identity marks diaspora, and diaspora marks

identity; this is a fluid, dependent relationship that constantly calls into question markers of

community, group and individual identity, and what constitutes the boundaries of 'home'.

Hall "designates this process as the evolution of 'cultures of hybridity'," linking

"the development of hybridity" with "the changing character of diasporas" (R. Cohen 131).

Identity is not simply a matter of remembering and representing one's homeland; it is,

according to Hall, a convergence between "homogenization and assimilation" in an

increasingly globalizing world, and "the reassertion of localism" (R. Cohen 131). When the

global questions the local, how does the individual respond? What sorts of 'cultural

hybridity' or 'hybrid identities' are produced as a result of these challenges? These are the

types of questions that the subsequent analyses of *SGGK* and *Patience* seek to explore.

3.3 Hybridity

Amar Acheraïou explains that hybridity "has been a feature of all societies, from the

Sumerians and Egyptians through to the Greeks and Romans down to modern times" (1).

Despite anxiety regarding the hybridization of race that dates back to these ancient

civilizations, Acheraïou argues that "hybridity is usually addressed from a theoretical and

historical perspective that rarely extends beyond the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries"

(1). According to Coombes and Brah, "[i]t was Charles Darwin who first employed [the

term 'hybridity'] in 1837 in his experiments with cross-fertilization in plants" (88). In the

18th century, "biological hybridity" (Coombes and Brah 88) emerged

in the context of interracial contact resulting from overseas conquest and population

displacement in Britain, France, and the United States. Grounded in comparative

anatomy and craniometry, these early speculations on the hybrid were chiefly

concerned with the perceived contamination of White Europeans by the races they

colonized. [This concept] . . . invoked biology to justify ideologies of White racial

superiority and to warn of the danger of interracial breeding described as

"miscegenation" and "amalgamation." (Kraidy "Hybridity in Cultural

Globalization" 319)

At the time, the colonizing self stood in clear and vehement opposition to the Other, and the

product of the potential "miscegenation" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 319) that may have occurred

between the self and the Other was called a 'hybrid'. Although grounded in biological

justifications for white superiority, the term has since gone through many shifts, especially

as colonial projects eventually regressed. Lucile Desblache argues that "[t]he Other,

biologically and socially, is no longer defined in opposition to the self but as a part of the

self that is constantly evolving" (245). As such, original justifications for racial Othering,

and the deep anxiety that originally accompanied the formation of the hybrid, were no

longer valid.

The transformation from racial anxieties to emphasis on "[i]nterdependence

between colonized and colonizers" was a result of "the development of a postcolonial

world in which hybridity was valued as a key agent of cultural, linguistic and political

transformation" (Desblache 246). Given this development, Kraidy argues that we must now

understand 'hybridity' "in a triple context: (a) the development of vocabularies of racial

and cultural mixture from the mid-nineteenth-century onward; (b) the historical basis of

contemporary hybrid identities; and (c) the juncture at which the language of hybridity

entered the study of international communication" (*Hybridity* vii).

Many scholars, including Kraidy, Acheraïou, Desblache, Coombes, and Brah credit Homi Bhabha with having contributed most substantially to this shift in how we understand the term. In the late twentieth century, Bhabha "reclaimed hybridity as a tool which would allow us to articulate diversity, to 'elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the other of our selves'" (Desblache 246). Acheraïou explains,

> Bhabha adopted the term 'hybridity' and divested it of its colonial connotations of ontological and racial degeneration. . . . For most scholars in postcolonial and cultural studies hybridity represents a crucial emancipatory tool releasing the representations of identity as well as culture from the assumptions of purity and supremacy that fuel colonialist, nationalist, and essentialist discourses. (5-6)

Ultimately, Bhabha froze the racial connotations associated with the term and turned them on their head; instead of fearing the hybrid, Bhabha welcomed it as an accurate representation of an identity rich with multicultural influence and racial intermingling.

Although its modern understanding is clear, today, 'hybridity' is "one of the most widely used and criticized concepts in postcolonial theory" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 316). Many arguments have come forth opposing the widespread usage of 'hybridity' in the modern context. Some argue that "because of its pervasiveness, hybridity is theoretically useless. . . . Since all culture is always hybrid, this argument goes, then hybridity is conceptually disposable" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 322). Other objections to its application include its political suspiciousness, as "it allegedly lends legitimacy to a corporate rhetoric that frames cultural mixture as a market to be taken by capital" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 323), that "hybridity is seen as a strategy of cooptation used by the power holders to neutralize difference" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 323), and that hybridity "assumes a symbiotic relationship

without paying adequate attention to economic, political, and social inequalities" (Coombes and Brah 1). As such, "[h]ybridity becomes a floating signifier ripe for appropriation, precisely because we use the concept without rigorous theoretical grounding" (Kraidy, "Hybridity" 323).

Despite these ongoing debates, hybridity's importance, especially pertaining to how it is recognized in postcolonial literature, is nonetheless significant. Hybridity seeks to identify those spaces "'in-between the designations of identity'" (Bhabha qtd. in Easthope: 145). In pinpointing these spaces, "'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha qtd. in Easthope: 145). Ultimately, hybridity should here be understood "as the sign of the productive emergence of new cultural forms which have derived from apparently mutual 'borrowings', exchanges and intersections across ethnic boundaries" (Coombes and Brah 9). Searching for these cultural exchanges in the medieval context should be just as much of a priority as is doing so in the modern context. Coombes and Brah argue

> that the earliest history of travel, exploration and colonialism has always entailed
> various kinds of serendipitous, mutual, strategic and subversive cross-cultural
> borrowings and more transgressive masquerades. Such exchanges or inversions
> should not be seen as solely contemporary phenomenon. (10)

If cultural exchange has always been a part of exploration and colonization, then what can hybridity teach us about medieval cultural intermingling? In what ways do the intersections between colonizer and colonized in *SGGK* and *Patience* produce a "cultural hybridity" (Bhabha qtd. in Easthope: 145)? Is hierarchy imposed, or do these cultural intersections disregard hierarchy? And most importantly, what does hybridity help to identify about

medieval colonization? Can we view Gawain and/or Jonah as exemplary of a cultural

hybrid? Do their interactions with the Other contribute to their identity, and in what ways?

These are the types of questions that the subsequent chapters seek to explore.

3.4 Mimicry and Ambivalence

Mori Ram describes mimicry "as an act that reveals the inherent contradictions

embedded in the effort to shape subjects according to political and cultural norms" (736).

The colonized subject is to desire to become a replication of their colonizer, "to adopt

settlers' customs and norms" while simultaneously recognizing that they can never quite

"fully emulate [the] settler" (Ram 736). Satoshi Mizutani further explains, "the effect of

mimicry can be taken as destabilizing the white subject as the transcendental author of

colonial discourse" (35-36). And Bhabha himself describes mimicry as "the sign of a

double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which

'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (122).

Through mimicry, the colonized subject is motivated to replicate the identity of

their colonizer, while at the same time recognizing that their efforts will always fail, always

fall short. The concept "tends to allude to a particular state of mind, the outcome, perhaps,

of an internal conflict between one's desire to identify with the dominant group and

inherent inability to become a part of it, or else triggered by an anxiety of being exposed as

an excluded minority while trying to pass as a member of a hegemonic society" (Ram 736).

The colonizer desires to see a "reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference

that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 122). What this produces, Bhabha says, "is

a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of

mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but

becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial'

presence" (123). This "partial presence" yields its "*double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Bhabha 126).

Bhabha argues that there is something unique about the colonial relationship—that in seeking to colonize the Other, an interesting doubled, hybrid identity, or dichotomous representation of both colonizer and colonized emerges (127). This double-edged sword, so to speak, offers a view of the colonial relationship that lies somewhere between "mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (Bhabha 127). That is, the mission is to replicate the colonizing subject, to encourage the other to modernize their identity, language, cultural practices, beliefs, technology, economics, and ideology, and transform it into the colonizer's. "The excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse," Bhabha explains, "but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence" (127). The discourse produced as a result of the "ambivalence of mimicry" thus disrupts complete replication, causing this fractured, "'partial' presence" (Bhabha 127).

The other becomes a mere figment of the colonial imagination, in a sense. The further one sets out to mimic the colonizer, the further away one gets from his or her own notion of selfhood. But to negotiate between these two senses of selfhood is a complication that is always rendered unsolvable. Bhabha explains,

> the black man stops being an actional person for only the white man can represent his self-esteem. Mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its make. . . . The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double-vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial

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subject. (129).

The Other appears to exist in mere partial reflections of his colonizer, constantly negotiating between the colonizer's pull forward, and his own sense of identity holding him to his traditions.

In searching for mimicry within a text, Bhabha encourages the reader to search for what he calls "metonymies of presence" (128). These are "inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse," that include such characteristics as "[t]he difference between being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; [and] the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications . . ." (Bhabha 128). These metonymic distinctions between colonizer and colonized function to challenge the colonial discourse precisely because the act of mimicry itself always fails. One can never be fully English, only Anglicized. One can never fully become white, nor can their offspring, they can only emulate 'whiteness'.

In searching for evidence of mimicry within the text, one must thus examine the way that colonial discourse functions, and is imparted on, the colonized Other. The ways in which the Other responds to this discourse—via both emulation and recognition that they can never fully become the colonizer—and the identity struggles that abound as a result, all help to illuminate mimicry in literature. In what ways do Gawain and Jonah act as representations of the dominant discourse? Can they simultaneously represent the colonizer and the colonized Other? In what ways do the respective Others of each text represent mimicry, and how do their actions and perspectives push against the dominant discourse? The subsequent chapters seek to explore the ways in which mimicry functions in *SGGK* and *Patience*, to ultimately show that colonial identity and its opposing Other, and the ways

in which the Other's identity is formed and reformed via mimicry, were very much present in the medieval period.

Inextricably linked to 'mimicry' is Bhabha's concurrent concept of 'ambivalence'. Where 'mimicry' names the process of near, but never full, replication, 'ambivalence' names the space between the dominant colonial discourse and these attempts at replication. 'Ambivalence' represents the perspective that constantly challenges the completeness of the dominant colonial discourse. As such, "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha 153).

More specifically, Bhabha discusses the ambivalence of colonial authority—that which simultaneously dictates and at the same time resists. "Resistance," Bhabha explains, "is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of another culture, as a difference once perceived" (157-158). Instead, Bhabha explains "[i]t is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power – hierarchy, normalization, marginalization and so forth" (158).

In the introduction to *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha does describe the transformation of identity based on modern history: "[t]he move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world" (2). I recognize that Bhabha's discussion is produced out of modernity, and that thoughts of the past likely played little to no part in the formation of his discussion.

Nevertheless, there are "subject positions" (Bhabha 2) in the premodern world that also affect one's claim to individual identity, and their ability to challenge the dominant colonial discourse. For that reason, I would argue that 'ambivalence' and 'mimicry', although modern concepts, are thus applicable to premodern texts such as *SGGK* and *Patience*, because of what they can help to clarify about colonial discourse and the colonized identity. Not only was colonial discourse a dominant presence in medieval English works such as *SGGK* and *Patience*, but Bhabha's 'ambivalence' also assists with the recognition of colonial perspectives that adhere neither fully to the colonizer nor fully to the colonized Other.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

In "Postcolonialism and the Study of the Middle Ages," Altschul explores such questions as "[w]hy should medievalists explore contemporary instead of strictly medieval issues?" and "why should the tools of contemporary theories be applicable to medieval societies and times?" (589). As Ingham and Warren have attested in *Postcolonial Moves*, there is something to be learned from the application of contemporary theory to medieval societies and literatures. And thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Welsh history is a useful background for demonstrating what one might learn from this theoretical application.

As Edward I's conquest of Wales was solidified, the conflict between settler and native became increasingly prominent. Disagreements over who had claims to what, which ideologies, values, and cultural practices were considered legitimate and superior, and what made up one's national identity, especially in the wake of national crises—the ways in which individuals, both settler and native, responded to these challenges made up the medieval postcolonial identity.

As Altschul aptly points out, "[t]he historical specificity of the spheres on which

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postcolonial criticism was devised need not be allowed to define postcolonialism as a field

of inquiry" (590). And furthermore, "postcolonialism as a field of inquiry is a critical

engagement with the myriad of cultures produced in the multileveled contacts between

colonizers and colonized; with the transactions, contradictions, collaborations, and

resistances that exist from all sides of the colonial encounter" (Altschul 590). So, the

combination of careful examination of Welsh history, and a thorough analysis of *SGGK*

and *Patience*, together can reveal an entirely new perspective on medieval culture and texts,

one that illuminates previously overlooked or under-analyzed responses to medieval

colonial endeavours.

Ultimately, it is a position taken up by scholars such as Loomba that serves to

justify what will occur in the subsequent analyses:

> Some contemporary critics have suggested that post-colonialism is more than a body
>
> of texts produced within post-colonial studies, and that it is best conceived of as a
>
> reading practice. They argue that the post-coloniality of a text resides in its discursive
>
> features, and that modes of representation such as allegory or irony are transformed
>
> as a practice by the development of a post-colonial discourse within which they
>
> construct counter-discursive rather than homologous views of the world. (193)

Out of the theories that emerged from the postcolonial human experience, a reading

practice developed. And it is this reading practice that ultimately allows for a convergence

between the medieval and the postcolonial. Rather than reappropriating human experience,

or engaging in anachronistic impositions on periods that predate the experiences

themselves, a postcolonial reading practice allows for the awakening of new perspectives

that had not previously been considered, while simultaneously acknowledging and

respecting the difficult human experiences that produced the very possibility of such a

reading practice.

More specifically, this postcolonial reading practice in particular directly connects the theories of diaspora, hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence to the colonial relationship between England and Wales as it developed between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Through the voice of the *Gawain*-poet, a new postcolonial perspective is illuminated. This perspective is an ambivalent one, and as the subsequent chapters uncover, the *Gawain*-poet appears to grapple with English colonization in ways not previously considered before by scholars. It is only through this combination of history and theory—establishing the English-Welsh landscape in the late fourteenth century as a colonial one, recognizing that postcolonial theoretical platforms developed in the modern are just as relevant and applicable in the contemporary—that this reading practice is solidified.

Chapter 4, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," features the employment of this reading practice onto *SGGK*. Several scholars have already taken up this particular text as a postcolonial one, and so I will first explore the ways that scholars such as Ingham and Arner have incorporated the postcolonial into their own readings of *SGGK*. These analyses have helped to shape my own reading of the poem, and I will subsequently offer a another from which to consider the poem, one which focuses on the *Gawain*-poet's struggle to maintain a single subject position on multiple levels within the text (character, narrator, author, and the text iself).

Chapter 5, "*Patience*," will also engage with *Patience* from this postcolonial perspective, offering a new, and yet untouched, angle of criticism for the poem. Traditionally considered for its biblical frame, *Patience* bears no blatant connections to the English-Welsh colonial relationship the way that *SGGK* does. However, many of the colonial elements found in *SGGK* are mirrored in *Patience*. Thus, my analysis of this poem

will investigate human relationships, individual identity production, maintenance, and restoration, the text's implicit perspectives on England's colonizing projects in Wales, how these projects were received by both colonizer and colonized in the Middle Ages, and how one might consider the *Gawain*-poet's perspective as one of multiple subject positions, rather than strict adherence to, the very familiar biblical story of Jonah.

Chapter 4: "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*"

Before delving into Gawain's story, the *Gawain*-poet opens *SGGK* with an introduction that immediately invokes the concept of 'empire'. The *Gawain*-poet introduces readers first to Troy and its founder "Ennias" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 5), and subsequently lists other famous colonists, such as Romulus and Brutus, and the colonies they founded:

> Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
>
> With gret bobbaunce þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst
>
> And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
>
> Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
>
> Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes,
>
> And fer ouer þe French flod, Felix Brutus
>
> On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settes[.] (*SGGK* 8-14)

Randy P. Schiff explains, "[a]lthough founder figures such as Aeneas and Brutus are fictional, their status as originary Trojans was believed in, and hence reproduced by, the storytellers and chroniclers who profoundly shaped subsequent *ethnies*" (82) . *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* thus reminded contemporary readers of the British mythology that had bolstered their national spirit and strengthened the power of their empire.

The opening stanza of *SGGK* thus serves as more than "merely a conventional historical frame" (Schiff 85). Instead, it opens up the possibility for reading *SGGK* as a reflection on empire, and this is exactly what scholars such as Ingham and Arner do, as both examine *SGGK* for its references to the colonial relationship between England and Wales in the late fourteenth century, and what Su Fang Ng and Kenneth Hodges do, as they examine "possible non-European contexts for the poem" (257).

Colonial investigations in *SGGK* are not new, and each scholar brings a unique perspective to the ways that empire and colonization are articulated in the poem. My intention, in this chapter, is to first discuss these scholars' contributions before delving into my own postcolonial analysis of *SGGK*, using the theories described in Chapter 3. I will argue that Gawain's journey provides evidence of the building of diasporas and the challenging of identities, and that the ambivalence of Gawain's perspective lends to a reading of *SGGK* using Bhabha's theories of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. Ultimately, this chapter sets out to explore current trends in colonial analyses of *SGGK*, elaborate on how these modern theories can function in a medieval context, and concludes by offering a new postcolonial reading of the poem.

4.1 Previous Scholarship

In 2001, Ingham wrote, "postcolonial studies shares with medieval studies a poignant concern for things fading away, and a desire to respond to loss" (69). At that time, the medieval-postcolonial convergence was only just beginning to take shape. Ingham's important article, "'In Contrayez Straunge': Colonial Relations, British Identity, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," which originally prompted this investigation into a postcolonial reading of *SGGK*, acknowledges some of the problems associated with the application of postcolonial theory, (much of which is addressed in this thesis's introduction) and then moves into a discussion of such prominent colonial features as conflict on the English-Welsh borderland in North Wales, the history of English colonization in Wales, and Homi Bhabha's theories of 'ambivalence' and 'mimicry' in the context of the Green Knight. In the Green Knight, Ingham explains, "we see the exotic other from the western reaches of the isle whose rule and power rival Arthur's; we also see an image of chivalric aping, a display of sovereign trappings almost right but not quite"

(81). The bulk of Ingham's analysis of *SGGK* falls into the category of "disappearing difference" (83), most specifically in the form of colonial distinctions that begin to fade as differences of gender are increasingly illuminated:

> Gawain is neither surer nor safer in what appears as the comparatively familiar location of Bertilak and his courtly surroundings. And the astute devotion of the Pentangle Knight will be tested most powerfully not in the wild exterior space of the Welsh 'contrayez straunge', but in the intimacy of domestic interiors at the castle of a regional lord. (Ingham 84)

It is Lady Bertilak who challenges Gawain most successfully, Ingham argues (87); Gawain is challenged to uphold the reputation of his Arthurian lineage not through battles with barbaric Welsh border-peoples, but with a delicate yet persuasive Lady Bertilak.

Layered on top of this is the fact that Morgan le Fay is revealed as the ultimate mastermind behind the Green Knight's impudent challenge, and that Lady Bertilak too is a pawn in Morgan's overall scheme. Ingham explains,

> the poem's interest in ethnic others converges upon its representations of the 'otherness' of gender and upon its concern for Gawain's virtue. Indeed, what promises early on to be Gawain's test before a marvelous challenger turns into his test before a beautiful lady. And the virility of the Green Man finally comes to appear as a power managed by a jealous female. The Green Knight's otherness disappears when the gendered otherness of Morgan le Fey comes into view. (85)

The way that British colonialism functions in *SGGK* thus transforms itself from a very obvious distinction between English and Welsh via the Green Knight's entrance into Arthur's court, and Gawain's journey into the unforgiving Welsh borderland, to a difference of gender, in which Lady Bertilak serves as a pawn in Morgan le Fay's grand

scheme.

Contrary to Ingham's conception of colonial transformation in *SGGK*, Arner argues that elements of colonial difference are present throughout the entirety of the poem; differences of gender do nothing more than further illuminate these distinctions. Arner thus analyses *SGGK* from the perspective that it includes obvious references to English-Welsh colonial conflict in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (81-83), and that it features "fierce foes" or "semi-humans" in northern Wales that indicate "that inhabitants of the frontier are close to beasts, so close that the boundary between where the human ends and the animal begins is not entirely clear" (84).

Moreover, where Ingham describes the uncovering of Morgan le Fay as an element of gender differences acting on the part of colonial distinctions, Arner argues that Morgan's placement in the text further supports the idea that the Welsh population is barbaric and less intelligent. "Morgan," Arner explains, "is traditionally a hybrid figure, connected both with Arthur's court and with the Celtic, pagan fringes; but in *SGGK*, Morgan is ineluctably on the side of the natives" (90). She effectively "betray[s] her Arthurian kin" to remain with these "natives," and "[a]s Arthur's half-sister, Morgan's decision to align with border-dwellers undermines English claims that their ways are inherently better than those of the Welsh" (Arner 90). Although Morgan strives to undermine English superiority as best she can, she does so without explicit evidence as to why (Arner 90). "By explicitly assigning Morgan's weak rationales (weak largely because there is no further elaboration of these explanations and because the text does not provide narrative justifications for Morgan's position)," Arner argues that the poem "implies that unwarranted spitefulness motivates the sorceress" (91). "Border-dwellers," she explains, "lack substantive, convincing motivations for disliking the English and are not motivated by reason or justice but are propelled

primarily by peevishness" (Arner 91).

On the topic of gender, Arner argues that it is not so much a transformation of colonial power that puts gender at the forefront of discussions of *SGGK*, but that gender merely "camouflages the real relations of power in late fourteenth-century Britain" (93). That is, it is out of a Welsh desire to "humiliate" the English that Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fay play roles in this poem; "the English are not the aggressors, but the obvious victims in English-Welsh relations" (Arner 93). Despite their obvious differences, Ingham and Arner set the stage for a number of interesting conversations about the colonialism in *SGGK*.

From an entirely different perspective, Ng and Hodges take up colonization in *SGGK* from a non-European standpoint (257). They acknowledge that most scholars have focused on Northern Europe as the source for colonial contention with England, but that engaging "with the east and with Islam" should also be considered (Ng and Hodges 258). They explain,

> [a]s postcolonial readings have begun to suggest, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is
> a border poem. But the borders are not simply between Wales and England: Cheshire
> was affected by borders between England and Europe, Christendom and Dar al-Islam.
> The possible link between al-Khidr and the Green Knight (even if inconclusive, given
> the elusiveness of the author and his poem) allows the poem to explore these
> boundaries and show how the chivalry of the young King Arthur and his court is
> profoundly shaped by an encounter that goes beyond his kingdom and even beyond
> Christendom. (Ng and Hodges 260)

Ng and Hodges use the Order of the Garter to link *SGGK* with Islam (261), and the patron of the Garter, Saint George, whose popularity was on the rise in the early fourteenth

century (267). Because of "George-mania" (Ng and Hodges 268), under the desire and instruction of Richard II, the English went "[l]ooking for relics of George in the Levant and the Iberian Peninsula," which ultimately would have brought about

> English and European contact with eastern traditions of Saint George, both Orthodox
> and Islamic, and with them stories of al-Khidr. While *Sir Gawain and the Green*
> *Knight* is much more than a topical poem, it may have coalesced in an environment
> where tales of Saint George's head, the Order of the Garter, and al-Khidr, Saint
> George's green avatar, were all circulating. (Ng and Hodges 268)

From here, Ng and Hodges point to evidence within the text that supports this English-Islamic interaction: "[i]f the Green Knight's intrusion into Arthur's court and the violence of the beheading game shadow the heady fear and exhilaration of crusade, Sir Gawain's stay in Bertilak's court represents the temptations of more peaceful coexistence" (274). Ultimately, their argument is grounded in the uniqueness of the Green Knight's character, and that the *Gawain*-poet would have been familiar with the figure of al-Khidr as a point of reference for the creation of this mythical green man (Ng and Hodges 292).

While acknowledging Ng and Hodges important contribution, and recognizing that Ingham and Arner have argued for a postcolonial reading of *SGGK* that considers the English-Welsh relationship in the late fourteenth century, this chapter seeks to further explore the ways in which colonialism functions in this poem, specifically using the theoretical platforms outlined in Chapter 3. As was articulated there, identity is not simply a matter of remembering and representing one's homeland and culture; it is, according to Hall, a convergence between "homogenization and assimilation" and "the reassertion of localism" (R. Cohen 131). While Hall's discussion incorporates a modern vocabulary— invoking thoughts of globalization, for example, the main principle of his concern remains

nonetheless significant to medieval postcolonial study. Gawain struggles deeply with this convergence of homogenization and assimilation with localism, resulting in what could arguably be called a hybrid identity—one that adheres both to his Arthurian roots, and to the challenges he faces as he journeys further away from those roots.

As *SGGK* progresses, readers see Gawain struggle with what he has been known to represent—a remarkable member of Arthur's court known for his exceptional knightly decorum. As Gawain moves from the space of Camelot to the unfamiliar territory of North Wales, and into Bertilak's castle, one can see how Gawain's identity is challenged, diminished, and arguably reclaimed. When homogenization and assimilation to the dominant discourse is troubled or questioned by the locales Gawain finds himself within, how does he respond? When Gawain's reputation precedes him, and the environments in which he finds himself directly challenge this reputation, how does his identity shift? What sorts of 'cultural hybridity' or 'hybrid identities' are produced as a result of these challenges? How can Hall's concept of 'diaspora' function to draw out Gawain's hybrid identity? To whom and what does Gawain belong, and how does he continue to search for and identify with remnants of home, even while abroad?

An exploration of Gawain's hybrid identity ultimately leads to a discussion of Bhabha's concepts of 'hybridity', 'mimicry', and 'ambivalence'—concepts first applied to *SGGK* by Ingham in 2001. One must first look to the colonized Other in *SGGK* in order to understand the parameters of this poem's ambivalent perspective. In what ways does the *Gawain*-poet articulate Camelot as different from the aggressive North Wales, and from Hautdesert? Bhabha explains that "[t]he exercise of colonialist authority . . . requires the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent

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mark of power" (158). Considering the historical relationship between England and Wales, how is the colonialist message of difference and superiority articulated in *SGGK*? And what are the ways in which the *Gawain*-poet unsettles this dominant colonial discourse?

One can look to Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' or 'hybridization' to better understand the way that *SGGK* functions as an ambivalent, or hybrid, text. A noticeable switch occurs when Gawain exits Camelot, and enters the foreign Welsh landscape. The terrain is rugged, the beasts savage, the weather unforgiving. Yet once Gawain reaches Bertilak's castle, the foreignness of the landscape is replaced with the familiarities of home. Gawain's journey through the vicious North Wales is important to what Bhabha says about ambivalence and hybridization. Gawain's relationship to Camelot categorizes him as representative of the dominant colonizing force, whereas on foreign soil, the roles are suddenly reversed, and Gawain is up against a fiercely dominant landscape that is impossible to adapt to. The *Gawain*-poet is here doing exactly what Bhabha refers to in his definition of hybridization: unsettling the colonial power, but also subverting that power in order to "turn the gaze of the discriminated back on the eye of power" (112). The Green Knight does this effectively when he enters Arthur's court, both praising it, but also folding its superiority back in on itself by exerting his own dominance. Furthermore, Gawain represents this shifting perspective by occupying both roles: superior in one landscape, and inferior in another. The reversal of roles in *SGGK* is the "contemplat[ion] [of] its discriminated subjects" (Bhabha 112). Suddenly the power England, or Camelot, exerted on bordering Wales has now been turned on Gawain, and the *Gawain*-poet takes the time to elaborate on the effect it has on Gawain's knightly self-assurance.

4.2 Diaspora

As is widely known, Sir Gawain is not a character originally created by the *Gawain*-

poet. His reputation in the larger genre of Arthurian literature was relatively consistent. Known for his chivalry and his inability to resist the ladies (Petrović 129), Gawain is a "cosyn" (*SGGK* 372) to Arthur and demonstrates an admirable level of devotion to his king. After the Green Knight has interrupted the Christmas feast at Camelot, and proposed the "Crystemas gomen" (*SGGK* 283), Gawain volunteers to participate, but not before uttering a speech that articulates his utmost devotion to, and worship of, his King Arthur:

> I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest,
>
> And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe.
>
> Bot for as much as ȝe ar myn em I am only to prayse;
>
> No bounté but your blod I in my bode knowe.
>
> And syþen þis note is so nys þat noȝt hit yow falls,
>
> And I haue frayned hit at yow fyrst, foldez hit to me. (*SGGK* 354-359)

Here, Gawain positions himself in complete opposition to Arthur. He is the weakest, the feeblest, and exclaims that his moral goodness is as a direct result of his blood relation to Arthur. Because of this, he offers to replace Arthur in the game, and take up the Green Knight's proposition himself (*SGGK* 365). With a seemingly strong hold on his identity, Gawain here represents the ultimate courtly knight: his focus is on decorum and devotion to his king, and he shows not fear in the face of a foreign intruder, but bravery, as a knight should. Gawain's identity here appears fully intact.

Although he follows through on the terms of the game, once Gawain leaves Arthur's court, he immediately begins to upset traditional knightly expectation. Even at his departure, the courtiers at Camelot criticize Arthur "for his encouragement of the beheading bargain and for his acceptance of Gawain's obligation to keep his word" (Andrew and Waldron, *"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* 233):

Bi Kryst, hit is scaþe

Þat þou, leude, schal be lost, þat art of lyf noble!

To fynde hys fere vpon folde, in faith, is not eþe.

Warloker to haf wroȝt had more wyt bene

And haf dyȝt ȝonder dere a duk to haue worþed.

And so had better haf ben þen britned to noȝt,

Hadet wyth an aluisch mon, for angardez pryde.

Who knew euer any kyng such cousel to take

As knyȝtez in cauelaciounz on Crystmasse gomnez? (*SGGK* 674-683)

Providing a "detached view of the ideals of chivalry" (Andrew and Waldron, "Sir Gawain" 233), it is not only Gawain who questions the quest he's embarking on; his courtiers also show concern for Gawain, and claim Arthur's decision to let Gawain follow through with the terms of the game was a prideful one. This passage thus immediately evokes the sense that Gawain does not have complete faith in his king's decision-making abilities, and that when the repercussions of these poor decisions fall onto the king's subjects, one cannot be expected to maintain the utmost faith and devotion.

Voicu posits that "national identity in a national culture can never achieve the unified homogeneity it wishes for itself" (169). That is, despite developing and encouraging a national rhetoric and upholding a set of expectations for what one's national identity should look like, "we have to admit that there can be no escape from identity; and further, that all identity defines itself precisely by establishing an inside (*in-hereness*) and an outside (*out-hereness*) so that all identity to a degree practices insider*ism* together with an exclusionary force" (Voicu 169). Gawain's identity is divided between the "*in-hereness*" (Voicu 169) that places him as an Englishman, a citizen of Camelot, a member of the Round Table, and

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a wholly devoted subject of King Arthur, and the "*out-hereness*" (Voicu 169) that sees him challenge these institutions and representations of self because he is human, is fearful, and is perturbed about the situation he has found himself in. This dichotomous representation of Gawain's identity continues to solidify itself as *SGGK* progresses.

Although one can here see the beginnings of the combining of homogeneity and assimilation with localism, as Hall posits (R. Cohen 131), it is not until Gawain crosses through the English-Welsh border that one can really see this dichotomy form. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss the parameters of diaspora without acknowledging the impact that defined borders have on this concept (Brah 177). Arner explains,

> When Gawain leaves Arthur's castle, the knight first passes through Logres,
> indicating that Arthur's abode is situated in England, south of the Humber. Only
> after traveling extensively, a foray that includes traversing northern Wales, does
> Gawain discover Bertilak's castle, signifying that Arthur's English court and that of
> his rival are a great distance apart geographically and symbolically. (83)

The line between Camelot and Bertilak's realm, Hautdesert, is clearly drawn geographically. But more than this, the division is a colonial one as well, in which aspects of difference are illuminated and emphasized as Gawain enters the foreign North Wales that separates Camelot from Hautdesert.

Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamor explain that "[b]eing far from home is a rupture," and that "[b]eing far from one's native land and feeling nostalgic for it are ancient themes . . . found among poets and writers and are widely shared by those who have left to go abroad" (80). We see Gawain experiencing this rupture the further that he travels. He moves through "þe ryalme of Logres" (*SGGK* 691) or "Arthur's Britain" (Andrew and Waldron, "Sir Gawain" 233), into "Norþe Walez" (*SGGK* 697), until he reaches "Wyrale,"

where "[w]onde . . . bot lyte / Þat auþer God oþer gome wyth goud hert louied" (*SGGK* 701-702). Andrew and Waldron explain that "[t]he forest of Wirral was a notorious refuge for outlaws in the 14th c[entury]" ("Sir Gawain" 234). Gillian Rudd posits, "the Wirral and Wales are inevitably places of lawlessness and danger and, being wildernesses, are inhabited by godless men" (55). Yet the *Gawain*-poet does not mention a single confrontational interaction between Gawain and these forest-dwelling criminals. Instead, Gawain is brought against savage landscapes and foreign monsters—a feature of the poem that Arner argues is a well-calculated attempt to represent the Welsh as violent, inhuman creatures, rather than human beings: the "litany of adversaries indicates that the land is teeming with savage beasts. The hero does not engage with knightly contests with other men, for there are none in sight" (84-85).

"Appropriately," Arner explains, "when Gawain enters Wales and the frontier, he enters what is coded as otherworldly or radically alien, a wondrous and strange territory, a place of magic and marvels" (83). Furthermore, she argues that the Welsh are not only "*not* the progeny of Arthur and his court, but the inhabitants of Wales and the frontier are positioned as the foes of Gawain and, by extension, as enemies of Arthur's kingdom" (Arner 84). Gawain is thus representative of England, and stands in direct opposition to the creatures he encounters and the aggressive landscapes he endures as he searches for the Green Chapel.

Gawain rides "[f]er floten fro his frendez," far removed from the comforts and familiarity of home (*SGGK* 714). His encounters are numerous and strange, as Arner has expressed:

Sumwhyle wyth wormez he werrez, and with wolues als,

Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, þat woned in þe knarrez,

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Boþe wyth bullez and berez, and borez oþer-quyle,

And etaynez, þat hym a-nelede, of þe heȝe felle;

Nade he ben duȝty and dryȝe, and dryȝtyn, had serued,

Douteles he hade ben ded, and dreped ful ofte. (*SGGK* 720-725)

The landscape is violent; the creatures are terrifying; the weather is merciless; and the place looks and feels nothing like home.

More than this, Gawain's experience in this rugged terrain gives readers a glimpse of the true human experience, rather than simply perpetuating the brave and impenetrable reputation of a Camelot knight. Rudd argues, "[i]t is almost as if at the moment Gawain reaches the banks and enters the Wirral he must be reminded, or possibly remind himself, of the correct attitude a worthy knight should take to all he finds in this kind of terrain" (56). While encountering these foreign creatures that threaten his very livelihood, Gawain's spirit is increasingly diminished by the unforgiving weather and the miserable Welsh landscape:

For werre wrathed hym not so much þat wynter nas wors,

When þe colde cler water fro þe cloudez schadde

And fres er hit falle myȝt to þe fale erþe.

Ner slan wyth þe slete he sleped in his yrnes

Mo nyȝtez þen innoghe, in naked rokkez

Þeras claterande fro þe crest þe colde borne rennez

And henged heȝe ouer his hede in hard iisseikkles.

Þus in peryl and payne and plytes ful harde

Bi contray caryez þis knyȝt tyl Krystmasse Euen,

Alone. (*SGGK* 726-735)

The characteristics that are meant to define a knight are here trumped by the intensity of the human experience. Gawain is isolated; he knows no one, and is entirely alone on his quest. His vulnerability is evident—he is in peril and in pain (*SGGK* 724)—and the overwhelming power of the cold literally hangs over him in icicle form (*SGGK* 731-732). How can Gawain keep his connection with Camelot, and maintain his reputation as a brave impenetrable knight, when he is being challenged so deeply at the most fundamental level of human life? Is it not in this particular place that one's true identity comes to the surface? The elements of the foreign landscape work against him here, and the tough exterior that a knight is supposed to maintain is forgotten. The bravery typically associated with an Arthurian knight is entirely lost; Gawain's connection with home has been challenged, and misery amasses the further he rides.

According to Hall, "the closed conception of diaspora rests on a binary conception of difference. It is founded on the construction of an exclusionary frontier and depends on the construction of an 'Other' and fixed opposition between inside and outside" (548). This explains Gawain's reaction to his surroundings. Opposition exists between the inside, Camelot, and the outside—Wales, Hautdesert, the Green Chapel. And, if Gawain stands for the dominant colonial discourse, then the Green Knight functions as the Other. Once Gawain transfers from English to Welsh territory in search of the Green Chapel, the opposition between inside and outside is illuminated by his struggles to maintain his composure and knightly spirit while being hammered by bad weather and monstrous creatures.

Relief from Gawain's seemingly endless suffering appears in the form of Bertilak's castle. Evolving from violent to solacing, the landscape transforms from one of complete unfamiliarity in Wales, to a space of warm welcome in Hautdesert, and a return to what

Gawain is most familiar with. As Gawain approaches Bertilak's castle, the *Gawain*-poet

describes it in detail:

A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyt aȝte,

Pyched on a prayere, a park al aboute,

With a pyked palays, pyned ful þik,

Þat vmbe-teȝe mony tre mo þen two myle.

Þat holde on þat on syde þe haþel auysed,

As hit schemered and schon þurȝ þe schyre okez;

Þenne hatz he hendly of his helme, and heȝly he þonkez

Jesus and saynt Gilyan, þat gentyle ar boþe,

Þat cortaysly hade hym kydde, and his cry herkened. (*SGGK* 767-775)

The castle is couched in trees, safeguarded by a moat, literally protected from the harsh

elements that have affected Gawain so deeply. Suddenly, Gawain finds himself back within

the comforts of quasi-home, and his identity immediately begins to reestablish itself.

Many details from inside Bertilak's castle remind Gawain of home: luxurious

bedding (*SGGK* 853); curtains of silk with gold trimmings (*SGGK* 854);

And couertorez ful curious, with comlych panez,

Of bryȝt blaunnier a-boue enbrawded bisydez,

Rudelez rennande on ropez, red golde ryngez,

Tapytez tyȝt to þe woȝe, of tuly and tars,

And vnder fete, on þe flet, of folande sute. (*SGGK* 855-860)

While readers are not provided with many details about the interior of Arthur's castle in

Camelot, it can be assumed that the features of Bertilak's castle articulated here reflect the

comforts of home, and that this is why Gawain is able to feel so relaxed in Bertilak's castle.

This return to a space of familiarity is compounded by reminders from Bertilak's courtiers that Gawain is well known for is courteousness. They ask that Gawain "teccheles termes of talking noble" (*SGGK* 917) so that they may "lerne of luf-talking" (*SGGK* 927), and credit God for Gawain's arrival at Hautdesert (*SGGK* 920-921). The reputation of decorum that is associated with an Arthurian knight, and specifically, in Gawain's case, his ability to speak with flawless courtesy, follows him wherever he goes. Voicu explains that "[t]he way somebody is identified and categorized – by others and by him/herself – does influence his/her identity" (162). Gawain's engagement with Bertilak's knights immediately reinscribes who he is and what he is identified with in Camelot. As this evening comes to a close, Gawain retreats "ful gay" (*SGGK* 935), his energy and spirit seemingly restored. Stock explains that

> "[i]n the study of diasporic groups, the notion of home is referred to and employed in diverging, sometimes contradictory ways. Two rather common areas of enquiry concern the relationship of . . . migrants to an 'originary homeland', and questions of 'feeling at home'. . . . The second might trace the desires and the (im)possibilities of making oneself at home – in the different spaces diasporic subjects inhabit, but mainly in the current place of residence. (25)

Gawain's identity, one might argue, is thus entirely reliant upon consistent reminders of what he represents, how he is treated and respected at home, and the visual and aesthetic details that remind him of being in Camelot. When these reminders of the home he left behind are removed, his identity is evidently fractured.

For that reason, Gawain's identity presents itself as a direct example of the coming together of the homogeneity and assimilation of colonial discourse with the localism that Hall speaks of (R. Cohen 131). Gawain experiences many shifts in identity as *SGGK*

progresses: he is "a perfect knight subverted to evil; the blameless victim of a scheming woman; a fallible human being prone to evil; and, finally, . . . a knight who has been tarnished by his dealings with the world" (Hollis 271). Camelot is representative of the dominant colonizing force; there, Gawain knows his role as a cousin of King Arthur, as a Knight of the Round Table, as a member of the elite. This feeling of belonging is arguably reinscribed in Hautdesert, as reminders of home and his status as a courteous knight reconnect him with Camelot.

The homogeneity of his identity is first identified in Camelot, where he has a specific role to play under the larger direction of King Arthur and the dominant nationalistic and colonial discourse articulated from this central locus, and then again when it is reinscribed within the walls of Bertilak's castle. The localism of Wales, of the creatures Gawain encounters and the unforgiving elements he endures, challenges the homogeneity of this larger identity, and calls into question Gawain's ability to adhere to it. Assimilation and localism are thus polarized within Gawain, culminating with a hybrid identity that both adheres to, and challenges, the dominant discourse.

One can see this polarization at work most effectively when the homogeneity and assimilation come together with the local as one entity in Gawain's dealings with Lady Bertilak. The knights in Bertilak's castle have, as was previously mentioned, reminded Gawain of his homogenous position as a representative of the dominant colonial discourse; Lady Bertilak becomes a representative of the local, and directly challenges this dominant discourse by trying to tempt Gawain into bed with her. By first recalling Gawain's flawless reputation—

Sir Wowen ȝe are,

Þat alle þe worlde worchipez; quereso ȝe ride,

> Your honour, your hendelayk is hendely praysed
>
> With lordez, wyth ladyes, with alle þat lyf bere (*SGGK* 1226-1229)—

Lady Bertilak effectively reminds Gawain of his role and reputation on Camelot soil. This, compounded with the general reminders of Camelot that Hautdesert offers to Gawain, effectively marks Gawain as representative of what Stock refers to as migrants who relate to an "originary homeland" (25). However, Lady Bertilak follows her reminder with the ultimate temptation:

> Ȝe ar welcum to my cors,
>
> Yowre awen won to wale,
>
> Me behouez of fyne force
>
> Your seruaunt be, and schale. (*SGGK* 1237-1240)

This offer represents the second area of diasporic enquiry that Stock refers to: it is now an "(im)possibilit[y]" (25) that Gawain can ever fully replicate his homeland in Hautdesert. Morgan explains, "[t]he very cleverness of the lady is in its turn designed to obscure the moral reality of a situation in which she has invaded the privacy of the bedroom and in doing so offended against the rights of her guest" (202). Her actions are disruptive; they challenge Gawain's ability to mimic Camelot in a strange space. Thus, while Bertilak's castle is filled with reminders of home, and while Gawain's identity partially reshapes itself as a direct result of these reminders, events such as Lady Bertilak's intrusions into Gawain's bedchamber, and Gawain's choice not to participate in the hunting games with Bertilak, mean that Hautdesert will always fall short of Camelot.

Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamor argue that a diaspora community must "have a number of factors involving the origin of the (voluntary or forced) migration" (21). These include "settlement in one or several countries [and] maintenance of identity and

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community solidarity, which allows people to make contacts between groups and to organize activities aimed at preserving that identity" (Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamor 21). Gawain's migration is both voluntary, as he offered to take Arthur's place, and forced, as he did not fully understand the terms of the agreement he made with the Green Knight. He settles, albeit temporarily, in Hautdesert, but not before having encountered the foreign in North Wales. And he attempts to revivify his identity via the community solidarity he finds with the courtiers in Bertilak's castle. Nevertheless, Gawain's identity is not fully reinstated until he returns to Camelot as *SGGK* comes to a close.

While Gawain is immediately met with laughter upon his return from the Green Chapel, showing off his pathetic flesh wound as a symbol of the epic battle he has allegedly endured with the Green Knight (*SGGK* 2514-2515), he is still rewarded with an unprecedented level of solidarity:

> . . . lordes and ledes þat longed to þe Table,
>
> Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
>
> A bende abelef hym aboute, of a bryȝt grene,
>
> And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were. (*SGGK* 2515-2518)

In this, there seems to be a return to what Gawain has lost. Although he does not immediately receive praise and solidarity from the people of Camelot, his comrades do eventually support Gawain's sacrifice by donning green girdles to symbolize his bravery (*SGGK* 2515-2518). So, Gawain returns to his former status of Knight of the Round Table, receiving praise for surviving the impossible quest he so selflessly volunteered to take up, and ultimately returning to being a symbol of the dominant colonial discourse. Gawain has fought the inferior, and he has won.

4.3 Hybridity, Ambivalence, and Mimicry

Marwan Kraidy explains hybridity as "the fusion of two (or more) components into a third term irreducible to the sum of its parts. By unhinging the identities of its ingredients without congealing into a stable third term, hybridity enters a vicious circle where its condition of existence is at the same time its kiss of death" (*Hybridity* 66). If Gawain represents the dominant colonial discourse, and the Welsh landscape, the Green Knight, Bertilak, and Lady Bertilak all function on some level as representatives of the inferior colonized subject, then the challenged space that Gawain finds himself in because of these colonized subjects' direct subversions to colonial authority becomes this third space, and does, indeed, become the "kiss of death" (Kraidy, *Hybridity* 66). This space never solidifies itself into something concrete. As Gawain moves from place to place, his identity shifts and adapts, constantly causing ambivalence to remain a prominent feature of his character, and of the overall colonial discourse that Gawain represents.

In order to examine how *SGGK* functions as an ambivalent or hybrid text, it is first necessary to explain how the text functions as a piece of colonial discourse. David Spurr explains this concept as follows: "[i]n colonial discourse every individual weakness has its political counterpart—uncivilized society, according to this logic, being little more than the uncivilized mind and body writ large" (76). In this way, the political counterpart to Camelot is North Wales, a rough and rugged terrain not nearly as welcoming or inhabitable as Camelot is represented to be, and perhaps too, Hautdesert, where the seemingly welcoming characteristics of home are challenged by Bertilak and Lady Bertilak.

Bhabha explores the postcolonial other within colonial discourse. He explains, "[i]n the colonial discourse, that space of the other is always occupied by an *idèe fixe*: despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, violence" (101). The Green Knight is the heathen or barbarian,

and chaos and violence ensue the moment his character collides with the men of Arthur's court. The Green Knight's territory is a country upon which Camelot's superiority is exerted. *SGGK* acts as a piece of colonial discourse that in many ways attempts to signify this relationship. But there are many instances in the text where this colonial discourse is challenged by a certain ambivalence in the *Gawain*-poet's voice. This is the kind of thing Bhabha is referring to when he says that the symbols of the other and their "ambivalent repetition makes them the signs of a much deeper crisis of authority that emerges in the lawless writing of the colonial sense" (101). The *Gawain*-poet is on the surface attempting to participate in and perpetuate fourteenth century colonial discourse, while underneath experiencing this crisis of authority that complicates significantly the dominant voice of the text.

Ambivalence thus plays an important role in *SGGK*. For example, the *Gawain*-poet's description of Arthur's court and its inhabitants shifts frequently from praise to critique. Arthur's knights are described as "luflych lorde, ledez of þe best" (*SGGK* 37), and they are "þe most kyd knyȝtez vnder kryste seluen" (*SGGK* 51). And, prior to the insult delivered by the Green Knight (*SGGK* 309-315), he too praises their reputation:

Bot for þe los of þe, lede, is lyft vp so hyȝe,

And þy burȝ and þy burnes best ar holden,

Stifest vnder stel-gere on stedes to ryde,

Þe wyȝtest and þe worþyest of þe worldes kynde,

Preue for to play wyth in oþer pure layke;

And here is kydde cortaysye, as I haf herd carp,

And þat hatz wayned me hider, i-wyis, at þis tyme. (*SGGK* 258-264)

Arthur's court is filled with the best of British knights, the strongest and the worthiest

(*SGGK* 261), and the most courteous (*SGGK* 263). All of this evidence praising Arthur's court supports the idea that on the surface, *SGGK* is meant to be accepted as a text representative of England's dominant colonial discourse, specifically as it related to English colonial projects in Wales.

However, despite this praise, there are also several instances in the text where criticism and opposition may be noted. More than once, Arthur is called boyish: the *Gawain*-poet, in the position of narrator, first describes him as "so ioly of his ioyfnes, and sum-quat childgered" (*SGGK* 86); and, this boyish quality is further emphasized not only by the Green Knight, when he calls Arthur's knights "berdlez chylder" (*SGGK* 280), but also by the narrator, who provides several examples of Arthur's childish mannerisms. Arthur has a tendency to refuse food unless someone tells him an elaborate story prior to meal time (*SGGK* 85-106); he ignores the Green Knight's request for a peaceful game, and instead suggests that they engage in battle (*SGGK* 276-278); and, after the game has been proposed and his court thoroughly insulted by the Green Knight, Arthur's only response is to call the once potentially thrilling game "nys" (*SGGK* 323). There is even a level of naivety demonstrated when Arthur explains to Gawain the seeming simplicity of the game the Green Knight has proposed. Arthur tells Gawain that if he swings correctly, he won't have to worry about receiving a blow in return (*SGGK* 372-374). Even though the Green Knight reminds Arthur and Gawain that the rules will not change regardless of the outcome of Gawain's blow (*SGGK* 390-397), Gawain proceeds with a false confidence, and a substantial naivety for accepting the terms of a game that are, quite literally, too good to be true.

The oppositional voice in these examples is obvious—it is even hinted at in the opening stanza of the poem: the *Gawain*-poet explains that in Britain "boþe blysse and

blunder / Ful skete hatz skyfted synne" (*SGGK* 18-19). Despite all the praise articulated in *SGGK*, this line, combined with the examples of contradictory or oppositional voices articulated in this section, acknowledges very early on in the poem that Britain has already experienced its fair share of imperfection, and foreshadows future slip-ups and imperfections by explaining that Britain was not always as flawless as it now appears.

The Green Knight also functions as an effective example of ambivalence. The Green Knight intrudes on a Christmas feast in Camelot, and is described as "an aghlich mayster" (*SGGK* 136), overwhelming in size (*SGGK* 140), but graceful in his ability to ride (*SGGK* 142). He is also "oueral enker grene" (*SGGK* 150). His size and colour immediately Other him; the Green Knight stands in stark contrast to the knights of Arthur's court, and despite his stature, he is positioned as the inferior in a superior space.

Although he is totally strange, he is nonetheless described as a rather lavish courtly figure. The *Gawain*-poet spares no detail of the Green Knight's ensemble:

A strayt cote ful streʒt þat stek on his sides,

A meré mantile abof, mensked withinne

With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene

With blyþe blaunner ful bryʒt, and his hod boþe,

Þat watz laʒt fro his lokkez and layde on his schulderes;

Heme wel-haled hose of þat same grene,

Þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder

Of bryʒt golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,

And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides. (*SGGK* 152-160)

The Green Knight is not just green in hue; his clothing is also green, and lavishly decorated with furs and gold embroidery; he carries a gold helmet. Even his horse is oversized and

green, "gret and þikke" (*SGGK* 175).

Following this description of the Green Knight's attire, the *Gawain*-poet explains that "[h]it semed as no mon myȝt, / Vnder his dynttez dryȝe" (*SGGK* 202-203); the act of Othering in this section is circumscribed by an acknowledgement of the Green Knight's power. This is further emphasized in the following stanza, where the Green Knight is described as so large that "heȝe he ouer loked" (*SGGK* 223). And, despite the fact that the knights of Arthur's court are so fascinated by the intruder, silenced by his appearance even, the *Gawain*-poet explains "I deme hit not al for doute, / Bot sum for cortaysye" (*SGGK* 246-247). This is an open acknowledgement that the Green Knight too is worthy of respect, and it is partly this worthiness that has silenced the court. So, even though the Green Knight has been Othered completely, a process perhaps expected when a foreigner barely resembling a human man enters into English territory uninvited, his power and dominance are still emphasized, albeit subtly. The *Gawain*-poet articulates both what his own readers would expect of a foreigner's description, as well as perhaps a hint of his own perspective bleeding through. The Green Knight may be different, but he is still, nonetheless, a man worthy of respect (*SGGK* 249).

These subtle instances of equality between the men of Camelot and the Green Knight are of course balanced by subsequent instances of further Othering of the Green Knight. Following the courtesy shown for the Green Knight, he offends the court when no one agrees to participate in his game. The Green Knight goes from receiving a hint of courtesy from the court, to losing this respect completely:

"What, is þis Arþures hous," quod þe haþel þenne,

"Þat al þe rous rennes of, þurȝ ryalmes so mony?

Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,

> Your gryndel-layk, and your greme, and your grete wordes?
>
> Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe rounde table
>
> Ouer-walt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche;
>
> For al dares for drede, with-oute dynt schewed!"
>
> Wyth þis he laȝes so loude, þat þe lorde greued;
>
> Þe blod schot for scham in-to his schyre face
>
> And lere[.] (*SGGK* 309-318)

The knights' silence at the Green Knight's proposal causes the Green Knight to question Camelot's reputation completely. He asks where their pride has gone (*SGGK* 311), and questions whether he is even in the right house (*SGGK* 309). Any courtesy or acknowledgement of equality that came before is now damaged by the Green Knight's condescending words. Instances in the text where the ambivalent voice comes through are immediately circumscribed by a re-balancing act, as if the *Gawain*-poet could see his dominant discourse slipping, and as a result immediately realigned himself with what was expected.

In addition to these instances of voice confusion or alternation, roles are complicated and reversed at noticeable occurrences. The hunting scenes provide an interesting example of a role-reversal in the text. When readers first meet the Green Knight, the knowledge of who occupies what role in the colonial relationship is clear. Camelot is superior, the Green Knight's territory is inferior, and the Green Knight's association with Bertilak, that they are one and the same, means that Bertilak's realm is by extension Othered as well. As a result, when Gawain steps out of his own territory, and onto foreign soil, it is not just the harsh elements in North Wales that attack his identity; Bertilak suddenly becomes the hunter, the superior, and the animals that he hunts, scholars such as

Burnely, Savage, and Burrow have argued, represent certain elements of Gawain's character.

There are codes that an Arthurian knight should adhere to—codes of decorum that distinguish acceptable knightly behavior from poor manners. Contemporary readers would have been aware of these distinctions, and would have been able to recognize when and where a knight did not adhere to the boundaries of expected behaviour. Choosing not to participate in a hunt is certainly not representative of knightly behavior, but this is what Gawain does after Bertilak reassures him about his quest for the Green Chapel:

> Bot þe knyȝt craued leue to kayre on þe morn,
>
> For hit watz neȝ at þe terme, þat he to schulde.
>
> Þe lorde hym letted of þat, to lenge hym resteyed,
>
> And sayde, "As I am trwe segge, I siker my trawþe,
>
> Þou schal cheue to þe grene chapel, þy charres to make,
>
> Leude, on nwȝerez lyȝt, longe before pryme;
>
> For-þy þow lye in þy loft, and lach þyn ese,
>
> And I shal hunt in þis holt[.] (*SGGK* 1670-1677)

It is not expected that a knight will show weakness or exhaustion. Yet, Gawain takes the opportunity that Bertilak presents to him; he thus weakens himself via tacit compliance, and Bertilak steps into the dominant role. It is clear that the doe—whose fear makes her first instinct to run to safety (*SGGK* III.ii), the boar—a clever animal (*SGGK* III.xii), and the fox—a quick, cunning, and secretive creature (*SGGK* III.xxiii), represent characteristics seen in Gawain as the hunting scenes progress. Intermingled with the temptation scenes with Bertilak's wife, the varying animals serve as a progression of behavior that Gawain experiences as he finds new ways to politely decline Lady Bertilak's advances. But if

Gawain is representative of the animals, then *he* is now the one being hunted, both by Bertilak metaphorically, and by Lady Bertilak physically.

J. D. Burnely explains how previous scholars, such as Savage and Burrow, have "acknowledge[d] a link between the panic flight of the fox, the death before the sword of Ber[t]ilak, and the emotional disturbance and deviousness of Gawain which will end beneath the axe of the Green Knight" (2). Moreover, Savage argues that while "[t]he animals hunted on the first two days, the two species of deer and the wild boar, were favorites among medi[e]val hunters because of the good 'runs' they gave, . . . there was no such feeling of admiration for the fox" (2). On the third day of hunting, as Bertilak "routs out" Reynard, Gawain "incurs the guilt of being false to his knightly word and deceitful to a generous and trusting host" (Savage 5). When Gawain breaks with the expectations of good courtly behaviour, contemporary readers would have recognized such a shift.

Bhabha explains such examples of shift in voice as mimicry within colonial practice and discourse. While recognition of the colonial discourse present in *SGGK* might first acknowledge Camelot as the colonizing force and the Green Knight as the inferior Other, this original perception is complicated by such plot twists as the hunting and bedroom scenes. Bhabha explains mimicry as

> the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (86)

Camelot appropriates the other—the Green Knight—as it visualizes its power. However, the mimicry that recognizes such ambiguities as Arthur as both superior ruler and beardless

child, the Green Knight as both Other and courtly superior, Gawain as both superior colonial figure and confused, challenged individual, threatens the "'normalized' knowledges" that make one place or people superior to another (Bhabha 86).

Bhabha claims, "the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (88). In this sense, Gawain acts as the ultimate representative of mimicry. As a figure of the dominant colonial discourse—representing Camelot figuratively, and invading Wales more literally—Gawain should theoretically have no problem maintaining his composure as he traverses through North Wales. His identity as a member of the colonizing empire should be solid and intact, and the very thing that Othered individuals in Wales should have been striving to emulate. But, as we have seen, Gawain's identity is challenged both in North Wales and at Hautdesert, and suddenly he becomes an ambivalent representation of the colonized Other. His identity is caught up in his own personal struggles, and so efforts to maintain his connection to Camelot become an "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122) mimic.

Ambivalence means readers cannot read *SGGK* as a clearly defined colonial text. The *Gawain*-poet's constantly fluctuating voice is representative of a familiarity with both worlds, both sides, both roles; and, because of this familiarity, he is able to break down the binary of colonizer and colonized. The ambivalence of voice is not necessarily a point of confusion or contention, or an error on the part of the *Gawain*-poet. It may not even have been deliberate, but the poet's constant switching back and forth is evidence of a perspective that is nowhere near unilateral.

As Ingham points out, "we tend to think of regions of colonial interaction as places marked by strident oppositions: colonial vs. conquerer, ethnically marked culture vs. dominant one, Welsh vs. English," but these relationships are not always this simple (77).

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Bhabha explains, "hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (112). Hybridity allows for the *Gawain*-poet's complicated voice, because at its core, this is what postcolonial literatures reflect—those voices that question the "demands of colonial power," while at the same time turning "the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha 112).

While Bhabha's discussion of ambivalence lies primarily in the relationship between colonizer and colonized, ambivalence functions on multiple levels in this text. There is an expectation—a predetermined standard of behaviour and decorum—that this central character should adhere to. But when he strays from this—in bed with Lady Bertilak present, lying to Bertilak himself—ambivalence is illuminated. In his attempt to represent the colonizer, Gawain struggles with his own identity, and is challenged to uphold or adapt it in the presence of these challenges. Ingham claims that "colonial intimacies can involve multiple, and not just dual, loyalties" (77). This meant not only a loyalty to the crown, but also Gawain's loyalty to himself, and loyalty to the Other. Ingham concludes by explaining that "we should not necessarily assume an easy cultural identity" between a centralized monarchy and satellite colonists "fighting on its behalf. Regional customs, dialects, and loyalties can make powerful claims on categories of identity" (77). Making the connection between the content of *SGGK* and the English-Welsh history associated with it, Ingham here reminds readers that proximity to the dominant culture has a major effect on one's ability to replicate it accurately and successfully. As Gawain travels further from the central locus of his identity, his senses of selfhood and belonging begin to dissipate. Thus, the further Gawain moves away, the more he becomes an ambivalent figure in the text; he is almost the same as a true Camelot knight, but not quite.

On a larger scale, one might also consider *SGGK* as an "almost the same, *but not*

quite" (Bhabha 127) representation of the colonial mentality itself. The poem attempts to replicate a certain colonial perspective, one that favours the superior colonizer over the far inferior, underdeveloped, barbaric other. And indeed, the outer shape of the story—Gawain traverses rough landscapes to meet the barbaric Other on foreign soil, only to survive the seemingly fatal blow and be celebrated by his comrades back home—is complicated by Gawain's struggles as he travels.

And yet, there is something to this poem that speaks to the idea that the discourse itself is not an exact replica, merely a metonymic attempt to adhere to the political expectations of the time. Gawain's identity struggles, articulated in the "Diaspora" section above, compounded with the latter discussion of the ways in which *SGGK* functions as a piece of colonial discourse that is challenged by the ambivalence and hybridity embedded within it, further support the idea that the *Gawain*-poet was not merely reiterating and perpetuating a colonialist tradition. He was, whether intentionally or not, articulating the complicated nature of the colonial perspective, and arguably letting his own voice—the one embedded below the dominant discourse itself—subtly come through.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

Welsh history is rich with accounts of colonization and conquest. England's progression from coexistence with, to complete colonization of, Wales between 1066 and 1400 does directly impact the way that I, and scholars like Ingham and Arner, have read *SGGK*. References to the English-Welsh relationship in the poem are hard to ignore. Once Gawain leaves Camelot and enters Wales, his quest transforms into an impossibly challenging one, setting up the Welsh borderlands as a place of barbarity, strangeness, and inferiority. Chapter 2 addresses the ways in which the Welsh were considered inferior to the English, the way that England exerted its superiority over the Welsh, and how the

Welsh responded to such threats to their collective national identity. The foreign space that Gawain travels through becomes emblematic of the distinction between the English and the Welsh.

Benjamin Utter remarks, "*SGGK* is plainly concerned with, among other things . . . the incongruity between high ideals and imperfect achievement, between faithfulness and failure, and between purity and [filth]" (123). The ways that Gawain grapples with these binaries provides the opportunity to read the poem from a postcolonial perspective. Indeed, *SGGK* is peppered with oppositions—between the colonial self and the Other, between English and Welsh, between dominant colonial discourse and the ambivalent voice that challenges it, between perfect colonizer and mimic.

One can see these oppositions in the English-Welsh colonial history as well. The English were the superior colonizers, the Welsh the inferior Others, expected to mimic, or at least emulate, the English. The distinction between the two became progressively more significant as time went on, and the gap between what made one English and what made one Welsh continued to grow. The information contained in Chapter 2 directly informed the way I shaped my own analysis of *SGGK*, and as I considered the ways in which England and Wales defended their respective national identities, the *Gawain*-poet's voice became all the more significant. The dominant voice of the text—that which expectedly adheres to the Arthurian tradition, and to the perpetuation of the English as superior—is obscured by the ambivalence that accompanies the colonial experience. The *Gawain*-poet, whether intentionally or not, takes up multiple subject positions within the text: Arthur's knights are both praised and criticized; Gawain grapples between his well-known reputation and his own vulnerability; the poem's narrator both belittles the Green Knight and also praises him; the text adheres both to the dominant colonial discourse, and

simultaneously questions this discourse, however subtly.

The spaces between these opposing viewpoints provide opportunities for colonial analysis from the perspective of contemporary postcolonial theory. Although colonial investigations in *SGGK* are not new, and scholars have been engaging in such studies for over a decade now, this analysis nonetheless helps to illuminate the ways in which these contemporary theories can function when applied to medieval texts. Furthermore, this analysis, and the scholars who have commented on *SGGK* thus far, helps to guide a postcolonial analysis of *Patience*—a text not previously considered through a postcolonial lens. In the chapter that follows, the same methodology for analysis will be applied to *Patience* in an effort to show that the scope of the medieval-postcolonial convergence stretches further than one might expect.

Chapter 5: "*Patience*"

Although references to England's colonial project in Wales are easier to recognize in *SGGK*, there are many similarities between it and *Patience* that cause one to wonder if *Patience* too can be analyzed using a postcolonial lens. The plot is a biblical one. Jonah is called upon by God to deliver a message to the people of Nineveh, whose behaviour has angered God to such an extent that he now wants to destroy their city. Jonah, fearing what the Ninevites might do to him upon his delivery of God's message, chooses instead to hide from God in the belly of a ship. Not surprisingly, God finds Jonah there, and creates a storm that causes the other inhabitants of the ship to call into question which man on the boat has angered God so intensely. After Jonah is identified as the culprit, and thrown overboard, a whale swallows him. Here, he spends his time repenting his sins, and asking God for forgiveness, before being rescued by Him and ultimately following through with the delivery of God's message in Nineveh. Assuming that God will follow through on His threat to destroy the city, Jonah is infuriated when He accepts the Ninevites repentance, but eventually, God schools Jonah on the importance of patience, and the poem concludes with a small closing soliloquy about the significance of it in relation to the other beatitudes.

Applying a postcolonial reading practice to *Patience* is not without its difficulties. Its biblical frame is a major hurdle: to complete a colonial reading that considers God as a colonizing figure and the sinful Ninevites as the colonized Others is complicated by the fact that *Patience* is merely a slightly elaborated biblical retelling of the "Book of Jonah" in the Bible. However, the ways in which the *Gawain*-poet retells Jonah's story—adding additional bits of dialogue, expanding what readers know of Jonah's perspective, and transforming God from an omniscient presence to an actual character in the text—allows for a reading of *Patience* that looks at the divine power as colonizer, a sinful population in

need of repentance as colonized Others, and poor prophetic behaviour as a marker of colonial ambivalence.

Putter and Stokes, in their "Forward to *Patience*," identify Israel as the true site of Jonah's origins, not Judah:

> Assumptions about Jonah's location in the Old Testament world were based on a
> reference to a prediction about Israel made by 'Jonah, the son of Amittai, the
> prophet, which was of Gath-hepher' (2 Kings 14.25). From this it was assumed that
> Jonah was a subject of the northern kingdom of Israel . . . (199)

They argue that "Judee" refers "not to the southern kingdom of Judah (as opposed to the northern kingdom of Israel), but to Jewish territory as a whole" (Putter and Stokes 200). Israel is thus positioned in direct opposition to Nineveh, as Nineveh was "situated in Assyrian territory, in what is now northern Iraq" (Putter and Stokes 200). So, given a prophet coming from Israel, God's nation in the Old Testament and thus a vehicle for medieval Christian identification, to disgrace a population in foreign Nineveh, the superiority of one location over the other, and the possibility that colonial discourse functions to perpetuate this superiority, are thus emphasized.

The colonial discourse arguably produced from Israel, and articulated via God, is invoked as *Patience* begins. In the "Book of Jonah," the command that God gives to Jonah is articulated in one simple sentence: "Arise, and go to Ninive the great city, and pray in it: for the wickedness thereof is come up before me" (Jonah 1:2)[3]. In *Patience*, God's command is much more detailed and explicit. After an opening soliloquy, in which the narrator gives his readers a sort of moral introduction to the human characteristic of patience and its importance in relation to the other beatitudes of the Bible (*Patience* 1-56),

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[3] This quotation is from the Douay-Rheims *Holy Bible*, a version translated from the Latin Vulgate.

the narrative begins with a command from God:

> 'Rys radly,' He says, 'and rayke forth euen;
>
> Nym þe way to Nynyve wythouten oþer speche,
>
> And in þat ceté My saȝes soghe alle aboute,
>
> Þat in þat place, at þe poynt, I put in þi hert.
>
> For iwysse hit arn so wykke þat in þat won dowellez
>
> And her malys is so much, I may not abide,
>
> Bot venge Me on her vilanye and venym bilyue;
>
> Now sweȝe Me þider syftly and say Me þis arende.' (*Patience* 65-72)

God demands that Jonah go immediately to Nineveh without hesitation; He claims the Nineveh peoples' evil is so intense that He cannot stand idly by; and, He threatens vengeance over their villainy (*Patience* 65-72). This command, while functioning as the motivator for Jonah's subsequent adventures, also functions as representative of a dominant discourse. God here acts like the head of a monarchy, Jonah as a member of his court, and the people of Nineveh as the heathen, barbaric, Othered society waiting for reformation and modernization by the empire. Much like modern justifications for colonial projects, it is Jonah's moral duty, and God's desire to improve Nineveh, that justify their actions.

In the Bible, there is no response from Jonah after God delivers his command; Jonah is mute, and he displays his protest only via action (Jonah 1:3). However, Jonah voices his distaste and intense fear for the outcome of the command requested in *Patience*:

> 'If I bowe to His bode and bryng hem þis tale,
>
> And I be nummen in Nuniue, my nyes begynes:
>
> He telles me þose traytoures arn typped schrewes;
>
> I come wyth þose tyþynges, þay ta me bylyue,

107

Pynez me in a prysoun, put me in stokkes,

Wryþe me in a warlok, wrast out myn yȝen.['] (*Patience* 75-80)

Jonah's reservations and fears are here explained: the people of Nineveh will surely torture

him should he deliver God's command, and although he is a prophet and should arguably

be protected by God, Jonah is human, and fears greatly for his safety and his life. Adam

Brook Davis argues that this is a result of Jonah acknowledging "God's power (at least,

when forced to do so), and not His mercy" (274-275). We see Jonah acknowledge God's

mercy only when his situation is so dire that he has no other choice but to appeal to it—in

the belly of the whale, for example (Jonah 2:3-11). The addition of Jonah's inner

monologue this early in the poem sets up an oppositional relationship between Jonah and

God; instead of fulfilling his prophetical duties, he opposes his commander and acts instead

in his own self-interest.

So, what do these subtle, albeit significant, manipulations of Jonah's story by the

Gawain-poet do to the reader's understanding of the purpose of *Patience*? Davis, in "What

the Poet of *Patience* Really Did to the Book of Jonah," argues that we can "be quite sure

that the poet held the Vulgate *Jonah* before him as he worked" (267). *Patience* "is rendered

faithfully, completely and in proper sequence," but Davis notes that "there is a contribution

(the exact character of which has been disputed)" by the *Gawain*-poet (267). The Vulgate

version of *Jonah*, in Latin, is kept largely intact; Davis argues that "the poet's alterations of

the Vulgate text are, for the most part, unobtrusive," and that, "[i]n general, he extends and

emphasizes patterns already present in his source. One of the most prominent of these

contrasts Jonah's irrationality and lack of self-control with the rational self-control of God

and even of Jonah's fellowmen" (271-272). The poet's "interpretation of the Jonah story,"

is not "strikingly innovative" by any means, Davis argues, but "we may detect something

novel in his application of the tradition to a study of moral pedagogy" (270).

Davis thus argues that the *Gawain*-poet shapes *Patience* into a didactic text with his own contributions: the *Gawain*-poet "is fascinated by the acts of teaching and learning, the roads by which one arrives at understanding, at least as much as by the understandings themselves, analytically expressed. It is no novel proposition that *Patience* is a teaching text, that is, that it is largely didactic" (268). By inserting himself into the text in the poem's opening soliloquy, the *Gawain*-poet calls "attention to his own presence as instructor," and draws the reader's attention to "his central, if not explicit, concern: the prophet's responses to shifting circumstances, the underlying moral states which determine those responses, and Jonah's progress among those states" (Davis 269).

If we take Davis's summation to be correct, and understand *Patience* as a largely didactic text, then those moments where Jonah is meant to be taught, or to teach, are further emphasized by the additions that the *Gawain*-poet makes to *Patience*. But, one might also look to these moments of right and wrong, where Jonah is forced to endure hardship in order to learn and to teach, as contributing to a colonial reading of the text. Although the morality of the text comes from its biblical origins and its central focus on God as the divine commander, with Jonah's disobedience and repentance tied up in his commitment and obligatory devotion to God, one might also look to these moments as representative of an individual navigating the difficulties associated with adhering to one's empire when he doesn't necessarily agree with its political decisions. What could this potential colonial perspective teach us about colonization in the later Middle English period?

Traditionally, Jonah is conceived of as "one of the crusty examples of reluctant Old Testament prophets," and "a representative of proud, rational independence" (Pohli 1). "These qualities form a cipher in the homiletical code," Pohli explains, "which the poet

uses to make his or her poem spiritually useful. At this primary level of allegorical meaning, Jonah stands in for every person who disobeys a benevolent impulse, or an allegedly divine command" (Pohli 1). One might also look to Jonah as an example of every person whose perspective errs on the side of ambivalence towards colonization, rather than full submission to the dominant colonial discourse. Moreover, as a familiar character, Jonah's appearance in *Patience* allows the poem to "appeal to an average audience of non-readers, described by G. R. Owst as the unwashed, gaping crowd, spellbound by a story of miracles. But this version of Jonah's story is also pervasively subtle, indicating that its author might have had in mind another, more sophisticated audience" (Pohli 2). Jonah's story appeals to many types of people—those who are fascinated by his miraculous journey, and perhaps too, those who understand and possibly relate to his ambivalent perspective.

Even Jonah's name represents ambivalence. Jonah's "full name, meaning 'Dove, the son of Faithfulness or Fidelity', is suggestive of a prophet who will fulfill his duty in faithfulness and obedience to the word of God" (Payne 131). As a "reluctant messenger and intercessor," Payne argues,

> Jonah is presented as a parody or caricature of a prophet, refusing to accept the call, . . . Jonah also displays an unwillingness to intercede for God's mercy to be shown to the people with whom he is involved. When he does pray, his chief concerns are himself and his own well-being. He shows a complete lack of understanding of the concerns of God. (131)

Payne's description here refers to the Jonah characterized in the Bible; but the replication of his story in *Patience* prompts the same conclusion: Jonah is deliberately selected, in both the Bible and in *Patience*, in order to enhance the didactic nature of the story. The reader's

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expectation that Jonah will fail helps to illuminate the differences between right and wrong; readers recognize when Jonah is making the wrong decision, and are offered a method for repentance that they may adopt in their own lives.

In the context of a postcolonial reading of *Patience*, Jonah is an individual grappling between the demands placed upon him by a higher power, and his own vulnerability that he struggles with as he journeys to Nineveh. The space between Israel and Nineveh challenges Jonah's identity, and forces him to make decisions that go against the will of the powers that control him. As we saw with Gawain, *Patience* has Jonah struggle between the homogenization and assimilation to the dominant discourse, and the localism of his journey (R. Cohen 131). Where God's word functions as the dominant colonial discourse, and thus as the homogeneity under the colonizer's rule, each place that Jonah enters between Israel and Nineveh contributes to a challenge to this assimilation. The role he occupies—as both prophet directly associated with God, and vulnerable man afraid for his life—leads to the development of a hybrid identity as identified by Hall, and an ambivalent outlook on colonial discourse and authority, as ambivalence is described by Bhabha.

If, as Bhabha points out, successful colonial authority is predicated on the process of acknowledging "differentiations, individuations, [and] identity effects" (158), then how does the role Jonah plays as prophet to the higher power or, in a postcolonial gaze, as a representative of the larger colonialist discourse, contribute to the success of God as commander? Do Jonah's faults, although contradictory to the word of God, not continue to solidify God's place as ruler? What is clarified about the Ninevites that further points out this distinction between God and Jonah, and how does Jonah's reaction to the command that is laid upon him illuminate the difference between God as colonizer and Nineveh as

object of colonization?

As with Gawain, there is an expectation, a predetermined standard of behaviour and decorum that Jonah is required to adhere to. As he departs from this expectation, Jonah's ambivalence comes to the forefront. While he is expected to act on behalf of the colonizer, he strays—hiding in the belly of the ship, being swallowed by the whale, questioning God's choices—in an attempt to protect himself. In the process, Jonah's identity is challenged, and he is forced to adapt it the further away he moves from God's command. For example, we see a shift in Jonah's character depending on whether or not God is angry with him: Jonah first sleeps in the belly of the ship as he hides from God (*Patience* 186), and then acknowledges his faults and accepts responsibility for his actions once God calls him out (*Patience* 205-212). Jonah is at once a symbol of the dominant colonial discourse, and at the same time the very thing that questions it. As he grapples between these conflicting identities, Bhabha's concept of ambivalence comes to the forefront in my description of him. Although Jonah's characterization in *Patience* is predetermined by the Vulgate and the Bible, one can nonetheless look similarly to the ambivalence of his perspective as representative of a distaste for, or at least confusion about, the decisions of the empire.

Additionally, as was the case with *SGGK*, one can consider *Patience* itself as an "almost the same, *but not quite*" (Bhabha 127) representation of medieval colonization itself. The *Gawain*-poet aims to replicate a certain mentality through his articulation of Jonah's story. In it, the superior colonizer—God, and Israel by extension—is favoured over the far inferior, underdeveloped, barbaric Others, the Ninevites. But the smooth replication of a colonialist mentality is disrupted by Jonah's refusal to adhere to the expectations placed upon him. The manipulation of *Patience* by the *Gawain*-poet—whether we consider this a pedagogical process or not—further emphasizes the distinction between the dominant

discourse and Jonah's place within it.

5.1 Diaspora

Voicu argues that "[h]ome is not a place that one leaves behind, but a geographical point of reference, a sense of place which serves as an anchor for the travel" (174). This sentiment arguably holds true for Jonah as well: although we know nothing of his past, or his position in relation to God prior to God's initial call that he go to Nineveh, one can at least assume, because he is afraid of the Ninevites hurting him, that Jonah's ties to Israel are strong. Voicu goes on to reference James Clifford, who argues that

> the cross cultural or 'border' experiences of travel should not be viewed as
> acculturation, where there is a linear progression from culture A to culture B, nor as
> syncretism, where two systems overlap each other. Rather, Clifford understands
> these cross-cultural or 'border' experiences as instances of historical contact, 'with
> entanglement at intersecting regional, national, and transnational levels'. (174)

As Jonah journeys from Israel, and his identity as a prophet is both unstable and fearful of what's to come in Nineveh, one can see his various encounters along the way as "instances of historical contact" (Voicu 174). His relationship to God, his encounter with the seamen, his experience in the whale, and his actions in Nineveh, mix expectation with truth and ensnare Jonah's pure prophetical identity in the reality of human experience.

Lawrence M. Clopper, in "The God of the 'Gawain-Poet'," examines the differences in vocabulary used by the narrator and by Jonah to describe God. Whereas the narrator uses terms that invoke respect—father, sovereign, king (9)—Jonah's references are much more colloquial. Clopper concludes, "[t]he vocabulary suggests that Jonah imagines God to be a local lord whose power only extends over a limited area and who, while he can command individuals, at times ignores or overlooks them because a single man is

insignificant among such multitudes" (9). Jonah's naïve misconception of God's reach

contributes substantially to the decisions Jonah makes, and the identity struggles he faces.

After Jonah decides to pay the seamen to take him to Tarshish (*Patience* 99-100),

"recoil[ing] at the heaviness of [his] task" (Diekstra 208), Jonah naively hopes that God

will forget his command and leave him be. Diekstra argues that "[t]here is some apparent

inconsistency in his feeling that God desires his death, and at the same time that God is too

remote to care" (208). In hiding on the boat, Jonah assumes that God will not care to come

searching for him, but the act of hiding itself acknowledges God's power. Nevertheless,

Jonah finds relief on the ship, albeit temporarily:

> Watz neuer so joyful a Jue as Jonas watz þenne,
>
> Þat þe daunger of Dryȝtyn so derfly ascaped;
>
> He wende wel þat þat Wyȝ þat al þe world planted
>
> Hade no maȝt in þat mere no man for to greue. (*Patience* 109-112)

Jonah's experience on the boat positions him in stark contrast to the arguably unique,

heathen-god-worshiping group of seamen. These men, although by no means devoted to

God, are each equally devoted to their false gods, and pray to them as the ship's destruction

becomes imminent:

> But vchon glewed on his god þat gained hym beste:
>
> Summe to Vernagu þer vouched avowes solemne,
>
> Summe to Diana deuout and derf Neptune,
>
> To mahoun and to Mergot, þe mone and þe sunne,
>
> And vche lede as he loued and layde had his hert. (*Patience* 164-168)

Andrew and Waldron note that "[t]he names of these deities are not found in the Vulgate

account, which says simply *clamaverunt viri ad deum suum* 'the men cried to their god'"

("Patience" 192). The *Gawain*-poet's specific references to these deities—"Vernagu" (*Patience* 165), "Diana" (*Patience* 166), "Neptune" (*Patience* 166), "Mahoun" (*Patience*167), and "Mergo" (*Patience* 167)—draws attention to the distinction between this group of men and Jonah. Vasta argues that "[t]he poem evokes the traditional Jew vs. Gentile motif not only through the Ninevites but also through the Gentile sailors, in whose presence Jonah is named three times as a Jew" (11). Nevertheless, Jonah still makes an ill-fated attempt to hide within this group, even if his success at doing so is only momentary. Johnson explains that "diaspora studies asserts that members of the diaspora are self-defined and make a conscious effort to become part of the diaspora" (54). The seamen are a unique group, arguably self-defined by the god(s) they worship, and they are placed in direct opposition to Jonah specifically because they are not Christ-worshippers. They are effectively Othered as a result, and bring to mind the possibility of considering them as a unique diaspora depicted by the *Gawain*-poet as heathen and in need of reformation. As a representative of the dominant discourse, an Israelite spreading the word of God, Jonah's worshipping of the true God automatically classifies him as superior to these Othered sailors.

Although one could argue that Jonah's choice to sleep, which some scholars argue "symbolize[s] moral lassitude" or a "lack of moral awareness" (Andrew and Waldron, "Patience" 193), demonstrates a complete disregard for his duty to God, (and therefore equalizes him to the heathen seamen,) Jonah nonetheless appeals to God and accepts that he should be thrown overboard once he has been questioned (*Patience* 205-212). In a certain sense, Jonah himself functions within a small diaspora—one that "invites us to hold together in creative tension notions of 'home' and 'away' while, at the same time, unsettling and questioning both" (Knott 79). Jonah's experience at sea, and his interactions

with the seamen, unsettle and question the tensions between home and away, and Jonah's

flipping back and forth from adherence to God to hiding from Him to appealing to Him

once again is evidence of these tensions.

Jonah's interaction with the sailors further clarifies the distinction between Jonah as

a representative of the dominant discourse (albeit a confused one) and those who do not

adhere to it (but should). As this section of the poem comes to a close, we see the seamen,

like Jonah, appealing to the true God, thanking Him for granting them grace (*Patience*

226), and ultimately choosing to pray to Him and no other gods:

> Þer watz louyng on lofte, when þay þe londe wonnen,
>
> To our mercyable God, on Moyses wyse,
>
> With sacrafyse vpset, and solempne vowes,
>
> And graunted Hym on to be God and grathly non oþer. (*Patience* 237-240)

This quick conversion from worshipping false gods to solely worshipping Christ emulates

the ideal colonial conversion of the colonial Other's identity, and contributes to the idea

that the seamen are an Othered group capable of transformation to adhere to the dominant

colonial discourse.

Stock explains that "[i]n the study of diasporic groups, the notion of home is

referred to and employed in diverging, sometimes contradictory ways," and furthermore,

that "questions of 'feeling at home' . . . might trace the desires and the (im)possibilities of

making oneself at home – in the different spaces diasporic subjects inhabit, but mainly in

the current place of residence" (25). Jonah's case is perplexing: although he seems to

identify with Israel, and recognize himself as a prophet, he nonetheless makes attempts to

cut ties with his identity in an effort to forget his origins and save his own life. In this sense,

Jonah's choice to hide in the belly of the ship presents the "(im)possibilit[y]" that Stock

refers to (25); he cannot make himself feel at home in this space. As a result, Jonah's identity immediately shifts from one hiding from his origins to one who acknowledges them, admits his faults, and asks for forgiveness:

'I am an Ebru,' quoþ he, 'of Israyl borne;

Þat Wyӡe I worchyp, iwysse, þat wroӡt alle þynges,

Alle þe worlde with þe welkyn, þe wynde and þe sternes,

And alle þat wonez þer withinne, at a worde one.

Alle þis meschef for me is made at þys tyme,

For I have greued my God and gulty am founden;

Forþy berez me to þe borde and baþes me þeroute,

Er gete ӡe no happe, I hope forsoþe.' (*Patience* 205-212)

Andrew and Waldron here argue that "[i]t is significant that as soon as Jonah is challenged with his misdemeanours he accepts full responsibility for them and agrees that he should be thrown from the boat: the poet here introduces the positive side of Jonah's character" ("Patience" 205-212). We see him flip back and forth between devoted attendant of God (only when it is convenient) and weak, irrational, fragile human. The moment his role as prophet is challenged, he reverts to his fragile human side; the moment his fragile human side is called into question, he reverts back to his prophetical role and appeals to God for mercy.

The *Gawain*-poet repeats this same kind of shift from devoted prophet to weak, disobedient man in Jonah's encounter with the "wylde walterande whal" (*Patience* 247). After finding himself in the "wombe of þat fissce" (262), Jonah appeals to God:

'Now, Prynce, of Þy prophete pité Þou haue.

Þaӡ I be fol and fykel and falce of my heart,

Dewoyde now Þy vengaunce, þurȝ vertu of rauthe;

Thaȝ I be gulty of gyle, as gaule of prophetes,

Þou art God, and alle gowdez are grayþely Þyn owen.

Haf now mercy of Þy man and his mysdedes,

And preue Þe lyȝtly a Lorde in londe and in water.' (*Patience* 282-288)

In moments of weakness, especially when Jonah's life is questioned, he appeals to God for forgiveness. Readers witness Jonah repenting his misdeeds, and stating that through his anguish he remembered his relationship with God (*Patience* 286). The more Jonah falls, the more he is reminded of his relationship to God, and the importance of acknowledging that he is merely an object of—and a messenger for—this higher power.

Despite the fact that God is omnipresent, there is a certain kind of diasporic relationship that occurs between Jonah and God, even as Jonah moves from one space to the next, and further away from Israel. Dufoix, Waldinger, and Rodamor argue that a diaspora must

> have a number of factors involving the origin of the (voluntary or forced) migration: settlement in one or several countries; maintenance of identity and community solidarity, which allows people to make contacts between groups and to organize activities aimed at preserving that identity; and finally, relations between the leaving state, the host state, and the diaspora itself, the last of which may become a link between the first two. (21)

All of these characteristics are present in *Patience*. Jonah's migration is, albeit temporary, nonetheless forced, and he sees his only means of escaping his anticipated plight in Nineveh as taking up an entirely different journey; he finds himself settling first in the ship, then in the whale, then in Nineveh; he maintains his faltering identity only through constant

reminders of his relationship to God (much as Gawain maintains his identity through constant reminders of his reputation and role in Camelot), and finally, there is a relationship between Israel where Jonah comes from, Nineveh where he ends up, and the diaspora consisting only of God and Jonah. This diaspora connects Israel and Nineveh, and God's omnipresence allows for Him to move with Jonah as a the second member of this diasporic grouping.

Nevertheless, because it takes constant reminders from God and the people Jonah finds himself in the company of to remind him of his rightful place, Jonah's identity tends towards an ambivalent one—one that acts both as colonial messenger (prophet) and ambivalent subject. "The concept of identity," Voicu argues, "can be defined in terms of sameness vs. difference" (164). Jonah's relation to Israel acts as this "sameness" (Voicu 164); his distinction from the Ninevites acts as this "difference" (Voicu 164). Therefore, it is the expectations God imposes upon Jonah as prophet, and Jonah's own desire to protect himself, that come together to produce an identity that neither adheres to the dominant colonial discourse, nor fully opposes it.

John Hutnyk says that "[i]n its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration" (59). He argues that "[t]he hybrid is a usefully slippery category, purposefully contested and deployed to claim change. . . . [H]ybridity has come to mean all sorts of things to do with mixing and combination in the moment of cultural exchange" (Hutnyk 59-60). As Jonah encounters God, the sailors, the whale, and the people of Nineveh, moments of cultural exchange transform him into a hybrid subject, one who refuses his ruler's command that he go to Nineveh—"['] At alle peryles,' quoþ þe prophete, 'I aproche hit no nerre[']" (*Patience*

85)—and demonstrates his worship of him simultaneously—"Careful am I, kest out fro Þy cler yȝen / And deseuered fro Þy syȝt; ȝet surely I hope / Efte to trede on Þy temple and teme to Þyseluen" (*Patience* 313-315).

5.2 Hybridity, Ambivalence, and Mimicry

In "Jonah and Christ in *Patience*," Malcolm Andrew proposes a connection between Jonah and Christ that sees Jonah as both a "subfulfillment" of Christ, and also as a "type" of Christ (231). Where on the one hand "Jonah angrily and churlishly refuses to undertake a task because it might subject him to the risk of suffering the very fate which Christ was later to suffer for the sake of mankind," on the other, "the central part of *Patience*" sees "Jonah's conduct as wholly praiseworthy" (Andrew 231). Whether or not one subscribes to Andrew's proposition that Jonah is a type of Christ, it is undeniable that Jonah's indecisiveness—where one moment he is running from God, while the next he is begging for his mercy—contributes to an ambivalent reading of his character.

Homi Bhabha "uses hybridity as an 'in-between' term, referring to a 'third space', and to ambivalence and mimicry, especially in the context of what might, uneasily, be called the colonial cultural interface" (Hutnyk 60). Jonah is unhappy: "Goddes glam to hym glod þat hym vnglad made" (*Patience* 63); he is "wrathed in his wyt" (*Patience* 74). But eventually, he follows through with God's command, and delivers His message to the Ninevites:

Ȝet schal forty dayez fully fare to an ende,

And þenne schal Niniue be nomen and to noȝt worþe;

Truly þis ilk toun schal tylte to grounde;

Vp-so-doun schal ȝe dumpe depe to þe abyme,

To be swolȝed swiftly wyth þe swart erþe,

And alle þat lyuyes hereinne lose þe swete. (*Patience* 359-364)

In forty days, he preaches, the city of Nineveh will cease to exist, banished to the abyss for the wickedness conducted within it, should the Ninevites refuse to clean up their act and repent their sins. For a moment, Jonah fulfills his role as prophet completely, and acts upon the command he was originally given. But the temporary purity of this act is immediately truncated by his anger with God for accepting the Ninevites repentance and agreeing not to annihilate the city after all. Jonah experiences "sorȝe" as a result of God's choice, and "[h]e wex as wroth as þe wynde towarde our Lorde" (*Patience* 410). Never mind that Jonah has forgotten to acknowledge that the Ninevites did not "Pyne . . . [him] in a prysoun, put [him] in stokkes, / Wriþe [him] in a warlock, wrast out [his] yȝen" (*Patience* 79-80). Instead, the Ninevites hear the command and immediately act upon it: "Þenne al leued on His lawe and laften her synnes, / Parformed alle þe penaunce þat þe prynce radde" (*Patience* 405-406). One might wonder if Jonah's childish distaste for God's choice not to destroy the city is a result of God actually proving him wrong: the Ninevites did not seek to destroy Jonah, to torture him for the message he delivered; they listened, acted upon the command, and did as they had to do for survival. What's more, one might wonder why someone as closely tied to God as a prophet would not be elated at the sight of an entire population repenting and appealing to the wishes of their Lord.

In the postcolonial gaze, God represents the clearly defined colonizer. He is displeased with the Ninevites behaviour, and seeks via messenger to reform it. When the Ninevites respond exactly as they are supposed to, they become the perfect example of the colonized Other. They recognize God, or the colonizer, as having more control than they do, and they immediately respond to the threat articulated by Jonah. Interestingly, Lampert-Weissig explains that "[t]he Welsh territories took the Normans nearly 200 years to

subdue" (44). The immediacy of the Ninevites response supports the significance and power of God's discourse; where the Norman's colonial reformations took 200 years, God's reformations took less than 40 days. Although Jonah expects to be destroyed by the Ninevites before God is able to destroy their city, the Ninevites immediate response leaves Jonah surprised.

While Jonah himself represents an important ambivalent perspective, so too are the Ninevites portrayed as ambivalent. Where Jonah views the Ninevites as the barbaric, uncivilized Other in need of saving by the colonizer, the *Gawain*-poet ultimately shows the Ninevites are the perfect colonial object. The King of Nineveh, upon hearing Jonah's warning, does not emphasize his position as ruler, or consider himself exempt from the repentance that must occur; he puts on a hair shirt just like his subjects (*Patience* 381), and cries out to his people:

> Al schal crye, forclemmed, with alle oure clere strenþe;
>
> Þe rurd schal ryse to Hym þat rawþe schal haue;
>
> What wote oþer wyte may ȝif þe Wyȝe lykes,
>
> Þat is hende in þe hyȝt of His gentryse?
>
> I wot His myȝt is so much, þaȝ He be myssepayed,
>
> Þat in His mylde amesyng He mercymay fynde. (*Patience* 395-400)

His command has the effect of equalizing king and subject; all are at risk of damnation if they do not do as Jonah says. Jonah's perspective that the Ninevites are thus beyond help is actually naïve; they subvert the expectation in the same way that Jonah himself does. When one's life is threatened, the appeal to God for mercy is less a matter of obligation than it is of absolute necessity.

Ashcroft posits, "rather than a kind of flaw in the operation of colonial discourse, a

self-defeating need to produce in the colonized subject an imitation which must fail, because it can never be an exact copy, ambivalence may be regarded as a much more active feature of post-colonial subjectivity" (22). Ashcroft explains that this ambivalence is a "'two-powered' sign of capacity of the colonized to 'imitate' transformatively, to take the image of the colonial model and use it in the process of resistance, the process of self-empowerment" (22). To what extent can we consider Nineveh as exemplary of this transformative limitation? That is, to what extent is the Ninevites adherence to God's word an act of rebellion as much as it is an act of adherence to colonial command? Keeping in mind the ambivalent representation of the Ninevites as they are depicted differently by Jonah and by the *Gawain*-poet, do the Ninevites not disrupt the colonial force anyway, by upsetting Jonah's expectations? Are Jonah's frustration, anger, and disappointment in God's decision not to annihilate the city not the ultimate culmination of Nineveh's rebellion?

In the grand scheme of the *Patience* narrative, if God represents the dominant colonizing force, his preaching the colonizer's discourse, and the Ninevites the barbaric Others in need of reformation, then Jonah himself acts as the "third space" (Hutnyk 60). He questions the authority of his commander; he questions his position as prophet in relation to God; and he desires to see the city of Nineveh and its people destroyed. At the same time, however, Jonah is fearful, and he grapples with the vulnerability of his life as he gets closer and closer to Nineveh. The ambivalence embedded within Jonah's perspective ultimately reflects the ambivalence of the colonial perspective itself. From this standpoint then, do we accept that Jonah's efforts are futile, and that ultimately, the colonizer's discourse wins? Even if this is the case, it is still significant that we are able to recognize and classify Jonah's actions as ambivalent, even if this ambivalence never succeeds to overthrow the

colonizer. If readers can recognize and pinpoint a text's ambivalence, then it has succeeded in its purpose.

Ashcroft posits, "[a]mbivalence is not merely the sign of the failure of colonial discourse to make the colonial subject conform, it is the sign of the agency of the colonized – the two-way gaze, the dual orientation, the ability to appropriate colonial technology without being absorbed by it – which disrupts the monologic impetus of the colonizing process" (22-23). Where Nineveh, although ambivalent in representation, ultimately succumbs to the demands of the colonizing force, it is really Jonah whose actions call attention to ambivalence in *Patience*. Jonah is a representative of the colonizing force, but the importance of Nineveh's alignment with the dominant discourse is less significant than Jonah's push-back.

Jonah is thus not an exact replication of the colonial discourse; he is a mimetic attempt to replicate it, without ever actually achieving full duplication. Again, Bhabha speaks of mimicry as "a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (86). God appropriates the Other, in this case the people of Nineveh, as he visualizes his power, by demanding change in Nineveh. However, the "almost the same, *but not quite*" (Bhabha 127) mimicry that Jonah represents threatens the "'normalized' knowledges" (Bhabha 86) of what makes Israel and God far superior to the Ninevites. Is Jonah not also guilty of sin that demands repentance? Is the repentance he does demonstrate substantial enough, considering the sins he has committed? Does his prophetical role not intensify the sins that he commits—lying to God, hiding from Him, refusing to accept his role as prophet, and becoming angry with God for keeping His word?

If we return to Davis's suggestion that *Patience* is didactic (268), then Jonah's voice

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teaches us that adhering to the boundaries of good religious behaviour, or showing solidarity with the ruling elite, is easier said than done. If Jonah as prophet refuses to listen to God, what hope is there for anyone else who attempts (or does not attempt) to follow God's word? Just as the *Gawain*-poet presents a shifting voice in *SGGK* that is arguably familiar with both the dominant discourse and the effect of this discourse on the people (both colonizing and non), we see the *Gawain*-poet again reiterate this same shifting voice in *Patience*.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

As this chapter's introduction states, Jonah's story is a biblical one. The *Gawain*-poet's retelling of Jonah's experience does indeed keep the bones of this biblical story intact. Thus, to consider God as a representation of the dominant colonial discourse is not without its difficulties. And yet, the biblical structure of omniscient higher power and inferior, imperfect subject, parallels the colonial structure of colonizer and inferior, imperfect Other. And just as *SGGK* reflects multiple subject positions in Gawain, in the Camelot vs. Wales relationship, in Bertilak and the Green Knight, and in the overall structure of the text itself, so too are these multiple subject positions present in *Patience*.

Jonah adheres to God's commands, and simultaneously pushes against them; Israel opposes Nineveh, and yet Jonah's behaviour, and the Ninevites response to God's call, complicate the seemingly simple colonial distinction between colonizer and Other; and, the text itself, which explores the relationship between an overt power and its subject, challenges the dominant biblical structure of the poem by alluding to ambivalence in its characters, the direct questioning of an authoritative figure, and how difficult it can be to adhere to the rigid expectations of this authority.

Devotion to this omniscient God and devotion to the colonizer are paralleled in

many ways in *Patience*. The dominant voice can dictate what it wishes, and expect the good Christian, or the devoted colonial subject, or the powerless colonial object, to respond as necessary. Where the Ninevites response to God's call for reformation represents the expected reaction to an authoritative threat, Jonah's response more accurately depicts the truth of the human experience. Instilled with fear, Jonah recognizes his vulnerability and allows this to dictate his every move. He is both an ambivalent Christian, and an ambivalent representation of the dominant colonial discourse.

How can a good Christian, nay a prophet, both adhere to God's word, and yet simultaneously seek to defy it? Jonah's ambivalence marks *Patience* as both biblical and postcolonial, and the oppositional positioning of Israel and Nineveh that frames this text easily allows God to slip into the role of colonizer, and Nineveh to slip into the role of the Other. Thus, one might accept Davis's summation that Jonah fulfills a didactic role in *Patience* (268), both at the biblical level, for the contemporary reader, and at the postcolonial level for the modern scholar. *Patience* ultimately illuminates the difference between right and wrong, enhancing the distinction between patience as exemplary of good Christian behaviour, or of a good colonial representative, and acting in self-interest as indicative of the need for immediate repentance to either God, or to the empire.

Once again, the *Gawain*-poet, whether intentionally or not, speaks to the difficulty one experiences trying to adhere to dominant colonial expectations. Just as episodes of slippage in the dominant discourse occurred in *SGGK*—praising Arthur's court and subsequently critiquing it, for example—similar episodes of slippage occur in *Patience*, marking this text as worthy of postcolonial study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and *Patience* are, at first glance, entirely

dissimilar. One would not expect an Arthurian legend and the retelling of a biblical story to

have much in common. But as the two preceding chapters have identified, Gawain and

Jonah face rather similar challenges, their respective journeys paralleled in multiple ways.

Both men are challenged to uphold an identity associated with, and entirely the subject of, a

greater power. Each man's identity is challenged the further he travels from the power he

represents, and the further each travels, the more ambivalent his perspective becomes. In

the end, one might argue that both men come full circle, returning to Camelot, or to the full

acceptance of God's power and mercy, and ultimately solidifying the concreteness of the

overarching colonial discourse framing each text. Despite this, it is Gawain and Jonah's

respective journeys, and the ways in which each responds to the challenges brought against

them, that illuminates the ambivalence of the colonial perspective, and allows for *SGGK*

and *Patience* to be considered as colonial texts.

SGGK's dominant colonial structure presents a knight, representative of the larger

Arthurian (or English) tradition, traversing foreign (Welsh) landscapes to meet his ultimate

deadly fate at the hands of the barbaric and unpredictable Green Knight, only to survive

and be praised for his bravery and the sheer miracle of his survival upon returning to

Camelot. *Patience* presents a dominant theological overtone, one that features a prophet

whose questioning of his position in relation to God serves as the ultimate didactic tool.

The harder Jonah pushes against God's force, the more substantial the repentance required.

Although Jonah spends more time questioning God's authority than he does complying

with it, the *Gawain*-poet concludes *Patience* with a small treatise on the importance of

patience as a virtue, ultimately emphasizing for readers that despite one's rebellions, God's

word is law, and the more one practice's patience, the more they will be praised.

Considering the English-Welsh relationship, as it existed at the time these poems were composed, one is able to directly connect the didactic nature of these texts with the agenda of the English crown. As the fourteenth century drew to a close, England had fully conquered the Welsh, and everything from the creation of English towns to the construction of castles on Welsh land to the establishment of separate and wildly imbalanced legal practices largely favouring the English emphasized that England's occupation of Wales was permanent. The dominant discourses presented in *SGGK* and *Patience* serve to emphasize the power of the crown and the importance of Christian obedience and devotion.

However, as the preceding two chapters have identified, *SGGK* and *Patience* both lack the seamless articulation of this dominant discourse. Both poems' protagonists push against the expectations of their societies, and as a result, the ambivalence of the colonial perspective is illuminated. Various similarities connecting these two texts produce what I believe to be a very unique perspective that bleeds through the objections of Gawain and Jonah, the flip-flopping between praise and critique of Arthur's court or God's power, and the way that the inferior Others are depicted in each text. The *Gawain*-poet's shifting perspective suggests that adhering to the dominant discourse is not always as simple as it is made to seem.

The *Gawain*-poet's proximity to Wales and the Wirral, as the introduction to this thesis explained, positions him in close proximity to the contemporary colonial projects in Wales. As this first chapter suggested, it seems reasonable to suspect that the poet was directly connected, in some form, to these colonial projects, and that this relationship was one influenced by both the ideology of England as a colonizing power, and a knowledge of Welsh resistance and resentment in response to England's eventual conquest of their

territory. But the poet's perspective is not coherent, and is complicated by the taking up of various subject positions as Gawain and Jonah's journeys progress.

The presence of multiple subject positions in each text speaks directly to the ambivalence of the colonial experience, and the difficulties associated with adherence to, or attempted denial of, the dominant discourse. In *SGGK*, for example, the original relationship between dominant Camelot and inferior Wales is articulated through the conflict between King Arthur and the Green Knight at the Christmas feast. But the more the *Gawain*-poet describes the Green Knight, the more power is afforded to him (*SGGK* 246-247). *Patience* makes a similar distinction between Israel and the Ninevites, where Israel, and by extension Jonah, represents the superior, and the Ninevites and their lack of moral decorum categorize them as the inferior, barbaric Others. However, like Gawain, the further Jonah moves from this superior space, the more his role reverses from dominant to vulnerable. The Ninevites refuse to accept their fate as sinners, and instead perfectly repent, modifying their behaviour to seamlessly align with the expectations of their God. Unlike the Ninevites, the more Jonah rebels, the further he slips into the role of the inferior Other in need of reformation. The boundaries separating the colonizer from the colonized are never concretely established.

By identifying that this is a consistent and unique component of the *Gawain*-poet's voice, a new way to read these poems is presented. Searching for ambivalence in *SGGK* and *Patience*, at the levels of the character, the narrator, and the texts themselves, connects the *Gawain*-poet to the English-Welsh colonial relationship in an unexpected way. Proximity to the colonial relationship does not necessarily dictate that his perspective will perfectly align with the colonizers'. Instead, the *Gawain*-poet's perspective is coloured by perhaps inadvertent, but nonetheless identifiable, questioning of the decisions of the

colonizer's agenda. More than this, the slippage found in the *Gawain*-poet's writing, especially as it pertains to the perspectives of Gawain and Jonah as representatives of the dominant discourse, indicates that colonization was not just difficult for those colonial objects forced to succumb to the colonizer's force. As Chapter 2 described, and as the sections on diaspora in Chapters 4 and 5 emphasize, identity struggles are produced not just as a result of a colonial object's forced conversion to the dominant system; the colonial subject is also subjected to such struggles, and Gawain and Jonah are exemplary of this.

Postcolonial theory, as described in Chapter 3, teaches us that the dominant discourse is constantly challenged by both the colonial object's unstable and always changing sense of selfhood, and their inability to wholly adhere to the dominant discourse. Where 'diaspora' helps to uncover the individual's experience grappling with an identity that is linked both to their place of origin and their current space of occupation, or with the culture and traditions they once subscribed to, and the imposing colonizer's culture and traditions, 'ambivalence' recognizes and gives name to those perspectives that on the surface adhere to the colonial discourse, but below the surface simultaneously question it.

Despite some scholars' vocalizing their concerns that the application of postcolonial theory onto periods outside its own creation risks anachronism, I have demonstrated that these theories can successfully be isolated from the experiences that created them, and be applied respectfully to periods that are further illuminated and better understood by adopting a postcolonial gaze. Scholars such as Ingham and Arner have successfully done so, and their approaches to analyzing *SGGK* largely informed the postcolonial reading practice employed in this thesis.

While the identification of constructs described in Hall and Bhabha's theories in *SGGK* easily links this poem to the English-Welsh colonial conflict as the fourteenth

century drew to a close, *Patience* makes no direct references to England, to the Welsh Marches, to the Wirral, or to any recognizable geographic place name that directly connects the poem to this same history. On its own, *Patience*'s structure, although a mere manipulation of the traditional biblical story of Jonah, offers the opportunity for postcolonial analysis based solely on Jonah's relationship to Israel and God, and the depiction of the Ninevites as a barbaric people in need of reformation. *Patience*'s connection to *SGGK*—written together in the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript, and largely believed to have been composed by the same poet (Andrew and Waldron, "Introduction" 5)—offers the opportunity to consider the two texts as different reactions to the same historical issue. Their respective colonial discourses, and the ambivalences present within each poem, directly connect *Patience* to the historical reflections of *SGGK*, and as such, to the colonial history of England and Wales.

Because of this, one might look to both *SGGK* and *Patience* not just as commentary on colonization and its effects, but also as exemplary of colonial pushback, a subtle vocalization by the *Gawain*-poet that one's ability to adhere to the dominant discourse, in whatever context this discourse exists, is troubled by the nature of the human experience in its varying forms, and the ways in which an individual's inherent vulnerability trumps his ability to devote himself fully to the expectations of the colonizer.

In the introduction to this thesis, I asked, how does one know where history ends, and story begins? How can we identify when the literature of the medieval period speaks to historical (colonial) experience, rather than merely existing as a reiteration of a fictitious fantasy adhering to Arthurian tradition, or of a biblical retelling of a well-known story? Whereas the modern colonial experience produced a plethora of postcolonial literatures that pushed back against the empire, the medieval colonial experience lacks these explicit

contradictions to colonial rule.

Although our knowledge of medieval colonization, specifically as it pertains to England's colonization of Wales, is considerably extensive, it lacks these overt voices writing back to the medieval empire that have made theorizing the postcolonial perspective in the twenty-first century a possibility. What we have to rely on, in the medieval colonial world, is only the literature produced at this time. The answer to my introductory question—is the significance of these smaller-scale colonial projects somehow diminished because of the scale of these projects impact?—is perhaps best answered by considering that the impact of colonization on the general populations witnessing it in the medieval period was much more illusive than its modern-day counterpart, and that these fictitious poems encompass all that we know of the author's response to colonization.

If we consider *SGGK* and *Patience* as literary examples of colonial pushback, however subtle this pushback may be, then we need not concern ourselves with where history ends, and story begins; ultimately, one influences, and is inflected by, the other. *SGGK* contributes to the well-known Arthurian storytelling tradition, but its contents are inflected by the history surrounding the *Gawain*-poet during its composition. *Patience* recounts Jonah's biblical adventure, but subtle manipulations by the *Gawain*-poet connect *Patience* to *SGGK*, and in subtle ways, to this same colonial history. As the preceding analysis of *SGGK* and *Patience* have identified, both Gawain and Jonah experience and represent the difficulties associated with colonization and its effects. What these analyses of *SGGK* and *Patience* here demonstrate is that there is still much to learn about medieval colonization, and how its effects have been articulated, however subtly, in its literature.

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