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The Arctic Arthur and the American Avalon: John Dee's *Brytanici imperii limites* (1578) and the North Atlantic island imaginary

Ben Stewart

The British polymath John Dee (1527-1608/1609) was one of his country's foremost experts in international law.[1] In May 1578, he presented Queen Elizabeth (r. 1558-1603) his legal argument for the British colonization of the Americas: *Brytanici imperii limites*.[2] The *Limites* consists of four documents, compiled into a vellum-bound quarto in 1593.[3] Documents I and II provide brief commentaries on specific geographical reforms. Document III itemizes real and alleged transatlantic voyages between 530 and 1577 that Dee considered precedents for British colonization. Alongside the recent voyages of John Cabot, Sebastian Cabot, Stephen Borough, and Martin Frobisher, Dee cites several mythic precedents: the Welsh prince Madoc, the Irish St. Brendan, and the British king Malgo. But, as he concludes in document IV, the British claim to North America would 'depende cheiflie vppon our Kinge *Arthur* his wonderfull foreyn conquests'. Here, Dee assembles his textual evidence, including the narrative of Arthur's northern expedition, to 'conjure' Elizabeth's 'iust Arthurien clayme': a restored British empire from the Russian border to Florida.[4]

Mary C. Fuller proposes that, with its Scandinavian kingdoms and North Atlantic islands, Dee's Arctic conquest narrative corresponds more closely to a 'Viking or Norse empire (if the term applies to such a decentralized phenomenon)' than to any British or Roman one.[5] Caitlin

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[1] N. J. Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the Elizabethan expedition* (Cham 2020) 18.

[2] K. MacMillan & J. Abeles eds., *John Dee. The limits of the British empire* (Westport, CT 2004).

[3] K. MacMillan, 'John Dee's "Brytanici imperii limites"', *Huntington library quarterly* 64:1&2 (2001) 151-159: 152.; K. MacMillan, 'Introduction. Discourse on history, geography, and law' in MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 1-29: 4.

[4] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 43, 83.; B. Zeiders, 'Conjuring history. The premodern origins and post-truth legacy of John Dee's *Brytanici imperii limites*', *Journal of medieval and early modern studies* 49:2 (2019) 378-401: 377-378.

[5] M. C. Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?' in: Jyotsna G. Singh ed., *A companion to the global renaissance. English literature and culture in the era of expansion* (Malden, MA 2009) 149-162: 151.

Green notes the name 'Winlandiam' in Dee's fourth document, which she, following Lynette Muir, glosses as the Norse 'Vinland'.[6] As recorded in the thirteenth-century 'Vinland sagas', *Eiríks saga rauða* and the *Groenlandinga saga*, Norse Greenlanders crossed the Atlantic around the year 1000 and established some temporary settlements in North America.[7] Since the 1960 excavation by Norwegian archaeologists Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine Ingstad, the Viking campsite at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, is the only location where a Norse presence in the Americas - Greenland excepted - has been firmly attested by archaeological evidence.[8]

Fuller also connects Dee's Arthurian legend with the Avalon peninsula in Newfoundland, named for the mythical island in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (c. 1136-1138). At the opposite end of the island from L'Anse aux Meadows, the Avalon peninsula was 'the earliest focus for English activities on the island': Britain's first landfall, temporary settlement, and permanent settlement in the Americas.[9]

In her influential book *Firsting and lasting*, Jean M. O'Brien develops a typology of colonial practices by which New England settlers appropriated indigeneity from natives, enabling themselves to treat the lands to which they had arrived as *terra nullius*.[10] Nathan Probasco has already implicated Dee and his colleagues in a colonial discourse of 'firsting', erasing the island's Beothuk and Mi'kmaq inhabitants.[11] The renaming of the peninsula engages the next stage of O'Brien's model. Between 'firsting' and 'lasting', there is 'replacement', partly accomplished through the renaming of places.[12]

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[6] T. Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the conquest of the north', *Heroic age* 15 (2012) 11.

[7] A. Winroth, *The age of the Vikings* (Princeton, NJ 2014) 68-69.

[8] B. Wallace, 'The Norse in Newfoundland. L'Anse aux Meadows and Vinland', *Newfoundland studies* 19:1 (2003) 5-43: 10-11.

[9] Fuller, "Where was Iceland in 1600?", 160-161. The relevant locations and years are: first landfall, near St. John's, 1497; first temporary settlement, Harbour Grace, 1583; first permanent settlement, Cuper's Cove, 1610.

[10] J. M. O'Brien, *Firsting and lasting. Writing Indians out of existence in New England* (Minneapolis, MN 2010) 1-53. See also L. Beck, 'Introduction. Firsting and the architecture of decolonizing scholarship on the early-modern Atlantic world' in: idem ed., *Firsting in the early-modern Atlantic world* (New York, NY 2020) 1-22.

[11] N. Probasco, "John Dee, Humphrey Gilbert, and Richard Hakluyt's erasure of Native Americans" in: Beck ed., *Firsting in the early-modern Atlantic world* 25-49: 25-26.

[12] On Beothuk and Mi'kmaq place-names, see E. R. Seary, *Place names of the Avalon peninsula of the island of Newfoundland* (Toronto 1971) 18-33.

Placenames 'do important cultural work regarding history'; the 'systematic renaming of the landscape' constitutes a settler-colonial 'replacement narrative'—literally *re-placing*.[13] In Mi'kmaw, the island is called Ktaqmkuk: 'across the waves/water'.[14] Settlers re-placed Ktaqmkuk as 'Newfoundland', whose name conveys the explicit element of 'discovery'. Later, in the southeast, comes the evocatively British 'Avalon'.

Fiona Polack situates Ktaqmkuk/Newfoundland within a Euromerican 'island imaginary'. This settler discourse considers 'places surrounded by water especially amenable to colonial fantasies of total control'.[15] Insularity becomes prerequisite and pretext for colonization, a recurring theme in early modern English writings on America.[16] John Dee's *General and rare memorials* (1577), which preceded the *Limites*, exemplifies this ideological tendency. Advocating the 'restoration' of 'an Incomparable *Islandish Monarchy*, as, the BRYTISH IMPIRE hath bene: Yea, as it, yet, is: or, rather, as it may, & (of right) ought to be', it naturalizes Britain's territorial encroachment on other islands as the consequence of its 'Ilandish appropriat Supremacy'.[17] The *Limites*, which 'candidly discusses the hidden meanings of the *Memorials*' for a private royal audience, thus aims at increasing the number of islands Britain can subject to its 'insular hegemony' in both Europe and America.[18]

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[13] O'Brien, *Firsting and lasting*, 56-57. See also P. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', *Journal of genocide research* 8:4 (2006) 387-409: 388-389.

[14] S. M. Manning, 'Contrasting colonisations. (Re)storying Newfoundland/Ktaqmkuk as place', *Settler colonial studies* 8:3 (2018) 1-18: 1.

[15] F. Polack, 'De-islanding the Beothuk' in: idem, ed., *Tracing ochre. Changing perspectives on the Beothuk* (Toronto 2018) 4.

[16] J. Knapp, *An empire nowhere. England, America, and literature from* Utopia *to* The tempest (Berkeley, CA 2023), 7. Cf. Geoffrey's first words in the *Historia*: 'Britain, the best of islands, is situated in the Western Ocean' ('Brittania insularum optima in occidentali occeano'); K. Lavezzo, 'The sea and border crossings in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*' in: S. I. Sobecki, ed., *The sea and Englishness in the middle ages. Maritime narratives, identity, and culture* (Cambridge 2011) 113-132: 116.

[17] J. Dee, *General and rare memorials pertaining to the perfect arte of nauigation* (London 1577), 3, 59.

[18] G. Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire in its European context', *The historical journal* 49:3 (2006) 643-675: 646-647.; P. C. Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies. Arthurian romance and the making of Britain* (Philadelphia, PA 2001) 48.

The present study attends to the enlistment of folklore and mythology in ongoing processes of settler-colonialism.[19] Following a brief introduction to the Tudor-era reception of King Arthur, it surveys various textual influences, Norse and otherwise, on Dee's Arctic myth. Through the combined reading of primary and secondary texts, it ascribes to Vinland a greater influence on the *Limites* than has been previously suggested, drawing attention to one passage in particular which has received insufficient scholarly attention. Dee's Arthurian speculations are then considered as intellectual background for the naming of the Avalon peninsula—a connection proposed, but never substantially explored, in previous studies. Above both questions hangs a methodological concern: to what extent do attempts to triangulate John Dee, the Avalon peninsula, and Vinland 'engage in the manufacture of the myth they pretend to analyze'?[20] Advocating caution, this study finds the relation between Dee's Arthur and Newfoundland's Avalon more discursive than empirical, both drawing on the 'island imaginary' of British maritime expansion. The study concludes with the suggestion that Dee's method of historical 'conjuration' anticipates later Anglo-American approaches to Vinland.[21]

Arthurian Myth in Tudor England and Wales

Continued scholarly interest in Dee's '"empire recovery" texts' is best understood through their engagement in the manufacture of British imperial ideology.[22] Although Dee is 'traditionally credited with coining' the term 'British empire', the Welsh antiquarian Humphrey Llwyd (1527-1568) may

[19] Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', 388-390.; J. K. Kauanui, '"A structure, not an event". Settler colonialism and enduring indigeneity', *Lateral* 5:1 (2016).; O'Brien, *Firsting and lasting*, 206.
[20] R. Slotkin, *Regeneration through violence. The mythology of the American frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, CT 1973) 4.
[21] Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 380.; A. Kolodny, *In search of first contact. The Vikings of Vinland, the peoples of Dawnland, and the Anglo-American anxiety of discovery* (Durham 2012); C. Crocker, 'What we talk about when we talk about Vínland. History, whiteness, indigenous erasure, and the early Norse presence in Newfoundland', *Canadian journal of history / Annales canadiennes d'histoire* 55:1-2 (2020) 91-122.; W. Cleaves, 'From Monmouth to Madoc to Māori. The myth of medieval colonization and an indigenous alternative', *English language notes* 58:2 (2020) 21-34: 25.
[22] Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 380.

have actually preceded him. Both Dee and Llwyd conceived of the empire as something intrinsically Arthurian.[23] Even Glyn Parry, whose 'revisionist' scholarship argues against stereotyping Dee's work 'within the tropes of British oceanic ideology, Atlantic exploration, and American discovery', admits that Dee's thalassocratic 'British empire' meant the 'restored Empire of Arthur, King of the Britons'.[24]

Dee was 'somewhat obsessed with Arthur,' even naming his firstborn son after him.[25] This fixation likely relates to Arthur's status as a Welsh cultural hero. Dee took great pride in his Welsh heritage, and it appears this informed his reading of Geoffrey's *Historia*.[26] For Elizabeth, he authored a speculative genealogy intended to prove that the queen was descended from Arthur and other Welsh royals.[27] This family tree also incorporated Madoc, whom Dee believed—again following Llwyd—had crossed the Atlantic and established a tribe of 'Welsh Indians' in the twelfth century.[28] The myths of Madoc and the Arctic Arthur served to write Britain into North America's imagined past, thereby naturalizing their presence there in the present.[29] Yet Dee's Arthurian 'conjurations' may have also had a more immediate, pragmatic motive. With his promotion of the Arthurian theme, Dee

[23] Sherman, *John Dee*, 148.; B. W. Henry, 'John Dee, Humphrey Llwyd, and the name "British empire,"' *Huntington library quarterly* 35 (1972) 189-190.; P. Roberts, 'Tudor Wales, national identity and the British inheritance' in: B. Bradshaw & P. Roberts eds., *British consciousness and identity. The making of Brtiain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge 1998) 8-42: 23-27.; D. Armitage, *The ideological origins of the British empire* (Cambridge 2004) 46-47.

[24] Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 8.; Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 644.; G. Parry, *Arch-conjuror of England* (New Haven, CT 2011) 94.

[25] Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 27 n28.

[26] P. Russell, '"Divers evidences antient of some Welsh princes." Dr. John Dee and the Welsh context of the reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in sixteenth-century England and Wales', in H. Tetrel & G. Veysseyre eds., *L'Historia regum Britannie et les "bruts" en Europe. Production, circulation et réception (xiiᵉ-xviᵉ siècle)* (Paris 2018) 395-426: 397, 404-407.

[27] Sherman, *John Dee*, 10.

[28] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 43-44.; Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 27. See also G. A. Williams, *Madoc. The making of a myth* (London 1979).

[29] Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 25-29.

simultaneously 'promotes his continued presence at court': if Elizabeth was Arthur, then who else but Dee could be her Merlin?[30]

Although the Tudors shared Dee's Welsh background, the question of Arthur's Tudor-era reception is divided by major historiographical disagreement.[31] Even the most conservative writers accept that Henry VII's (r. 1485-1509) resemblance to the *mab darogan* provoked great prophetic excitement amongst the bards of Wales.[32] The continuation of the dynasty under Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547) complicates matters. Henry's schism with the Church bred the myth's unfavorable associations with 'Catholic' superstition. A wide swath of the English public now proclaimed its disbelief in Arthur's historicity, a demythologizing tendency exemplified by Polydore Vergil (c. 1470-1555), whom Dee despised.[33] For English Catholics, the tragedy of Arthur poignantly evoked the shuttering of Glastonbury Abbey in 1539, one of the last three abbeys to be suppressed.[34] Hardly the 'supreme exemplar of a distinctively Protestant imperialism', it is to this Catholic context that Dee and his Arthurian empire properly belong.[35]

Impressions conflict about the Arthur of the mid-sixteenth century. Some historians emphasize the myth's decline in Britain, claiming that the

[30] Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 378. This case of Renaissance self-fashioning should not be confused with history itself; Sherman rightly rejects the enduring notion, lodged in 'both the scholarly and the popular imagination', that Dee was 'the reincarnation of Merlin at the Tudor court'. Sherman, *John Dee*, xii.

[31] For a good overview of this discussion, see J. P. Carley, 'Arthur and the antiquaries' in: S. Echard ed., *The Arthur of medieval Latin literature. The development and dissemination of the Arthurian legend in medieval Latin* (Cardiff 2011) 149-178: 149-150.

[32] S. Anglo, 'The *British history* in early Tudor propaganda', *Bulletin of the John Rylands library* 44:1 (1961) 17-48: 20. The *mab darogan* ('son of prophecy') is the 'messianic figure of the Sovereign returned… variously and repeatedly identified with Arthur Pendragon'. Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 5, 72, 198.

[33] Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 392.

[34] C. Cusack, 'The Glastonbury thorn in vernacular Christianity and popular tradition', *Journal for the study of religion, nature and culture* 12:2 (2018) 307-326: 309, 313.; P. Hayward, 'Multiple Avalons. Place naming practices and a mythical Arthurian island', *Island studies journal* 17:2 (2022) 126-142: 131.

[35] Dee took Catholic orders at Louvain in 1548, and took part in the interrogation of Protestant martyrs under Edmund Bonner, the bishop of London (d. 1569). Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 644-645, 649.

Tudors' Habsburg rivals utilized Arthuriana to greater effect at this time.[36] Yet others adduce examples of Arthurian iconography under Henry VIII, evoking Arthur's legendary status as an 'imperial rival' to Rome.[37] Under Elizabeth, Arthur supposedly 're-emerged' - yet this period also marked Arthur's 'migration' from history to fiction, most famously accomplished in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie queene* (1590; 1596).[38] Dee's insistence on the historicity of Arthur marks him as an exceptional figure in this context. The Welsh background that informed his argument makes him an even more atypical case.[39]

What seems clear, however, is the relevance of *Arthurus imperator* as a symbol of territorial expansion.[40] Official historians used Arthur's conquests and other Galfridian material to justify English invasions of Ireland, echoing earlier propaganda by Gerald of Wales (1146-1223). Dee's claims even made their way into Spenser's *View of the present state of Ireland* (c. 1596).[41] In 1597, Dee invoked Arthur's conquest of Norway to defend British sovereignty over Scotland.[42] Yet other writers inverted the same myths to criticize the empire: John Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587) portrays a king undone by

[36] S. Anglo, *Images of Tudor kingship* (Surrey 1992), 45-55.; Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 649.

[37] S. Mottram, "'An empire of itself'. Arthur as an icon of an English empire, 1509-1547' in: E. Archibald & D. F. Johnson, eds., *Arthurian literature xxv* (Cambridge 2008) 153-173: 167-168.; Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?', 151. See also Lavezzo, 'Sea and border crossings', 121-124.

[38] Carley, 'Arthur and the antiquaries', 150.; D. A. Summers, 'Re-fashioning Arthur in the Tudor era', *Exemplaria* 9:2 (1997) 371-392. See also C. Artese, 'King Arthur in America. Making space in history for *The faerie queene* and John Dee's *Brytanici imperii limites*', *Journal of medieval and early modern studies* 33:1 (2003) 125-141: 127-136.; Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 228.

[39] Authors who doubted Arthur's historicity usually emphasized his Welshness, whereas his Englishness was generally associated with those who insisted on it. Dismissals of the "Welsh" Arthur likely related to English fears about the rebellious "madness" induced by Welsh vaticinatory poetry and the so-called 'Breton Hope'. Mottram, "'An empire of itself'", 168-169.; Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 51-53.

[40] Carley, 'Arthur and the antiquaries', 152.

[41] A. Hadfield, 'Briton and Scythian. Tudor representation of Irish origins', *Irish historical studies* 28:112 (1993), 390-408: 390, 392, 398.; Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?', 151.

[42] Carley, 'Arthur and the antiquaries', 164.

overreaching imperial ambition.[43] For Dee, however, the Arthurian inheritance represented a straightforward means for Elizabeth to reappropriate her mythic ancestor to British imperial ends.[44]

Lastly, Arthur had a perceived astrological significance which might have made the 'Arctic Arthur' an almost self-evident prospect. The sympathy of 'Arthur' with the celestial 'Arcturus' held significant currency in Tudor England—a prominent motif, for example, in the royal pageants of 1498, 1501, and 1610.[45] Although Dee does not mount such an argument himself, in the *Limites* he reprints two passages which use the name 'Arcturus' for Arthur.[46] Moreover, he and his contemporaries saw occult sciences such as alchemy and astrology as intrinsically linked with royal authority.[47] It seems doubtful that Dee, arguably the highest-ranking astrologer in England, would have missed the resonance.[48]

The Arctic Arthur

Arthur's conquest of the northern isles originates from the *Historia regum Britanniae*. According to Geoffrey, Arthur ruled over Ireland, Iceland, Gotland, Orkney, Norway, and Denmark.[49] From one perspective, this Scandinavian scene might suggest that Geoffrey presented Arthur 'as a

[43] P. Schwyzer, 'King Arthur and the Tudor dynasty' in: J. Parker & C. Wagner eds., *The Oxford handbook of Victorian medievalism* (New York, NY 2020) 23-33: 31.
[44] Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 649.
[45] S. Anglo, *Spectacle pageantry and early Tudor policy* (Oxford 1969), 54-56, 59-63, 73-80.; R. Gossedge & S. Knight, 'The Arthur of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries' in: E. Archibald & A. Putter eds., *The Cambridge companion to the Arthurian legend* (Cambridge 2009) 103-119: 104.; Schwyzer, 'King Arthur and the Tudor dynasty', 26. See also N. J. Higham, *King Arthur. The making of the legend* (New Haven, CT 2018), 117-145.
[46] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 67, 135 n52. The passages in question are taken from works by Werner Rolevinck (1425-1502) and Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516).
[47] G. Parry, 'John Dee, alchemy and authority in Elizabethan England' in: M. Harmes & V. Bladen eds., *Supernatural and secular power in early modern England* (Farnham 2015) 17-40. One of Dee's first services to Elizabeth was the casting of a horoscope for her coronation date, 15 January 1559. Parry, *Arch-conjuror of England*, 48-49.
[48] On Dee's astrological career, see also R. Dunn, 'John Dee and astrology in Elizabethan England' in: S. Clucas ed., *John Dee. Interdisciplinary studies in English renaissance thought* (Dordrecht 2006) 85-94: 93.
[49] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 68-69.

Norman-style king with a Viking heritage', playing to his courtly patrons.[50] But two centuries of Viking occupation preceded the Norman invasion; thus the early modern 'Arctic Arthur' may have also served to 'explain in nationally favorable terms an actual history of Norse and Danish conquest'.[51] Drawing extensively on William Lambarde's *Archaionomia* (1568), Dee argues that just as English laws survived the Danish conquest, and Danish laws survived the Norman one, Arthur's title to the northern islands remained valid.[52] Accordingly, a discernible strategy of 'islanding' informs Dee's designs on both American and European territory.[53] His Scandinavian focus presents a potential interface with Norse 'islomania'.[54] On the authority of Pliny and Solinus, Dee claims that 'a greate parte of Norway may be called an iland, and *Denmark* (…) hath of some byn estemed an ile'. Even Scandinavia itself is technically an island, he says, on account of being encircled by rivers.[55]

The *Limites* draws on Norse-inspired embellishments to expand the number of countries that constitute Britain's 'insular wholeness'.[56] As an American island appended to the imaginary Norse 'empire', it seems reasonable to expect that the appearance of Vinland in Dee's text would underpin his 'islanding' argument. Yet the name occurs just once, in a passage lifted directly from the *Archaionomia*.[57] Here Lambarde draws from a section of the *Leges edwardi confessoris* (c. 1130-1135) that was expanded with extensive quotations from the later *Leges anglorum londoniis collectae* (c. 1210). The anonymous author of the *Leges anglorum*, known only to scholars as 'The Londoner', embellishes Arthur's conquest of the north with a number of lands unmentioned by Geoffrey, including a place called 'Wynelandiam'.[58] Lynette Muir traces 'Wynelandiam' to Adam of Bremen's *Gesta hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (c. 1075), lending considerable support to the 'Vinland'

[50] Gossedge & Knight, 'Arthur of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries', 111-112. On the Anglo-Norman colonial context of Geoffrey's *Historia*, see Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 38-50.; Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 25-26.
[51] Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?', 153.
[52] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 89-90, 138-139 n91.
[53] Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 646.
[54] Gillis, *Islands of the mind*, 48-50.
[55] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 59.
[56] Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 7-10, 15.
[57] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 57, 130 n20.; L. Muir, 'King Arthur's northern conquests in the *Leges anglorum londoniis collectae*', *Medium ævum* 37:3 (1968) 253-262: 254.; Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur…', 7-8.
[58] Muir, 'King Arthur's northern conquests', 253-255.

interpretation. In Adam's fourth book, the *Descriptio insularum aquilonis*, the Danish king Sven Estridsen (r. 1047-1076) informs him 'of yet another island of the many found in that ocean', the island 'called Vinland'. Speaking 'not from fabulous reports but from the trustworthy relation of the Danes', the king paints Vinland an island lush with vines and unsown crops.[59] Past it no navigation is possible, given 'impenetrable ice and intense darkness'.[60]

Although the *Limites* name Vinland as one of many north Atlantic islands subjected to Arthur, they show no knowledge of a connection between it and 'Newefound lande'. Clearly unacquainted with the Norse sagas as texts, Dee states outright that 'no historie or recorde (yet in our hands) doth make mention of any other prince or potentate his conquests, discoverys, or saylinge beyond *Groenland*, from [Arthur's] tyme (about Anno 520) till within these 200 yeares last past'. The Norse voyages around 1000 and their thirteenth-century records are apparently ruled out.[61] Yet the *Limites* also expresses Dee's 'reasonable hope (…) that out of some libraries, publique or private, in *Norwaye, Denmarke, or Sweden*' more evidence may emerge.[62] It seems reasonable to conclude that, although the *Limites* finally furnish one example in which Vinland is leveraged to support Dee's colonial aims, Muir is probably correct that the Norse sagas were unknown to him.

In the same passage that names Vinland, Lambarde credits Arthur with Christianizing Norway.[63] Muir suggests 'The Londoner' adapted this detail from Adam's relation of the deeds of Olaf Tryggvason, king of Norway (r. 995-1000).[64] Olaf was the first of two kings who undertook Norway's conversion, the other being his namesake Olaf Haraldsson (r. 1015-1030). According to twelfth-century accounts, Olaf Tryggvason was a zealous missionary king who also converted the Shetlands, Orkneys, Faroes, and Iceland. Olaf also sent Leif Eiríksson as his emissary to convert Greenland.[65]

[59] Cf. K. Kunz, 'Eirik the red's saga', in G. Sigurðsson ed., *The Vinland sagas* (London 2008) 23-50: 35.
[60] Adam of Bremen, *History of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. F. J. Tschan (New York, NY 2002 [1959]), 219-220.
[61] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 46-47.
[62] Ibidem, 52.
[63] Ibidem, 57.
[64] Muir, 'King Arthur's northern conquests', 256-257, 259.; Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the conquest of the north', 11.
[65] Kunz, 'Eirik the red's saga', 34-35.

All these northern islands appear as territories Dee claims were conquered by Arthur.[66]

It becomes tempting, then, to conclude that Dee's Arthur 'really' represents Olaf Tryggvason, with the Christianizing king taking credit for his envoy's discovery. But the legendary attribution of historical events to Arthur follows after a 'general pattern of medieval historicization'; we might say 'The Londoner' uses Olaf as a 'scaffold for historicization', much as the *Historia Britonnum* (c. 828) did Ambrosius Aurelianus.[67] The safest conclusion is that Dee participates in a British 'island imaginary', combining assorted facts and fables to construct America as best serves his 'colonial fantasies of total control'.[68] Any influence the Vinland narrative exerted on the *Limites* was necessarily mediated by a succession of other texts. It is somewhat remarkable, then, that their basic narratives exert such an influence—independently of the name 'Vinland'.

The *Groenlandinga saga* disagrees with *Eiríks saga rauða*, claiming it was not Leif Eiríksson but Bjarni Herjólfsson who first accidentally sailed to Vinland. Bjarni, too, had intended to sail for Greenland.[69] The differing accounts present a rough congruence with the third document of the *Limites*, which claims the island 'Grocland (beyond *Groenland*) did receive his inhabitantes (a colonye of *Swedens* the most parte) sent by Kinge Arthur'.[70] The placement of this Norse settlement 'beyond *Groenland*' immediately evokes the voyage to Vinland.

After establishing themselves in Grocland, Arthur's Swedes expand to the neighboring island of Estotiland. Dee takes its name from the tale of the 'noble *Venetians*' Nicolò and Antonio Zen, which he presented to Elizabeth at Windsor Castle in 1577.[71] A descendant of these elder Zeni, also named Nicolò Zen (1515-1565), published an account of his ancestors' travels entitled *Dello scoprimento* (1558). The text alleged that in the late fourteenth century its author's kinsmen had sailed to islands in the northwest Atlantic

[66] S. Bagge, 'The making of a missionary king. The medieval accounts of Olaf Tryggvason and the conversion of Norway', *The journal of English and Germanic philology* 105:4 (2006) 473-513: 474-475.; MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 46.
[67] T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud 2007), 204-205.; Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the conquest of the north', 11-12.
[68] Polack, 'De-islanding the Beothuk', 4.
[69] K. Kunz, trans. 'Saga of the Greenlanders', in Sigurðsson, *Vinland sagas* 1-21: 4-7.
[70] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 46-47.
[71] Ibidem, 5, 10, 37-38, 46-47, 125-126 n2.

under the tutelage of an enigmatic figure called 'Zichmni'. Working within the Venetian *isolario* tradition, Zen's description of the north Atlantic belongs less to empirical cartography and more to an early modern 'island imaginary'.[72] Yet many early modern cartographers interpolated its associated *carta de navegar* , introducing the 'phantom islands' Estotiland, Frisland, Icaria, and Drogio to their maps.[73] Dee carries these over to the *Limites*, proposing new locations for Estotiland and Drogio.[74] On Zen's authority, he claims later that 'Latin books (…) of Christian religion' had been found in Estotiland, adding the possibility that they had been sent there by Arthur.[75]

Dee's source for Grocland was the Dutch cartographer Gerhard Mercator (1512-1594). Mercator's world map of 1569 depicts Grocland as an island west of Greenland (Fig. 1). The cartouche on its detailed inset of the Arctic circle refers to the Arctic myth of Arthur.[76] On 20 April 1577, Mercator sent a response to Dee's inquiries about the Arctic, of which Dee would reprint large portions in document IV of the *Limites*. The letter is primarily a transcript, with occasional Latin abridgements, from a Belgic itinerary by Jacobus Cnoyen van Tsertoghenbosche. An alleged world-traveler 'like Mandeville', Cnoyen reports on the Arctic region, including a relation of King Arthur's northern conquests. He claims that Arthur 'peopled' Grocland, but soon indicates the island was 'peopled' already by inhabitants '23 feet tall'.[77]

[72] E. Horodowich, 'Venetians in America. Nicolò Zen and the virtual exploration of the new world', *Renaissance quarterly* 67:3 (2014) 841-877: 868. On the *isolario* tradition, see Gillis, *Islands of the mind*, 42-43.
[73] Horodowich, 'Venetians in America', 843.
[74] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 37-38.
[75] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 46.; Horodowich, 'Venetians in America', 842, 858.
[76] M. Milanesi, "'Intentio totius cosmographiae'", in G. Holzer, V. Newby, P. Svatek & G. Zotti eds., *A world of innovation. Cartography in the time of Gerhard Mercator* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2015) 131-145: 139.
[77] Taylor, 'A letter dated 1577', 57-58, 61.

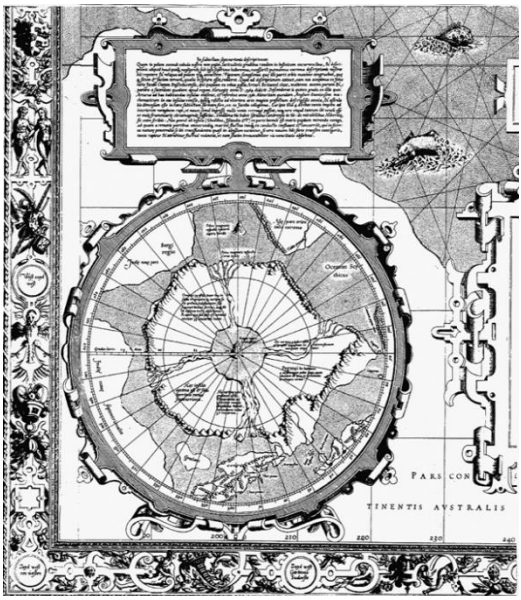

Fig. 1. Inset of the Arctic circle from Gerardus Mercator's 1569 world map. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

In his English annotations upon the 1577 letter, Dee tentatively equates Grocland and Greenland, given the close resemblance of their names. [78] This hypothesis is supported by the description of 'a people of small stature', whom some scholars correlate with Thule, or paleo-Inuit, people. [79] Arthur's two northern expeditions might parallel Eirik the Red's scouting and settlement of Greenland. [80] But, seeing as the third document of the *Limites* describes Grocland as an island 'beyond *Groenland*', Dee must have abandoned this interpretation. [81] His 1582 map of the Arctic confirms this, presenting Grocland as an island to the west of Greenland in conformity with Mercator.[82] The placement of the 'Indrawing Sea' beyond Grocland echoes Adam's warning about navigation past Vinland. [83] Still, proclaiming Vinland the 'real' Grocland seems little better than the earlier

[78] Ibidem, 57-58.

[79] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 84.; K. A. Seaver, "'Pygmies" of the far north', *Journal of world history* 19:1 (2008) 63-87: 83-84.; Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the conquest of the north', 10.

[80] R. A. Skelton, T. E. Marston & G. D. Painter, *The Vinland map and the Tartar relation* (New Haven, CT 1965) 244.; Muir, 'King Arthur's northern conquests', 258-259.; Green, 'John Dee, King Arthur, and the conquest of the north', 10-11. Cf. Kunz, 'Eirik the red's saga', 27-28.

[81] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 46.

[82] Ibidem, 36.

[83] Taylor, 'A letter dated 1577', 58.; Tschan, *History of the bishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, 219-220.

equation with Greenland. Grocland, Estotiland, and the like are 'phantom islands', precisely because they do not correspond to any real geographic location.

It seems reasonable to accept the hypotheses of Green and Fuller: the Arthurian narrative of the *Limites* borrows indirectly from the Norse sagas to construct precedent for a British empire in North America and Europe. Despite Dee's unfamiliarity with the sagas themselves and his nonrecognition of the name 'Vinland', the idea of Scandinavian exploration and colonization of islands 'beyond *Groenland*' apparently reached him, albeit mediated by the myth of Arthur. The Galfridian tradition provided one fantasy of 'insular return' to subsume all the islands of the 'Viking or Norse empire'—sometimes stretching the definition of 'island' - into Britain's 'insular wholeness'.[84] As Charlotte Artese explains: 'Dee's project was (…) to find a history between England and America at a time when America had no European history'.[85] Like his nineteenth-century counterparts, he sought this history, however foggily, in the Norse expeditions to Vinland.[86]

The American Avalon

Dee once considered traveling to Newfoundland himself, but no such voyage was ever realized.[87] He was closely involved, however, with the preparations for Humphrey Gilbert's (d. 1583) voyage. Holding letters patent 'to discover searche finde out and viewe such remote heathen and barbarous lands countries and territories not actually possessed of any Christian prince of people', Gilbert captained a fleet of three ships—HMS *Squirrel*, *Delight*, and *Golden Hinde*—to Norumbega, the northeastern region below the St.

[84] Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 40.; Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?', 151.
[85] Artese, 'King Arthur in America', 137.
[86] See the section below entitled 'The Anglo-American Viking romance'.
[87] R. Baldwin, 'John Dee's interest in the application of nautical science, mathematics and law to English naval affairs' in: Clucas, *John Dee*, 97-130: 106.

Lawrence River, in the summer of 1583.[88] Stopping over in the 're-provisioning station' of Newfoundland, Gilbert performed the 'turf and twig' ceremony of English common law to assert possession over the island.[89] This was England's first colonial endeavor any further abroad than Ireland, where Gilbert had distinguished himself as a brutal oppressor.[90]

Until his departure to the European continent later that year, Dee had made a career in England as a navigational consultant. He replaced Sebastian Cabot (c. 1474-c. 1557) at the Muscovy Company, and served as the 'primary scholarly advisor' for Martin Frobisher's (d. 1594) ill-fated expeditions for the Northwest Passage.[91] Dee began consulting Gilbert in 1577. Gilbert shared Dee's Catholic leanings and his esoteric interests; according to Andrew Hadfield, he also adhered to Dee's ideology of Arthurian restorationism.[92] But Gilbert's letters patent predated Dee's composition of the major Arthurian section of the *Limites* by a month - thus Parry argues that Gilbert could not have 'needed Dee's support' for the venture.[93] Whether he 'needed' it or not, he seems to have had it. In 1582, Dee provided Gilbert a

[88] D. B. Quinn, *The voyages and colonising enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, vol. 1 (Farnham 2010 [1938]) 188. See also K. A. Seaver, 'Norumbega and *harmonia mundi* in sixteenth-century cartography', *Imago mundi* 50 (1998) 34-58.

[89] Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 49-50.

[90] F. Klaassen, 'Ritual invocation and early modern science. The skrying experiments of Humphrey Gilbert', in C. Fanger ed., *Invoking angels. Theurgic ideas and practices, thirteenth to sixteenth centuries* (University Park, PA 2015) 341-366: 341.

[91] Baldwin, 'English naval affairs', 109-115.; W. H. Sherman, 'John Dee's Columbian encounter' in: Clucas, *John Dee*, 131-140: 132.

[92] Hadfield, 'Briton and Scythian', 391. Gilbert and Dee both belonged to a magically inclined circle of navigators and cartographers, which also included Gilbert's brother Adrian (1545-1628) and the Arctic explorer John Davis (c. 1550-1605). Adrian Gilbert had played a curious role in the angelic conversations Dee conducted with the scryer Edward Kelley (1555-1597) earlier that year, and Humphrey had performed his own 'actions with spirits' in 1568, with a seventeen-year-old Davis serving as scryer. Their convenance to discuss navigation, cartography, and metallurgy suggests an important overlap of esoteric pursuits with imperial and commercial ones. Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 8, 26-28, 86 n127.; Klaassen, 'Ritual invocation and early modern science', 341-344, 359-360.; D. E. Harkness, *John Dee's conversations with angels. Alchemy, cabala, and the end of nature* (Cambridge 1999) 52.; E. Fenton ed., *The diaries of John Dee* (Oxfordshire 1998) 54-59.; Sherman, 'John Dee's Columbian encounter', 138.

[93] Parry, *Arch-conjuror of England*, 130.

circumpolar chart featuring a relatively advanced depiction of America.[94] He also directed Gilbert toward the 'ideal location for a colony', Norumbega.[95] The supportive relationship was apparently mutual, as Gilbert had promised Dee the title to all lands north of the 50°N parallel.[96] The guarantee terminated in September 1583 with Gilbert's demise on the return trip to England, shipwrecked in the Azores.[97] Dee, humiliated again, departed for the continent to seek more stable work as an alchemist.[98]

Dee's designs on Newfoundland were never realized, yet some scholars persist in linking the Arthurian myth of the *Limites* with the naming of the Avalon peninsula.[99] The myth of Avalon originates in Geoffrey's *Historia*. The name refers to the faraway island where Arthur's sword Caliburn is forged, and where Arthur himself is conducted by maidens after his mortal wound at Camlann.[100] Gerald of Wales glossed 'Avalon' as an 'island of apples', which he correlated with Glastonbury Tor.[101] Although well-acquainted with both Geoffrey and Gerald, Dee—like his colleague Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616)—never used the name 'Avalon'.[102] Its absence from the *Limites* is especially notable given how many other mythical islands populate

[94] A. Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America. An intellectual history of English colonisation, 1500-1625* (Cambridge 2003) 44.; Baldwin, 'English naval affairs', 105.

[95] N. Probasco, 'Cartography as a tool of colonization. Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 1583 voyage to North America', *Renaissance quarterly* 67 (2014) 425-472: 431.; Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 41-42, 107-125, 231.

[96] Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 109.

[97] MacMillan, 'Discourse on history, geography, and law', 2-4.; Baldwin, 'English naval affairs', 106.

[98] Baldwin, 'English naval affairs', 108, 113.

[99] Fuller, 'Where was Iceland in 1600?', 160-161.; B. Freitag, *Hy Brasil. The metamorphosis of an island. From cartographical error to Celtic Elysium* (Amsterdam 2013), 44-51.; E. Haefeli, *Accidental pluralism. America and the religious politics of British expansion, 1497-1662* (Chicago, IL 2021) 134.

[100] L. Brinklow, 'The island mystic/que. Seeking spiritual connection in a postmodern world', in S. D. Brunn, ed., *The changing world religion map. Sacred places, identities, practices and politics* (Dordrecht 2015) 97-113: 98.

[101] Hayward, 'Multiple Avalons', 129-130.

[102] M. C. Fuller, 'Arthur and Amazons. Editing the fabulous in Hakluyt's *Principal navigations*', *The yearbook of English studies* 41:1 (2011) 173-189: 186.

Dee's 'island imaginary': Atlantis, Ophir, Thule, Antilia, and St. Brendan's.[103] The absence of Avalon may relate to Dee's condemnation of 'overbould writers (…) and other fonde fainers', among whom he counted Geoffrey, for damaging the reputation of Arthurian myth.[104] Dee had a strong conviction in the historicity of Arthur, but he also believed that the true histories had been adulterated with obvious fantasies, which made the task of refuting critics like Vergil all the more difficult.

Although Dee works from a largely Celtic imaginary, his 'Arctic Arthur' is decidedly Norse. It seems notable, then, that the name 'Avalon' should be applied to a peninsula in Newfoundland, which Norsemen explored nearly six centuries before.[105] Yet there is not much to suggest Dee identified Newfoundland with Vinland, Grocland or any other mythical island. The island appears separately, and quite accurately, on Mercator's 1569 map, labelled *Terra de bacallaos*, and Dee carries this over into his own.[106] The *Limites* uses several names, including both 'Baccalaos' and 'Newefound Lande' to describe the site of Cabot's 'discovery voyage'. Neither is equated with Vinland. Dee may have placed Newfoundland within the larger genre of mythic islands, indexing the Cabots between Madoc and St. Brendan, but the parallels stop there.[107]

The name 'Avalon' first appears in Newfoundland on John Mason's map of 1625.[108] A 1669 map by Robert Robinson applies it to the whole peninsula.[109] The name is attributed to George Calvert (1580-1632), Lord Baltimore, to whom the Crown granted part of the peninsula in 1621, and to his partner in the colonial enterprise, the Discalced Carmelite missionary Simon Stock (1576-1652).[110] In a letter to his superiors, Stock gives the only firsthand account of its naming: 'we have called it Avalon, [since] thus was

[103] G. Yewbrey, 'John Dee's "Brytish impire". "A laborious treatise" on Ophir of 1577', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld institutes* 78 (2015) 247-276. See also H. M. Jones, *O strange new world. American culture. The formative years* (New York, NY 1964 [1952]) 1-8.; Slotkin, *Regeneration through violence*, 27-30.

[104] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 53.; Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 382-383.

[105] Fuller, "Where was Iceland in 1600?", 160-161.

[106] K. Nebenzahl, *Atlas of Columbus and the great discoveries* (Chicago, IL 1990) 127.

[107] MacMillan & Abeles, *Limits*, 43-45.

[108] Codignola, *Coldest harbour*, 160 n49.

[109] O'Dea, *17th century cartography of Newfoundland*, 31.; Seary, *Place names of the Avalon peninsula*, 63.

[110] R. S. Lacy, *Burial and death in colonial North America. Exploring internment practices and landscapes in 17th-century British settlements* (Bingley 2020) 109.

named the land where Saint Joseph of Arimathea first preached the Faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Britain'.[111] In the gospels, Joseph of Arimathea claims Christ's body after the crucifixion; medieval lore adds that St. Philip sent him as a missionary to Roman Britain. Robert de Boron's poem *Joseph d'Arimathie* (c. 1190-1200) introduced him into Arthurian mythology, making him responsible for the Holy Grail's transport to Britain.[112] As Carole Cusack interprets it, the Joseph myth reimagines England as the center of a Christian world to which it had previously been peripheral.[113] By applying the name 'Avalon' to the first English colony in the Americas, Calvert and Stock center Newfoundland in a new myth of origins within the English island imaginary.[114]

Evan Haefeli draws an explicit parallel between Calvert's colony and Dee's *Limites*: 'Avalon was a patriotic name, but it was not particularly Protestant. Like John Dee's British empire, it was a nationalist evocation of early Christian England'. Given Arthur's 'well-known Catholic resonances', previous interventions have emphasized the denominational meaning of this name.[115] After resigning as secretary of state in 1625, Calvert publicly declared himself a Catholic, announcing that his colony would practice religious tolerance.[116] Parry argues that, for Dee, Arthur provided a similarly 'careful avoidance of confessional definition for his concept of empire'.[117] Although nothing suggests Calvert or Stock relied on Dee's 'Arctic Arthur' narrative to justify colonization, it seems reasonable that a similar Arthurian *imperium* would have informed their naming of Avalon. Like Gilbert, Calvert arrived in Newfoundland having taken part in the 'planting' of Ireland; 'extending the empire' was an interest that 'defined his life'.[118] Stock imagined Avalon as

[111] Codignola, *Coldest harbour*, 15.
[112] G. Ashe, *From Caesar to Arthur* (London 1960) 89-90.
[113] Cusack, 'Glastonbury thorn in vernacular Christianity', 313.; Hayward, 'Multiple Avalons', 130-131.
[114] Gillis, *Islands of the mind*, 3, 7-8.
[115] Haefeli, *Accidental pluralism*, 134.
[116] Codignola, *Coldest harbour*, 12-15.; J. D. Krugler, *English and Catholic. The Lords Baltimore in the seventeenth century* (Baltimore, MD 2004) 69.; Lacy, *Burial and death*, 109.
[117] Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 649.; cf. Haefeli, *Accidental pluralism*, 84.
[118] Jones, *O strange new world*, 173-179.; Krugler, *English and Catholic*, 5.

a 'bridge-head for the spiritual conquest of America', and of Asia via the Northwest Passage.[119] In this, his goals and Dee's seem closely aligned.[120]

Clearer than any direct influence from Dee, however, is Stock's own reliance on the 'island imaginary'. Initially unaware that 'Avalon' was merely a region in Newfoundland, his letters refer often to the 'island' or even 'archipelago' of Avalon.[121] This geographically undefined island, disconnected from the American continent, is closer to a mythical island than to any contemporary account of Newfoundland. Though Stock readily acknowledges the island's 'gentile' inhabitants as prospects for trade or conversion, he also claims the island of Avalon 'was unknown in former times and has had no name until now'.[122] Stock's island seems to be more of a manipulable image than a material reality. Imaginative 'islanding' clears the way for the 'firsting' implicit in the name.

Dee and the colonists of Avalon both relied on Arthurian imagery to insert the American colonies into an imperial 'island imaginary'. Yet Dee never used the name 'Avalon', and Calvert and Stock never digressed on King Arthur. For this reason, scholarly connections between the two have remained largely conjectural. The name 'Avalon' does not refer to Dee's *Limites*, but to a shared ideological background: English, Catholic, and imperial. In both cases, the appeal to Arthurian legend serves, in Wallace Cleaves's phrase, to help the British 'insert their own past into an imagined past on the continent of North America'.[123]

The Anglo-American Viking Romance

The British imperial 'island imaginary' is John Dee's strongest link with the Avalon peninsula. Yet his relation to the other settler myth of Newfoundland - Vinland - holds greater significance than previous interventions have recognized. With his entry about the Swedish colonists of Grocland and Estotiland, Dee is arguably the first Anglophone writer to use the Vinland narrative as justification for colonizing North America. In this, he prefigures

[119] Codignola, *Coldest harbour*, 48, 89.
[120] Probasco, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 68, 109, 117-118, 217, 231.
[121] Codignola, *Coldest harbour*, 16, 22, 48.
[122] Ibidem, 77.
[123] Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 28.

a whole genre of nineteenth-century Viking speculation, which likewise worked to colonize the historical imagination. Suffused with settler-colonial anxiety, this racialist movement largely concerned itself with 'positioning the early Norse settlers as white ancestors of present-day Americans'. [124] Its proponents sought to prove these 'American antiquities' with the alleged runestones of Kensington, Minnesota and Dighton, Massachusetts, or the so-called 'Viking tower' in Newport, Rhode Island (Fig. 2). The Danish philologist Carl Christian Rafn (1795-1864) identified both Dighton Rock and the Newport tower as authentic Norse craftsmanship - the latter as a baptistery built by Scandinavian Christians. [125] Although Rafn is best remembered as an early proponent of the American Vinland theory, his interpretations of these objects - which he never viewed in person - find little mainstream acceptance today.[126]

Fig. 2. The "Viking tower" in Newport, Rhode Island. Made by Beyond My Ken, 5 april 2021. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

While some theorists constructed 'Anglo-America's Viking heritage' through archaeological conjecture, others opted for literary analysis. Taking after Dee's use of the Madoc myth, they read traces of European contact into Native American storytelling. [127] The nineteenth- and twentieth-century appropriations of the Wabanaki culture-hero Gluskap present another relevant case. In the

[124] Crocker, 'What we talk about…', 99.
[125] K. J. Harty, 'The "Viking tower" in Newport, Rhode Island. Fact, fiction, and film' in: T. W. Machan & J. K. Helgason, eds., *From Iceland to America. Vinland and historical imagination* (Manchester 2020) 45-60.; Kolodny, *In search of first contact*, 106-107, 122-123, 153, 160, 165-166, 327.
[126] Kolodny, *In search of first contact*, 103-150.; Harty, '"Viking tower"'.
[127] Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 28.

Mi'kmaq stories Josiah Jeremy told to Silas Tertius Rand (1810-1889), Gluskap departs 'across the water, to a distant land in the west'; his return is promised to relieve the 'oppressions and troubles' of the Mi'kmaq.[128] There is a passing similarity here with Arthur's retreat to Avalon, and his role in the 'postcolonial' Welsh traditions as *Rex quondam, rexque futurus* - a resemblance noted by U.S. folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903).[129] Leland advocated an even closer relation, however, with Norse mythology, from which he saw the vast majority of Algonquian legends as derived.[130] A similar thesis was expounded by Eben Norton Horsford (1818-1893), who in 1889 oversaw the construction of the 'Norumbega Tower' in Weston, Massachusetts, as a memorial to the Norse adventurers.[131] These settler attempts to 'find themselves already in the land' entail the supremacist erasure of its original inhabitants, arguing that any sophisticated myth must ultimately have some European origin.[132]

In the next century, Frederick J. Pohl (1889-1991) identified Gluskap with Henry Sinclair, earl of Orkney (1345-1400). He equated both with Zen's character 'Zichmni' from *Dello scoprimento*.[133] A more recent genre of esoteric literature has integrated Pohl's theory with those surrounding Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland—namely that the carvings at the chapel, built at the behest of Sinclair's grandson William (1410-1480), encode secret evidence of medieval transatlantic navigation.[134] Several pseudohistorical works add that the elder Sinclair made his transatlantic voyage to smuggle the Holy Grail to Nova

[128] Kolodny, *In search of first contact*, 283-295.

[129] Ingham, *Sovereign fantasies*, 3-4, 38-39.; C. G. Leland, *The Algonquin legends of New England, or, myths and folk lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes* (Boston, MA 1884) 2, 131, 376.

[130] Leland, *Algonquin legends*, 5-6. See also Kolodny, *In search of first contact*, 272, 278, 282-283, 362 n30, 366 n19.

[131] Harty, "'Viking tower'".

[132] Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 29.; Kolodny, *In search of first contact*, 282.

[133] Frederick J. Pohl, 'A Nova Scotia project', *Bulletin of the Massachusetts archaeological society* 20:3 (1959) 39-42.

[134] Harty, "'Viking tower'". See also C. Cusack, 'Esoteric tourism in Scotland. Rosslyn chapel, *The Da Vinci code*, and the appeal of the "new age"' in: J. M. Wooding & L. Barrow, eds., *Prophecy, memory and fate in the early and medieval Celtic world* (Sydney 2020) 247-270.

Scotia on behalf of the Knights Templar.[135] Chauvinistic statements, such as one author's assertion that 'passages in the Mi'kmaq chants (…) are of a higher level of poetry or allegory than one can generally attribute to the Mi'kmaq', are not uncommon.[136] The Newport and Sinclair narratives partake in the construction of a 'mythic medieval past' which renders 'the conquest of America an already accomplished fact': an America that has always been European and Christian.[137] The characters and symbols that populate these fantasies spring from the same colonial imaginary the present study describes: Vikings, Arthuriana, the 'Zeno narrative'—even John Dee.[138]

Conclusion

There is compelling evidence for the distant influence of Vinland on Dee's ideas about islands 'beyond *Groenland*'. It is necessary to add, however, that these residual traces do not 'prove' the argument of the *Brytanici imperii limites*; to the contrary, a close reading reveals the power of fiction and invented tradition.[139] Postcolonial scholars often warn against romanticizing our objects of study, and few historical figures attract greater romanticism than esoteric practitioners like Dee. Parry rightly advises we 'avoid fetishizing his texts'.[140] The esoteric core of Dee's thought is undeniable, but esotericism

[135] See, e.g., M. Bradley & D. Theilmann-Bean, *Holy grail across the Atlantic. The secret history of Canadian discovery and exploration* (Toronto 1988); A. Sinclair, *The sword and the grail. Of the grail and the Templars and the true discovery of America* (New York 1992); M. Bradley, *Grail knights of North America. On the trail of the grail in Canada and the United States* (Toronto 1998); T. Wallace-Murphy & M. Hopkins, *Templars in America. From the Crusades to the new world* (San Francisco, CA 2004); W. F. Mann, *The knights Templar in the new world. How Henry Sinclair brought the grail to Acadia* (Rochester, VT 2004).
[136] Mann, *Knights Templar*.
[137] Cleaves, 'Monmouth to Madoc to Māori', 25.
[138] According to a recent theory, the Newport tower is an astrological clock built in 'Norumbega' on Dee's orders. Its main proponent is James Alan Egan, curator of the Newport Tower Museum. Harty, "'Viking tower'", n24. Egan also portrays Dee himself in a series of short films available at http://newporttowermuseum.com.
[139] Crocker, 'What we talk about…', 109.
[140] Parry, 'John Dee and the Elizabethan British empire', 675.

hardly transcends these histories of oppression and expropriation.[141] Dee, as 'empiricist and fabricator', drew on the sources available to him (and some which were not) to 'conjure imperial precedent' for Britain.[142] More recently, the 'Arch-Conjuror' of history - an ancestor of this pseudo-historiographical tradition - has become a character in the drama himself. But human agency always mediates human myth-making; thus it seems advisable not to succumb to the mystique of the magus.[143]

[141] See R. Bauer, *The alchemy of conquest. Science, religion, and the secrets of the new world* (Charlottesville 2010); W. W. Woodward, *Prospero's America. John Winthrop, Jr., alchemy and the creation of New England culture, 1606-1676* (Chapel Hill 2010).
[142] Zeiders, 'Conjuring history', 378, 395.
[143] B. Lincoln, *Gods and demons, priests and scholars. Critical explorations in the history of religions* (Chicago, IL 2012), 62.