

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 20, 2011 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 1J

STORIES AND SIGNS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Session Moderator: James Clauss, Classics

Mary Gates Hall 258

1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Contexts of Colonization: The Literary-Historical Treatment of the Anglo-Saxon Settlement

Brian Hardison, Senior, English, Evening Degree Program

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Paul Remley, English

Owing to the paucity of surviving literary witnesses from sub-Roman Britain, the details of the Anglo-Saxon colonization of the British Isles are vague at best. In his pastoral letter *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, the late fifth or early sixth century British cleric Gildas provides the earliest surviving—and only contemporaneous—Insular literary account of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons or *aduentus Saxonum*. While not intended to serve primarily as a history, the Gildasian account of the *aduentus Saxonum* served as a source for later authors. By analyzing the accounts found in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, the pseudo-Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, it is evident that while these authors consulted Gildas' material directly, they also felt free to embellish it. Indeed, the farther from the source text, the more conspicuous these embellishments become. Thus, by examining these, we may identify the possible motives and biases of the authors which led to their addition.