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**The Galfridian Tradition(s) in England,
Scotland, and Wales: Texts, Purpose,
Context, 1138-1530**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the responses to and rewritings of the *Historia regum Britanniae* in England, Scotland, and Wales between 1138 and 1530, and argues that the continued production of the text was directly related to the erasure of its author, Geoffrey of Monmouth. In contrast to earlier studies, which focus on single national or linguistic traditions, this thesis analyses different translations and adaptations of the *Historia* in a comparative methodology that demonstrates the connections, contrasts and continuities between the various national traditions.

Chapter One assesses Geoffrey's reputation and the critical reception of the *Historia* between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, arguing that the text came to be regarded as an authoritative account of British history at the same time as its author's credibility was challenged. Chapter Two analyses how Geoffrey's genealogical model of British history came to be rewritten as it was resituated within different narratives of English, Scottish, and Welsh history. Chapter Three demonstrates how the *Historia*'s description of the island Britain was adapted by later writers to construct geographical landscapes that emphasised the disunity of the island and subverted Geoffrey's vision of insular unity.

Chapter Four identifies how the letters between Britain and Rome in the *Historia* use argumentative rhetoric, myths of descent, and the discourse of freedom to establish the importance of political, national, or geographical independence. Chapter Five analyses how the relationships between the Arthur and his immediate kin group were used to challenge Geoffrey's narrative of British history and emphasise problems of legitimacy, inheritance, and succession. Chapter Six examines how the linguistic change of place names, and the reconfiguration of the insular landscape, undermine claims of British sovereignty and legitimise the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons.

Finally, the conclusion addresses how translators, adaptors, and compilers used the strategies of evaluation, quotation, translation, imitation, and revision to determine the authority of Geoffrey's narrative of British history.

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Introduction

The *Historia regum Britanniae* ('The History of the Kings of Britain', c. 1138), which records the reigns of ninety-nine British kings from Brutus to Cadwaladr, was one of the most popular and influential histories produced in the Middle Ages. Written by Geoffrey of Monmouth, a secular canon at Saint George's College, Oxford, the *Historia* was commissioned by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, and dedicated to Robert of Gloucester, one of the illegitimate sons of Henry I.¹ The Latin text of the *Historia* survives in 217 manuscripts, demonstrating the contemporary and continued interest in Geoffrey's narrative of British history throughout the Middle Ages.² Indeed, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, manuscripts of the *Historia* were produced and disseminated across medieval Europe – most notably in England, Champagne, France, Germany, Italy, and Normandy.³

In addition to the large number of extant manuscripts, the *Historia* also survives in multiple translations and adaptations. Within twenty years of its composition, an unknown author produced a Latin reworking of the vulgate *Historia*

¹ Some manuscripts of the *Historia* include double dedications: nine witnesses are dedicated to Robert of Gloucester and Waleran of Meulan, while a single witness is dedicated to King Stephen and Robert of Gloucester. Sixteen witnesses omit the introductory chapters altogether, and twenty-seven witnesses do not name a dedicatee; see Julia C. Crick, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Brewer, 1991), pp. 116-20.

² See Julia C. Crick, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, III: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989).

³ On the circulation and readership of the *Historia*, see Crick, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV*, pp. 196-217.

now known as the First Variant.⁴ In the mid-twelfth century, the cleric Robert Wace used the vulgate and First Variant texts as the basis of his Anglo-Norman translation, the *Roman de Brut*, and the priest Lazamon subsequently translated Wace's text into early Middle English by the end of the century. While Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Lazamon's *Brut* crossed linguistic boundaries, later translations of the *Historia* produced in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries crossed geographical borders and assimilated Geoffrey's work into various national traditions. In early fourteenth-century England, Pierre de Langtoft produced an abridged version of the *Roman de Brut* in Anglo-Norman verse, and around 1338 Robert Mannyng translated Wace into Middle English verse. The *Roman de Brut* was also used as the basis for the multilingual Prose *Brut* tradition, which was originally produced in Anglo-Norman at the end of the thirteenth century before being translated into Latin and Middle English in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Robert of Gloucester and Thomas Castleford translated the Latin text of the *Historia* into Middle English verse in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries respectively, while John Hardyng translated a Latin version of the Prose *Brut* into Middle English verse in 1454. In Wales, the Latin texts of the vulgate *Historia* and the First Variant were translated into Welsh, and six individual translations were produced between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The *Historia* was also transmitted to Scotland in the thirteenth century via a Latin text known as the 'Scottish Monmouth'.⁵ In the late-fourteenth century, John of Fordun included certain parts of Geoffrey's narrative of British

⁴ See Neil Wright, 'Introduction', *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, II: The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. xi-cxvi.

⁵ On the 'Scottish Monmouth' and its relationship to the *Historia regum Britanniae* and the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, see, John and Winifred MacQueen, 'Introduction to Books I and II', in *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), I (1993), pp. xiii-xxxiii (xxviii-xxix); Dauvit Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

history in his *Chronica gentis Scotorum* ('The Chronicle of the Scottish People'), which was the first continuous Latin history of Scotland. Walter Bower subsequently revised the *Chronica* in the mid-fifteenth century, and from 1440 produced a continuation known as the *Scotichronicon*. The Fordun-Bower tradition also provided the basis for the fifteenth-century Old Scots chronicle, the *Scottis Originale*, as well as Hector Boece's sixteenth-century Latin history of Scotland, the *Historia Gentis Scotorum* ('History of the Scottish People', 1527).

Yet despite the popularity, influence, and continuous production of the *Historia*, the reputation and position of its author were markedly more unstable – and less visible – than many modern commentators have customarily discussed. Often discredited by his twelfth-century contemporaries, Geoffrey's very name as the author of the *Historia* came to be erased in later centuries – especially in the work of translators, compilers and adaptors. This thesis examines the responses and rewritings of the *Historia* in England, Scotland, and Wales between 1138 and 1530, and argues that the continued production of the text – which here encompasses new versions, translations, and adaptations – was directly related to the erasure of its author, Geoffrey of Monmouth. Indeed, Geoffrey's erasure as the authoring voice of the *Historia* meant that the text could be freed from the specific political and national contexts that were central to its initial production, such as the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, and the Norman colonisation of Wales.⁶ Unconstrained by the original cultural interests and anxieties of the mid-twelfth-century Anglo-Norman

⁶ On the political and national contexts that influenced the production of the *Historia*, see John Gillingham, 'The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*', in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values*, ed. by John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 19-40; Michael A. Faletra, 'Narrating the Matter of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Norman Colonization of Wales', *Chaucer Review*, 35.1 (2000), 60-85; Michael A. Faletra, 'The Conquest of the Past in *The History of the Kings of Britain*', *Literature Compass*, 4.1 (2007), 121-33.

world, the ideological utility of the *Historia* could be used to support new national and political interests, and situated within different historiographical frameworks. The absence of Geoffrey in these various texts and traditions subsequently increased the authority of the *Historia*, and ensured the longevity of its narrative of British history.

Through a comparison of texts and traditions, this thesis addresses the multilingual and multinational contexts of the *Historia*. Many of the texts analysed in this study are translations – either from Latin into Anglo-Norman, or Anglo-Norman into Middle English, or Latin into Middle Welsh. Michelle R. Warren points out that

[t]ranslated texts represent the monolingual product of specifically multilingual alliances. These relations emerge from various occasions and motivations, including class-consciousness, political persuasion, theological dispute, cultural rivalry, and personal admiration. In each case, translation offers an opportunity to redefine audiences, social relations, historical inheritance, and ethnic identities.⁷

The vernacular translations of the *Historia* produced in England and Wales made the text accessible to the aristocratic classes and the laity. Wace's *Roman de Brut* can be located in the demand for vernacular versions of dynastic histories by the Anglo-Norman élite in the mid-twelfth century, while Lazamon's *Brut* represents a form of resistance to colonial conquest.⁸ The multilingual Prose *Brut* tradition was produced for the gentry, and other Middle English chronicles circulated among the emerging middle classes.⁹ In Wales, the translation of the *Historia* began in the mid-thirteenth

⁷ Michelle R. Warren, 'Translation', in *Middle English: Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 51-67 (p. 52).

⁸ On the translation of dynastic histories in the twelfth century, see Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999). On Lazamon's *Brut* as resistance to colonial conquest, see Kenneth J. Tiller, *Lazamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

⁹ On the audiences and manuscript contexts of the Prose *Brut* tradition and other Middle English chronicles, see Lister M. Matheson, *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies 180 (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998); Lister M. Matheson, 'The Chronicle Tradition', in *A Companion to Arthurian*

century, and Helen Fulton proposes that '[t]he translation of Latin chronicles into Welsh [...] suggests a local demand in Wales for high-status texts of national significance made available in the prestige vernacular.'¹⁰ Meanwhile, the emergence of Latin narratives of Scottish history, which also included parts of Geoffrey's narrative of British history, can be viewed in context with the vernacular narratives of national history produced in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as John Barbour's *Bruce*, Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil*, and Blind Harry's *Wallace*.¹¹

This comparative study of the *Historia regum Britannie* is indebted to the study of Four Nations history that emerged in response to J. G. A. Pocock's 1975 essay 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject'.¹² While Pocock has primarily focused on the early modern period, the politically sympathetic work of R. R. Davies has demonstrated how a comparative non-Anglocentric approach to history can be achieved in medieval studies.¹³ In his 1988 essay, 'In Praise of British History', Davies observes that the four nations approach to medieval history involves 'breaking down the barriers between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and [...]

Literature, ed. by Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 58 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 58-69.

¹⁰ Helen Fulton, 'Negotiating Welshness: Multilingualism in Wales Before and After 1066', in *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c. 800-1250*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Tyler, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 145-70 (p. 161).

¹¹ On the national context of medieval Scottish literary texts and historical narratives, see Alessandra Petrina, 'The Medieval Period', in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27-40.

¹² See J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *The Journal of Modern History*, 47.4 (1975), 601-21.

¹³ Davies' Presidential Addresses to the Royal Historical Society (1992-96) are probably the best introduction to his comparative approach to British history; see R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400, I: Identities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 4 (1994), 1-20; R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400, II: Names, Boundaries and Regnal Solidarities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 5 (1995), 1-20; R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400, III: Laws and Customs', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 6 (1996), 1-23; R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400, IV: Language and Historical Mythology', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), 1-24.

seizing the opportunity to enrich our understanding by considering the connection, comparison, and contrasts between them'.¹⁴ His comparative approach to British history is clearly demonstrated in *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles, 1093-1343* (1998), which analyses the power relationships between these nations, and addresses how they constructed their historical narratives and political mythologies. This present thesis adopts a similarly comparative approach, in order to address the textual history of Geoffrey's narrative of British history, and understand the complex connections, comparisons, and contrasts between the different translations and adaptations of the *Historia regum Britanniae* produced in England, Scotland, and Wales.

Scholarship on the reception of the *Historia regum Britanniae* has primarily been limited to a specific time period or a single linguistic or national tradition. The twelfth-century reception of the *Historia* has dominated much critical scholarship. J. S. P. Tatlock's influential *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and its Early Vernacular Versions* (1950) contains three chapters on twelfth-century translations of the *Historia*, including fragments of several minor French versions, and works by Wace and Laȝamon.¹⁵ In *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (1989), R. William Leckie, Jr analyses how historians and translators, including Henry of Huntingdon, Geffrei Gaimar, Alfred of Beverley, Gervase of Canterbury, William of Newburgh, Roger of Wendover, the author of the First Variant, Wace, and Laȝamon, rewrote Geoffrey's account of the Saxon

¹⁴ R. R. Davies, 'In Praise of British History', in *The British Isles, 1100-1500: Comparisons, Contrasts, and Connections*, ed. by R. R. Davies (Edinburgh: Donald, 1988), pp. 9-26 (p. 23).

¹⁵ J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1974).

conquest of Britain.¹⁶ While Tatlock and Leckie emphasised the wider reception history of the *Historia*, a number of individual studies and edited collections on the translations of the Wace and Lazamon have also been produced, including those by Françoise H. M. Le Saux (1989; 1994), Rosamund Allen, Lucy Perry, Jane Roberts and Carole Weinberg (2002; 2013).¹⁷ *Lazamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (2007) by Kenneth J. Tiller is one of the most extensive pieces of scholarship on Lazamon's *Brut*, and examines the text as an act of translation within the wider tradition of insular history writing in the twelfth century.¹⁸

Much of the critical material on the *Historia* and the wider Galfridian tradition is also contained within distinct critical fields – the most obvious and largest one, of course, being Arthurian studies. Robert Huntingdon Fletcher's *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, especially those of Great Britain and France* (1906) surveys more than two hundred chronicles produced between the sixth and the sixteenth centuries, including a range of Latin, Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Welsh chronicles derived from Geoffrey's *Historia*.¹⁹ E. K. Chambers' *Arthur of Britain* (1927) contains several chapters on Geoffrey's sources and the critical reception of the Arthurian story in the *Historia*.²⁰ In *Arthurian Literature and Society*

¹⁶ R. William Leckie, Jr, *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

¹⁷ See Françoise H. M. Le Saux, *Lazamon's Brut: The Poem and Its Sources*, Arthurian Studies 19 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989); Françoise H. M. Le Saux, ed., *The Text and Tradition of Lazamon's Brut*, ed. Arthurian Studies 33 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994); Rosamund Allen, Lucy Perry, and Jane Roberts, eds, *Lazamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*, King's College London Medieval Studies 19 (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2002); Françoise H. M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2005); Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts and Carole Weinberg, eds, *Reading Lazamon's Brut: Approaches and Explorations* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013).

¹⁸ Kenneth J. Tiller, *Lazamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Robert Huntingdon Fletcher, *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, especially those of Great Britain and France* (New York: Franklin, 1906; repr. 1958).

²⁰ Chambers' chapter on 'Records' includes comments on the historicity of Arthur by William of Malesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Alfred of Beverley, and Gerald of Wales (among others); see E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1927), pp. 233-82.

(1983), Stephen Knight examines the ideological function of the Arthur story from the medieval to modern periods, and relates the production of Geoffrey's *Historia* to the political interests of the dominant Anglo-Norman élite.²¹ Meanwhile, in *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (1998), Siân Echard analyses the *Historia* in relation to other twelfth-century texts, arguing that 'shared themes and methods [of Latin Arthurian narratives] have their genesis in the cultural world of the Angevin Empire'.²² More recent studies by Michelle R. Warren (2000), Richard J. Moll (2003), as well as Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (2004), have analysed the Arthurian narrative in a range of chronicles derived from the *Historia*, including the works of Wace, Laȝamon, Robert of Gloucester, Robert Mannyng, and John Hardyng.²³ This thesis is indebted to many of these works, especially those that have addressed the often-neglected verse chronicles; however, this study is more expansive. By examining Galfridian narrative as a whole, rather than limiting analysis to the Arthurian section of the *Historia*, this thesis is able to demonstrate the continued influence and political utility of Geoffrey's legendary British history.

The study of reception of the *Historia* in Latin has focused on the reproduction and reuse of the text in different literary contexts. In *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers 1300-1500* (1946), Laura Keeler examined various universal, local, and monastic chronicles that quote from the

²¹ Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), pp. 38-67.

²² Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

²³ See Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300*, Medieval Cultures 22 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

Historia and assess the reliability of the text.²⁴ Between 1986 and 1991, Neil Wright and Julia Crick produced a five-volume study of the *Historia* that addressed the reception of the text and its manuscript context. Wright edited the Bern manuscript of the *Historia*, the First Variant, as well as the *Gesta Regum Britanniae* by William of Rennes, and his editorial introductions examine how the *Historia* was rewritten in Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁵ Crick, meanwhile, produced a catalogue of the manuscripts of the *Historia*, and her study of the dissemination and reception of the text identifies the different Latin histories that circulated with the *Historia* in the later Middle Ages.²⁶

The reception of the *Historia* in England has primarily focused on the multilingual Prose *Brut* tradition. In his 1998 study, *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Lister M. Matheson identified the various versions, and catalogued the different manuscripts, of the Middle English Prose *Brut*; he also traced the evolution of the *Brut* tradition across Anglo-Norman, Latin, and Middle English.²⁷ The Middle English Prose *Brut*, which is extant in 181 manuscripts, has received the most critical attention, including a special edition of *Trivium* (2006) and a recent collection of essays by Jaclyn Rajsic, Erik Kooper and Dominique Hoche (2016).²⁸ Julia Marvin, however, has recently published *The Construction of Vernacular History in the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: The*

²⁴ Laura Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers, 1300-1500*, University of California Publications in English 17.1 and Studies in the Geoffrey of Monmouth Tradition 4 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1946).

²⁵ See Wright, 'Introduction', in *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Volume 2*, pp. xi-cxvi.

²⁶ See Crick, *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV*, pp. 19-877.

²⁷ *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies 180 (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998).

²⁸ William Marx and Raluca Radulescu, eds, *Readers and Writers of the Prose Brut, Trivium*, 36 (Lampeter, Wales: Trivium Publications, University of Wales, 2006); Jaclyn Rajsic, Erik Kooper and Dominique Hoche, eds, *The Prose Brut and Other Late Medieval Chronicles: Books Have Their Histories: Essays in Honour of Lister M. Matheson* (York: York Medieval Press, 2016).

Manuscript Culture of Late Medieval England (2017), which addresses the text and manuscript context of the Anglo-Norman versions. In comparison to the Prose *Brut* tradition, which has attracted significant scholarly interest, the verse chronicles of Robert of Gloucester, Pierre de Langtoft, Robert Mannyng, Thomas Castleford, and John Hardyng, have often been discussed in short critical surveys of the history of Arthurian literature by Lister M. Matheson (1990; 2012), W. R. J. Barron, Françoise Le Saux, and Lesley Johnson (1999).²⁹ Outside of Arthurian studies, the work of Thea Summerfield (1998), Caroline D. Eckhardt, and Sarah L. Peverley (2004) has increased the critical attention to some of these verse chronicles.³⁰ These scholars have also made these texts more accessible: Eckhardt produced an edition of *Castleford's Chronicle* for the Early English Text Society in 1996, while Peverley edited the First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle* with James Simpson for TEAMS Middle English Texts in 2016.

The reception of the *Historia* in Wales has focused on the Welsh-language translation known as the *Brut y Brenhinedd*. Acton Griscom's 1929 edition of the *Historia regum Britanniae* included the first printed edition of the text, as well as a survey of the manuscripts of the Welsh *Brut*.³¹ In 1930, John J. Parry identified six

²⁹ See Lister M. Matheson, 'King Arthur and the Medieval English Chronicles', in *King Arthur Through the Ages*, ed. by Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990), pp. 248-74; W. R. J. Barron, Françoise Le Saux, and Lesley Johnson, 'Dynastic Chronicles', in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. by W. R. J. Barron, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 2 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 11-46; Lister M. Matheson, 'The Chronicle Tradition', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 58 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 58-69.

³⁰ See Thea Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings Lives: The Design of Past and Present in the Early Fourteenth-Century Verse Chronicles by Pierre de Langtoft and Robert Mannyng* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998); Sarah Louise Peverley, 'John Hardyng's *Chronicle*: A study of the Two Versions and a Critical Edition of Both for the Period 1327-1464' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hull, 2004).

³¹ *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth with contributions to the Study of its Place in Early British History together with a literal translation of the Welsh Manuscript No. lxi of Jesus College Oxford*, ed. by Acton Griscom and trans. by Robert Ellis Jones (London and New York: Longman and Green, 1929).

main versions of the Welsh *Brut*, which have subsequently been confirmed by Brynley F. Roberts.³² This analysis of the different versions informed the work of Thomas Jones (1968) and J. Beverley Smith (2008), who both examined the relationship between the *Brut y Brenhinedd* ('The Chronicle of the Kings'), the *Brut y Tywywsogyon* ('The Chronicle of the Princes'), and the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* ('The Kings of the English') that extended the narrative of Welsh history into the thirteenth century.³³ The *Brut y Brenhinedd* has also been examined as an act of cultural translation. In 2015, Helen Fulton discussed the *Brut y Brenhinedd* in context with Welsh translations of classical and European texts, arguing that these texts can 'be seen as a response by Welsh writers to their position on the border'.³⁴ Meanwhile, Georgia Henley (2016) has examined the reception of the *Historia* and the translation of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* in thirteenth-century Wales, suggesting that 'Welsh-language literature and historical writing arose out of, and alongside, Latin writing'.³⁵

The reception of the *Historia* in Scotland has examined the rewriting of Geoffrey's narrative of British history in Scottish historiography. John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum* has often been interpreted as a direct response to Edward I's use of the *Historia regum Britanniae* in the early-fourteenth century as evidence

³² John J. Parry, 'The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*', *Speculum*, 5.4 (1930), 424-31; John Jay Parry, 'Introduction', in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), pp. ix-xviii; Brynley F. Roberts, 'Introduction', in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, ed. by Brynley F. Roberts, (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), pp. ix-lx.

³³ Thomas Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', *Scottish Studies*, 12 (1968), 15-27; J. Beverley Smith, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales: The Composition of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*', *Studia Celtica*, 42 (2008), 55-86.

³⁴ Helen Fulton, 'Translating Europe in Medieval Wales', in *Writing Europe, 500-1450: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Aidan Conti, Orietta Da Rold, and Philip Shaw, Essays and Studies 68 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2015), pp. 159-74 (p. 161).

³⁵ Georgia Henley, 'From the "Matter of Britain" to "The Matter of Rome": Latin Literary Culture and the Reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Wales', *Arthurian Literature*, 33 (2016), 1-28.

that the kings of England held sovereignty over Scotland.³⁶ In 2002, however, Steve Boardman cautioned against the ‘systematic hostility’ of Scottish historians towards the Matter of Britain, demonstrating how the *Historia* ‘continued to exert an influence on the way the Scots perceived the past’ in genealogy and narrative history.³⁷ John and Winifred MacQueen, as well as Dauvit Broun, have been instrumental in establishing the transmission of the *Historia* from England to Scotland.³⁸ Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan also note that many Scottish historians, including John of Fordun and Walter Bower, were ‘embroiled in complex negotiations with Geoffrey’s text’.³⁹ The selection of essays in *The Scots and the Medieval Arthurian Legend* (2005) edited by Purdie and Royan examine a variety of texts and genres, including Latin histories and Old Scots chronicles and romances, and demonstrate the range of different responses to Geoffrey’s incarnation of Arthur in late medieval and early modern Scotland.⁴⁰

In contrast to these earlier studies, which focus on a single national or linguistic tradition, this thesis directly compares the various national traditions, as well as different translations and adaptations of the *Historia* produced in England, Scotland, and Wales, in order to produce a textual history of the Galfridian tradition.

³⁶ See in particular R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

³⁷ Steve Boardman, ‘Late Medieval Scotland and the Matter of Britain’, in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, ed. by Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 47-72 (p. 49).

³⁸ On the text and the transmission of the ‘Scottish Monmouth’, see John and Winifred MacQueen, ‘Introduction to Books I and II’, in *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), I (1993), pp. xiii-xxxiii (xxviii-xxix); Dauvit Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

³⁹ Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan, ‘Introduction: Tartan Arthur?’, in *The Scots and the Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan, Arthurian Studies 61 (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2005), pp. 1-8 (p. 5).

⁴⁰ See in particular Nicola Royan, ‘The Fine Art of Faint Praise in Older Scots Historiography’, in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan, Arthurian Studies 61 (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2005), pp. 43-54; Juliette Wood, ‘Where Does Britain End? The Reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Scotland and Wales’, in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, pp. 9-24.

Sif Rikhardsdottir and Victoria Flood have applied similar comparative approaches to a range of texts and traditions. In *Medieval Translation and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (2012), Sif Rikhardsdottir examines ‘the movement of texts and their implicit cultural content across linguistic and territorial boundaries’.⁴¹ Her study of vernacular translation addresses ‘the relationship with the source text and the cultural conditions surrounding its refashioning’.⁴² Meanwhile, in *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England: From Geoffrey of Monmouth to Thomas of Erceledoune* (2016), Flood traces the origins and development of an insular prophetic tradition concerned with sovereignty, territory, and geographical unity derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Prophetiae Merlini*, and analyses the complex intertextual relationships between English, Scottish, and Welsh prophetic traditions. Rikhardsdottir and Flood both trace the transmission, circulation, and reception of texts and traditions across geographical boundaries, and this thesis similarly traces the textual history of the Galfridian tradition in different national contexts. Yet rather than examining the thematic development of texts like Rikardsdottir, or the transformation of generic literary motifs like Flood, this thesis examines the rewriting of a single historical narrative: in particular, it addresses how English, Scottish, and Welsh historians reproduced, revised, and reimagined Geoffrey’s narrative of British history from Brutus to Cadwaladr.

⁴¹ Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translation and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), p. 23.

⁴² Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translation and Cultural Discourse*, p. 2.

Unlike in other modes of writing about the past, narrative is a distinctive feature of history writing. As John Burrow points out, ‘annals are disconnected, chronicles are episodic, [but] history is ideally continuous’.⁴³ Burrow also writes that

[h]istory as a genre [...] characteristically involves extended narrative, relevant circumstantial detail, and thematic coherence; the recording of facts is dictated by thematic, dramatic, and explanatory considerations, rather than just chronological juxtaposition and convention.⁴⁴

Antonia Gransden also notes that histories were often ‘literary in form’ and were organised around a theme rather than a strict adherence to chronology.⁴⁵ Building on the work of Nancy F. Partner,⁴⁶ historians and literary scholars have recognised the rhetorical qualities of medieval history writing, especially as ‘[m]uch historical information of a subtler kind – oblique commentary on the events reported, attitudes towards history, or metacommentary on historiography – can reside in the narrative form’.⁴⁷ Although the *Historia* is not a reliable account of early insular history, the text demonstrates some of the literary and rhetorical aspects of historical writing, and this thesis analyses how genealogy, speeches, letters, descriptions, topoi, and ideological cruxes function as part of its overall narrative framework.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One traces the critical reception of the *Historia* between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries, arguing that Latin and vernacular historians in England, Scotland, and Wales rejected Geoffrey the historian as a source of authority, and subsequently created his narrative of British history a textual authority instead. Chapter Two analyses how Geoffrey’s

⁴³ John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 218.

⁴⁴ Burrow, *A History of Histories*, p. 219.

⁴⁵ Antonia Gransden, ‘The Chronicles of Medieval England and Scotland: Part I’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 16 (1990), 129-50 (p. 130).

⁴⁶ See Nancy F., *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

⁴⁷ Monika Otter, ‘Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing’, in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 109-130 (p. 110).

genealogical model of history, which was based on the continuous succession of British kings from Brutus to Cadwaladr, was connected to different national origin stories and contemporary narratives of English, Scottish, and Welsh history that subsequently redefined the boundaries of Galfridian time. Chapter Three demonstrates how the description of Britain in the *Historia* was used for different political purposes to construct geographical and ideological landscapes that emphasised the disunity of the island and subverted Geoffrey's vision of insular unity. Chapter Four addresses the function of the letters between Britain and Rome in the *Historia*, and contends that the translations and imitations of these fictional texts use argumentative rhetoric, myths of descent, and the discourse of freedom to articulate opposition to contemporary insular conflicts and establish the importance of political, national, or geographical independence. Chapter Five examines how the relationships between Arthur and his immediate kin group were used to emphasise problems of legitimacy, inheritance, and succession, and to challenge and contest Geoffrey's narrative of British history. Chapter Six analyses how the linguistic change of place names, and the reconfiguration of the insular landscape, undermine claims of British sovereignty and legitimise the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons.

These features of the *Historia regum Britanniae* frame, punctuate, and shape the meaning of the narrative, and are therefore the most significant sites for revision, alteration, and textual intervention. These discursive modes frame and influence the interpretation of the text, and are central to the rewriting, reshaping, and repurposing of the *Historia* throughout the later Middle Ages.

1. The *auctoritas* of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Critical Reception of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, 1138-1573

Geoffrey of Monmouth, or *Galfridus Monemutensis*, is the pen name for the twelfth-century cleric known as Geoffrey Arthur (*Galfridus Arturus*).¹ Geoffrey was most likely a canon at the church of Saint George in Oxford: he witnessed seven charters between 1129 and 1151, and in three of these charters he styled himself as ‘magister’ (1150), ‘bishop’ (1151), and ‘bishop-elect’ (1151).² As Geoffrey of Monmouth, he was also the author of the *Prophetiae Merlini* (1135), the *Historia regum Britanniae* (1138), and the *Vita Merlini* (1150). The prologues and epilogues to these texts demonstrate how Geoffrey constructed his authorial personae. In the *Prophetiae* and the *Historia*, Geoffrey presents himself as a translator, who is modest about his literary art and rhetorical skill. Meanwhile, in the epilogue to the *Vita Merlini*, Geoffrey claims that he is ‘celebrated throughout the world’³ for his history of the Britons. By styling himself as a teacher and a bishop, as well as a translator and a

¹ O. J. Padel believes *Artur* was a nickname rather than a legitimate family name as there was no evidence of the name being used in England during the twelfth century; see O. J. Padel, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 8 (1984), 1-27 (2). The entry for 1152 in Robert of Torigni’s *Chronicle* confirms that Geoffrey Arthur was the same person as Geoffrey of Monmouth: ‘Gaufridus Artur, qui transtulerat historiam de regibus Britonum de Britannico in Latinum, fit episcopus Sancti Asaph in Norgualis [Geoffrey Arthur, who translated the history of the British kings from British into Latin, is made bishop of Saint Asaph in North Wales]’. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. by Richard Howlett, 4 vols (London: Printed for Her Majesty’s Stationery Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889), IV, p. 168. My translation.

² On Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Oxford charters see, H. E. Salter, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford’, *The English Historical Review*, 34 (1919), 382-5.

³ *The Life of Merlin*, in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Michael Faletra (Canada: Broadview Press, 2008), pp. 241-76 (p. 276).

poet, Geoffrey persistently reinvented his identity, and claimed he was a reputable authority on British history.

In contrast to modern ideas of authorship, which emphasise originality and individual genius, Andrew Taylor notes that '[a]uthorship in the Middle Ages was more likely to be understood as participation in an intellectually and morally authoritative tradition'.⁴ According to Taylor, medieval texts and authors were judged on their 'age, authenticity, and conformity with truth',⁵ and he also points out that medieval

authors are in many respects considered closer to translators, compilers, or scribes than in modern conceptions of authorship, in the sense that they do not necessarily have proprietorship of the texts on which they work, and still less of the 'matere' they reshape.⁶

In the prologue to the *Historia*, Geoffrey uses the 'Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum [very old book in the British tongue]'⁷ as a rhetorical topos to confer authority on his work, demonstrate his connection to historical tradition, and present himself as a translator rather than an author.⁸ By deferring to this text, Geoffrey establishes the authenticity of the *Historia*; but by limiting his agency and perceived control over the text, he ultimately facilitates the elision of his authorial persona from subsequent rewritings of his work.

⁴ Andrew Taylor, 'Part One: Authorizing Text and Writer', in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 3-15 (p. 6).

⁵ Taylor, 'Authorizing Text and Writer', p. 6.

⁶ Taylor, 'Authorizing Text and Writer', p. 5.

⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009) 2.9-10. All further references to the *Historia* are to this edition and are given in the body of the text; references are to the chapter and line numbers only.

⁸ On Geoffrey's self-fashioning in the prologue to the *Historia*, see Siân Echard, 'Whose History? Naming Practices in the Transmission of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie*', *Arthuriana*, 22.4 (2012), 8-24. On the generic conventions of, and literary topoi used in medieval prologues, see Antonia Gransden, 'Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England', *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell Press), pp. 55-81.

This chapter, which traces the critical reception history of the *Historia regum Britanniae* from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, analyses the various literary, scholarly, and intellectual representations of Geoffrey of Monmouth, arguing that medieval historians, commentators, and translators, as well as early modern antiquarians, constructed Geoffrey's reputation and his *auctoritas* to suit their own political, cultural, and national agendas. The first section examines the critical attitudes of four twelfth-century historians – Henry of Huntingdon, Alfred of Beverley, Gerald of Wales, and William of Newburgh – who quoted from, and critically assessed the reliability of, the *Historia* to establish themselves as credible historians of British, English, and Welsh history. The second section demonstrates how, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, translators and compilers in England, Scotland, and Wales refashioned Geoffrey's authorial persona in order to rewrite the narrative of the *Historia* to suit different national contexts. Finally, the third section analyses how two sixteenth-century antiquarians, John Leland and John Prise, used their classical learning to defend Geoffrey against his critics and to discredit the reputation of their rivals who doubted the authority of the *Historia*. Although Geoffrey was dismissed as an unreliable historian in the twelfth century, and was erased from many subsequent rewritings of the *Historia*, this chapter addresses how his narrative of British history continued to exert authority and influence over many insular historians until the end of the sixteenth century.

Commentary and Criticism: Geoffrey's Twelfth-Century Reputation

In the immediate aftermath of its production, commentators on the *Historia regum Britanniae* primarily focused on the veracity of the text and the identity of its author.

Henry of Huntingdon, Alfred of Beverley, and Gerald of Wales all integrated quotations from the *Historia* into their works, and used Geoffrey's text as a model for their own accounts of British history. Henry was one of the first recorded readers of the *Historia*, and praised Geoffrey for his account of sub-Roman Britain; however, Alfred and Gerald were not always willing to cite the source of their quotations and, if they did mention Geoffrey or his text by name, then they did so to cast doubt over the *Historia*'s reliability. By the end of the twelfth century, William of Newburgh viciously attacked the *Historia* and labelled its author as a liar and a fraud.

In contrast to previous surveys of the well-known reception of the *Historia* in the twelfth century by Antonia Gransden, Monika Otter, and Sjoerd Levelt,⁹ this section addresses the reputation of Geoffrey of Monmouth and his account of British history through the scholastic model of *auctoritas*. Given his varied reception in the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth is not a likely candidate to be given the status of *auctor*. As A. J. Minnis points out, an '*auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed'.¹⁰ Readers were usually responsible for creating *auctors*, and the term was

⁹ See Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: Volume I, c. 550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 177-81 and pp. 212-13; Antonia Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as a Historian in Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 33.4 (1981), 397-425 (pp. 414-19); Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 152-4; Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy F. Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 109-30 (pp. 119-21); Sjoerd Levelt, 'Citation and Misappropriation in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* and the Anglo-Latin Historiographical Tradition', in *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Giuliano di Bacco and Yolanda Plumley (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 137-47. Julia Crick has examined the reception of the Merlin prophecies in the twelfth century; see Julia Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', *Journal of Medieval History*, 18 (1992), 357-371.

¹⁰ A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), p. 10.

an accolade bestowed upon a popular writer by those later scholars and writers who used extracts from his works as sententious statements or *auctoritates*, gave lectures on his works in the form of textual commentaries, or employed them as literary models.¹¹

In the twelfth century, most Latin history writers in England, including Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, Alfred of Beverley, Gerald of Wales, and William of Newburgh, identified Gildas and Bede as *auctores*. These historians often compared Geoffrey with Gildas and Bede, and where Geoffrey's narrative contradicted or challenged theirs, their authority was such that the *Historia* was, usually, further discredited. This section examines the different critical attitudes of four twelfth-century historians, and demonstrates how they used comparative and evaluative historiographical practices to assess and interrogate the reputation of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Henry of Huntingdon

Henry of Huntingdon's *Epistola ad Warinum* ('Letter to Warin'), included in the third version of the *Historia Anglorum* ('History of the English People', 1140), is the earliest surviving reference to the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and is based on notes Henry made at Le Bec, Normandy, in 1139. While Neil Wright has focused on the complex textual relationship between the *Epistola* and the *Historia*,¹² his analysis of the two texts often overlooks the rhetorical features that Henry uses to demonstrate his own literary skill and to construct Geoffrey as an *auctor*.

In the *Epistola*, Henry constructs the *Historia* as a model of history worthy of imitation. Certainly, Henry's epistle seems to develop a series of parallels between

¹¹ Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 10.

¹² See Neil Wright, 'The Place of Henry of Huntingdon's *Epistola ad Warinum* in the Text-History of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*: A Preliminary Investigation', in *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays by Members of Girton College, Cambridge, in Memory of Ruth Morgan*, ed. by G. Jondorf and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 71-113.

Henry's own self-presentation and that of Geoffrey in the *Historia*'s prologue. Henry begins his letter by addressing his recipient:

Queris a me, Warine Brito, uir comis et facete, cur, patrie nostre gesta narrans, a temporibus Iulii Cesaris inceperim, et floretissima regna, que a Bruto usque ad tempus Iulli fuerunt, omiserim. Respondeo igitur tibi, quod nec uoce nec scripto horum temporum noticiam, sepiissime querens, inuenire potui. Tanta pernitie obliuionis mortalium gloriam, successu diuturnitatis, obumbrat et extinguit. Hoc tamen anno, cum Romam proficiscerer, apud Beccensem abbatiam scripta rerum predictarum stupens inueni. Quorum excerpta, ut in epistola decent, breuissime scilicet, tibi dilectissime mitto.

[You ask me, Warin the Breton, kind and courteous man, why I began my narrative of past events in our native land from the time of Julius Caesar, and omitted the flourishing kingdoms that existed from Brutus down to the time of Caesar. My reply to you is that although I searched again and again, I was unable to find any report of those times, either oral or written. Such is the destructive oblivion that in the course of the ages obscures and extinguishes the glory of mortals. But this year, when I was on the way to Rome, to my amazement I discovered, at the abbey of Le Bec, a written account of those very matters. Of this I send you, dear friend, some excerpts, greatly shortened so as to fit into a letter.]¹³

Henry's response to Warin's question, which draws attention to a gap in his historical narrative, is reminiscent of Geoffrey's comment in his prologue that he could not find any accounts of the early British kings that lived before the incarnation of Christ. Henry and Geoffrey each emphasise their futile attempts to find a historical source, and both of their searches were subsequently resolved when they were presented with a manuscript: Geoffrey was supposedly given a 'Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum' ['very old book in the British tongue'] (*HRB*, 2.9-10) by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, while Henry was given Geoffrey's *Historia* by Robert of Torigni, himself an important chronicler.¹⁴ Like Geoffrey, Henry

¹³ Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Diana E. Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 8.1. All further references to Henry's *Historia* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book and chapter number only.

¹⁴ David Dumville points out that Robert of Torigini is the 'central figure' in the 'circulation of historical and pseudo-historical texts between Norman churches, particularly Benedictine foundations'; see David N. Dumville, 'An Early Text of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum*

emphasises the written nature of his source, and the *Epistola* arguably performs a textual substitution whereby the British book is replaced by the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Geoffrey's history, then, is the authoritative version of British history in the twelfth century, with a similarly authoritative history of textual transmission from cleric to historian.

Henry's epistle, which is constructed from 'excerpta' ['excerpts'] (HA, 8.10) from the *Historia*, actively affirms Geoffrey's status as an *auctor*. At the end of his letter, Henry positions his short account of British history in relation to Geoffrey's *Historia*, and informs Waurin the Breton that

Hec sunt que tibi breuibus promise. Quorum si prolixitatem desideras, librum grandem Galfridi Arturi, quem apud Beccum inueni, queras. Vbi predicta diligenter et prolixè tractate uidebis.

[These are the matters I promised you in brief. If you would like them at length, you should ask for Geoffrey Arthur's great book, which I discovered at Le Bec. There you will find a careful and comprehensive treatment of the above.]

(HA, 8.10)

Despite the changes that Henry made to the *Historia* in his epistle, including various textual omissions, unique additions, and substantial revisions, he clearly defers to Geoffrey's authority concerning matters of British history; indeed, Henry even recommends the *Historia* to his correspondent, and the text accrues authoritative capital through its recirculations between clerics and academics.¹⁵

Britanniae and the Circulation of Some Latin Histories in Twelfth-Century Normandy', *Arthurian Literature*, 5 (1985), 1-36 (p. 23).

¹⁵ On the circulation and readership of the *Historia*, see Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 196-217. Crick identifies 58 manuscripts of the *Historia* that were produced in the twelfth century.

Alfred of Beverley

Quotation from the *Historia* in insular histories provides the main evidence for the reception of Geoffrey's work in the twelfth century. Alfred of Beverley's *Annales sive historia de gestis regum Britanniae* ('Annals, or History of the Deeds of the Kings of Britain', c. 1143) quotes extensively from Geoffrey's *Historia* alongside the works of several other historians, including Gildas, Bede, Symeon of Durham, John of Worcester, and Henry of Huntingdon. The *Annales* is divided into nine books: the first five books record the reigns of the British kings from Brutus to Arthur, while the other four books focus on Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman history to 1129. As a compilation of various histories, the *Annales* includes very little original material, and Antonia Gransden observes that Alfred 'made no systematic attempt to evaluate the relative reliability of his sources'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the *Annales* does have some historical value, particularly as it demonstrates the widespread popularity of the *Historia* in the mid-twelfth century. Like Henry's epistle, Alfred's prologue includes a personal account of his discovery of the *Historia*. More importantly, the *Annales* is an early example of the doubt and scepticism about the *Historia* that William of Newburgh articulated more directly at the end of the twelfth century.

Alfred's prologue directly addresses the authoritarian nature of twelfth-century ecclesiastical legislation.¹⁷ In 1143, a legatine council in London decreed that divine office could not be recited in church in the presence of any

¹⁶ Antonia Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as a Historian in Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32.4 (1981), 397-425 (415).

¹⁷ John Patrick Slevin notes that '[t]he Westminster legatine council of 1143 introduced new disciplinary legislation aimed at protecting church property and clergy. No other London council issuing similar disciplinary legislation is known to have occurred after 1143 and before spring 1148, thus it appears that it is the March 1143 legatine council and its decrees to which Alfred refers to in the prologue. In canon five there is prescriptive legislation mandating the suspension of divine services in churches where excommunicates were present. Canon two suspends divine services in places where clerks are being imprisoned. Canon eight imposed severe penalty on priests who do not implement the rules governing suspension of divine services'; see John Patrick Slevin, 'The Historical Writing of Alfred of Beverley' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2013), pp. 78-9.

excommunicated persons. During this period of enforced clerical inactivity, Alfred focused on reading and private study, and he recalls that

Ferebantur tunc temporis per ora multorum narrationes de hystoria Britonum, notamque rusticiatis incurrebat, qui talium narrationum scienciam non habebat. Fateor tamen propter antiquitatis reverenciam, quæ mihi semper veneracioni fuerat, tamen propter narrandi urbanitatem, quæ mihi minime, junioribus vero memoriter & jocunde tunc aderat, inter tales confabulators saepe erubescbam, quod præfatam hystoriam necdum attigeram. Quid plura? Quaesivi hystoriam, & ea vix inventa, leccioni ejus intentissime stadium adhibui. Dumque rerum antiquarum nova leccione delectarer, mox mihi animus ad eam trascribendam scatebat, sed temporis opportunitas, & marsupii facultas non suppetebat.¹⁸

[At that time tales from the *History of the Britons* were on many people's lips, and anyone unfamiliar with these stories was branded a fool. Nonetheless, despite the reverence accorded to its antiquity, for which I have always had the deepest respect, and its refinement of style, which meant nothing to me but delighted younger men who knew it by heart, I often blushed to admit in conversation that I have not yet acquainted myself with the aforementioned history. What more is there to say? I sought out this work, and no sooner had I found it than I applied myself to reading it diligently. And because I was delighted to read this novel account of the distant past, my mind was soon agitating to transcribe it, but the time available to me and the poverty of my purse would not allow it.]¹⁹

This comment indicates that many readers were interested in the *Historia* for its content; however, Alfred values the text for its style, its originality, and its antiquity, and he presents himself as a potential *scriptor* who could assist the transmission of the *Historia* in northern England. Alfred demonstrates his reverence for the *Historia* by citing it eleven times throughout the *Annales*, and his quotations from the text reinforce its *auctoritas*. He also mentions the author of the *Historia* seven times, but he only identifies Geoffrey as *Britannicus* ('the Briton').²⁰ While Alfred might be unwilling to name Geoffrey, he also cites the *Historia* more than any other insular

¹⁸ *Aluredi Beverlacensis Annales, sive historia de gestis regum Britanniae, libris IX*, ed. by Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1716), p. 2.

¹⁹ 'Alfred of Beverley, Annals, or *History of the Deeds of the Kings of Britain*', in *Prologues to Ancient and Medieval History: A Reader*, ed. and trans. by Justin Lake (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 218-220 (p. 219). All further references to the English translation of the prologue to Alfred's *Annales* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text.

²⁰ See Slevin, 'The Historical Writing of Alfred of Beverley', p. 146.

historian in the twelfth century. Alfred, then, is primarily interested in the authority of the text rather than the identity of its author.

In his prologue, Alfred also outlines the comparative methodology that he applied to his sources. Geoffrey's *Historia* is the primary source for the first five books of the *Annales*, and Alfred comments on his use of this text at some length:

Ut autem desiderio gliscenti aliqua ex parte satisfacerem, ob relevandam aliquantisper dierum illorum maliciam, non eruditis, sed mihi meisque similibus talium rerum ignaris, de præfata hystoria quædam deflorare studui, ea videlicet quæ fidem non excederent, et legentem delectarent, et memoriæ tenacius adhaererent, et quorum veritatem eciam ceterarum historiarum collatio roboraret. Cujus rei gracia veteres revolvens hystorias, attentius indagavi quid præ ceteris singulare vel propium, quidve cum ceteris commune vel dissonum contineat hystoria Britonum.

(*Annales*, pp. 2-3)

[Therefore, in order to satisfy at least in part my swelling desire, and to provide some relief from the evils of those days, I endeavoured to excerpt from the aforementioned history material that would not strain credibility and would delight the reader and stick fast in his memory, the truth of which could be confirmed by comparison with other histories. I did this not for the benefit of the learned, but for myself and those like me who were ignorant of such things. For this reason, I pored over older histories and diligently investigated what was unique and exclusive to the *History of the Britons*, and what it contained that agreed or disagreed with other works.]

(Lake, p. 219)

Alfred's selection criteria are not mutually exclusive, especially as the most memorable and entertaining events in the *Historia* are not known for their historical credibility. Nevertheless, Alfred also proposes to compare the *Historia* with other works – most notably Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* – in order to assess its reliability.²¹ In the *Annales*, Alfred occasionally notes that some historical sources are silent on certain matters of British history, and he doubts the existence of certain historical figures, including several of the British kings before Caesar, as well as Aurelius Ambrosius and Arthur. By omitting any unreliable material, Alfred

²¹ See Slevin, 'The Historical Writing of Alfred of Beverley', pp. 112-17.

rationalises Geoffrey's account of early British history, and prioritises historical fact over entertaining – but not necessarily truthful – stories. He judges the *Historia* on its accuracy and integrity, and only reproduces material from the text that his audience would find believable.

Gerald of Wales

Along with William of Newburgh, Gerald of Wales was one of the key historians responsible for shaping Geoffrey's reputation in the late twelfth century. Gerald has often been associated with Geoffrey of Monmouth, particularly as they both identify themselves with Wales. Despite the parallels between the two historians, Gerald has often been regarded as one of the principal critics of Geoffrey's work.²² Julia Crick, however, has challenged the notion that Gerald was hypercritical of Geoffrey. She writes that

[i]t is tempting to assume that Gerald's overt hostility to the 'History' of Geoffrey of Monmouth condemns that work as mendacious, fictitious, or at least outside the literary traditions within which it claimed to rest. Such a view represents a considerable oversimplification.²³

Crick examines a number of stories in Gerald's works, including origin myths, prophecies, and Arthurian material, that can be traced back to the *Historia* in order to demonstrate that Gerald was invested in upholding Geoffrey's vision of British history. Gerald never cites the *Historia* as his source of information, and he very rarely mentions Geoffrey, unless to disagree with him. In his works on Welsh

²² For example, E. K. Chambers compares Gerald of Wales to William of Newburgh, writing that '[t]he invective of William of Newburgh finds a more humorous parallel in the references of the Welsh ecclesiastic and antiquarian, Giraldus Cambrensis'; see E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, p. 107. In his translation of the *Itinerarium Kambriae*, Lewis Thorpe points out that 'Gerald rarely misses a chance of a jibe at Geoffrey of Monmouth'; see *The Journey Through Wales and the Description of Wales*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978; repr. 2004), p. 118 (n. 160).

²³ J. C. Crick, 'The British Past and the Welsh Future: Gerald of Wales, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Arthur of Britain', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 60-75 (p. 75).

history, the only insular historian Gerald mentions besides Geoffrey is Gildas, the author of *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* ('On the ruin and conquest of Britain', c. 570). Gerald uses Gildas to fashion his own authorial identity, attempting to imitate what he tried to do 'plus sapientia quam eloquentia, plus animo quam calamo, plus zelo quam stilo, plus vita quam verbis imitator' ['with more understanding perhaps that literary skill, more in my soul than by my pen, more in my enthusiasm than by my style, more in my life than by my works'].²⁴ Gerald also quotes from Gildas – most notably when criticising the Welsh people.²⁵ In contrast, Geoffrey's *Historia* is only worthy of indirect references, and Gerald uses the text as an alternative authority on British history.

Gerald constructs Gildas as the ultimate authority on British history. In the preface to his *Descriptio Kambriae* ('The Description of Wales', c. 1194), Gerald demonstrates his respect for Gildas, and he declares that:

Præ aliis itaque Britanniae scrittoribus, solus mihi Gildas, quoties eundem materiae cursus obtulerit, imitabilis esse videtur. Qui æ quæ vidit et ipse cognovit scripto commendams, excidiumque gentis suae deplorans potius quam describens, veram magis historiam texuit quam ornatam.

[Of all the British writers he seems to be the only one worth copying. He puts on parchment the things which he himself saw and knew. He gives his own strong views on the decline and fall of his people, instead of just describing it. His history may not be all that polished, but at least it is true.]

(DK, First Preface)

Gildas' authority is established in three ways. First, Gerald identifies Gildas as an

²⁴ Latin quotation from *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. by James F. Dimock, 8 vols (London: Longman, 1861-91; repr. 1964), VI, First Preface. English translation from Gerald of Wales, *The Description of Wales*, in *The Journey Through Wales and the Description of Wales*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978; repr. 2004), First Preface. All further references to Gerald's writings on Wales are to these editions and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book and chapter numbers only.

²⁵ On Gerald's self-identification with Gildas and his use of *De Excidio* to 'legitimise and reinforce his negative comments about the Welsh', see Huw Pryce, 'Gerald of Wales, Gildas, and the *Descriptio Kambriae*', in *Tome: Studies in Medieval Celtic History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards*, ed. by Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 115-24.

eye-witness of ‘British’ history, who ‘vidit et ipse cognovit’ [‘saw and knew’] the events which took place and which he chose to write about. Second, Gerald indicates that Gildas provided ‘excidiumque gentis suæ deplorans’ [‘strong views on the decline and fall of his people’], and so he deserves praise since he did not allow national sentiment to override his view of the Britons. Indeed, Gerald later points out that Gildas ‘gentem suam acriter invehitur’ [‘criticised his own people so bitterly’] (*DK*, 2.2) and ‘nihil unquam egregium de ipsis posteritati reliquit’ [‘had nothing good to say to posterity about them’] (*DK*, 2.2). Finally, Gerald excuses Gildas for his poor style, but he defends him for his commitment to truth. Gerald’s final comment inscribes Gildas as an *auctor*, who emerges as a reliable and trustworthy historian who is worthy of imitation.

Gerald also establishes the *auctoritas* of Gildas and his *De Excidio* through a complex rhetorical and dialectical strategy. In the second book of the *Descriptio Cambriae*, Gerald includes a number of references to Gildas’ work, and he comments that

Gildas [...] more historico suæ gentis vitia veritatis amore non suppressens, his verbis declaravit; ‘Nec in bello fortes, nec in pace fidelis’.²⁶

[Gildas, who revered the truth, as every historian must, was not prepared to gloss over the weakness of his own people. ‘In war they are cowards,’ he said, ‘and you cannot trust them in times of peace’.]

(*DK*, 2.2)

Gerald initially appears to doubt Gildas’ authority as this quotation is juxtaposed with examples of British (and notably Galfridian) heroes – including Cassibellanus, Brennius and Belinus, Constantine, Aurelius Ambrosius, and Arthur – to demonstrate the military prowess of the Britons. The contrast and comparison

²⁶ Cf. Gildas, 6.2: ‘ita ut in proverbium et derisum longe lateque efferretur quod Britanni nec in bello fortes sint nec in pace fideles’ [‘in fact it became a mocking proverb far and wide that the British are cowardly in war and faithless in peace’].

between quotation and historical examples allows Gerald to assess the extent of the Britons' bravery. Gerald constructs his counter argument around another quotation from Gildas, which recalls how the Britons appealed to the Romans for aid: 'Barbari nos ad mare, mare autem ad barbaros impellit: hinc submergimur, hinc trucidamur' ['The barbarians are driving us into the sea and the sea drives us back into the hands of the barbarians. We have to choose between being drowned and having our throats cut'] (*DK*, 2.2).²⁷ This quotation is followed by an authorial intervention, and Gerald inserts his voice into the narrative to further question the bravery of the Britons: 'numquid tunc fortes, numquid laudabiles fuere?' ['Were they brave then? Have we any reason to admire them for what they did?'] (*DK*, 2.2). These rhetorical questions imply the Britons were not brave, and by evaluating his sources, Gerald proves that Gildas was correct to view the Britons as cowards. Gerald aligns himself with Gildas, which subsequently increases his own authority on matters of British history.

Throughout the *Descriptio Kambriae*, Gerald uses stories from the *Historia* to explain the etymological origins of various British place names. For example, Gerald alludes to the discovery of Merlin by British nobles in Book Six of the *Historia*, and uses it to explain the name of the place in question: 'Kairmerdin, ubi et Merlinus inventus fuerat, a quo et nomen accepit' ['Carmarthen is where Merlin was discovered, hence its name'] (*DK*, 1.5).²⁸ Gerald also incorporates Geoffrey's story about the naming of the River Severn, asserting that 'Hæc Britannice Haveren, a

²⁷ Cf. Gildas, 20.1: 'repellunt barbari ad mare, repellit mare ad barbaros' inter haec dueo genera funerum aut iugulamur aut mergimur' ['The barbarians push us back to the sea, the sea pushes us back to the barbarians; between these two kinds of death, we are either drowned or slaughtered'].
²⁸ Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, 106.511-15: 'At cum in urbem quae postea Kaermerdin uocata fuit uenissent, conspexerunt iuuenes ante portam ludentes et ad ludum accesserunt, fatigati autem itinere sederunt in circo, exploraturi quod quaerebant. Deique, cum multum diei praterisset, subita lis orta est inter duos iuuenes, quorum errant nomina Merlinus atque Dinabutius' ['When they arrived at the city later called Kaermerdin, they discovered youth playing in front of the gate; they approached the players, but, tired by their journey, sat in a circle around them, looking for what they sought. After most of the day had passed, a quarrel suddenly broke out between two youths, whose names were Merlin and Dinabutius'].

nomine puellæ, filiæ scilicet Locrini, ibi a noverca submerse, vocata est' ['It took its Welsh name of Hafren from that of a girl, the daughter of Locrinus, who was drowned there by her stepmother'] (*DK*, 1.5).²⁹ This story of family conflict is found in Book Two of the *Historia*, and Geoffrey records how Queen Guendolena ordered the Severn to be named after Habren because 'uolebat etenim honorem aeternitatis illi impendere quia maritus suus eam generauerat' ['she wanted Habren to enjoy immortality since her own husband had been the girl's father'] (*HRB*, 25.61-2). Both Gerald and Geoffrey comment on how the British name 'Habren' has been corrupted to 'Severn', but only Gerald provides linguistic examples to demonstrate the differences between Welsh and Latin. Finally, Gerald confirms Geoffrey's account of the division of Britain by Brutus of Troy between his three sons (*DK*, 1.7). In the *Historia*, Geoffrey reports the division according to the age of each of the sons: Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus. Gerald, meanwhile, recounts the story according to the size of the territorial divisions (England, Scotland, and Wales). In matters relating to legendary history and topography, Gerald was clearly willing to accept the authority of various stories from the *Historia*, and he adapted them to suit the much more regional and local vision of his own work.

Gerald's complex relationship with Geoffrey of Monmouth is most evident when he directly names his fellow historian or the *Historia regum Britanniae*. In the *Descriptio Kambriae*, Gerald takes offence at the origin of the term 'Welsh' in the

²⁹ Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, 25.58-62: 'Iubet enim Estrildidem et filiam eius Habren praecipitari in fluuium qui nunc Sabrina dicitur fectique edictum per totam Britanniam ut flumen nomine puellae uocaretur; uolebat etenim honorem aeternitatis illi impendere quia maritus suus eam generauerat. Vnde contigit quod usque in hunc diem appellatum est flumen Britannica lingua Habren, quod per corruptionem nominis alia lingua Sabrina uocatur [she ordered Estrildis and her daughter Habren to be thrown into the river now called the Severn, and issued instructions throughout Britain that the river should be named after the girl; she wanted Habren to enjoy immortality since her own husband had been the girl's father. Hence the river is called Habren in the British even today, although in the other tongue this has been corrupted to Severn]'.

Historia (HRB, 207.592-4), and he corrects Geoffrey's explanation in order to assert his own authority.³⁰ He writes that

Wallia vero non a Walone duce, vel Wendoloena regina, sicut fabulosa Galfridi Arthuri mentitur historia; quia revera neutrum eorum apud Kambros invenies; sed a barbarica potius nuncupatione nomen istud inolevit. Saxones enim, occupato regno Britannico, quoniam lingua sua estraneum omne Wallicum vocant, et gentes has sibi extraneas Walenses vocabant. Et ine, usque in hodiernum, Barbara nuncupatione et homines Walenses, et terra Wallia vocitatur.

[The name Wales does not come from that of a leader called Walo, or from a queen called Gwendolen, as we are wrongly told in Geoffrey of Monmouth's fabulous History, for you will find neither of these among the Welsh who ever lived. It is derived from one of the barbarous words brought in by the Saxons when they seized the kingdom of Britain. In their language the Saxons apply the adjective 'vealh' to anything foreign, and, since the Welsh were certainly a people foreign to them, that is what the Saxons called them. To this day our country continues to be called Wales and our people Welsh, but these are barbarous terms.]

(DK, 1.8)

These corrections to the *Historia* demonstrate Gerald's commitment to truth. By contesting Geoffrey's fabricated etymology, Gerald demonstrates his familiarity with Welsh culture, and he cites the Welsh people as his ultimate source of authority. In contrast to Geoffrey, who calls the Welsh 'degenerati autem a Britannica nobilitate' ['unworthy successors of the noble Britons'] (HRB, 207.598), Gerald recognises – and rejects – the colonial origins of the term 'Welsh'. Indeed, he uses *Kambros* and *Kambria* – the Latinised form of *Cymry* and *Cymru* – instead of *Wallia* and *Walenses*, and states that 'Hinc igitur proprie et vere patria Kambria, hinc patriot Kambri dicuntur, vel Kambrenses' ['Just as the correct name of the country is Cambria, so the people should be called Cymry or Cambrenses'] (DK, 1.7). As Hugh

³⁰ Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, 207.592-4: 'Barbarie etiam irrepente, iam non uocabantur Britones sed Gualenses, uocabulum siue Gualone duce eorum siue a Galaes regina siue a barbarie trahentes [As their culture ebbed, they were no longer called Britons, but Welsh, a name which owes origin to their leader Gualo, or to queen Galaes or to their decline]'.

Pryce points out, Gerald's 'Cambrian nomenclature'³¹ is derived from Kamber, the son of Brutus of Troy, in the *Historia regum Britanniae*.³² Gerald's choice of ethnic terminology confirms the authority of the *Historia* as a national history, and he only corrects specific examples in order to rectify information about the Welsh people.

Gerald's reputation as one of Geoffrey's principal critics is primarily based on the story of Meilyr the Soothsayer from Caerleon in the second and third recension of the *Itinerarium Kambriae* ('The Journey Through Wales', 1191; revised 1197).³³ Despite his frequent use of Geoffrey's British history, Gerald appears to openly challenge the *auctoritas* of the *Historia* in the *Itinerarium Kambriae* through the figure of Meilyr, who is ravaged by demons when presented with a copy of the text. Gerald reports that

Quoties autem falsum coram ipso ab aliquo dicebatur, id statim agnoscebat: videbat enim super linguam mentientis daemonem quasi salientem et exultantem, Librum quoque mendosum, et vel falso scriptum, vel falsum etiam in se continentem inspiciens, statim, licet illiteratus omnino fuisset, ad locum mendacii digitum ponebat. Interrogatus autem, qualiter hoc nosset, dicebat dæmonem ad locum eundem dignitum suum primo porrigere. [...]

Contigit aliquando, spiritibus immundis nimis eidem insultantibus, ut Evangelium Johannis ejus in gremio poneretur: qui statim tanquam aves evolantes, omnes penitus evanuerunt. Quo sublato postmodum, et Historia Britonum a Galfrido Arthuro tractata, experiendi causa, loco ejusdem subrogata, non solum corpori ipsius toti, sed etiam libro superposito, longe solit crebrius et taediosius insederunt.

[Whenever anyone told a lie in his presence, Meilyr was immediately aware of it, for he saw a demon dancing and exulting on the liar's tongue. Although he was completely illiterate, if he looked at a book which was incorrect, which contained some false statement, or which aimed at deceiving the

³¹ Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), 775-801 (p. 785). Pryce credits Geoffrey as the inventor of the term *Cambria* to mean Wales, particularly as no Welsh source uses this term before the publication of the *Historia*.

³² Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, 23.7-10: 'Kamber autem partem illam quae est ultra Sabrinum flumen, quae nunc Gualia uocantur, quae de nomine ipsius postmodum Kambria multo tempore dicta fuit, unde adhuc gens patriae lingua Britannica sese Kambro appellat [Kamber received the region across the river Severn, now known as Wales, which for a long time was named Kambria after him, and for this reason the inhabitants still call themselves Cymry in the British]'.
³³ On the different recensions of the *Itinerarium*, and the revisions that Gerald made to the text, see James F. Dimock, 'Preface', in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, VI, pp. ix-lxxi (pp. ix-xxi).

reader, he immediately put his finger on the offending passage. If you asked him how he knew this, he said that a devil first pointed out the place with its finger. [...]

When he was harassed beyond endurance by these unclean spirits, Saint John's Gospel was placed on his lap, and then they all vanished immediately, flying away like so many birds. If the Gospels were afterwards removed and the *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth put there in its place, just to see what would happen, the demons would alight all over his body, and on the book, too, staying there longer than usual and being even more demanding.]

(*IK*, 1.5)

Gerald uses this story of truth and lies, salvation and damnation, to demonstrate the 'dignitatis et reverentiae sacrosancti evangelii liber existat' ['respect and reverence we owe to each of the books of the Gospel'] (*IK*, 1.5). The contrast between the *Historia* and John's Gospel – the Word of God – suggests that Geoffrey's British history is the epitome of fiction; however, this denunciation of the *Historia* has to be situated within the larger context of the *Itinerarium Kambriae*. Gerald does not directly denounce the *Historia*, and his apparent criticisms of the text are only presented through the story of Meilyr. Furthermore, Gerald is arguably more critical of the eccentric soothsayer, rather than the *Historia*. At the end of his chapter on Caerleon, Gerald remarks that 'inter hæc autem omnia admiratione dignissima [...] quod oculis carneis spiritus illos tam aperte videbat' ['It seems most odd to me [...] that Meilyr was able to see these demons clearly with the eyes in his head'] (*IK*, 1.5). Gerald maintains that spirits can only be seen if they assume 'corpora' ['corporeal substance'], and so he asks 'ab aliis quoque præcipue præsentibus et prope positis quomodo videri non poterant?' ['how was it that they could not be seen by other individuals who were assuredly present and were standing quite near?'] (*IK*, 1.5). Through this rhetorical question, Gerald doubts Meilyr's reliability as the source of his prophetic skill cannot be verified by external sources. The prophet Meilyr shares an affinity with the critical historian who is capable of discerning the truth; but

although external authority can verify history – the study of the past – it cannot verify prophetic predictions of the future. Gerald ultimately discredits Meilyr, and the people of Caerleon who believe his divinations. Nevertheless, this story of lies and falsehood proved so popular that it inevitably affected Geoffrey's reputation among medieval historians. On account of Gerald's anecdote, Geoffrey's name and the title of the *Historia* became associated with lies, fiction, and prophecy, rather than truth, fact, and history.

William of Newburgh

Geoffrey's most profound critic was William of Newburgh. William's scathing assessment of the *Historia regum Britanniae* is situated within his authorial prologue to the *Historia rerum Anglicarum* ('The History of English Affairs', c. 1198), which is essentially a treatise on history and truth. Given that William's prologue defies traditional generic expectations, Antonia Gransden has suggested that the text may have been conceived as a separate work.³⁴ More recently Anne Lawrence-Mathers has argued that William's rejection of Geoffrey's *Historia* depends upon 'an unshakeable belief in the truth of Bede's account of post-Roman Britain',³⁵ and she demonstrates that his prologue is part of a 'self-consciously English vision of the English past'³⁶ that was constructed through manuscript compilations in twelfth-century Northumbria. William's historical prologue also resembles a commentary – or academic prologue – especially as he determines the moral purpose of the *Historia regum Britanniae* for his readers, and identifies the intention of its author. As

³⁴ Gransden suggests that the separate tract 'might well have ended at "abo minibus resputar", at which point William changes theme and starts leading up to his own chronicle'; Antonia Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as a Historian in Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32.4 (1981), 397-425 (p. 461, n. 113).

³⁵ Anne Lawrence-Mathers, 'William of Newburgh and the Northumbrian Construction of English history', *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 339-57 (p. 340).

³⁶ Lawrence-Mathers, 'William of Newburgh', p. 341.

Vincent Gillespie points out, commentaries ‘canonize texts, authorize specific understandings of textual meaning as official or legitimate, and ordain their reproduction or replacement according to the needs of the present’.³⁷ In short, William combines the historical and the academic prologue to determine the immoral and unethical nature of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the *Historia regum Britanniae*.

In the twelfth century, the most popular type of academic prologue typically began by introducing the title of the work (*titulus libri*) and the name of the author (*nomen auctoris*).³⁸ In his prologue, William refers to the *Historia regum Britanniae* as the ‘Britonum historiam’ [‘A History of the Britons’] (*HRA*, 1.5), which was a generic title that other twelfth-century historians also used. Like Henry and Gerald, William refers to Geoffrey as *Galfridus Arthurus*, or Geoffrey Arthur, but he also seems to invent an explanation of this name and claims that

Gaufridus hic dictus est agnomen habens Arturi, pro eo quod fabulas de Arturo ex priscis Britonum figmentis sumptas et ex proprio auctas per superductum Latini sermonis colorem honesto historiae nomine palliavit.

[This man is called Geoffrey and bears the soubriquet Arthur, because he has taken up the stories about Arthur from the old fictitious accounts of the Britons, has added to them himself, and by embellishing them in the Latin tongue he has cloaked them with the honourable title of history.]³⁹

By associating him with King Arthur, and by claiming that he exaggerated and aggrandised his source material, William attempts to undermine Geoffrey’s

³⁷ Vincent Gillespie, ‘The Study of Classical Authors: From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume Two: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 145-235 (p. 149).

³⁸ According to A. J. Minnis, the most popular type of academic prologue in twelfth century followed an eight part structure, which included the *titulus (inscriptio, nomen) libri*, or the title of the work; the *nomen auctoris*, or the name of the author; *material libri*, or the subject-matter of the work and the material from which it had been composed; *modus agenda (modus scribendi, modus tractandi)*, or the method of didactic procedure employed in the work; *ordo libri*, or the order of the book; *utilitas*, or utility; and *cui parti philosophiae supponitur*, or the branch of learning to which the work belonged; see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 19-26.

³⁹ William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs: Book 1*, ed. and trans. by P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), 1.2. All further references to William’s *Historia rerum Anglicarum* are to this edition and are given in the body of the text; references are to the book and chapter number only.

authority; however, he also credits Geoffrey with the status of *auctor*, who were distinguished from the roles of *scriptor*, *compiler*, and *commentator* by their ability to invent their own work.⁴⁰ Even as Geoffrey's principal critic, William is – incidentally – his most important bestower of *auctoritas*.

Academic prologues also addressed the author's intention (*intentio auctoris*) and the subject matter of their work (*materia libri*). William emphasises the relationship between Geoffrey's *matière* and his authorial intention in order to question the reliability of the *Historia*. He describes Geoffrey's sources as 'fingunt fabulae' ['invented tales'] (*HRA*, 1.15) and 'fabularum vanitatem' ['fables without substance'] (*HRA*, 1.6). William also points out that the stories about Arthur do not correspond with the works of Gildas or Bede, and so he asserts that Geoffrey was motivated by

sive effrenata mentiendi libidine sive etiam gratia placendi Britonibus,
quorum plurimi tam bruti esse feruntur ut adhuc Arturumn tamquam
venturum expectare dicantur, eumque mortuum nec audire patiantur.

[an uncontrolled passion for lying, or secondly a desire to please the Britons,
most of whom are considered to be so barbaric that they are said to be still
awaiting the future coming of Arthur being unwitting to entertain the fact of
his death.]

(*HRA*, 1.9)

According to William, Geoffrey was a liar and a propagandist, and such intentions are not credible as they result in the distortion of fact into fiction. Like Gerald of Wales, William contrasts Geoffrey with Gildas, who is judged to be a reliable historian because he 'in veritate promenda propriae genti non parcit' ['did not spare his own nation in revealing the truth'] (*HRA*, 1.2). By identifying Geoffrey's intentions as dishonest, William makes a moral judgment on the *Historia*; indeed, as

⁴⁰ On the definitions of the *auctor*, *scriptor*, *commentator*, and *compiler*, see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 94.

Suzanne Reynolds points out, ‘the intentionalist structure [of the *accessus*], the “grasping” of the original thought that underwrote the reading of the figures and tropes, is also the basis for the text’s ethical value’.⁴¹ Since the work of an *auctor* should typically ‘provide moral instruction’,⁴² William’s comments about Geoffrey’s dishonesty also provide a warning to potential readers, and he suggests that they should not read the *Historia* if they value truth and fact.

Like academic commentators, William uses his prologue to outline the order of the book (*ordo libri*) – in this case the *Historia regum Britanniae* – for his audience. William describes Geoffrey’s account of British history, from Vortigern to Arthur; but he also compares it with Bede’s account from Vortigern to Ethelbert to demonstrate that ‘the “dark age” of post-Roman Britain [...] cannot be made to fit chronologically with Geoffrey’s exciting reconstruction’.⁴³ In a complex rhetorical passage towards the end of his prologue, William further questions the narrative of the *Historia*, and directly addresses his audience, asking:

quomodo enim historiographi veteres, quibus ingenti curae fuit nihil memorabile scribendo omittere, qui etiam mediocria memoriae mandasse noscuntur, virum incomparabilem ejusque acta supra modum insignia silentio praeterire poterunt? Quomodo, inquam, vel nobiliorem Alexandro Magno Britonum monarcham Arturum ejusque, acta vel parem nostro Esaiae Britonum prophetam Merlinum ejusque dicta, silentio suppresserunt? [...] Cum ego nec tenum de his veteres historici fecerint mentionem, liquet a mendacibus esse conficta quaecunque de Arturo atque Merlino ad pascendam minus prudentium curiositatem homo ille scribendo vulgavit.

[how could the historians of old, who took immense pains to omit from their writings nothing worthy of mention, and who are known to have recorded even modest events, have passed over in silence this man beyond compare and his achievements so notably beyond measure? How, I ask, have they suppressed in silence one more notable than Alexander the Great – this Arthur, monarch of the Britons, and his deeds – or Merlin, prophet of the

⁴¹ Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 148.

⁴² Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 26.

⁴³ Lawrence-Mathers, ‘William of Newburgh’, p. 345.

Britons, one equal to Isaiah, and his utterances? [...] So since the historians of old have made not even the slightest mention of these persons, clearly all that Geoffrey has published in his writing about Arthur and Merlin has been invented by liars to feed the curiosity of those less wise.]

(*HRA*, 1.14)

By emphasising that ‘historiographi veteres’ [‘the historians of old’] do not mention Arthur or Merlin, William demonstrates that the *Historia* is an unreliable account of British history, and he subsequently reinforces the authority of Gildas and Bede.

William uses his ability to evaluate his sources to assert his authority over Geoffrey, who is simply a ‘fabulator’ [‘story-teller’] (*HRA*, 1.15), and demonstrates how his critical faculties surpass those of other twelfth-century historians. In contrast to Alfred of Beverley and Gerald of Wales, who simply raised questions about certain parts of the *Historia*, William uses his comparative methodology to wholly discredit Geoffrey’s aim to fill the lacuna in British history. William’s critique, then, attacks the fictitious content of the *Historia*, as well the deceitful intentions of its author.

The comments of these four historians demonstrate an increasing scepticism about the truthfulness of Geoffrey and the *Historia* throughout the twelfth century. Just after the publication of the *Historia*, Henry of Huntingdon praised Geoffrey for his originality, but by the end of the century William of Newburgh denounced him for the exact same quality. Henry’s admiration for Geoffrey’s originality soon evolved into cautious scepticism about the reliability of the *Historia*, and Alfred of Beverley first emphasised the need to verify the text with external sources. Amidst this growing scepticism, Gerald of Wales appropriated material from the *Historia* for his narratives about Wales, but refused to cite the text unless he wanted to directly criticise Geoffrey. Finally, William of Newburgh’s evaluation – and subsequent condemnation – of the *Historia* completely undermined Geoffrey’s authority. Geoffrey was dismissed as an unreliable and untrustworthy historian, and the

reputation of the *Historia* was discredited as an authoritative account of British history through its association with its author.

Translation and Quotation: Reshaping Geoffrey's Authority in Vernacular Histories and Latin Chronicles

Between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, translators and compilers established the *Historia* as the authoritative account of British history and reproduced its narrative to suit a range of different audiences. During the twelfth century, the *Historia* was translated into two different vernacular languages: the cleric Robert Wace translated it into Anglo-Norman verse for his royal patrons, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and then the priest Lazamon translated Wace's *Roman de Brut* into Middle English alliterative verse. The *Historia* became more widespread in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when the text was transmitted across England, Scotland and Wales in a variety of languages, including Latin, Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Middle Welsh. In England and Wales, the narrative of the *Historia* was primarily transmitted through translations and adaptations, such as the multilingual Prose *Brut* tradition and the Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd*. Meanwhile, in Scotland, the *Historia* was reproduced in Latin, and it was quoted from extensively in Scottish historical narratives, particularly John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum*.

These translators and compilers consistently reproduced the narrative of the *Historia*, but its author, Geoffrey of Monmouth, is noticeably absent from many of their works: he is either erased entirely, or his authority is challenged and questioned. While Siân Echard has examined the different representations of Geoffrey's name in

incipits to manuscripts of the *Historia*,⁴⁴ there has been little critical discussion of the use of Geoffrey's name or the erasure of his authorial persona by later insular historians. This section analyses how translators and compilers in England, Scotland, and Wales removed Geoffrey from their texts, and used different rhetorical strategies to assert their authority and establish reliability of their own narratives. In particular, this section addresses how vernacular translators used prologues and epilogues to reframe the Galfridian narrative in different social, cultural and linguistic contexts, and also examines how compilers situated direct quotations from the *Historia* within larger historiographical frameworks, including universal and national history. The disassociation between text and author increased the authority and adaptability of Geoffrey's narrative of British history, which was consistently reused and reproduced between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries.

Wace, Lazamon, and Mannyng: Translating the *Historia* in England

In England, translators of the *Historia* often erased Geoffrey from their texts: Wace does not acknowledge the *Historia* as the source of his *Roman de Brut*, and Lazamon and Robert Mannyng both acknowledge their debt to Wace, rather than to Geoffrey. By erasing Geoffrey – but conveniently using his narrative – these translators are able to adapt the *Historia* to suit the interests of their different audiences, and they use their prologues to establish 'the authority, authenticity and accessibility of their own texts'.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See Siân Echard, 'Whose History? Naming Practices in the Transmission of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannie*', *Arthuriana*, 22.4 (2012), 8-24. On rubrics and incipits in manuscripts of the *Historia*, see Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV*, pp. 125-51.

⁴⁵ Julia Marvin, 'Latinity and Vernacularity in the Tradition of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Text, Apparatus and Readership', *Medieval Chronicle*, 8 (2013), 1-42 (p. 2).

In the *Roman de Brut*, Wace presents himself as a translator, and eliminates Geoffrey from his authorial prologue. This omission was not, necessarily, deliberate as Wace partly based his translation on the First Variant,⁴⁶ which does not include Geoffrey's prologue and contains a shorter version of the final colophon than the vulgate Version.⁴⁷ Subsequently, Wace invents a prologue that emphasises the content and structure of his narrative, and which functions as a call to attention for his audience. He writes that

Ki vult oïr e vult saveir
 De rei en rei d'eir en eir
 Ki cil furent e dunt il vindrent
 Ki Engleterre primes tindrent,
 Quels reis i ad en ordre eü,
 E qui anceis e ki puis fu,
 Maistre Wace l'ad translaté
 Ki en conte la verité.

[Whoever wishes to hear and to know about the successive kings and their heirs who once upon a time were the rulers of England – who they were, whence the came, what was their sequence, who came earlier and who later – Master Wace has translated it and tells it truthfully.]⁴⁸

Wace's self-presentation as 'maistre' is typical of twelfth-century vernacular historians who wanted to inscribe 'their work within the "learned" culture normally confined to the scholarly world of *latinitas*, [and] to differentiate it from 'entertaining' vernacular literature'.⁴⁹ Like Geoffrey, Wace indicates that his text is a translation, and the verb 'translaté' (from the Latin 'transfero') establishes the

⁴⁶ On Wace's use of the First Variant, see Robert A. Caldwell, 'Wace's *Roman de Brut* and the *Variant Version* of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Speculum*, 31.4 (1956), 675-82.

⁴⁷ On the relationship between the vulgate *Historia* and the First Variant, Neil Wright, 'Introduction', in *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, II: The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), pp. xi-cxvi.

⁴⁸ *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), ll. 1-8. All further references to Wace's *Brut* in this chapter are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the line numbers only.

⁴⁹ Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), p. 41.

principle of *translatio studii et imperii*, or the translation of knowledge and power, and the reference to the kings of ‘Engleterre [England]’ – rather than Britain – locates the *Brut* firmly within the Anglo-Norman worldview. Furthermore, he also asserts the authority of his narrative by foregrounding the importance of knowledge (‘saveir’, to know) and truth (‘verité’), and he allows his audience to judge the veracity of his translation.

In contrast to Wace, who identifies himself as a translator, Lazamon presents himself as a compiler who ‘þa þre boc / þrumde to are [combined [...]] three books into one]’⁵⁰ in order to construct his narrative of English history. In his prologue, Lazamon claims that he has

gon liðen	wide 3ond þas loede,
and biwon þa æðela boc	þa he to bisne nom.
He nom þa Englisca boc	þa makede Sent Beda.
Anoþer he nom on Latin	þe makede Seinte Albin
and þe feire Austin	þe fulluht broute hider in.
Boc he nom þe þridde,	leide þer amiddden,
þa makede a Frenchis clerc,	
Wace we ihoten,	þe wel couþe writen;
And he hoe 3ef þare æðelen	Ælienor
þe wes Henries quene	þes he3es kinges.

[travelled far and wide throughout this land, and obtained the excellent books which he took as a model. He chose the English book which St Bede composed. He chose another in Latin by St Albin and the Blessed Austin who introduced baptism here. He chose a third book and placed with the others, a book which a French cleric called Wace, and who could write well, had composed; and he had presented it to the noble Eleanor who was the great King Henry’s queen.]

(Lazamon, ll. 13-22)

While only one of these sources is readily identifiable – namely, Wace’s *Roman de Brut* – the three books that Lazamon cites function as ‘a genealogy of the work and

⁵⁰ Lazamon, *Brut, or Hystoria Brutonum*, ed. and trans. by W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Essex: Longman, 1996), 1. 28. All further references to Lazamon’s *Brut* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the line numbers only.

its maker'.⁵¹ Lazamon uses these books to establish himself as a reader and writer of history: he looks upon his books 'with pleasure' and uses his quill to write 'sopere word' ['truthful words'] (Lazamon, l. 27). Furthermore, by claiming to have used sources in Latin, Anglo-Norman, and English, Lazamon attempts to establish his linguistic competency, as well as emphasising his skill as a historian in bringing these texts together.

Similarly, in the prologue to his chronicle, Robert Mannyng names his authorities, and fashions himself in the dual role of translator and compiler. Mannyng based his *Chronicle* on two Anglo-Norman historical texts, and combined the British narrative of Wace's *Roman de Brut* with the English narrative of Pierre de Langtoft. He explains the rationale for this structure in his prologue:

þes Inglis dedes 3e may here
as Pers telles alle þe manere.
One mayster Wace þe ffrankes telles
þe Brute, all þat þe Latyn spelles
ffro Eneas till Cadwaladre.
Þis mayster Wace per leues he,
and ryght as mayster Wace says,
I telle myn Inglis þe same ways,
ffor mayster Wace þe Latyn alle rymes
þat Pers ouerhippis many tymes.
Mayster Wace þe Brute alle redes,
& Pers tellis alle þe Inglis dedes;
þer Mayster Wace of þe Brute left,
ryght begynnes Pers eft
and tellis forth þe Inglis story,
& as he says, þan say I.⁵²

Like Lazamon, Mannyng constructs a textual genealogy for his narrative of British history; however, he also uses his prologue to challenge the authority of his sources,

⁵¹ Lesley Johnson, 'Tracking Lazamon's Brut', *Leeds Studies in English*, 22 (1991), 139-65 (p. 147). On the problem of Lazamon's sources that he identifies in his prologue, see also Françoise Le Saux, *Lazamon's Brut: The Poem and its Sources* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 14-23.

⁵² Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *The Chronicle*, ed. by Idelle Sullens (Binghamton University, 1996), ll. 55-70. All further references to the *Chronicle* of Robert Mannyng are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the chapter; references are to the line numbers only, unless the reference is to the additions in the second manuscript.

especially as he chooses to write in ‘Inglysch’ (Mannyng, l. 5), which he claims is ‘not for þe lerid bot for þe lewed’ (Mannyng, l. 6). By relating the ‘story of Inglande’ (l. 3) in English, Mannyng demonstrates the inextricable relationship between nation and language. English – or rather his ‘symple speche’ (Mannyng, l. 73) – makes Mannyng’s narrative accessible to ‘symple men’ (Mannyng, l. 77) who do not know Latin and French. Mannyng, then, is a considerate translator, who adapts his sources to suit the needs of his English-speaking audience.

The *Brut y Brenhinedd*: Translating the *Historia* in Wales

Geoffrey’s presence in the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, the Welsh language translation of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, is complicated by the number of different versions of the text. The *Brut y Brenhinedd* is extant in around sixty manuscripts that were produced between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries and, according to J. J. Parry, they can be classified into six main versions: the *Dingestow Brut*; Llanstephan 1; Peniarth 44; Peniarth 21; the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*; and the *Brut Tysilio*.⁵³ In the early versions of the text, Geoffrey’s authorial prologue was often included untranslated, or was otherwise omitted; it was first translated into Welsh in the Cotton Cleopatra text.⁵⁴

⁵³ See John J. Parry, ‘The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*’, *Speculum*, 5.4 (October, 1930), 424-31; John Jay Parry, ‘Introduction’, in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. ix. Brynley F. Roberts has since affirmed these six classifications; see Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Introduction’, in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, ed. by Brynley F. Roberts (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), pp. ix-lx (pp. xxviii-xxxi).

⁵⁴ The copying of the Latin prologue in the Dingestow *Brut* can be attributed to a scribal error, and Acton Griscom observes the prologue is in ‘a different hand to the rest of the manuscript’; see Acton Griscom, ‘The Known Welsh MS. Chronicles: Professor Petrie’s Appeal and Answers to It: The Age and Interrelation of the MSS, and of the Versions They Contain’, in *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth with contributions to the Study of its Place in Early British History* ed. by Acton Griscom and trans. by Robert Ellis Jones (London and New York: Longmans and Green, 1929) pp. 114-45 (p. 122). In addition to omitting the prologue, the Welsh versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* also omit other references to the clerical and academic circles that Geoffrey circulated in. Brynley F. Roberts points out that all Welsh versions of the *Historia* ‘omit the dedicatory epistle to Alexander in vii.1 and the reference to Walter in xi. 1’, and he notes that ‘[a]ll manuscripts of the Llanstephan 1 version lack their opening pages but there is no reason to assume that Geoffrey’s dedication to Robert was part of the translation’; Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Introduction’, in *Brut y Brenhinedd*, pp. ix-lx (p.

The colophons to the Welsh *Brut* are more complex, and there are considerable variations between some of the major manuscripts. While these prologues and colophons are not a reliable method of classifying the different versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, they do indicate how certain translators and scribes reshaped the authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth and his ‘British book’ for their own political purposes.

The Dingestow *Brut*, a thirteenth-century translation of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, includes Geoffrey’s prologue and dedication to Robert of Gloucester in Latin that identifies the British book as ‘Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimus’ (*HRB*, 2.9-10). Although the colophon in this manuscript is incomplete, it includes some significant changes to the version in Geoffrey’s *Historia*. The manuscript states that:

E tywysogion a uuant ar gymry wedy hynny pob eilwers a orchymynneis i y caradawc o lan carban uyg kyt oeswr. Ac iddo ef yd edweis i y defnyd y ysgrieuennu y llyuyr o hynny allan. Brenhinedd y saesson y rei a doethant ar ol a orcymynneis y wilym o ...a... mesbyr. a henry o hontendeson. A thewi ar e kymri.

[The *princes who were over the Cymry* after that [temp. Athelstan] successively, I committed to Caradoc of Lancarvan my contemporary *and to him I promised the material for writing the book from that time on*. The kings of the Saxons *who came afterwards I committed to William ... bry and Henry of Huntingdon*, but let them be silent about the Cymry.]⁵⁵

This colophon suggests that Geoffrey could have authored – or perhaps translated – the material about the Welsh Princes that was used as the basis of the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, which is wrongly attributed to Caradoc of Lancarvan.⁵⁶ Geoffrey is presented as having a monopoly over the Welsh future rather than the British past,

xxxiii). With the exception of the Latin prologue in the Dingestow *Brut*, the colophons in the early versions of the Welsh *Brut* are the only evidence of Geoffrey’s authority in the text, but not many of them survive in the extant manuscripts.

⁵⁵ Acton Griscom, ‘The Known Welsh MS. Chronicles’, pp. 123-4. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁶ J. E. Lloyd has demonstrated that Caradoc of Lancarvan did not write the *Brut Tywysogyon*; J. E. Lloyd, ‘The Welsh Chronicles’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 14 (1928), 369-91.

especially as he commands William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon to be silent about the *kymri* rather than the Britons (as in the *Historia*). The Dingestow *Brut*, then, uses Geoffrey's voice to control the writing of Welsh national history.

The language of the British book is questioned in the colophons to the Red Book of Hergest (*Llyfyr Coch Hergest*) and British Library, Cotton Cleopatra MS B. v. The version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* in the Red Book combines the text of the Dingestow *Brut* with Llanstephan 1; it includes no prologue, and the text follows on from *Ystorya Dared* in the manuscript. The Red Book refers to the British book as 'llyfyr brwtwn', and states that 'Gwallter archdiagon ryt ychen o vrytanec yg kymraec' ['Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford translated [the book] from British into Welsh'].⁵⁷ Like the Latin terms 'Britones' and 'Britanni', which can mean Welsh, Cornish, or Breton, the Welsh 'brwtwn' also has several meanings: in 1868, W. F. Skene suggested that this manuscript referred to a 'Breton' book, while sixty-one years later Acton Griscom inferred that the book was written in Old Welsh.⁵⁸ In contrast, the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* refers to the 'British book' as 'llyfyr kymraec', and claims that 'Gwallter archdiagon ryt ychen o ladyn yng kymraec' ['Walter Archdeacon of Oxford turned [the British book] from Latin into Welsh'] (Parry, p. 3).⁵⁹ Although these manuscripts appear to disagree on the original language of the 'British book', they both concur that Geoffrey received a Welsh ('kymraec') – rather than British – book from Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Walter is a simple intermediary in the *Historia regum Britanniae*; however, in these Welsh manuscripts

⁵⁷ Acton Griscom, 'The Known Welsh MS. Chronicles', pp. 123-4.

⁵⁸ See W. F. Skene, 'The Literature of Wales Subsequent to the Twelfth Century', in *The Four Ancient Books of Wales Containing The Cymric Poems attributed to the Bards of the Sixth Century: Volume I*, ed. by W. F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), pp. 19-32 (p. 26); Acton Griscom, 'The Known Welsh MS. Chronicles', pp. 123-4.

⁵⁹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. by John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. 3. All further references to the Welsh *Brut* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

he is credited as a translator, and this scribal intervention subsequently complicates the translation history of the revered British book.

The manuscripts of the *Brut Tysilio* include the most controversial version of Geoffrey's colophon in the collection of Welsh *brutiau*. The *Brut Tysilio* is a highly abridged version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*; it was produced in the fifteenth century and is derived from Peniarth 44 and Cotton Cleopatra MS B v. The colophon to the version of the *Brut Tysilio* in Oxford, Jesus College MS 61 states that:

Myfi Gwallter Archiagon Rydychen a droes y llyfr honn o Gymraec yn Lladin. Ac yn vy henaint y troes i ef yr ailwaith o ladin ynghymraec.⁶⁰

[I, Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, translated this book from the Welsh into Latin, and in my old age have translated it again from the Latin into Welsh.]⁶¹

This colophon completely eradicates Geoffrey from the text, and attributes the Welsh translation to Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. On the basis of this colophon, the eighteenth-century Welsh antiquarian Lewis Morris believed that the *Brut Tysilio* was the source of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and he subsequently developed a production history of the manuscript and its author. Morris' theory was the basis for a national myth that insisted a Welsh manuscript was central to the development of historical writing in medieval Britain.⁶² The replacement of Geoffrey's name with Walter's is a product of the translation and transmission process.

⁶⁰ Transcript from *Brut Tysilio*, Oxford, Jesus College MS 28. Available online at <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=jesus&manuscript=ms28> [accessed 11/06/2015]. Oxford, Jesus College MS 28 is a seventeenth-century transcript of Oxford, Jesus College MS 61, which was produced at the end of the fifteenth century. Oxford, Jesus College MS 28 was produced by Hugh Jones, Underkeeper of the Ashmolean Museum, in 1695.

⁶¹ *The Chronicle of the Kings of Britain; translated from the Welsh copy attributed to Tysilio; collated with several other copies, and illustrated with copious notes*, trans. by Peter Roberts (London: printed for E. Williams, 11, Strand, Bookseller to the Duke and Duchess of York, 1811), p. 190.

⁶² On Lewis Morris and the *Brut Tysilio* see, Brynley F. Roberts, 'Appendix: The *Historia Regum Britanniae* in Wales', in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, ed. by Brynley F. Roberts, (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), pp. 55-74 (pp. 67-74).

‘According to Geoffrey’: Geoffrey and the English Latin Chroniclers

In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, Latin chroniclers in England continued to quote from the *Historia* and name Geoffrey as an authority.⁶³ For example, the *Flores Historiarum*, which was originally compiled by Roger of Wendover at Saint Albans in the thirteenth century, cites the *Historia* four times, ‘twice to honour the book and its author; and twice to prove the truth of statements which have today been discarded as Geoffrey’s inventions’.⁶⁴ Geoffrey is also mentioned by name sixteen times in the *Chronicon* by Joannis Bromton, and Thomas Otterbourne’s *Chronica Regum Angliae* retells ‘the entire substance’ of the *Historia* as an account of true history.⁶⁵

Laura Keeler has examined the different types of critical responses to Geoffrey of Monmouth in this period, and divides the Late Latin chroniclers into four separate categories according to the extent that they question Geoffrey’s reliability.⁶⁶ The fourteenth-century English chronicler Ranulf Higden, who was a monk at the monastery of Saint Werburgh in Chester, is particularly noteworthy for his scepticism of the *Historia*. In his *Polychronicon* (c. 1327), Higden adopts a similar method of critical evaluation to William of Newburgh to assess the reliability

⁶³ For a brief overview of the Latin historians in this period, see Ad Putter, ‘Latin Historiography After Geoffrey of Monmouth’, in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 85-108.

⁶⁴ Laura Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers, 1300-1500* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1946), p. 10.

⁶⁵ Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp. 20-1.

⁶⁶ Keeler’s categories are: 1. Chroniclers who draw freely upon Geoffrey of Monmouth without questioning his reliability; 2. Chroniclers who draw feely upon Geoffrey by question certain passages; 3. Chroniclers who, though they do not explicitly question Geoffrey’s reliability, draw upon him for a specific purpose only, usually political; 4. Chroniclers, conscious of the fictitious character of the *Historia*, who expose the true nature of its fables; see Laura Keeler, ‘Contents’, in *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp. vii-viii. Robert Huntingdon Fletcher also divided the Latin prose chronicles into four separate categories – as well as several sub-categories – but his analysis was solely based on the critical responses to the Arthurian period in Geoffrey’s *Historia*; see Robert Huntingdon Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, especially those of Great Britain and France* (Boston: Ginn & Co, 1906; repr. New York: Franklin, 1958), pp. 170-1.

of the *Historia*; however, the Cornish writer John Trevisa later translated the *Polychronicon* for Thomas de Berkeley (5th Baron Berkeley), and used the same comparative methodology as Higden to defend the authority of the *Historia*.

Ranulf Higden's scepticism of the *Historia* and his evaluation of the text owes much to William of Newburgh.⁶⁷ In his *Polychronicon* (c. 1327), a universal history compiled from a variety of sources, Higden uses Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, and Geoffrey of Monmouth as his main sources of Arthurian history. Higden mentions Arthur's twelve battles in Henry's *Historia Anglorum* (originally from the *Historia Brittonum*), and he alludes to the stories of the Britons reported by William in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*; but he does not endorse Geoffrey's account of Arthur's foreign conquests or the war against Rome. Higden writes:

Ceterum de isto Arthuro, quem inter omnes chronographos solus Gaufridus six extollit, mirantur multi quomodo veritatem sapere possint quae de ea praedicantur, pro eo quod si Arthur, sicut scribit Gaufridus, terdena regna acquisvit, si regem Francorum subjugavit, si Lucium procuratorem reipublicae apud Italiam interfecit, cut omnes historicis Romani, Franci, Saxonici, tot insignia de tanton viro omiserunt, qui de minoribus viris tot minora retulerunt. Ad hæc dicit Gaufridus suum Arthurum regem Francorum Frollonem vicisse, cum tamen de Frollonis nomine nusquam reperiatur apud Francos. Item dicit Arthurum tempore Leonis imperatoris Lucium Hiberium, reipublicae procuratorem, extincisse, cum tamen juxta omnes historias Romanas constet nullum Lucius eo tempore rempublicam procurasse, neque etiam tunc natum fuisse, sed tempore Justiniani, qui quintus fuit a Leone. Denique Gaufridus dicit se mirari quod Gildas et Beda nullam de Arthuro in suis scriptis fecerunt mentionem; immo magic mirandum puto cur ille Gaufridus tantum extulerit, quem omnes antique veraces et famosi historici poene intactum reliquerunt.

[Furpermore of þis Arthur, for among alle writers of cronikes Gaufridus alon so preyseþ hym, meny men wondreþ how it myȝte be soþ þat is i-told of him. For ȝif Arthor hadde i-wonne þritty kyngdoms, as Gaufridus telleþ, ȝif

⁶⁷ John E. Housman notes that, in their criticisms of the *Historia*, there is a straight line from the vitriolic William [...] to the much gentler Higden'; see John E. Housman, 'Higden, Trevisa, Caxton, and the Beginnings of Arthurian Criticism', *The Review of English Studies*, 23 (1947), 209-17 (p. 210).

he hadde i-made Lucius in Italy, procurator of the empere and of þe comynte, why left alle þe writers of stories of Romayns, Frenschemen, and Saxons, and speke noȝt of so greet [dedes and of so greet] a victor, seþþe þat þey tolde so moche and of so menye lasse men, and of well lasse dedes. ȝit herto Gaufridus telleþ þat þis Arthoure over come Frollo kyng of Fraunce, and no kyng of Frollo is i-founde amonge þe Frensche men. Also Gaufridus seiþ þat Arthur slouȝ Lucius Hiberius, procurator of þe empere and of the comynte, in Leo þe emperours tyme, but alle stories of Rome it is i-knowe þat non Lucius was procurator of þe empere noþer of the þe comynte þat tyme, and also þat noon Arthur regned, noþer was i-bore, in leo þe emperours tyme, but in Iustinianus his tyme, þat was þe fifte after Leo. Also Gaufridus seiþ þat hym wondreþ þat Gildas and Beda in here books spekeþ nouȝt of Arthur; but I holde more [wondre] why Gaufridus preyseþ more so moche oou þart al þe olde, famous, and soop writers of stories makeþ of wel nyȝ non mencioune.]⁶⁸

Like William of Newburgh, Higden uses the silences about Arthur in Gildas and Bede to discredit the authority of the *Historia*, and he also demonstrates that the events of Arthurian history cannot be verified by Latin, French, or English histories. Although he lists *Galfridus Monemutensis* as an authority in his prologue to the *Polychronicon*, Higden is forced to reject the account of Arthur's reign in the *Historia* on the basis that it is unhistorical. Furthermore, Higden's use of European sources can be compared with the Renaissance historian Polydore Vergil, who used Roman historians – particularly Caesar, Livy, and Tacitus – to evaluate the veracity of the *Historia* in the sixteenth century.

Although Higden casts doubt over Arthur's conquests, John Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* (c. 1387) contains a unique defence of Geoffrey's *Historia*. Trevisa directly addresses the criticisms of the historians who questioned the veracity of the *Historia* on the basis that it could not be verified with the accounts of other insular historians, such as Gildas and Bede. He comments that

⁶⁸ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis; together with the English translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Churchill Babington and Joseph Rawson Lumby, 9 vols (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865), V, pp. 332-7. All further references to *Polychronicon* are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

Seint Iohn in his gospel telleþ meny þinges and doyngeþ þat Mark, Luke, and Matheu spekeþ nought of in here gospels, ergo, Iohn is nought to trowynge in his gospel. He were of false byeye þat trowede þat þat argument were worþ a bene. For Iohn in his gospel telleþ þat oure Lordes moder and here suster stood by oure Lordes croys, and meny oper þinges that non oper gospeller makeþ of mynde, and ȝit Iohn his gospel is as trewe as eny of hem al þat þey makeþ. So þey Gaufridus speke of Arthur his dedes, þat oper writers of stories spekeþ of derkliche, oper makeþ of non, mynde, þat dispreveþ nought Gaufrede his stories and his sawe, and specialliche of som writers of stories were Arthur his enemies.

(*Polychronicon*, pp. 337-9)

Like Gerald of Wales, Trevisa upholds John's Gospel as the benchmark of truth; however, Trevisa uses the biblical text to establish the authority of the *Historia*, rather than to undermine it. Trevisa emphasises the different accounts of Christ's life in the four gospels to demonstrate that discrepancies between texts do not make them unreliable or untruthful. According to his method of reasoning, Trevisa implies that Geoffrey's account of Arthur is not, necessarily, unhistorical; indeed, as Richard Moll points out, 'Trevisa uses scripture, and in particularly the narrative elements found only in John, to reaffirm the veracity of Geoffrey's unique version of Arthurian history'.⁶⁹ Trevisa evidently values the originality of the *Historia*, and his comments resonate with Henry of Huntingdon, who praised Geoffrey for writing one of the only authoritative accounts of early British history.

'Thus Geoffrey Speaks': Quoting from the *Historia* in Scotland

In the late fourteenth century, the Scottish chronicler John of Fordun compiled various sources together to form the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* ('The Chronicle of the Scottish People', c. 1385), which recorded the history of Scotland from its foundation by the legendary Gaythelos and Scota and ended with the death of King David I in 1153. As Dauvit Broun has demonstrated, the first two books of John's

⁶⁹ Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 77.

Chronica are based on the work of a thirteenth-century anonymous synthesiser.⁷⁰

Like Higden's *Polychronicon*, the *Chronica* is a compilation of material from different sources, and can be classified as a 'derivative text'. According to Matthew Fisher, derivative texts negotiate the 'complex boundaries between compilation and composition, between quotation and derivation, and between description and invention'.⁷¹ John frequently quotes the *Historia regum Britanniae* throughout the first three books of the *Chronica*; however, he also assesses and evaluates reliability of these quotations, and sometimes rejects them if they do not agree with the overall narrative of Scottish history.

In contrast to Higden, who doubted the authority of the *Historia*, the fourteenth-century Scottish chronicler John of Fordun frequently quotes Geoffrey throughout the first three books of his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*. These quotations affirm Geoffrey's status as an *auctor*, and John usually refers to Geoffrey by name (*Galfridus*), and indicates what he wrote ('scribit') or said ('dicit') in the *Historia*. Although these references are rather formulaic, they demonstrate that Geoffrey was accepted as an authority on British history, and he is often situated alongside other insular writers, such as Bede and William of Malmesbury. To further reinforce Geoffrey's authority, John also quotes from the *Historia* at length several times: for example, Partholon's acquisition of Ireland (*CGS*, 1.23); Geoffrey's description of Britain (*CGS*, 2.2); Cassibellanus' payment of tribute to Caesar (*CGS*,

⁷⁰ Broun proposes the source for this account of Scottish origins in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* was a retelling of the *Historia regum Britanniae* 'from a Scottish point of view'. Broun refers to this text as 'The Scottish Monmouth', and he argues that it was 'more than just a retelling of substantial sections of Geoffrey's history of British kings, and probably also consisted of the Eber account (consisting of the story of Gaedel, Scota, and the settlement of inhabitable Ireland by their son, Eber, the discovery of the Stone of Scone by Simon, the settlement of the previously inhabited northern part of Britain by Pictish men and their Scottish brides, and the Stone of Scone's arrival with Fergus son of Ferchar in Scotland); see Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain*, p. 252.

⁷¹ Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012) p. 60.

2.14); the death of the Roman Emperor Severus (*CGS*, 2.34); the arrival of Hengist and Horsa (*CGS*, 3.13), the coronation of Arthur (*CGS*, 3.24-5); and Cadwaladr's lament for the Britons (*CGS*, 3.41). In contrast to several twelfth-century historians, who often quoted the *Historia* to question its veracity, John clearly accepted Geoffrey's account of British history. Furthermore, he uses the quotations from the *Historia* to situate his narrative of Scottish history within the wider history of Albion, which records the histories of the different insular peoples, including the Britons, the Scots, the Picts, and the Saxons.

Despite his frequent use of the *Historia*, John does point out certain contradictions in the text that could compromise its integrity. In Book Two of the *Chronica*, John lists some of the inconsistencies in the *Historia* regarding the relationship between Britain and Scotland. According to John, Leil's construction of Carlisle and Geoffrey's description of Britain provides evidence that 'Britanniam esse divisam a Scocia' ['Britannia is divided from Scotland'],⁷² while the story of Brutus' son Albanactus demonstrates that Britain and Scotland were united. John contextualises these examples from the *Historia* with quotations from Bede and William of Malmesbury, and he indicates that their works contained similar contradictions; however, instead of discrediting their authority, John claims that these textual discrepancies cannot be attributed to these writers:

Et licet hujusmodi sane crebra discrepatio reperta sit chronicis, ipsarum peritis, ymmo sanctis, nullatenus est auctoribus imputanda, qui caute suis originalibus immobili stilo consonas quippe veritate scripserunt historias. Sed scribis potius æmulæ nationis, quorum invidia quædam omnino chronicæ, ne regnorum confinium vigeat autoritas, evertuntur, pejorantur, violantur, ac

⁷² Latin quotations from *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 2.2. English translation from *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. by W. F. Skene and trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 2.2. All further references to John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum* are to these editions and are given parenthetically in the text of the chapter; references are to the book and chapter number.

indiscrete sæpius adeo mutantur, ut unius videatur assertio capituli sensum alterius adnuallare.

[Although, however, discrepancies of this sort are very often found in chronicles, they should by no means be imputed to their skilful, nay, holy, authors, who have taken care to write their histories in strict conformity with the truth, and with an unswerving regard for their original authorities; but, rather, to transcribers of a rival nation, by whose envy, lest the power of adjoining kingdoms should be strengthened, certain chronicles are entirely perverted, corrupted, violated, and, very often, indiscretely so changed that the assertion of one chapter seems to annul the purport of the next.]

(CGS, 2.4)

John upholds Geoffrey, Bede, and William of Malmesbury as writers who revered truth, and he attributes the contradictions in their works to the scribes who copied out their works. Although scribes did make changes to the texts that they copied out, this explanation is a convenient fiction that John uses to avoid assessing the reliability of the authors that he quotes. John's comments about the reliability of the *Historia* are judgements about the quality of his sources and the integrity of textual transmission, rather than a direct critique of its author, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, vernacular and Latin historians reproduced, refashioned, and reauthorised the *Historia* as a reliable source of British history. Although vernacular translators erased Geoffrey from their texts, and fashioned their own literary identities, they also accepted the narrative of the *Historia* and adapted it to suit different social, political, and linguistic contexts. Meanwhile, Ranulph Higden, John Trevisa, and John of Fordun continued the debate over the veracity of the *Historia* into the fourteenth century. These writers all evaluate the significance of textual discrepancies between the *Historia* and other insular histories, but they come to different conclusions. While Higden used these discrepancies to discredit the *Historia*, John Trevisa uses them to defend the *Historia*, and John of Fordun simply attributed them to the process of textual

transmission. Geoffrey, then, was either an absent authority; an unreliable authority; or an authority who had been unfairly dismissed.

The Battle of the Books: Defending Geoffrey in the Sixteenth Century

In the sixteenth century, Polydore Vergil reignited the debate over the veracity of the *Historia regum Britanniae*. In his *Anglica Historia* (1534), which was written for Henry VII, Vergil quotes William of Newburgh's scathing critique of Geoffrey, stating that

nostris temporibus pro expiandis istis Britonum maculis scriptor emersit, ridicula de eisdem figmenta contexens, eosque longe supra virtutem Macedonum et Romanorum impudenti vanitate attollens. Gaufredus hic est dictus, cognomine Arthurus, pro eo quod multa de Arthuro ex priscis Britonum pigmentis sumpta, et ab se aucta, per superductum Latini sermonis colorem honesto historiae nomine obtexit. Quinetiam maiore ausu cuiusdam Merlini divinationes falsissimas, quibus utique de suo plurimum addidit dum eas in Latinum transferret, tanquam approbatas et immobili veritate subnixas prophetias vulgavit.

[in our times a writer has come forth to excuse these faults in the Britons, manufacturing many silly fictions about them, and with his impudent vanity extolling them for their virtue far above the Macedonians and the Romans. This man is named Geoffrey, having the surname of Arthur because he writes much about Arthur taken from the fables of the ancient Britons and embroidered by himself, and passing it off as honest history by giving it the coloration of the Latin language. Indeed with a greater boldness he has published very spurious prophecies of Merlin, supplying additions of his own invention when translating them into Latin, and passing them off as genuine and guaranteed by unshakable truth.]⁷³

Like William, Vergil believed the *Historia* to be largely fictitious: he suggested that Geoffrey had invented the figure of Brutus of Troy, especially as he was not mentioned by Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and he also claimed that Geoffrey had embellished the portrait of Arthur.

⁷³ Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia (1555 Version): A Hypertext Critical Edition*, ed. and trans. by Dana F. Sutton (The University of California, Irvine, 2005; revised 2010), 1.19. Available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/> [accessed 04/07/2013].

The *Anglica Historia* provoked a range of responses from Vergil's contemporaries. According to Denys Hay, '[t]here were two contradictory views of Vergil among English scholars in Tudor times: almost without exception they profess to distrust and dislike the *Anglica Historia*; at the same time they make exhaustive use of it'.⁷⁴ The antiquarians John Leland, Humphrey Llwyd, and John Prise all criticised Vergil for his scepticism of Brutus and Arthur.⁷⁵ Indeed, as F. J. Levy writes, 'Polydore's scepticism left a void, and it was to be a very long time before men could accept that sort of thing with equanimity'.⁷⁶ Despite their criticisms, however, Vergil's contemporaries 'recognized the value of the *Anglica Historia* in areas unconnected with the specifics of early British history'.⁷⁷ The *Anglica Historia* was particularly useful as a source of early Tudor history, and Edward Hall used the text as one of the main sources for his *Chronicle* (1548).⁷⁸

While Vergil's comments about the *Historia* are the product of his classical learning and the method of Renaissance Humanist doubt, they are also part of a wider tradition of scepticism about the *Historia* that had existed since the twelfth century.⁷⁹ Some medieval commentators and translators – most notably John Trevisa

⁷⁴ Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 157.

⁷⁵ For an overview of the contemporary reaction to Vergil's scepticism of Geoffrey's *Historia*, see T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen, 1950), pp. 78-98. See also Ceri Davies, *Latin Writers of the Renaissance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), pp. 12-26; Ceri Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995); Philip Schwyzer, 'British history and "The British history": the same old story?', in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. by David J. Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 11-23; Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 76-89; Vergil's reputation deteriorated further after his death when John Bale, John Caius, and John Foxe accused him of burning manuscripts; see Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, pp. 158-9.

⁷⁶ F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, Renaissance Society of America reprint texts 15 (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1967; repr. Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 65.

⁷⁷ Alan B. Cobban, 'Polydore Vergil Reconsidered: The *Anglica Historia* and the English Universities', *Viator*, 34 (2003), 364-91.

⁷⁸ For Vergil's influence on Edward Hall, see Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, pp. 160-166.

⁷⁹ Renaissance historians are often esteemed for their systematic evaluation of source materials, but Andrew Hadfield notes that 'writers who had the benefit of an advanced training in European

– had attempted to defend Geoffrey against his critics, but the most analytic and academic defences of the *Historia* were produced John Leland and John Prise in the sixteenth century. Drawing on recently rediscovered manuscripts, these antiquarians constructed elaborate, learned treatises and argued that the *Historia regum Britanniae* was a truthful account of the British past. This section examines how Leland and Price used similar comparative and evaluative historical practices to the twelfth-century historians who had criticised the *Historia*; however, in contrast to these early critics, Leland and Price used this methodology to vindicate the narrative of British history in the *Historia*, and to discredit the authority of Polydore Vergil.

John Leland

Leland's defence of Geoffrey has a complex textual history. In 1536, Leland wrote an unpublished pamphlet entitled *Codrus, sive laus et defensio Gallofridi Arturii contra Polydorum Vergilium*, and he included this tract in *De uiris illustribus* ('Of Famous Men'), which was first completed between 1535-6 and later revised between 1543-6.⁸⁰ James P. Carley notes that the first draft of *De uiris illustribus* 'was conceived and directed at [Polydore] Vergil'.⁸¹ In the revised version, however, Leland excised many of his criticisms of Vergil as he had recently published similar material in his defence of King Arthur entitled *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis Britanniae* (1544), which was an expanded version of the *Codrus*.⁸² The *Assertio* and the *Codrus* are similar in style, structure, and argument, and Carley has examined

humanist thought and cultural were not necessarily impartial or more properly skeptical of the problematic nature of their sources' than medieval historians; see Andrew Hadfield, 'Sceptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution', *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 29.1 (2005), 25-44 (p. 38).

⁸⁰ On the composition of *De uiris illustribus*, see James P. Carley, 'Introduction', in *De uiris illustribus*, ed. and trans. by James P. Carley (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies and Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2010), pp. x-clx (pp. x-x).

⁸¹ James P. Carley, 'Introduction', in *De uiris illustribus*, p. cxix.

⁸² Carley's edition of *De uiris illustribus* includes the excised material.

how Leland defends the historicity of King Arthur against the scepticism of Polydore Vergil.⁸³ Although Arthur is the main subject of these texts, Leland's comparison and evaluation of his sources also establishes Geoffrey's authority, and in *De uiris Illustribus* he locates Geoffrey in a wider canon of respected British writers.

Leland used Johann Trithem's *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* as a model for *De uiris Illustribus*. Trithem's text contains a catalogue of 963 authors and '[e]ach entry had a short summary of the author's life followed by a list of works with (wherever possible) their incipits'.⁸⁴ In comparison, *De uiris Illustribus* includes 593 entries on British authors, ranging from the first druids to Robert Winton. The entry on Geoffrey of Monmouth in *De uiris Illustribus* contains various biographical details. Leland describes Geoffrey as a man who 'Summonopere delectabatur lectione antiquarum rerum' ['took great pleasure in reading ancient history'] and who 'Delectabatur etiam doctorum consuetudine' ['also delighted in scholarly intercourse'].⁸⁵ He also situates Geoffrey within the clerical and academic circles of his time, and he is upheld as model of learning and authority. He praises him for his dedication to British history as 'Solus etenim est qui diligentia sua, nunquam satis laudata, bonam partem Britannicae antiquitatis ab interitu plane uindicauit' ['he stands alone in having rescued a great part of Britain's antiquity well and truly from destruction through a diligence which is beyond all praise'] (Leland, pp. 308-9).

⁸³ See James P. Carley, 'Polydore Vergil and John Leland on King Arthur: The Battle of the Books', in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 185-204; James P. Carley, 'Arthur and the Antiquaries', in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 149-78.

⁸⁴ James P. Carley, 'Introduction', in *De uiris illustribus*, p. cv.

⁸⁵ John Leland, *De uiris Illustribus*, ed. and trans. by James P. Carley (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies and Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2010), p. 321. All further reference to Leland's *De uiris Illustribus* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

Leland presents Geoffrey as a translator, rather than an author, of his own work, and he writes that

qui ingenue fatetur se tantum interpretis usum fuisse officio, id est, historiam Britannicam Britannie scriptam [et Gualtero Mapo, Isiacorum archidiacono, oblatam sibi] Latinitate donauisse.

[he openly declares that he performed the task only of an interpreter; in other words, he translated a British history, written in the British language, [and brought to him by Walter Map, the archdeacon of Oxford,] into Latin.]

(Leland, pp. 310-11)

This remark is essentially an apology for the number of inventions that can be found in the *Historia*, and it is also designed to counteract the comments of Geoffrey's critics, who credited him with fabricating many of the events in his work. According to Leland, then, Geoffrey had a limited amount of creative agency, and he simply acted as a cultural mediator by transmitting an ancient account of the British past to his twelfth-century readers.

Leland's biography of Geoffrey includes a lengthy scholarly attack on Polydore Vergil. Leland complains that the Italian historian

Primum strenuae debacchatur in Galfredum, et uis auctoritatem eleuet et suae uanissimae uanitati pondus, robur, ueritatem etiam accumulet. Deinde, quem tot seuis uerbis ante lancinauerat, cogitur homo impudentissimus per bonam antiquioris historiae partem sequi. At huic impudentiae uenia certe danda est, quia alium quem recte sequeretur autorem prorsus nullum habuit.

[launches a frenzied attack on Geoffrey, in order to undermine Geoffrey's authority and to accumulate weight and force as well as credibility for his own empty inanities. Then, for much of the earlier part of his history, this most impudent fellow is forced to follow the writer whom he has just torn to pieces with so many harsh words. But one should surely forgive this impertinence when there was practically no other authority he could have followed.]

(Leland, p. 310-11)

Here, Leland asserts that Vergil is a hypocrite for discrediting Geoffrey, and then using his account to form the basis of the record of insular history in the *Anglica Historia*: 'Qualisqualis fuit Galfridus, ergo certo scio Polydorum coactum, nisi prius

habuisset tacere, Gallofridum sexcentis in locis sequi' ['Whatever man Geoffrey may have been, I know for certain that Polydore was forced to follow him in hundreds of places or else remain silent'] (Leland, p. 347). Leland's comments also imply that English history depends upon early British history for its authenticity. Indeed, during the fifteenth century, the idea of cultural inheritance between England and Wales was being more explicitly acknowledged, especially as Henry VII had used his descent from Cadwaladr, the last king of the Britons, to legitimate his claim to the throne.⁸⁶ According to Leland, then, the *Historia* still had political currency, and he consistently emphasises the authority of Geoffrey, the 'bona autore' ['good author'], in order to expose Vergil, the 'foreigner', as the unreliable fraud.

In *De uiris illustribus*, Leland also includes an assessment of the sources Vergil used in his *Anglica Historia*. Vergil's account of early insular history relied heavily on Tacitus' *Agricola* (c. 98) and Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de bello Gallico* ('Commentaries on the Gallic Wars', c. 58-49 BCE), both of which had grown in popularity during the early modern period.⁸⁷ For Vergil, Caesar and Tacitus were more authoritative than Gildas and Bede, who lived several centuries later than the period they were writing about. Leland, however, remarks that the Romans

qui de rebus nostris modo breuiter, modo concise, modo parum uere scripserunt, nemo ex illis aliquid saltem memoria dignum Britannia, quod ego sciam, ante Cesarem aedidit. Et omnia quae Caesar scripsit, quantumcunque illius dictis Codrus tribuat, mihi non uidentur e tripode profecta, quemadmodum neque alia multa, quae postea a Latinis autoribus de Britannis posteritati tradita sunt.

⁸⁶ On the use of British history in Tudor genealogy see in particular, S. Anglo, 'The *British History* in early Tudor propaganda: with an appendix of manuscript pedigrees of the kings of England, Henry VI to Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44 (1961), 17-48; Alison Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, prophecy and the 'British History' in the Reign of Edward IV,' *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Charles Ross (Gloucester: A. Sutton, 1979), pp. 171-92; Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 21-31.

⁸⁷ On the manuscripts and transmission of Caesar and Tacitus, see L. D. Reynolds and R. A. B. Mynors, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

[who wrote so briefly, so concisely, so inaccurately on our affairs, none of them, as far as I know, wrote anything worth mentioning before Caesar. Besides, not everything that Caesar wrote – however much the Duncie [Polydore Vergil] makes of his statements – seems to me to have proceeded from an oracle; the same applies to many other things about the Britons which were later handed down to posterity by Latin authors.]

(Leland, pp. 310-13)

This assessment of Caesar is also a judgment of Polydore Vergil. Leland implies that it was unreasonable for Vergil to use Roman – and therefore biased – history to counteract Geoffrey’s version of British history. Moreover, Leland also disregards ‘Gildam Bannochorensem et Bedam Girouicensem’ [‘Gildas of Bangor and Bede of Jarrow’], especially as Bede was ‘genti tamen Britanniae infensus’ [‘was so hostile to the British race’] (Leland, pp. 312-3) and the *Historia ecclesiastica* included very little information on early British history prior to the Saxon conquest.⁸⁸ Leland’s detailed evaluation of his sources interrogates the comparative methodology that Geoffrey’s critics used to disprove his account of insular history, and through his scholarly inquiry, he demonstrates that the *Historia* is the only real authority worth following.

⁸⁸ Leland actually discredits the authority of the *Historia Britonnum* rather than Gildas’ *De Excidio*, which had been published by Polydore Vergil in 1525. The Welsh antiquarian John Prise discovered a manuscript of the *Historia Britonnum* that attributed the work to Gildas, but Leland thought that the work was by Nennius. In *De uirius Illustribus*, he writes that ‘I am not unaware that there is a pamphlet in circulation attributed to Gildas (although the learned have severe doubts as to its authorship) and that in it a few scanty references are made to the days when the carnage caused by the the sword, famine, and pestilence that oppressed it’ (Leland, p. 313). Leland was right to doubt the authorship of the *Historia Britonnum* as over thirty extant manuscripts mistakenly attribute the text to Gildas. On the manuscripts of the *Historia Britonnum* and the authorship of the text, see David N. Dumville, “‘Nennius’ and the *Historia Britonnum*”, *Studia Celtica*, 10 (1975), 78-95. On the debate between Leland and Prise over the authorship of the *Historia Britonnum*, see Ceri Davies, ‘Introduction’, in *Historiae Britannicae Defensio: A Defence of the British History*, ed. and trans. by Ceri Davies (Oxford: The Bodleian Library, 2015), pp. xv-lxiii (xlvi-xlviii); Caroline Brett, ‘John Leland, Wales, and Early British History’, *Welsh History Review*, 15 (1990), 169-82

John Prise

Despite Leland's vindication of Geoffrey, Polydore Vergil's criticisms of the *Historia* continued to circulate in Early Modern England, especially as the *Anglica Historia* was published in three editions between 1535 and 1555.⁸⁹ In response to Vergil, the Welsh antiquarian John Prise prepared an argumentative essay entitled the *Historiae Britanniae Defensio*, which he completed by 1553 and was published posthumously in 1573. In his *Defensio*, Prise defends the writers of British history – particularly Geoffrey – and he claims that 'Quibus non minus fidei adhibendum est quam Romanis ipsis, illis praesertim in locis vbi a vetustis probatae fidei authoribus, vsquequaque non dissident' ['They are no less worthy of trust than the Romans, especially as in place after place there is no disagreement between them and ancient writers of proven reliability'].⁹⁰ The *Defensio* is a notable work of sixteenth-century Welsh humanism. As Ceri Davies points out, 'renewed interest in Greek and Latin classics inspired the Welsh humanists to search for the manuscripts of their own country and to assert that Wales had a literature which would stand comparison with the noblest of Greek and Latin achievements'.⁹¹ For Prise, these Welsh – or rather British – histories were central to establishing the veracity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*.

Prise begins the *Defensio* by directly addressing Vergil's claim that Geoffrey invented his material. Like Leland, Prise identifies Geoffrey as 'interpres' ['translator'] (Prise, 2.22.14) and argues that he cannot be regarded as the 'primus author' ['original author'] of the *Historia* (Prise, 3.23.13). Prise situates Geoffrey

⁸⁹ On the editions of the *Anglica Historia*, see Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, pp. 79-85.

⁹⁰ John Prise, *Historia Britannicae Defensio: A Defence of the British History*, ed. and trans. by Ceri Davies (Oxford: The Bodleian Library, 2015), 1.21.433-5. All further references to the *Defensio* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body the text; references are to the book, chapter, and line number.

⁹¹ Ceri Davies, *Latin Writers of the Renaissance*, p. 13.

within the literary context of his time, and he uses the references to Arthur in the works of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon as evidence that material about British history was in circulation during the twelfth century; indeed, Helen Fulton notes that '[t]he fact that William of Malmesbury had heard Welsh legends about Arthur a decade before Geoffrey wrote his history was proof enough for Prise that Arthur had been a historical king'.⁹² To further strengthen his argument that Geoffrey was a translator, Prise quotes William of Newburgh – or 'Gaufredi primus taxator' ['Geoffrey's first reviler'] (Prise, 3.24.15) – who claimed that Geoffrey adopted his material about Arthur from the Britons and 'aucta per superinductum Latini sermonis colorem | honesto historiae nomine obtexisse' ['added the embellishment of the Latin language and invested [them] with the honourable title of history'] (Prise, 3.24.16-17). Within the context of his argument, Prise transforms William's criticism of the *Historia* into a vindication of Geoffrey: he ignores William's objection to the translation of British fables into Latin, and focuses instead on the fact that the stories in the *Historia* 'non tum primum a Gaufreo conficta fuisse' ['were not invented for the first time by Geoffrey'] (Prise, 3.24.18-19).

Prise also relies on various British histories to prove that Geoffrey should be considered the translator of the *Historia* rather than its author. Unlike Vergil, Prise valued medieval manuscript sources; indeed, as Neil Ker writes, 'Polydore is the kind of historian who does not let his manuscripts disturb his narrative. For Prise the old manuscripts are in all, to be quoted exactly'.⁹³ In the *Defensio*, Prise asserts that

Habeo item ipse chronica complura sane vetustissima, partim Latine partim britannice scripta, quorum nonnulla ante Gaufredi tempora fuisse conscripta

⁹² Helen Fulton, 'Historiography: Fictionality vs. Factuality, in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. by Leath Tether and Johnny McFadyen in collaboration with Keith Busby and Ad Putter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 151-66 (p. 163).

⁹³ Neil Ker, 'Sir John Prise', *The Library Series*, 5 vol 10 (1955), 1-24 (p. 8).

multis eudentibus argumentis colligere. Et haec quidem Omnia historiae a Gaufrido translatae plane suffragari videntur.

[I myself have a number of very ancient chronicles, some written in Latin and some in the British tongue, not a few of which, it may be gathered from many clear pieces of evidence, were written before Geoffrey's time. It is obvious that all of these wholly support the history translated by Geoffrey.]

(Prise, 3.24.25-9)

Prise had seen a Gildasian recension of the *Historia Brittonum* at the Brecon Priory (now Hereford Cathedral MS P.V.1), and in the *Defensio* he asserts that the handwriting and orthography of the manuscript were 'proprie insertae expresse redolent' ['redolent of great antiquity'] (Prise, 3.25.42).⁹⁴ While Vergil discredited the *Historia Brittonum* in his *Anglica Historia*, Prise points out that the text contains material on Brutus and Arthur that is consistent 'cum Gaufredi translatione' ['with Geoffrey's translation'] (Prise, 3.25.54), and he effectively discredits Vergil's claim that the *Historia* did not correspond to any insular histories. For Prise, then, the similar content of the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Historia regum Britanniae* demonstrates the antiquity and the authenticity of the material in Geoffrey's account of British history.

In contrast to Prise, who argued for the credibility of British historians, Renaissance scholars like Polydore Vergil generally regarded classical historians to be the most authoritative and reliable sources of information on British history. Vergil dismissed Geoffrey's account of British history on the grounds that it did not correspond with the works of Livy and Caesar; however, in his *Defensio*, Prise draws explicit comparisons between Roman histories and Geoffrey's *Historia*. He writes that

⁹⁴ On Gildas and Prise, see D. Huw, 'Gildas Preisei', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 17 (1972), 314-20; Davies, 'Introduction', in *Historiae Britannicae Defensio*, pp. xv-liii (xlvi-xlviii).

Nempe a Caesare Cassiuellauni, Brenni ex Liuio et Iustino, Cinobelini a Suetoni, Aruiragi a Martiali, et Lucii Regis ab Eusebio, Carausii vero, Coeli, Constantii, Constantini, maximiani, Aurelii Ambrosii ab Eutropio Pauloque Diacono, et aliorum aliquot at aliis authoribus Latinis.

[Cassivellanus, for example, is mentioned by Caesar, Brennus by Livy and Justin, Cymbeline by Suetonius, Arviragus by Martial and King Lucius by Eusebius. Reference is made by Eutropius and Paul the Deacon to Carausius, Coel, Constantinus, Constantine, Maximianus and Aurelius Ambrosius, and more are mentioned by other Latin authors.]

(Prise, 3.28.108-12)

The references to the British kings in these classical histories allow Prise to demonstrate that Vergil's criticisms of the *Historia* were unfounded and – at worst – unlearned, especially as he notes that the 'eadem fere rerum euenta commemorant quae in historia a Gaufrido traducta habentur' ['events which they [the classical authors] recount are almost identical with those contained in the history translated by Geoffrey'] (Prise, 3.32.194-5). Prise also addresses the silences in classical histories concerning other events in British history, and explains that they 'multa tamen eos effugere tam procul dissitos oportuit' ['were bound to miss many things that were at such a distance from them'] (Prise, Preface to Edward VI.***i^v.54). Given that these writers primarily focused on Roman affairs, Prise suggests that classical authors should not, necessarily, be used at the benchmark of authority, especially on matters concerning British history. According to Prise, British histories are far superior to Roman authorities.

Despite their different attitudes to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Polydore Vergil, John Leland, and John Prise all adopted the same comparative methodology involving the analysis of different source materials. As Denys Hay writes,

[t]he scrutiny of any body of historical sources involves a critical approach, if only because no two sources tell quite the same story, and a process of selection at once takes place. Moreover, the authorities may not only

contradict one another: they may offend the elementary criteria of common sense, and even agree with one another in substantiating the impossible.⁹⁵

While Vergil relied on classical sources to discredit Geoffrey, Leland and Prise replaced the traditional authorities with British history and attempted to prove that the authority of the *Historia regum Britanniae* was beyond all doubt. In their respective treatises, Leland and Prise argued that Geoffrey was a translator rather than an author, and they used the depth and breath of their knowledge about classical and medieval source materials to counteract the criticisms that had been aimed at the *Historia* since the twelfth century.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the *auctoritas* of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the critical reception of *Historia regum Britanniae* between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and has identified three different critical responses to Geoffrey and his narrative British history. The first response, as represented by Gerald of Wales and the vernacular English and Welsh chroniclers, is the persistent quotation and translation of the *Historia* in various social, cultural, and linguistic contexts and for different purposes. The second response, which is typical of Alfred of Beverley, William of Newburgh, Ranulph Hidgen, John of Fordun, and Polydore Vergil, is scepticism towards the veracity of the *Historia* and the authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The third response, as exemplified by Henry of Huntingdon, John Trevisa, John Leland, and John Prise, is the unwavering belief in the authority of the *Historia* as a reliable source of British history.

⁹⁵ Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, p. 107.

This chapter has also demonstrated that Geoffrey of Monmouth is subject to more critical scrutiny by Latin historians than vernacular insular historians. Latin historians use comparative methodologies to scrutinise – and in some cases defend – Geoffrey’s authority and to determine the veracity of the *Historia*. In contrast to the Latin historians, who consistently quote Geoffrey and analyse the truthfulness of the *Historia*, vernacular historians in England and Wales challenged the authority of the text – rather than its author – through the process of translation, revision, and omission. Vernacular historians evidently accepted the *Historia* as an account of British history, and they reshaped and reframed Geoffrey’s narrative according to their own national concerns. The structural and narrative changes that the Latin and vernacular historians made to the *Historia* can be analysed according to this distinction between author and text, and they are discussed further in the next chapter.

2. ‘Brutus down to Cadualadrus, son of Caduallo’: Genealogy, Time, and Origins in the Galfridian Tradition

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, genealogy constitutes time: it explains the temporal origins of the Britons and represents the continuous line of regnal succession. Gabrielle M. Spiegel defines genealogy as model of ‘procreative time’,¹ arguing that it ‘functioned to secularize time by grounding it in biology’.² Spiegel also observes that

genealogy enabled chroniclers to organize their narratives as a succession of *gestes* performed by the successive representatives of one or more *lignages*, whose personal characteristics and deeds, extensively chronicled in essentially biographical modes, bespoke the enduring meaning of history as the collective action of noble lineages in relation to one another and to those values to which their *gestes* gave life.³

Geoffrey of Monmouth demonstrates this complex relationship between genealogy, action, and biography in his authorial prologue, and he describes the *Historia* as a ‘continue’ [‘continuous narrative’] of the ‘actus’ [‘deeds’]⁴ of the British kings ‘a Bruto primo rege Britonum usque ad Cadualadrum filium Caduallonis’ [‘from the first king of the Britons, down to Cadualadrus, son of Caduallo’] (*HRB*, 2.10). The

¹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 108.

² Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. 107.

³ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, pp. 108-9.

⁴ *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009), 2.11.

Historia memorialises royal deeds that are ‘digna aeternitate laudis’ [‘worthy of eternal praise’] (*HRB*, 1.6), while also mapping out the complex genealogical relationship between the British kings.

Genealogy is also intrinsically connected to space. As Francis Ingledew points out,

[g]enealogical textuality in family, regnal, and national histories expressed and stimulated a class-interested historical consciousness. The possession of territory and power came to correlate distinctively with ownership of time; time came to constitute space – family and national land – as *home*, an inalienable and permanent private and public territory.⁵

For Geoffrey, the origins of his genealogical model of history are located in the foundation of Britain, which is the homeland of the British people. The Roman goddess Diana emphasises the inextricable relationship between time and territory in her prophecy to Brutus of Troy, and she tells him that Britain ‘Hic fiet natis altera Troia tuis. / Hic de prole tua reges nascentur, et ipsis totius / terrae subditus orbis erit’ [‘will furnish your children with a new Troy / From your descendants will arise kings, who / will be masters of the whole world’] (*HRB*, 16.310-12). At the end of Book One of the *Historia*, Brutus fulfills this prophecy by founding Britain, and then New Troy; but Brutus’ descendants only inhabit the island until the reign of Cadwaladr, and so the loss of British sovereignty signals the end of British history.

The genealogy of British kings from Brutus to Cadwaladr functions as the main chronological and ideological framework of the *Historia*, and R. R. Davies has demonstrated how Geoffrey’s model of time disrupts ideas about the continuity of history writing in the twelfth century.⁶ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,

⁵ Francis Ingledew, ‘The Book of Troy and Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*’, *Speculum*, 69.3 (1994), 665-704 (pp. 668-9).

⁶ See R. R. Davies, *The Matter of Britain and the Matter of England: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered to the University of Oxford on 29 February 1996* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

however, the Galfridian model of history was expanded into the past and the present: new national origin stories located the beginning of British history before the time of Brutus of Troy, while the assimilation of the *Historia* into different English, Welsh, and Scottish national histories extended the Galfridian narrative up to the present day. This chapter argues that the major expansions of the *Historia regum Britanniae* produced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – including the English Prose *Brut* tradition, the Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd* and its continuations, and, north of the Antonine wall, John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum* – represent major reconfigurations of Galfridian time. Most studies, such as those by Dauvit Broun, Margaret Lamont, Julia Marvin, Jaclyn Rajsic, Thomas Jones, and Owain Wyn Jones, focus the development of these texts and their relationship to Geoffrey's *Historia* focus on a single national tradition.⁷ In contrast, this chapter analyses the relationship between genealogy, time, and origins not just within but also across these traditions, and demonstrates how insular historians across Britain relocated Geoffrey's narrative in time and space. The first section examines how Geoffrey used the genealogy of the British kings to structure and define the temporal limitations of the *Historia*. The second section focuses on the different pre-histories that were associated with the Galfridian tradition in the fourteenth century; it

⁷ On the English Prose *Brut* and its relationship to Geoffrey's *Historia*, see Margaret Elizabeth Lamont, 'The "Kynde Bloode of Engeland": Remaking Englishness in the Middle English Prose *Brut*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007); Jaclyn Rajsic, 'Britain and Albion in the Mythical Histories of Medieval England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2013). The most extensive study of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* is Julia Marvin, *The Construction of Vernacular History in the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: The Manuscript Culture of Late Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017). On the Welsh historical tradition and Geoffrey of Monmouth, see Thomas Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', *Scottish Studies*, 12 (1968), 15-27; Owain Wyn Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Bangor University, 2013). Unlike the English and Welsh traditions, the Scottish historical tradition is not exclusively Galfridian, but Dauvit Broun has examined the relationship between John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum* and Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae*; see Dauvit Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

analyses how the stories of Albina, Aeneas, and Scota situated Galfridian history in different temporal frameworks that do not exclusively use genealogy as a model of time. The final section addresses how English, Welsh, and Scottish historians transformed the limited scope of Geoffrey's narrative of British history into a more expansive and continuous chronological paradigm.

Constructing Genealogical Time in the *Historia regum Britanniae*

Ruptures in genealogy define the historical and textual parameters of the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Brutus, who accidentally murders his father, Silvius, breaks the Trojan line of patrilineal succession, and forfeits his right to inherit Alba Longa, which was founded by his grandfather, Ascanius. In exile, Brutus liberates many of the Trojans, who were enslaved to the Greeks, and travels to Albion, which he renames Britain. The foundation of Britain establishes the continuous line of British kings that constitutes the main historical framework of the *Historia regum Britanniae*. This section analyses the structural and chronological function of genealogy in the *Historia*: first, it examines how Geoffrey locates the reigns of the early British kings in time and place through his appropriation of genealogical material, particularly Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* and Eusebius' *Chronicon*. John J. Parry and M. Miller have identified Eusebius' *Chronicon* as the source of Geoffrey's synchronisms in the *Historia*.⁸ While the source relationship between these two texts

⁸ On the relationship between Geoffrey's *Historia* and Eusebius' *Chronicon*, see J. J. Parry, 'The Chronology of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, Books I and II', *Speculum*, 4.3 (July, 1929), 316-322; M. Miller, 'Geoffrey's Early Royal Synchronisms', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 28 (1978-80), 373-89. Julia Crick and Siân Echard have also examined how rubrics, annotations, and glosses draw attention to synchronisms in certain manuscripts of the *Historia*; see Julia C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), p. 95 and pp. 153-157; Siân Echard, 'Palimpsests of Place and Time in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', in *Teaching and Learning in*

is important, the wider structural and ideological significance of Geoffrey's synchronisms has often been overlooked. Using Howard R. Bloch's ideas about grammar and lineage, this section also addresses how Cadwaladr's flight from Britain breaks the continuous line of descent in order to demarcate the transition between British and English history.⁹

The Origins of Genealogical Time

Brutus of Troy is an inherently transgressive figure whose origins have a complex textual history.¹⁰ The story of Brutus' birth and origins in the *Historia regum Britanniae* is derived from the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*. Nennius identifies two founders of Britain, Britto and Brutus the Hateful, who have similar genealogies. Britto, who killed his parents and was expelled from Italy, is the son of Silvius, and the grandson of Aeneas. Meanwhile, Brutus the Hateful is the son of Silvius, the grandson of Ascanius, and the great-grandson of Aeneas; he can also trace his descent from Ham, 'filii maledicti videntis et ridentis patrem Noe' ['the accursed son who saw his father Noah and mocked him'].¹¹ According to Nennius, Britto was the legitimate founder of Britain, and he maintains that the 'genealogia istius Bruti exosi, nunquam ad se, nos id est Britones' ['genealogy of Brutus the Hateful has never been traced to us'] (*HB*, §10). In the figure of Brutus of Troy, Geoffrey combines these

Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Gernot R. Wieland on his 67th Birthday, ed. by Greti Dinkova-Bruun and Tristan Major (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 43-59.

⁹ R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 37.

¹⁰ For an overview of the evolution of the figure of Brutus, see Thea Summerfield, 'Filling in the Gap: Brutus in the *Historia Brittonum*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS F, and Geoffrey of Monmouth', *The Medieval Chronicle*, 7 (2011), 85-99.

¹¹ Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. by John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1980), §10. All further references to Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* in this chapter are to this edition and are given in the body of the text; references are to the chapter number only.

two founding figures: he retains the tragic nature of Britto's birth and youth, while also following the genealogy of Brutus the Hateful.

The story of Brutus of Troy in the *Historia regum Britanniae* emphasises the importance of a kin-group linked together by blood and descent. Geoffrey foregrounds the proximity of these blood ties, and he locates the origins of Brutus' transgressions in the figure of Silvius, who marries a member of his extended family:

Denique, suprema die ipsius superueniente, Ascanius, regia postestate sublimatus, condidit Albam super Tyberim genuitque filium cui nomen erat Siluius. Hic, furtivae ueneri indulgens, nupsit cuidam nepti Lauinae eamque fecit praegnantem. Cumque id Ascanio patri compertum esset, praecepit magis suis explorare quem sexum puella concepisset. Certitudine ergo rei comperta, dixerunt magi ipsam grauidam esse puero qui patrem et matrem, pluribus quoque terries in exilium peragratis ad summum tandem culmen honoris perueniret.

[After Aeneas had breathed his last, Ascanius succeeded him, built Alba by the Tiber and had a son named Silvius. He, indulging a secret passion, married a niece of Lavinia and made her pregnant. When his father Ascanius found out, he ordered his magicians to discover what the sex of the girl's child would be. Once they were certain, the magicians said that the girl was carrying a boy who would kill his father and mother, wander many lands in exile, and in the end receive the highest honour.]

(HRB, 6.52-9)

Silvius' 'secret passion' for, and his subsequent marriage to, Lavinia's niece breaks the laws of consanguinity, as she is his first cousin once removed.¹² Although Silvius and his wife are related by marriage rather than by blood, their union connects the Trojan and Latin bloodlines. Brutus is a potential heir to the throne of Alba Longa who could challenge the claim of Aeneas and Lavinia's descendants.

¹² Unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth, Nennius never identifies Brutus' mother by name: chapter ten of the *Historia Brittonum* simply states that 'Aeneas autem Albam condidit et postea uxorem ducit, et peperit ei filium nomine Silvium. Silvius autem duxit uxorem, et gravida fuit, et nuntiatum est Aeneae quod nurus sua gravida esset, et misit ad Ascanium filium suum, ut mitteret magnum suum ad considerandam uxorem, ut exploraret quid haberet in utero, si masculum vel feminam' ['Aeneas founded Alba, and then married a wife [Lavinia], who bore him a son named Silvius. Silvius married a wife, who became pregnant, and when Aeneas was told that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, he sent word to his son Ascanius, to send a wizard to examine the wife, to discover what she had in the womb, whether it was male or female']; see *British History and the Welsh Annals*, §10. On medieval laws of kinship, see Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

Brutus' expulsion, then, results in his disinheritance; however, it also allows Brutus to become the founding father of a new nation. Brutus' complex family history enables Geoffrey to construct the Britons as the rivals to the Romans, and both peoples can trace their genealogy back to the same mythic ancestor, Aeneas.

The foundation of London in the *Historia regum Britanniae* further demonstrates Geoffrey's appropriation of genealogical and chronological material from the *Historia Brittonum*. At the end of Book One of the *Historia*, Geoffrey explicitly relates Brutus' foundation of London – or *Troia Nova* – to other events in world history:

Postquam igitur praedictus dux praedictam urbem condidit, dedicavit eam civibus iure uicturis legem qua pacifice tractarentur. Regnabat tunc in Iudaea Heli sacerdos et archa testamenti capta erat a Philisteis. Regnabant etiam in Troia filii Hectoris, expulsi posteris Antenor. Regnabat in Italia Silvius Aeneas, Aeneae filius, avunculus Bruti, Latinorum tercius.

[After Brutus had built his city, he furnished it with dwellers to inhabit it lawfully and established a code under which they could live in peace. At that time the priest Eli was ruling in Judea and the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines. The sons of Hector were ruling in Troy after the descendants of Antenor were exiled. In Italy there ruled the third of the Latins, Silvius Aeneas, the son of Aeneas and the uncle of Brutus.]

(*HRB*, 22.504-9)

Like Nennius, Geoffrey uses the events of sacred history, such as the reign of Eli and the capture of the Ark of the Covenant, as a parallel to his secular history.¹³

Similarly, Geoffrey also compares Brutus' foundation of Britain with events of early Roman history; however, while Nennius mentions the reign of Britto's brother

¹³ C.f. Nennius §11: 'Aeneas autem regnavit tribus annis apud Latinos. Ascanius regnavit annis XXXVII. Post quem Silvius, Aeneae filius, regnavit annis XII, Postumus annis XXXIX. A quo Albanorum reges Silvii appellati sunt. Cuius frater erat Britto. Quando regnabat Britto in Brittannia, Heli sacerdos iudicabat in Israhel, et tunc arca testamenti ab alienigenis possidebatur, Postumus, frater eius, apud Latinos regnabat' ['Aeneas ruled three years among the Latins. Ascanius reigned 37 years, and after him Silvius, son of Aeneas, reigned 12 years, Postumus 39 years; and from him the kings of the Albani are called Silvii; and Britto was his brother. When Britto reigned in Britain, Eli the High Priest ruled in Israel, and the Ark of the Covenant was taken by foreigners. Postumus, his brother, ruled among the Latins']; see *British History and the Welsh Annals*, §11.

Postumus, Geoffrey refers to Brutus of Troy's uncle, Silvius Aeneas.¹⁴ By foregrounding the uncle-nephew relationship between Brutus and Silvius Aeneas, Geoffrey establishes two different lines of descent from Aeneas, the original founder of Alba Longa, which subsequently positions the Romans and the Trojans in opposition to each other in time and space.

Geoffrey also situates British history – especially the foundation of important cities – in the larger narrative of universal history. For example, Ebraucus constructs York during the reign of Silvius Latinus, the fourth king of Alba Longa, and ‘tunc Daud rex regnabat in Udaea et Siluius Latinus in Italia et Gad Nathan et Asaph prophetabant in Israel’ [‘at that time king David was ruling in Judea, Silvius Latinus was king in Italy, and Gad, Nathan, and Asaph were prophesying in Israel’] (*HRB*, 27.91-2). Meanwhile, Leil builds Carlisle at the time when Silvius Eptus (also known as Capetus Silvius) succeeded Silvius Alba, which Geoffrey claims was also the time when ‘Salomon coepit aedificare templum Dominio in Ierusalem’ [‘Solomon began to build the Lord's temple in Jerusalem’] (*HRB*, 28.113). Finally, Rud Hudibras builds Winchester ‘Tunc Capis filius Epti regnabat et Aggeus Amos Ieu Iohel Azarias prophetabant’ [‘at the time Capys, son of Eptus was reigning, and Haggai, Amos, Jehu, Joel and Azariah prophesied’] (*HRB*, 29.122-3). The majority of the Judaic events that Geoffrey mentions can be located on the Eusebius-Jerome chronicle, which ‘set out a summary of world history from the birth of Abraham (in our 2016 BC) to AD 325’.¹⁵ As R. W. Burgess and Michael Kulikowski point out,

¹⁴ The complex genealogies of Brutus in the *Historia Britonnum* and the *Historia regum Britanniae* are discussed at length by Acton Griscom, ‘The “Verbal Descent” Arguments Against the Historical Value of the *Tysilio* Text’, in *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth with Contributions to the Study of its Place in Early British History* (London and New York: Longmans and Green, 1929), pp. 154-95 (pp. 182-7 and 191-3).

¹⁵ R. W. Burgess and Michael Kulikowski, ‘The History and Origins of the Latin Chronicle Tradition’, *The Medieval Chronicle*, 6 (2009), 153-77 (p. 165).

the *Chronicon* ‘separated material from different national histories into separate columns, establishing synchronisms among the different histories’.¹⁶ By appropriating material from the *Chronicon*, Geoffrey effectively synchronises the events of British history with the dominant model of universal history that was based on ‘the Old Testament pattern of genealogical succession’.¹⁷ Many continuations of the *Chronicon* were produced – most noticeably by Saint Jerome – and Isidore of Seville and Bede used Eusebius’ model of universal history in their chronographical works.¹⁸ In the *Historia*, the cross-references between British history and Eusebius’ universal history give Geoffrey’s fictional account the appearance of historical veracity.

The Limits of Genealogical Time

In medieval society, genealogy was used for structural and socio-political purposes: it organised a kin-group according into blood and descent, and also legitimised the position of a certain family within the traditional social hierarchy. R. Howard Bloch argues that genealogy is defined a set of ‘representational practices’, including linearity, temporality, verticality, fixity, continuity, and inherence of value.¹⁹ Linearity relates to patrilineal succession, as well as the inheritance of the ‘symbols of traditional power’,²⁰ such as property, family name, and heraldic emblems. Temporality concerns the development and evolution of family relations, and articulates ancestry as ‘a series of successions’.²¹ Verticality emphasises the importance of blood ties, especially as patrimony ‘devolves exclusively to those who

¹⁶ Burgess and Kulikowski, ‘History and Origins’, p. 165.

¹⁷ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 37.

¹⁸ On the production of Eusebius’ *Chronicon*, its continuations, and its use by Isidore and Bede, see Burgess and Kulikowski, ‘History and Origins’, pp. 170-1.

¹⁹ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 83-7.

²⁰ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 83.

²¹ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 84.

are genetically related'.²² Fixity refers to the immobility of the noble family within medieval society, and is represented by the ancestral home. Continuity focuses on the construction of a line of succession from father to son, 'which [...] remains unbroken from the first ancestor to the current heir'.²³ Finally, inherence of value focuses on a social value that is exclusive to an individual family.

Some of the practices that Bloch outlines can be applied to the genealogical structure of the *Historia regum Britanniae*. For example, the names of the Britons and island of Britain, which are passed on from generation to generation, represent the practice of linearity. In tracing the development and evolution of the British people throughout time, the historical framework of the *Historia* demonstrates the practice of temporality. The line of British kings and their genetic link to a common ancestor – Brutus – signifies the practice of verticality. As the ancestral home of the British people, the island of Britain symbolises the practice of fixity. The continuous line of regnal succession exemplifies the practice of continuity. Finally, the genealogy of the Britons illustrates their intrinsic nobility and indicates the practice of inherence of value.

The chronological scope of the *Historia* is most clearly defined when these genealogical practices are broken and the line of descent is disrupted. The displacement of the Britons and their disinheritance by the Saxons at the end of the *Historia* indicates a crisis in the line of succession. After the futile efforts of Ivor and Yni, who attempted to regain Britain for their people, Geoffrey writes that

Supradicta namque mortalitas et fames atque consuetudinarium discidium in tantum coegerat populum superbum defenerare quod hostes longius arcere nequuerant. Barbarie etiam irrepente, iam non uocabantur Britones sed

²² Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 85.

²³ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 86.

Gualenses, uocabulum siue a Gualone duce eorum siue a Galaes regina siue a barbarie trahentes.

[The once proud race had been so weakened by plague, famine and their habitual strife that they could not ward off their foes. As their culture ebbed, they were no longer called the Britons, but Welsh, a name which owes its origins to their leader Gualo, or to queen Gales or to their decline.]

(*HRB*, 207.590-4)

The renaming of the Britons disrupts the practice of linearity, as subsequent generations will no longer inherit the name of their ancestors. The break in lineal succession is also reinforced by the disinheritance of the Britons, who ‘numquam postea monarchiam insulae recuperauerunt’ [‘never again recovered mastery of the whole island’] (*HRB*, 207.598-9). The loss of the island of Britain – the ancestral homeland of the British people – undermines the practice of fixity, and the Welsh are disassociated from their ancestors when they are forced out into the margins.

Geoffrey emphasises the differences between the Britons and Welsh – who he refers to as the ‘Degenerati autem a Britannica nobilitate’ [‘unworthy successions to the noble Britons’] (*HRB*, 207.598) – and it is evident that the intrinsic nobility of the Britons is not passed onto their descendants.

The practice of continuity is challenged by the succession of the Saxons, who have no genetic link to the original British kings. In contrast to the Britons, who descend into civil strife after the loss of Britain, Geoffrey claims that

Saxones, sapientius agentes, pacem etiam et concordiam inter se habentes, agros colentes, ciuitates et oppida raedificantes, et sic abiecto dominio Britonum iam toti Logriae imperauerant duce Adelstano, qui primus inter eos diadema portauit.

[The Saxons acted more wisely, living in peace and harmony, tilling the fields and rebuilding the cities and towns; thus with the British lordship overthrown, they came to rule all Loegria, led by Athelstan, who was the first of them to wear its crown.]

(*HRB*, 207.594-7)

For the Saxons, Athelstan is the first king in a new genealogical line of descent, and he is the figure back to whom the Saxon kings will trace their ancestry. Athelstan's acquisition of the British crown breaks the practice of linearity as the ultimate symbol of power is passed to a new dynasty. Athelstan, however, does not rule over the whole island – only Loegria.²⁴ The boundaries of power are redefined under this new regime, and the territorial inheritance of the Saxon kings is substantially different to the British kings who controlled the whole of Britain 'a mari usque ad mare' ['from shore to shore'] (*HRB*, 5.44).

The genealogical distinctions between the Britons, the Welsh, and the Saxons are further reinforced in the final colophon of the *Historia*. Having completed his history of the British kings from Brutus to Cadwaladr, Geoffrey takes leave of the *Historia*, and positions his work in relation to other contemporary histories:

Reges autem eorum qui ab illo tempore in Gualiiis successerunt Karadoco Lancarbanensi contemporaneo meo in materia scribendi permitto, reges uero Saxonum Willelmo Malmesberienensi et Henrico Huntendonensi, quos de regibus Britonum tacere iubeo, cum non habeant librum illum Britannici sermonis quem Walterus Oxenfordensis archidiaconus ex Britannia aduexit, quem de historia eorum ueraciter editum in honore praedictorum principum hoc modo in Latinum sermonem transferre curauit.

[The Welsh kings who succeeded one another from then on [i.e. after the death of Cadwaladr] I leave as subject-matter to my contemporary, Caradoc of Llancarfan, and the Saxon kings to William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon; however, I forbid them to write about the kings of the Britons since they do not possess the book in British which Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, brought from Brittany, and whose truthful account of their history I have here been at pains in honour of those British rulers to translate into Latin.]

(*HRB*, 208.601-7)

Geoffrey distinguishes between British, English, and Welsh history, and he challenges the idea that insular historiography 'should be regnal, political,

²⁴ On the loss of British sovereignty, see R. William Leckie, Jr, *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

continuous, developmental, and self-containedly English'.²⁵ The colophon to the *Historia* demonstrates that the British and English pasts are irreconcilable, especially as the Britons and the Saxons are not linked by genealogical descent. The British and Welsh pasts are not easily linked together either, since the two peoples are distinguished by name and country.

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the events of British history are clearly organised around genealogy, and this chronological structure is profoundly secular. According to Jacques Le Goff, secular – or profane – history is defined in opposition to sacred history. Sacred history typically begins with the Creation, Temptation and Original Sin, and it ends with the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Last Judgment. Such a narrative of history is 'positive, normative, historical, and teleological'.²⁶ In contrast, profane history focuses on the rise and fall of empires. Le Goff writes that

[t]he succession of the empires [...] was the guiding thread of the medieval philosophy of history. It proceeded at a double level, that of power and that of civilization. The transfer of power, the *translatio imperii*, was above all a transfer of knowledge and culture, a *translatio studii*.²⁷

While Geoffrey indicates links between certain events of British history and world history, he does not impose a Christian chronology on his overarching narrative. The reigns of the British kings, from Brutus and Cadwaladr, define his model of time, and the deeds of the English kings and the Welsh princes are clearly outside the chronological scope of his national history.

²⁵ Davies, *The Matter of England and The Matter of Britain*, p. 22.

²⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization, 400-1500*, trans. by Julia Barrow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 171.

²⁷ Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, p. 171.

Before Galfridian Time: Origins and Ancestry

The story of Brutus of Troy in the *Historia regum Britanniae* embodies the concept of *translatio imperii et studii*: the Britons move from East (Troy and Italy) to West (Britain) bringing culture and civilisation to an unfounded territory. The foundation of Britain is a classic example of a medieval origin story: it contains several components of myths of ethnic descent, explaining the temporal and spatial origin of the Britons, showing where they came from, how they got to the island of Britain, and from whom they were originally descended.²⁸ Brutus is preserved in historical memory as the mythic ancestor of the Britons and the heroic founder of Britain.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, new insular origin stories emerged that challenged Brutus' claim to Britain, as well as his position as the first ancestor of the British people. The English invented the story of Albina to explain the origins of the legendary giants who inhabited Albion before Brutus. The Welsh located the origins of the Britons in Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah, and the classical founders of Troy, rather than solely in the figure of Brutus. Meanwhile, the Scots developed the myth of the Egyptian princess Scota and her Greek husband Gaylethos, which they used to explain how Scotland had been founded before Brutus arrived and established Britain. The stories of Albina, Aeneas, and Scota reinforce the importance of antiquity and origins and create a continuous historical narrative from the beginning of the nation to the present time; they also demonstrate how the story of Brutus of Troy could be used and appropriated by different cultural and national traditions. Most scholarship on these origin legends has focused on the political use of the Brutus and Scota stories in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth

²⁸ These components of ethnic origin myths and myths of descent were identified by Anthony D. Smith in *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 57-98.

century, and the genesis of the Albina myth has traditionally been viewed as an attempt to counter Scottish claims to independence.²⁹ This section, however, examines how each of these origin stories use time, lineage, and textual genealogy to situate Brutus of Troy in different historical and ideological frameworks, which subsequently expands the chronological scope of the Galfridian narrative.

Brutus and Albina: *Des Grantz Geanz*

The story of Albina and her sisters circulated in the Anglo-Norman poem *Des Grantz Geanz* ('The Great Giants', c. 1332-4). In the fourteenth century, the text of *Des Grantz Geanz* was abridged by more than 100 lines and attached to the 1333 continuation of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*.³⁰ This text, which is a vernacular translation of the *Historia regum Britanniae*, exists in two versions, known as the Short version and the Long version: the Short version presents the story of Albina and her sisters as a verse prologue, while the Long version sublimates it into prose to

²⁹ On the political use of the Scota legend, see William Matthews, 'The Egyptians in Scotland: The Political History of a Myth', *Viator*, 1 (1970), 289-306; Edward J. Cowan, 'Myth and Identity in Early Medieval Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 63 (October, 1984), 111-35; Marjorie Drexler, 'Fluid Prejudice: Scottish Origin Myths in the Later Middle Ages', in *People, Politics, Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Joel T. Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987), pp. 60-76. The best study of the development of the early legend of Scota is Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1999). For more recent analysis of the legend of Scota and Gaythelos in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Scottish historiography see, Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 22-51. On the relationship between the Scota and Albina legends see, James P. Carley and Julia Crick, 'Constructing Albion's Past: An Annotated Edition of *De Origine Gigantum*', *Arthurian Literature*, 13 (1995), 41-114; Lesley Johnson, 'Return to Albion', *Arthurian Literature*, 13 (1995), 19-40; Anke Bernau, 'Myths of Origin and the Struggle over Nationhood in Medieval and Early Modern England', in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, ed. by Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 106-118.

³⁰ Georgine Brereton notes that '[t]he omission of 52 [...lines] (ll. 495-546) was an absolute necessity, as their account of the coming of Brutus to England and of his conquest of the giants would have anticipated, and in part contradicted, that which forms the first portion of the chronicle'; see Georgine Brereton, 'Introduction', in *Des Grantz Geanz: An Anglo-Norman Poem*, ed. by Georgine E. Brereton, Medium Aevum Monographs 2 (Oxford: Published for the Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature by Basil Blackwell, 1937), pp. v-xxxvii (p. xiii).

form part of the main narrative.³¹ The Albina myth exists in two forms known as the ‘A’ and ‘B’ versions, and Georgine Brereton has identified the criteria for the classification of various texts:

- a. Albina and her sisters are the daughters of an unnamed king and queen of Greece and are exiled after their plot to kill their husbands has been divulged by the youngest sister.
- b. Albina and her sisters are the daughters of Diodicias King of Syria and his wife Labana and are exiled after having executed their murderous designs. The youngest sister is not mentioned.³²

According to Brereton, verse and Latin texts typically conform to the ‘A’ pattern, while prose texts follow the ‘B’ pattern.

The story of Albina functions as a prologue to the story of Brutus of Troy: it claims that a group of rebellious women founded the island of Albion, and explains the origins and ancestry of the giants of Albion, which Geoffrey of Monmouth failed to account for in his *Historia*. According to *Des Grantz Geanz*, the giants are the offspring of Albina and her sisters who copulated with demons when they arrived on the island. In the prologue, the narrator claims that

Ci poet home saver coment
 Quant et de quele gent
 Les grauntz geantz vindrent
 Ke Engleterre primes tindrent
 Ke lors fust nomé Albion,
 Et qe primes mist le noun.³³

[Here people can know how and when and out of (from) which people the great giants came who first had possession of England, that was called Albion, and who first gave it that name.]

³¹ Lister M. Matheson provides an overview of the different versions of the Brut in his introduction to *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998). On the evolution of the Albina story in the *Brut* tradition, see Julia Marvin, ‘Albine and Isabelle: Regicidal Queens and the Historical Imagination of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* Chronicles’, *Arthurian Literature*, 18 (2001), 143-92.

³² Brereton, ‘Introduction’, p. xxxv.

³³ *Des Grantz Geanz: An Anglo-Norman Poem*, ed. by Georgine E. Brereton, Medium Aevum Monographs 2 (Oxford: Published for the Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature by Basic Blackwell, 1937), pp. 2-31 (ll. 1-6). All further references are to the *Abridged Version (Text of L with Corrections)* are to this edition and are given in the body of the text; references are to the line numbers only. My translation.

‘Primes’ [‘first’] is repeated twice in these opening six lines and it emphasises the giants’ legitimate right to the territory of Albion. The giants inherited the island from their immediate ancestor, Albina, who named the island after herself: ‘Pur ceo de moi, qe su feffe, / Deit la terre ester nome. Albina est mon proper noun, / Dunt serra nome Albion; Par unt de nous en ceo pais / Remembrance serra tutdis’ [‘the land should be named after me as feoffee. Albina is my proper name – from which it will be called Albion: by this we shall always be commemorated in this country’] (*DGG*, ll. 345-50). This act of foundation inscribes Albina’s name into the territory and the history of Albion, which exists before the time of Brutus and the Britons.

The story of Albina and her sisters in *Des Grantz Geanz* is located within the events of sacred time and universal history. After the prologue, the narrator describes the noble king and queen of Greece – the parents of Albina and her sisters – who lived ‘Après le comencement / Du mound, trois mil et neef cent / Et .lxx. aunz’ [‘3,970 years after the beginning of the world’] (*DGG*, ll. 13-15). The story of Albina and her sisters is clearly located within a larger narrative of world history that begins with God’s act of creation that, according to Saint Augustine, created the concept of time.³⁴ The ‘time after the beginning of the world’ functions as a continuous measurement, and gives the appearance of narrative progression from the Creation to the beginning of the events in the poem. In contrast, the foundation of Albion is measured against the Incarnation, and the narrator asserts that the giants ‘Cele gent la terre tindrent / Desque les Brutons vindrent’ [‘held the land until the Britons conquered it’] (*DGG*, ll. 479-80), and claims that ‘Ce fust avaunt qe Dieu feust nee, /

³⁴ In Book Eleven of the *Confessions*, Augustine states that ‘there cannot possibly be time without creation’, and he calls God ‘the eternal Creator of all time’; see Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 11.30.

Come part acompte le ai trove / Mil .c. aunz trent et sis / De ceo seize certain tutdis'
 ['the Britons arrived 1,136 years before the birth of Christ'] (*DGG*, ll. 481-4). This
 dating mechanism indicates a transition between two epochs – before and after
 Christ. The arrival of Brutus and the Britons is clearly synchronised with Christian
 history, rather than the Old Testament genealogical history (as in the *Historia*), and
 subsequently positions British history in a new model of time.

Albina's foundation of Albion is also defined in relation to Brutus'
 foundation of Britain. The epilogue of *Des Grantz Geanz* emphasises the relationship
 between the two origin stories, stating that

Du temps qe les dames vindrent
 Ke primes la terre tindrent,
 Desqes les Brutons vindrent
 Et la terre a force conquirent,
 Et la noun de Albion ousta,
 Et puis Bretagne la noma,
 Si come le cronicle count
 Deux et .lx. aunz amount;
 Taunt de temps, ceo fait a crere,
 Les geantz tindrent la terre.
 (*DGG*, ll. 485-94)

[From the time that the women who came first held the land until the time
 that Brutus came and conquered the land by force and ousted the name of
 Albion, and then named it Britain, so the chronicle counts two hundred and
 sixty years amounted.]

Albion exists for 260 years, until it is renamed Britain. The transition between
 Albina and Brutus, and the renaming of Albion as Britain, indicates that there are
 multiple beginnings, which are linked to the act of foundation. Time and continuity
 are linked to the name of the island, and the dual history of Albion and Britain
 ultimately subverts the Galfridian narrative of history that focuses on a single
 political entity.

As a prologue to the Prose *Brut*, the Albina story starts the narrative of British history in a different time and place. This expanded paradigm arguably has two beginnings: the first beginning is located in Greece and moves Albion, and the second beginning is located in Rome followed by Britain. Furthermore, the story of Brutus of Troy can be read ‘as a beginning which rectifies the errors and perverseness of Albina, the sisters and their giant offspring’.³⁵ The stories of Albina and Brutus are inextricably linked together, and they redefine the limits of Galfridian time to incorporate the histories of Albion, Britain, and England.

Brutus and Aeneas: *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec* and *Ystorya Dared*

Like the Albina myth, the legend of Aeneas functions as a pre-history to the story of Brutus of Troy and the foundation of Britain. Aeneas appears briefly at the beginning of the *Historia regum Britanniae* as he flees from Troy with his son Ascanius and settles in Italy. For Geoffrey, Aeneas’ name simply demonstrates his Trojan ancestry; however, in Welsh historical tradition, Aeneas’ complex genealogy is explicitly mapped out as it provides the central link between the foundational texts of Welsh history. *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec* (‘The Bible in Welsh’), the *Ystorya Dared* (‘The History of Dares’), and the *Brut y Brenhinedd* (‘The Chronicle of the Kings’) are all connected through Aeneas’ genealogy, which transcends the boundaries of time and space, and subsumes Biblical, Trojan, and British history into a larger narrative of Welsh history.³⁶

³⁵ Anke Bernau, ‘Britain’: Originary Myths and the Stories of Peoples’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker and William Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 629-48 (p. 250).

³⁶ On the construction of Welsh history see, Thomas Jones, ‘Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh’, *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968), 15-27; Helen Fulton, ‘Troy Story: The Medieval Welsh *Ystorya Dared* and the *Brut* Tradition of British History’, *The Medieval Chronicle*, 7 (2011), 137-50; Helen Fulton, ‘A Medieval Welsh Version of the Troy Story: Editing *Ystorya Dared*’, in *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Anne Hudson

Y Bibyl Ynghymraec emphasises the relationship between genealogy, history, and textuality. For example, the genealogy of Priam is clearly linked to the foundation of Troy and the events of the Trojan War:

Ylus vab Tros a vv vrenhin Troya, ac a edeilawd Ylium dinas, ac a'y henwis o'y henw ehun. Ac y hwnnw y bu vab Laomedon vab Ylus. Ac y hwnnw y bu vab Priaf, vrenhin Troya. Ac am hwnnw a'y etiued y traethir yn Ystorya Dared.

[Ilus son of Tros was king of Troy, and built the city of Ilium, and named it after himself. And he had a son, Laomedon son of Ilus. And he had a son, Priam, king of Troy. And it is about him and his heir [Hector] that an account is given in *The History of Dares*.]³⁷

This genealogy of the House of Troy, from Tros to Priam, appears to create a seamless transition between *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec* and *Ystorya Dared*, and it also gives the impression of narrative continuity; however, this line of succession is eventually broken by the death of Hector and the fall of Troy. Like the death of Roland in the medieval *chanson de geste*, which results in the ‘extinction of the family line’ and symbolises ‘the disruption of an essentially continuous past’,³⁸ the deaths of Hector and his brothers mark the end of Trojan history. Along with loss of British sovereignty and the Edwardian Conquest, the fall of Troy and the death of Priam’s sons is one of the main tragedies of Welsh historiography, which is based on a cyclical model of history that documents the rise and fall of a single people.³⁹

In contrast to Priam and his sons, Aeneas survives the Trojan War, and his genealogy provides the link between different national histories. In *Y Bibyl*

(Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 355-72; Helen Fulton, ‘History and *Historia*: Uses of the Troy story in Medieval Ireland and Wales’, in *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative*, ed. by Ralph O’Connor (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 40-57.

³⁷ Translation of *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec* quoted from ‘Introduction’, *Historical Texts from Medieval Wales*, ed. by Patricia Williams (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012), pp. xi-xlvi (p. xxiv).

³⁸ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 107.

³⁹ On the cyclical model of history associated with Boethius and its influence on insular history, see history with Eusebius, see Fulton, ‘History and *Historia*’, pp. 46-7.

Ynghymraec, Aeneas is the descendant of Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah who founded various European nations, which connects the Old Testament Patriarchs to the Trojans.⁴⁰ Through Aeneas, Trojan history is also connected to the British past:

A mab y hwnnw vv Tros ap Eirconius. A hwnnw a edeilawd Troya, ac a'y henwis o'y henw ehun. Ac y hwnnw y bu deu vab, nyt amgen, Ylus vab Tros ac Assaracus vab Tros. Mab y Assaracus vv Capis. A mab y hwnnw vv Ancisses. A mab y hwnnw vv Eneas Ywgwydwyynn. Ac am hwnnw a'u etiued y traethir yn Ystorya [y] Brut.⁴¹

[And a son of his [Ericonius] was Tros son of Ericonius. And he built Troy and named it after himself. And he had two sons, none other than Ylus son of Tros and Assaracus son of Tros. Capis was son of Assaracus. And a son of his was Anchises. And a son of his was Aeneas of the White Shield. And it is about him and his heir [Ascanius] that an account is given in *The History of the Brut*.]

(Williams, p. xxiv)

This genealogy identifies two separate Trojan bloodlines descended from Tros, the founder of Troy: the primary line is represented by Ilus, the founder of Ilium and the grandfather of Priam, while the secondary line is represented by Assaracus, who is the great-grandfather of Aeneas. Even though he is the nephew of Priam, Aeneas is never meant to inherit Troy, and he is not an adequate replacement for Hector. Instead, Aeneas is a builder of new nations, and he was adopted as a mythic ancestor by many European peoples, including the Franks, the Britons, and the Normans.⁴² For the Welsh, Aeneas' bloodline provides the continuous structure of their national history, connecting the royal house of Troy to the noble Britons and the aristocratic Welsh princes.

⁴⁰ In contrast, the *Promptuariam Bible*, which was the source of *Y Bibyl Yngymraec*, 'deals almost exclusively with the descendants of Shem'; see Thomas Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', p. 17.

⁴¹ *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec: sef, cyfieithiad Cymraeg Canol o'r Promptuariam Bibliae*, ed. by Thomas Jones (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1940), p. 63.

⁴² On the popularity of the Trojan myth of origins among European peoples, see Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval Origins Gentium and the Community of the Realm', *History*, 68 (1983), 375-90; Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy', 665-704; Richard Waswo, 'Our Ancestors, the Trojans: Inventing Cultural Identity in the Middle Ages', *Exemplaria*, 7.2 (1995), 269-90.

In *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec*, the emphasis on genealogy and continuity represents an attempt to reconcile the two different traditions about Aeneas that are exemplified in the *Ystorya Dared* and the *Brut y Brenhinedd*. The *Brut y Brenhinedd* adheres to the conventional tradition that reveres Aeneas as a nation-builder and a heroic mythic ancestor; indeed, he is the great-grandfather of Brutus of Troy, the founder of Britain. Meanwhile, the *Ystorya Dared*, which is a Welsh translation of Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Trojae Historia*, is part of a tradition that contains '[t]he most significant un-Homeric and un-Vergilian portraits of Aeneas'.⁴³ In this alternative tradition, Aeneas betrays the Trojans by allowing the Greeks into the city, and the fall of Troy is the direct product of treachery and internal strife. These different traditions are ultimately resolved through the larger teleological narrative of Welsh history and, as Helen Fulton points out, 'the Welsh adapter adds the comment, not in Dares [...], that Aeneas set sail away from Troy *parth ar eidal*, "towards Italy"'.⁴⁴ As the founder of Rome, and the ancestor of the Britons, Aeneas is absolved of his treachery, and the tragic destruction of Troy is transformed into a story about the rise of Rome and the foundation of Britain.

The genealogy of Brutus in *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec*, the *Ystorya Dared*, and the *Brut y Brenhinedd* emphasises the importance of family and nation. In contrast to the early Welsh genealogies, which created origin stories for an exclusive group of people, the story of Brutus and his descent from the Trojans constructs a prestigious

⁴³ Meyner Reinhold, 'The Unhero Aeneas', *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 27 (1966), 192-207 (p. 202). *De Excidio Trojae Historia* is a sixth-century Latin translation of a first-century Greek account of the Trojan War by Dares Phrygius, who supposedly fought on the Trojan side. Cornelius Nepos was originally thought to be the Latin translator of the Greek text, but Renaissance classical scholars later identified *De Excidio* as a forgery. On the authorship of *De Excidio*, see Stefan Merckels, 'News from the Past: Dictys and Dares on the Trojan War', in *Latin Fiction: The Latin Novel in Context*, ed. by Heinz Hofman (London and New York: Routledge, 1999; repr. 2004), pp. 155-66. On the critical reception of Dares, see Frederic Clark, 'Authenticity, Antiquity, and Authority: Dares Phrygius in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 72.2 (2011), 183-207.

⁴⁴ Helen Fulton, 'History and *Historia*', (p. 59).

lineage for a whole nation.⁴⁵ By situating the genealogy of Brutus in a wider historical framework, this compilation of texts construct the perceived antiquity and continuity of the Welsh people, who have survived multiple acts of relocation from Troy, to Italy, to Britain, and finally to Wales.

Brutus and Scota: the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*

Like the Albina story, the legend of Scota and Gaythelos is also defined in relation to the story of Brutus of Troy. According to the *Historia Brittonum*, Scota was the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh, and her husband, Gaythelos, was a nobleman of Scythia. Nennius describes how Scota and Gaythelos were expelled from Egypt, and how they wandered through Africa before settling in Spain; he also relates how their descendants founded Ireland, and named it after Scota. Nennius clearly contrasts the stories of Brutus and Scota, claiming that ‘Brittones venerunt in tertia aetate mundi ad Britanniam; Scotti autem in quarta obtinuerunt Hiberniam’ [‘The British came to Britain in the Third Age of the world; but the Irish secured Ireland in the Fourth Age’] (*HB*, §15). Scota also appears in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (‘The Book of the Taking of Ireland’, c. 900-1200), which elaborates on the shared origins of the Scots and the Irish.⁴⁶

The legend of Scota in John of Fordun’s *Chronica gentis Scotorum* (‘The Chronicle of the Scottish People’, c. 1385) follows this same model of *translatio studii et imperii* in the *Historia Brittonum*, tracing the movement of the Scots from

⁴⁵ On Welsh dynastic origin stories, see P. P. Sims-Williams, ‘Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales’, in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. by Tore Nyberg et al (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1985), pp. 97-131 (p. 119).

⁴⁶ Ireland was the traditional homeland of the Scottish people. During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the legend of Scota was rewritten, most notably in Baldred Bisset’s *Processus* (1301) and the Declaration of Arbroath (1320), so that the kingdom of Scotland was identified as the homeland of the Scottish people rather than Ireland; see Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999).

Egypt to Ireland (and eventually Scotland). Yet in contrast to Nennius, who locates the origin of nations after the initial act of foundation, John of Fordun privileges the importance of genealogy and time, which allows him to establish the antiquity of different peoples. In particular, John uses a model of time known as the Six Ages of the World, or the *sex aetates mundi*, in order to prove that the Scots – who claim descent from the Egyptians – have the greater claim to antiquity than the Britons, who can only claim descent from the Trojans.

In the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, John uses the *sex aetates mundi* in order to establish an exact point of origin for the Scottish people. Originally designed by Saint Augustine, this model of time is based upon the events of Biblical history, from the Creation to Revelation, and was used as ‘a system of periodization [...] to impose a pattern on history’.⁴⁷ John of Fordun locates the origins of the Scots in the Third Age (from Abraham to David), and he states that Scota’s husband, Gaythelos, was born ‘temporibus Moysi’ [‘in the days of Moses’].⁴⁸ The events of *Exodus* are a significant temporal reference in the text, and John mentions that the Pharaoh, Scota’s father, ‘persequendo filio Israel in Mari Rubro submersus est’ [‘was swallowed up in the Red Sea, while pursuing the children of Israël’] (CGS, 1.9).

⁴⁷ Graeme Dunphy, ‘Six Ages of the World’, *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. by Graeme Dunphy (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 1367-70 (p. 1367). According to Saint Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*, ‘The first “day” is the first age, extending from Adam to the Flood; the second extends from the Flood to Abraham. The second is equal to the first not in length of time, but in the number of generations; for there are ten generations in each. From Abraham down to the coming of Christ there are, as the evangelist Matthew reckons it, three ages, in each of which are listed fourteen generations: one age extending from Abraham to David, the second from David to the exile in Babylon, and the third from exile to the nativity of Christ in the flesh. Thus there are five ages in all. The sixth age now in being; but this cannot be measured by any number of generations, for it has been said, “It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in His own power.” After this age, God will rest, as on the seventh day; and He will give us, who will be that seventh day, rest in Himself’; see Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.30.

⁴⁸ Latin quotation from *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 1.8. English translation from *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. by W. F. Skene and trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 1.8.

Furthermore, the death of the pharaoh and the flight of Scota and Gaythelos from Egypt are connected to the wider chronology of world history:

A mundi quoque principio transactis 3689 annis, in tertiæ, videlicet, ætatis
 anno 505 qui fuit ante captivitatem Trojæ 330 ante conditionem urbis 760 et
 ante Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi nativitatem 1510. Alli dicunt sic,
 Quingentis mille cum sexaginta monosque
 Annis ut reperi precesit tempora Christi
 Rex Pharao populum fugientem per Mare Rubrum
 Cujus Rex Farao mergitur in medio,
 Supradicto Pharone cum suis exercitibus submersio, sexcentis, scilicet,
 curribus, quinquaginta milibus equitum, et ducentis milibus peditum
 armatorum[.]

[Three thousand six hundred and eighty-nine years after the beginning of the world, in the five hundred and fifth year of the third Age, three hundred and thirty years before the taking of Troy, seven hundred and sixty years before the building of Rome, in the year 1510 B.C. (or as others put it
 “One thousand and five hundred years, and seventy, less one,
 Before the birth, as I have found, of God’s incarnate Son,
 Was Pharoah, folloing the Jews, in the Red Sea undone”)
 the above-mentioned Pharoah was swallowed up, with his army of 600 chariots, 50,00 horse, and 200,000 foot[.]

(CGS, 1.10)

The chapter title to this extract is ‘De tempore quo Scoti primam habuerunt originem’ ‘[Concerning the time at which the Scots had their Origins’] (CGS, 1.11, my translation), and through his precise references to time and ages, John demonstrates that the origins of the Scots predates the fall of Troy and the rise of Rome. This comparative methodology is a form of apologetic chronography that was associated with Eusebius of Cesarea. As Burgess and Kulikowski point out, Eusebius used ‘chronology to prove the greater antiquity of the Jewish patriarchs in comparison to the Greek gods and heroes, especially with respect to Abraham [...] and to Moses, who all predated pagan gods, heroes, and philosophers’.⁴⁹ By making the Scots the descendants of the Egyptians, who were contemporaneous with the

⁴⁹ R. W. Burgess and Michael Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time: The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD: Volume 1: A Historical Introduction to the Chronicle Genre from its Origins to the High Middle Ages* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), p. 120.

Israelites, John of Fordun connects the Scots to a civilisation that has a greater antiquity than the Trojans and the Romans, who were also, of course, the ancestors of the Britons.

Genealogy, ancestry, and descent also function as a model of time in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*. After proving the antiquity of the Scots, John of Fordun provides an account of the origins of the Britons, and opts to follow the story of Brutus of Troy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*. John suggests that we should pass over

ceteris minus notis assertionibus, notioris nobis paginæ scriptis fidem adhibentes, et in hoc sectantes Galfridi chronicam, ab ipso Bruto, qui fuit filius Silvii, filii Ascanii, filii Æneæ, de Troja profugi, cujus pater Anchyses filius Troii, filii Dardani, congruum de Britonibus nostræ sumamus initium relationis.

[less known assertions, [and] pin our faith upon the words of a page better known to us; and following Geoffrey's chronicle in this particular, we may begin our account of the Britons from that Brutus who was the son of Silvius, the son of Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, the fugitive from Troy, whose father, Anchises, was the son of Troius, son of Dardanus.]

(CGS, 2.5)

John focuses on genealogical fact, rather than on Geoffrey's fictional account of the foundation of Britain, and he traces Brutus' lineage backwards to demonstrate that the founder of Britain is the ninth generation descended from Dardanus. This genealogy is connected to time and space, and the movement from Phrygia, to Troy, to Rome anticipates Brutus' movement from Rome to Britain. Brutus can also trace his ancestry from three founding fathers of the house of Rome: Aeneas, who founded Rome; Tros, who founded Troy; and Dardanus, who founded Dardania (here Phrygia).⁵⁰ By providing Brutus' full Trojan genealogy, John can compare the

⁵⁰ This Trojan genealogy can be traced from the *Historia Britonnum*; see *British History and the Welsh Annals*, §10. Similar variations were popular in the twelfth century. William of Malmesbury produced a genealogy of Aeneas, which is extant in Bodleian Arch, Selden B.16, fol. 7v, that begins

ancestries of the Britons and the Scots in order to further reinforce the antiquity of the Scottish nation.

For John of Fordun, numbers, dating, and chronology have a clear ideological and political function. John locates the story of Brutus of Troy in the *sex aetates mundi* in order to establish a direct comparison with the legend of Scota and Gaythelos. In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey never provides a concrete date for the birth of Brutus or the foundation of Britain, but John relates Trojan and British history to the wider chronology of universal history. He writes that:

Idem vero Silvius, patre vivente, de nobili femina, neptæ, videlicet, Lavinia reginæ, genuit Brutum, quia sicut per hunc patet verum, natus est ab origine mundi,

Mille quater deca tres fit Adam Bruto prior annis:

Hoc est, octingentesimo XLVIII^o. tertiæ ætatis anno. Ex Italia quidem exivit juvenis annorum quindecim, et in Albionis regnare coepit provinciis australibus, annorum ætatis triginta quinque. Genuit igitur idem Brutus ex uxore, filia Pandrasi regis Græcorum, tres filios, quibus imposita sunt hæc nomina, Locrinus, Albanactus et Camber. Qui, postquam viginti quatuor annis regnaverat, mortuus est, et supultus a filiis in urbe Londoniensi.

[Now this Silvius, during his father's lifetime, begat Brutus, of a woman of noble birth, the niece of Queen Lavinia. Brutus was born in A.M. 4032, as appears from the following rhyme : –

“Four times a thousand years, and three times ten,
Came Brutus, after Adam, first of men,”

That is, in the year 848 of the third Age. He left Italy a youth of fifteen years, and began to reign in the southern provinces of Albion at the age of thirty-five. Of his wife, the daughter of Pandrasus, king of the Greeks, he begat three sons, on whom were bestowed these names: - Locrinus, Albanactus, and Camber. He reigned twenty-four years, and then died, and was buried by his sons in the city of London].

(CGS, 2.6)

This description of the life of Brutus, and his location in time and space, can be compared with Scota and Gaythelos. Bower uses two different dating systems to

‘with Jupiter and the Trojan progenitor Dardanus and culminated in Priam and Aeneas, with such intervening figures as Erichthonius, Tros, Ilus, Assaracus, and Anchises arranged one after the other in order of linear descent’; see Frederic N. Clark, ‘Reading the “First Pagan Historiographer”’: Dares Phrygius and Medieval Genealogy’, *Viator* 41.2 (2010), 203–26 (214). Similar records of Trojan lineage beginning ‘Dardanus ex Iove et Electra’ were conjoined with fourteen copies of Dares Phrygius’ *De Excidio Troiae* in the Middle Ages.

demonstrate that the Scots are older than the Britons. First, the number of years ‘after the beginning of the world’: Scota and Gaythelos lived 3869 years after the beginning of the world, but Brutus lived 4032 years after the beginning of the world.⁵¹ Second, the number of years passed in the Third Age: Scota and Gaythelos lived in the 505th year of the Third Age, while Brutus lived in the 848th year of the Third Age. According to these figures, Britain was founded later than Scotland, and so the Scots claim ownership over their homeland through their antiquity.

The *Scottis Originale*, a vernacular account of the Fordun-Bower tradition, succinctly summarises the differences between the legends of Scota and Brutus. Using the possessive pronoun ‘our’, the text insists that ‘oure nacioun and oure name was foundit, and our land inhabyte lang tyme before þat Troy was destroyit and lang or Brute was borne’.⁵² This text emphatically states that the Scots arrived in Britain before Brutus of Troy, and demonstrates how the antiquity of the Scots depends on comparison with the origins of the Britons. The use of ‘our’ also distinguishes Scotland as separate nation from Britain, and also establishes the differences between the Britons and the Scots. Despite their different historical narratives, Scottish history depends on its relationship to British history to establish its authority.

In medieval genealogy there is, as R. Howard Bloch points out, a ‘tendency [...] to push back the moment of origin as far as possible (sometimes through successive revisions)’.⁵³ The origin stories of Albina, Aeneas, and Scota represent an attempt to locate the beginnings of Albion, Britain, and Scotland before the time of Brutus of Troy in the *Historia regum Britanniae*. The story of Albina emphasises the

⁵¹ Note that the story of Albina in *Des Grantz Geanz* begins 3,970 years after beginning of the world.

⁵² *The Scottis Originale (The Cronycle of Scotland in a Part)*, in *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, ed. by Dan Embree, Edward Donald Kennedy, and Kathleen Daly (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 111-134 (Dalhousie MS, p. 123).

⁵³ Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 80.

connection between the Creation and the foundation of Albion; the story of Aeneas relates the history of the Britons more explicitly to the Trojan War; and finally the story of Scota is positioned in the Augustinian and Eusebian models of world history. Each of these national histories locates the story of Brutus of Troy in a different temporal framework so that it no longer conforms to the conventional Galfridian model of history. Geoffrey's genealogy of the British kings is limited from Brutus to Cadwaladr; but these origin stories, and their use of the Brutus myth, provide the foundations for three different models of national history. The stories of Albina, Aeneas, and Scota were all incorporated into their respective narratives of national history in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and demonstrate how historians constructed continuity between the ancient past and the present time.

Beyond Galfridian Time: Temporal Thresholds and Textual Genealogies

History, time, and genealogy are continuous. From the mid-twelfth century onwards, several insular historians, including Alfred of Beverley, Gervase of Canterbury and Roger of Wendover, used Geoffrey's account of British history as part of larger, and more extensive, historical narratives.⁵⁴ During Geoffrey's lifetime, Geffrei Gaimar planned to translate and assimilate the narrative of the *Historia regum Britanniae* into his 'vast panorama of the Celto-British, Anglo-Saxon, and Anglo-Norman dynasties in the British Isles from the Trojan times until the death of William Rufus'.⁵⁵ Although Gaimar's translation of the *Historia regum Britanniae* is non-

⁵⁴ On these insular historians and their use of the *Historia*, see Leckie, *The Passage of Dominion*, pp. 86-100.

⁵⁵ Ian Short suggests that Gaimar's *Estoire des Bretons* has not survived because it was overshadowed by Wace's *Roman de Brut*; see Ian Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Liber vetustissimus*', *Speculum*, 69.2 (1994), 323-43 (324).

extant, the opening of his *Estoire des Engleis* (or ‘History of the English People’, 1135-40) demonstrates its connection to Galfridian history. The text starts in post-Arthurian Britain, and the narrator reminds the audience that

*Çaenarere el livre bien devant –
si vus en este remembrant –
avez oï confaitement
Costentin tint après Artur tenement,
e com Iwein [re]fu fait reis
de Muref e de Löeneis.
Mes de ço veit mult malement:
mort sunt tut lur meillur parent.
Li Seisne se sunt expanduz,
ki od Certiz furent venuz;
dés Humbre tresk’en Cateneis
doné lur out Modret li reis,
si unt saisi e [tut] purpris
la terre que ja tint Hengis;
cele claimant en heritage
car Hengis est de lur linage.*

*[You have, if you recall, already heard, in the previous volume, how Constantine ruled over this domain in succession to Arthur, and how, in his turn, Yvain was crowned king of Moray and Lothian. The situation, however, turns out badly, for the foremost members of their family are killed, and the Saxons who had arrived with Cerdic continued to expand their territory. King Mordred had ceded them all the land between the River Humber and Caithness, and they in addition seized and occupied all the land over which Hengest had previously ruled which they, as descendants of Hengest, claim as their rightful inheritance.]*⁵⁶

As R. William Leckie, Jr points out, Constantine ‘provides the principal connecting link’ as he ‘serves to place events relative to the regnal list in the *Historia regum Britanniae*’.⁵⁷ Gaimar’s narrative, however, deviates from Geoffrey’s single, continuous line of British kings, and he states that ‘ke dous reis out ja en Bretagne / quant Costentin ert chevetaigne’ [‘during the reign of Constantine [...] there were

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3. All further references to Gaimar’s *Estoire* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page number only. The first four lines of the above quotation are the work of the scribe, and Ian Short points out that they ‘refer to the division of Gaimar’s poem into two separate volumes [...] earlier in the manuscript tradition’; see Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p. 357 (note to ll. 1-4).

⁵⁷ Leckie, *The Passage of Dominion*, pp. 81-2.

already two kings in Britain’] (Gaimar, ll. 43-4), namely Adelbright (a Dane) and Edelfi (a Briton). Britain is clearly divided between multiple kings, and these territorial divisions allow Gaimar to focus on the events of regional and local history. The reign of Constantine, then, functions as a threshold that joins together two historical narratives.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, chroniclers in England, Wales, and Scotland often included events from Geoffrey’s narrative of British history within their own national histories, which ranged from legendary history to contemporary events. These chroniclers reoriented Geoffrey’s narrative in time and space, and they also expanded and revised his discrete genealogical model of history that was based on a single line of British kings. This section examines how English, Welsh, and Scottish chroniclers use transitions between texts, sources, and manuscripts to construct a textual genealogy that demonstrates how their individual historical narratives relate to Galfridian history. These textual thresholds help to situate the Galfridian narrative within larger historical frameworks that are based on a more continuous narrative of history.

British and English History in the Prose *Brut* Tradition

The narrative scope of the Prose *Brut* was much more ambitious than the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and the various versions of the text span from the foundation of Albion to the events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Prose *Brut* combined Wace’s *Roman de Brut* with Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*, along with a selection of clerical histories, regnal lists, and hagiographical materials to create a

linear narrative of history.⁵⁸ As Julia Marvin points out, the Prose *Brut* aims ‘to give its readers a sense of essentially unbroken lineage from the time of Brut straight through to that of the Plantagenets in power when the chronicle was composed’.⁵⁹ In order to ‘smooth over dynastic disruption’⁶⁰ and construct a continuous narrative, the Oldest Version of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* eliminated the reign of Cadwaladr, which traditionally demarcates the transition between British and English history in the Galfridian model of history.⁶¹ This textual absence facilitates the point of transition between the narratives of Wace’s *Roman de Brut* and Geffrei Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*. Furthermore, the inclusion of material from Gaimar’s *Estoire* within the Galfridian narrative transforms the post-Arthurian section and the passage of dominion into a complex negotiation between sources. Meanwhile, the reintroduction of Cadwaladr into the Middle English Prose *Brut* – specifically the Middle English Common Version to 1337, with full continuation (Stage 2) – in the fifteenth century emphasises the textuality and rewriting of history.⁶²

In the Prose *Brut*, the passage of dominion emphasises the problems of civil strife and dynastic succession, rather than tragedy and conquest (as in the *Historia*

⁵⁸ On the sources of the Prose *Brut*, see Julia Marvin, ‘Introduction’, *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 1-71 (pp. 20-40). See also Julia Marvin, ‘Sources and Analogues of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* Chronicle: New Findings’, in *Readers and Writers of the Prose Brut*, ed. by William Marx and Raluca Radulescu, *Trivium*, 36 (Lampeter, Wales: Trivium Publications, University of Wales, 2006), pp. 1-31.

⁵⁹ Julia Marvin, *The Construction of Vernacular History in the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: The Manuscript Culture of Late Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017), p. 113.

⁶⁰ Julia Marvin, ‘Havelok in the Prose *Brut* Tradition’, *Studies in Philology*, 102 (2005), 221-34 (pp. 285-6).

⁶¹ The omission of Cadwaladr was probably deliberate since the main sources of the *Brut* – Wace and Gaimar – include an account of the ruin of the Britons. William Marx argues that including ‘the account of Cadwallader and his people [in the original Anglo-Norman *Brut*] would have broken the history of progress and development leading up to the Norman dynasty’. He proposes that this episode was reintroduced in the fourteenth century when English monarchs and prominent families began to realise the importance and political purpose of the Welsh kings, especially Cadwaladr; William Marx, ‘Middle English manuscripts of the Brut in the National Library of Wales’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, (1992), 361-82 (379-80).

⁶² See ‘Appendix 1: The Text of the Cadwallader Episode’, in *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, pp. 57-61.

and the *Roman de Brut*). To emphasise the main theme of this episode, the Prose *Brut* contrasts the final events of Galfridian history with the narrative of Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* – particularly the story of Havelok, which is inserted into the text during the reign of Arthur's successor, Constantine. Marvin notes that the Havelok episode in the Prose *Brut* constitutes a 'digression [...from the] main source', and that 'no issues of succession hinge on its inclusion'.⁶³ This episode, however, needs to be contextualised within the larger narrative of the Prose *Brut*, particularly as the civil war between Athelbright and Edelfi in the Havelok story can be compared with the later war between the Elfrid and Cadwan. Both civil wars demonstrate the devastating effects of regional and national allegiances; but these territorial disputes also end in reconciliation, and the text states that Athelbright and Edelfi, as well as Elfrid and Cadwan, 'sentremerent taunt come sil vssent este freres dun ventre' ['loved each other as much as if they have been brothers from a single womb'].⁶⁴ In the Havelok story, however, intermarriage between Edelfi's sister, Orwenne, and Athelbright prevents the conflict from continuing to future generations. In contrast, Edwin and Cadwalein, who are not united by blood or marriage, break their fathers' bond of friendship and declare war on each other. By emphasising the importance of diplomatic marriages, the Havelok story implies that the final war in Galfridian history could have been prevented.

The transition between British history and English history in the Prose *Brut* is represented as a change in source materials from Wace's *Roman de Brut* to Gaimar's

⁶³ Marvin, 'Havelok in the Prose *Brut* Tradition', p. 286.

⁶⁴ *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), ll. 2044-5 and ll. 2659-60.

Estoire des Engleis.⁶⁵ After the war between the Anglo-Saxon kings, which is eventually resolved by Offa who ‘conquist tretuz le rois e les regnez de la terre e regna sur tuz’ [‘conquered all the kings and realms of the land and reigned over all’] (*ANPB*, ll. 2322-3), the text reflects on the writing and production of history:

abbez, moines, chanoins escritrent les vies e les afferes des rois pur mustrer la dreit foi come ben chesqun roi regna, e en quele pais e coment il morust, e des euesques ausi. E fesoient vn grant liure si le appelerent les croniks. Le bon Roi Alured en son temps auoit cel liure en son poer, e le fist metre en Wincestre en la graunte eglise. E le fist attacher ferme dun chene, qe nul home nel poeit diloqe remuer ne emporter, mes qe chesqun home I put regarder e lire ceo qil voudroit. Qar iloqe est la dreit estorie e la vie e les gestes de tuz le rois qe ount este en Engleterre.

[abbots, monks, and canons wrote down the lives and conduct of kings, and of bishops as well, in order to set out the proper truth of how long each king reigned and in what country and how he died. And they made a great book and called it the chronicles. The good king Alfred in his time had this book in his keeping, and he had it placed at Winchester in the great church. And he had it attached firmly with a chain, so that no man could remove it from there or carry it away, but so that each man could look at it and read whatever he wanted. For there is the correct history and the life and deeds of all the kings who have been in England.]

(*ANPB*, ll. 2325-32)

This description of the Winchester Chronicle originates from Geffrei Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*, and Ian Short suggests that Gaimar’s ‘digression on his source materials on origins [...] gives every appearance of being an authorial interpolation or afterthought’.⁶⁶ Within a different context, however, this description of the Winchester Chronicle is symbolic of the textual genealogy of the Prose *Brut* that can be traced back to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* through Gaimar’s *Estoire*; it also signifies the textual transition between the narratives of the *Historia regum*

⁶⁵ John Gillingham, ‘Gaimar, the Prose *Brut* and the Making of English History’, in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values*, ed. by John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 113-22.

⁶⁶ Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p. 384 (note to l. 2314).

Britanniae and the *Estoire des Engleis*, which are synonymous with British and English history.

The restored Cadwaladr episode in the Middle English Prose *Brut* links together past, present, and future. In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the reign of Cadwaladr provides a structural conclusion to Geoffrey's narrative history based on a single line of British kings. Yet in the Middle English Prose *Brut*, Cadwaladr's speech is symbolic of a larger narrative of history that encompasses the Britons, the Saxons, the Danes, the Normans, and the English. In the version of the Cadwaladr episode edited by Lister Matheson from Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg MS. 98, Cadwaladr addresses the different invasions and conquests of Britain:

Allas seide he to vs wrecchese of caytyues fforwhy for oure grete synnes of þe whiche we wolden not amenden vs while we hadde space of repentaunce is now comen vpon vs þis mysauenture whiche chasith vs out of oure reawme and proper londe. *Fro and out of whiche londe somtyme Romainys Scottes ne Saxons ne Danes ne might not exilen* vs. But what availleþ it now to vs þat byfore tymes oftentimes haue geten & wonne manye opere regiouns and londes sithen it is not the wille of God þat we abide & dwelle in oure owne lond. [...]

Turne ageyn 3e Romaines; turne ageyn 3e Scottes; turne ageyn 3e Saxons; turne ageyn 3e Frensshe men – now sheweþ to you Brytaigne al deserte the whiche youre power might neuere make deserte. Ne youre power now haþ not putte vs in exile but only þe power of þe kyng almyghti whom we haue offended by oure folyes þe whiche we wolde not leuen til he had chasticed vs by his dyvyne power.⁶⁷

As Jaclyn Rajsic points out, Cadwaladr's speech 'draws attention to the ethnic changes brought about by conquest' and 'creates a pattern of conquest to be fulfilled later'.⁶⁸ The Danes and the French – or rather the Normans – are out of time and place as their invasions of Britain are located in the future. The various peoples

⁶⁷ 'Appendix 1: The Text of the Cadwallader Episode', in *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, pp. 59-60.

⁶⁸ Jaclyn Rajsic, 'Cadwallader and the Rewriting of History in the Prose *Brut* Chronicle', (forthcoming).

whom Cadwaladr mentions draws together Geoffrey and Gaimar's narratives: the Romans, the Scots, and the Saxons represent the *Historia*, while the Saxons, the Danes and the French represent the *Estoire*. History is represented as a series of invasions or conquests, which emphasises how the various different peoples who are included in the *Brut* arrived in Britain.

In the Prose *Brut* tradition, the end of British history is rewritten as a transition between textual traditions. Geoffrey's *Historia* and Gaimar's *Estoire* are linked together to emphasise the continuity of British history. Furthermore, the textual genealogy of the Prose *Brut*, which is based on multiple sources, extends Geoffrey's genealogy of the British kings beyond the reign of Cadwaladr, and incorporates the different peoples of Britain into a seamless historical narrative.

British and Welsh History in the *Brut y Tywysogyon*

In the fourteenth century, Welsh scribes and manuscript compilers in monastic institutions constructed a narrative of British history from the Trojan War to the Edwardian Conquest by including the *Ystorya Dared*, the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, and the *Brut y Tywysogyon* ('The Chronicle of the Princes') alongside each other. Within this larger narrative framework, the Cadwaladr episode provides a transition point between British history in the *Brut y Brenhinedd* and Welsh history in the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, which primarily focuses on the history of the Welsh Princes.

Cadwaladr's position is further complicated in the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* ('The Kings of the Saxons'), which relates the loss of British sovereignty to the history of England and Wales. To bridge the gap between the different historical narratives, both the *Brut y Tywysogyon* and the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* reflect on the final events of the *Historia regum Britanniae*; however, these texts also situate the death of

Cadwaladr in a new model of contemporary Welsh history that substantially altered the temporal scope of Geoffrey's narrative of British history.

In the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, the death of Cadwaladr is assimilated into the overarching narrative of national history that records events in the provinces of Wales, with a particular focus on the deeds of the Welsh Princes. The opening of Peniarth 20 reports that:

Pedwar vgein mlyneð a chwechant ac vn oyd oed krist pan vv varwolaeth vawr yny ynys brydein. yny vlwy ðyn honno yðæth kadwaladyr vab kadwaflawn y brenhin dwaythaf a vv ar y brytanyeid y rufein ac yno y bu varw y deuðecved dyð ogalan mei. ac o hynny aflan y koffes y brytanyeid goron teyrnas ac y kafas y saesson hi. megys y proffwydassei verðin wrth wrtheyrn wrtheneu.⁶⁹

[Six hundred and eighty-one was the year of Christ when there was a great mortality in the island of Britain. In that year Cadwaladr ap Cadwallon, the last king that was over the Britons, went to Rome; and there he died on the twelfth day from the Calends of May. And thenceforth the Britons lost the crown of the kingship, and the Saxons obtained it, as Myrddin had prophesied to Gwrtheyrn Wrthenau.]⁷⁰

The death of Cadwaladr in the *Brut y Tywysogyon* clearly relates to the final chapters of the *Historia*, but the date of Cadwaladr's death has been revised in the Welsh version.⁷¹ Geoffrey states that Cadwaladr 'inopino etiam languor correptus, duodecima autem die kalendarum Maiarum anno ab incarnatione Domini .dclxxxix. a contagione carnis solutus, caelestis regni aulam ingressus est' ['suddenly fell ill on the twentieth of April in the year of our Lord 689 was freed from the prison of the flesh and entered the palace of the heavenly kingdom'] (*HRB*, 207.584-6), while the

⁶⁹ *Brut y Tywysogyon: Peniarth MS. 20*, ed. by Thomas Jones (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1941), p. 1. All further references to the Welsh text of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

⁷⁰ *Brut y Tywysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes: Peniarth MS. 20 Version*, trans. by Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1952), p. 76.

⁷¹ The Red Book of Hergest version also relates Cadwaladr's death and the pestilence to the Creation, stating that they occurred 'one year short of five thousand eight hundred and eighty years' since the beginning of the World; *Brut y Tywysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes: Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), p. 3.

Brut y Tywysogyon maintains that he died in May of 681. In the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, Cadwaladr's death from pestilence is linked to a series of natural disasters, as well as the fate of the Welsh princes. Plague and pestilence often signify tragedy in Welsh historical tradition,⁷² and in the entry for 1197, Peniarth 20 describes how 'ar dymestyl hono aladawd aneiryf or bobyl alluossogrwyd or bonhedigyon a llawer or tywysogyon' ['pestilence killed an untold number of people and a multitude of gentlefolk and many princes'], including Rhys ap Gruffudd, the prince of Deheubarth and the 'orchyuygedic ben holl gymry' ['unconquered head of all Wales'] (*BYT*, p. 76). Cadwaladr's death is linked to multiple tragedies in Welsh historiography and ultimately anticipates the Edwardian Conquest in 1282. History is conceived as a series of tragedies, which encompasses the fall of Troy, the loss of British sovereignty, and the loss of Welsh independence.

In the *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, the death of Cadwaladr is related to events in English and Welsh history. The annalistic structure of the text interweaves events in England and Wales, and emphasises the subjugation of the Welsh Princes to the Kings of England. Cadwaladr's death indicates the beginning of this subjugation:

Gwedy daruot yr anodun vall dymhestylus a'r newyn girat a dywetpwynt vchot, yn oe Catwaladyr Vendigeit, y doeth y Saesson a goresgyn Lloegyr o'r mor pwy gild, a'y chynal a dan pypm brenhin, val y buassei gynt y noes Hors a Hengist, pan deholassant Gortheyn Gortheneu o deruynev Lloegyr, ac a'y rannassant yn pumpy ran rynthunt. Ac yna y symvdassant henweu y dinessyd a'r trefi a'r randioed a'r cantrefoed a'r sswidev a'r ardaloed herwyd ev yeith wynt ehvn: London y galwassant Caer Llud; Eirwric nev Jorck y galwassat Caer Effrauc; ac val hynny holl dinessyd Lloegyr a symvdassant ev henweu, o'r rei yd aruerwynt yr hynny hyt hediw onadunt.

⁷² The *Annales Cambriae* lists three different plagues that follow – or are sometimes the direct cause of – the deaths of three important British kings: the first plague occurs in 537 after the death of Arthur and Modred at the battle of Camlann; the second plague occurs in 547 during the reign of Maelgwyn Gwynedd, and subsequently kills him; the third occurs in 682 after the death of Cadwaladr, killing him also. A fourth plague also occurs in Ireland; see *British History and the Welsh Annals*, pp. 45-9 and pp. 85-91.

[After the abysmal, pestilential plague and the dire famine, which were mentioned above, had come to pass in the time of Cadwaladr the Blessed, the Saxons came and conquered England from the one sea to the other, and held it under five kings, as it had been formerly in the time of Hors and Hengist, when they expelled Gwrtheyrn Gwrthenau from the bounds of England, and they divided it into five parts between them. And then they changed the names of the cities and the townships and the rhandiroedd [provinces] and the cantrefs and the swyddau and the ardaloedd according to their own language: they called *Caer-ludd*, London; they called *Caerefracg*, *Evirwic* or York; and thus all the cities of England changed their names, which have been used from that day to this.]⁷³

The text indicates its connection to Geoffrey's *Historia* and the *Brut y Brenhinedd* by referring to the events 'that were mentioned above'. The brief mention of Cadwaladr indicates the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons; however, the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* demonstrates the effect of conquest rather than focusing the tragic death of Cadwaladr. The remapping of Britain – now England – reinforces the Saxons claim to the territory, and according to J. Beverley Smith, this description and the following survey of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was borrowed from William of Malmesbury.⁷⁴ The contrast between Welsh and English names of towns and provinces also indicates the cultural conflict between the Saxons and the Britons – or rather the English and the Welsh – that underpins the overall structure of the text.

Cadwaladr's position in the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* also needs to be considered in its manuscript context. Like the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* functions as a continuation of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*. One manuscript of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* – British Library Cotton MS Cleopatra B v – concludes with a unique colophon that modifies Geoffrey's authorial comments at the end of the

⁷³ *Brenhinedd y Saesson, or The Kings of the Saxons: BM Cotton MS. Cleopatra B v and The Black Book of Basingwerk NLW MS. 7006: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), p. 3.

⁷⁴ J. Beverley Smith, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Wales: The Composition of *Brenhinedd y Saesson*', *Studia Celtica*, 42 (2008), 55-86 (p. 63).

Historia. In both extant manuscripts, this version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* is immediately followed by the *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, and the text states that:

Ar tywyssogeon a uuant ar gymre gwedy hynny pob eilwers: a orchmyneis ynnev y garadauc o lan garban. Vying kyt oesswr y oed hwnnw. Ac ydaw ef yd edeweis y defnyd y ysgrivennv brenhined y saesson o hynn allan; a ffeidyaw or kymre. Canyt ydiw ganthunt y llvyr kymraec yr hwnn a ymchweylws Gwallter archdiagon ryt ychen o ladyn yng kymraec. Ac ef ay traethws yn wir ac yn gwbyl o herwyd ystoria y racdywededigeon kymre. A hynny oll adatymchweilies ynnev o gymraec yn lladyn. Ac velly yteruyna ystorea brutus.

[And the princes who were over the Cambrians after that, in turn, I have left to Caradoc of Llan Carvan, my contemporary was he; and to him I have left the materials for writing about the kings of the Saxons from this time on; and [let them] leave the Cambrians alone for they do not have the Welsh book that Walter Archdeacon of Oxford turned from Latin into Welsh. And he treated of it all truly and fully, in accordance with the history of the aforesaid Cambrians. And all of this I turned back from Welsh into Latin. And so ends the history of Brutus.]⁷⁵

This colophon omits Geoffrey's reference to the English historians William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, to whom he referred his readers for information regarding the Saxon kings; and the scribe of the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript credits Caradoc of Llancarfan as the author of twelfth-century account of English and Welsh history.⁷⁶ Thomas Jones argues that that *Brenhinedd y Saesson* represents 'an attempt [...] to combine and synchronise Welsh and English history'.⁷⁷ Jones emphasises how the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* functions as a continuation of Geoffrey's *Historia* that unites two different national histories, but the text arguably constitutes a major disruption of Galfridian time. While Geoffrey set clear limits on the scope of his *Historia*, the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript defies

⁷⁵ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. by John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), pp. 217-8. All further references to the Welsh *Brut* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

⁷⁶ J. E. Lloyd has demonstrated that Caradoc of Llancarvan did not write the *Brut Tywysogyon*; see John Edward Lloyd, *The Welsh Chronicles* (London: Milford, 1929).

⁷⁷ Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', p. 20.

these temporal boundaries and connects the *Historia*'s narrative of British history with a linear, comparative narrative of Welsh and English history that extends to the thirteenth century. The colophon in the Cotton Cleopatra Manuscript and the narrative of the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* subsequently transforms the Galfridian paradigm into a dual history of two different nations that emphasises the sovereignty of the English over the British (and later the Welsh).

In the *Brut y Tywysogyon*, Geoffrey's genealogical model of British history is connected to the reigns of the Welsh Princes and the English kings. For Welsh chroniclers, British history extends beyond the reign of Cadwaladr as the Britons retain the title of 'Brytaniaid' until 1135 when they adopt the name 'Cymry'.⁷⁸ Moreover, the manuscripts of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* and the *Brut y Tywysogyon* emphasise continuity between texts and traditions to create a teleological model of Welsh history that overcomes some of the temporal limitations imposed on British history in Geoffrey's *Historia*.

British and Scottish History in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*

Like their English and Welsh counterparts, Scottish historians were also interested in ideas about historical continuity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Scotland, regnal histories were not produced until the thirteenth century, and the first attempts were represented by simple king lists. A narrative of Scottish origins also emerged in the thirteenth century, which provided the basic framework for the first proper narrative of Scottish history in John of Fordun's *Chronica gentis Scotorum*.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), 775-801 (p. 782).

⁷⁹ Broun proposes that an anonymous synthesizer, who provided 'a continuous account of kingship's past with chronological scale', wrote the first two books of Fordun's *Chronica* between 1249 and 1285; see Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain*, p. 246.

The *Chronica* traces the narrative of Scottish history from the foundation of Scotland to the reign of Alexander III, but John of Fordun also demonstrates how these events relate to British history. Besides the story of Brutus of Troy, John also includes another migration story from the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Book One of the *Chronica* quotes the story of Partholon from the *Historia*, which describes how a group of Basques travelled from Spain to Britain, and were granted control of Ireland by the British king Gurguntius (cf. *HRB*, 46.241-55).⁸⁰ Partholon is an established figure in British and Irish historiography, and he is mentioned in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* and the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* as one of the original founders of Ireland; however, Geoffrey's version of the Partholon story opposes this earlier tradition. Using his evaluative historiographical practice, John assesses the reliability of *Historia*, and identifies Geoffrey's story of Partholon as a story of Pictish origins that is part of the wider history of Scotland.

In the *Chronica*, the two different accounts of Partholon directly contradict each another. The first account of Partholon from an unnamed source privileges liberty and self-determination as Partholon and the Basques leave Spain 'certas quæsituri se fortuna perduceret, et perpetuas cum libertate mansiones' ['seeking, wherever fortune might lead them, a sure and perpetual home, in freedom'] (*CGS*, 1.21). This version also maintains that, when Partholon arrived in Ireland, he subdued the inhabitants and 'in perpertuam sibi possessionem optinuit' ['obtained it as a perpetual possession for himself'] (*CGS*, 1.21). In contrast, Geoffrey's version

⁸⁰ According to Dauvit Broun, the source for this account of Scottish origins in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* was a retelling of the *Historia regum Britanniae* 'from a Scottish point of view'. Broun refers to this text as 'The Scottish Monmouth', and he argues that it was 'more than just a retelling of substantial sections of Geoffrey's history of British kings, and probably also consisted of the Eber account (consisting of the story of Gaedel, Scota, and the settlement of inhabitable Ireland by their son, Eber, the discovery of the Stone of Scone by Simon, the settlement of the previously inhabited northern part of Britain by Pictish men and their Scottish brides, and the Stone of Scone's arrival with Fergus son of Ferchar in Scotland); see Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain*, p. 252.

of the story relates how Partholon made obeisance to the British king Gurguntius, who granted him Ireland. By pledging allegiance to Gurguntius, Partholon sacrifices the independence of his people, who are effectively under British control. The account in the *Historia* also states that Ireland was ‘tunc uasta omni incola’ [‘at that time devoid of inhabitants’] (*HRB*, 46.251). John of Fordun judges that Geoffrey’s account of Partholon ‘omnio videtur historiæ præcedenti tam facto quam tempore dissonum’ [‘seems altogether incompatible, both in fact and in date, with the foregoing narrative’] (*CGS*, 1.23), and he assesses the reliability of the *Historia* using the chronology of universal history. He explains that

Nostræ siquidem nullatenus historiæ contemporaneos esse tradunt hos reges. Nam in ætate tertia circa dies Abdon iudicis Israël, vel ante Paulo, cujus anno VI. Trojanum celebratur excidium, Pertholomi regnum a chronicis initium habere traditur. Regem vero Gurgunt in ætate quinta post primam Urbis Romæ captivitatem regnare perhibetur.

[Our histories, too, are far from making these kings [Gurguntius and Partholon] contemporaries; for the reign of Pertholomus is related by the Chronicles to have begun in the third Age, about, or a little before, the days of Abdon, a judge of Israel, in whose sixth year the destruction of Troy is recorded to have occurred; while it is said that King Gurgunt reigned in the fifth Age, after the first capture of the city of Rome.]

(*CGS*, 1.23)

The date of Partholomus’ reign during the third age of the world derives from Eusebius’ *Chronicon*, and it can also be cross-referenced with the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (‘The Book of the Taking of Ireland’), which maintains that there were ‘Ocht mbliadna imorro oeus se cet ocus da mile o thus domain co tiachtain Partholoin in Erinn’ [‘two thousand six hundred and eight years from the beginning of the world to the coming of Partholon into Ireland’].⁸¹ John also uses Eutropius and Eusebius to establish that Gurguntius’ father, Belinus, captured Rome during the fifth age of the

⁸¹ *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, ed. and trans. by R. A. Stewart Macalister, 5 vols (Dublin: Published for the Irish Texts Society by the Educational Company of Ireland, 1938-56), III (1940), 4.308.

world, and he maintains that ‘Patet igitur ipsum clare post urbem captam regnasse’ [‘It thus appears clearly that the latter [Gurguntius] reigned after the capture of the city’] (CGS, 1.23). The fact that the reigns of Partholomus and Gurguntius do not correspond with each other wholly discredits Geoffrey’s account, and so, for John, the *Historia* cannot be trusted as an accurate source of Irish-Scottish origins.

Despite his scepticism about the *Historia*, the reign of Gurguntius provides the main historical framework for John’s account of the origins of the Picts in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*. He writes that:

Sed sciendum est, quod in his diebus, Romanæ, videlicet, captivitatis, quibus ipsum a Galfrido regnare proponitur, de Pictavia progressi cum sua familia Picti trans fretum Britannicum ratibus Hiberniam adibant, ut ibi sedes a Scotis acciperent, quos ipsi nequaquam admittere volentes ad Albionem, ut infra patebit, transmiserunt. De quibus, nisi fallor, intelligi possint, quæ superius per Galfridum vitio relatoris de Scotis inscripta sunt. Nam ipsis, ut puto, per maria vagis casu rex obvians, ut navigarent ad insulam consuluit.

[You must know, however, that in these days – that is, at the time of the capture of Rome – when, as is propounded by *Geoffrey*, that king lived, the Picts, journeying forth with the kindred from Pictavia, went across the British channel, in ships, to Ireland, that they might obtain from the Scots a residence there. The latter, by no means willing to admit them, sent them over to Albion, as will appear below. And of these, if I am not mistake, may be understood what was written above, by Geoffrey, about the Scots, through the blunder of his informant. For these, I think, did the king, by chance meeting them wandering through the seas, advise that they should sail to the island.]
(CGS, 1.24)

By exploiting Geoffrey’s apparent confusion between the Picts and the Scots, John transforms the encounter between Partholon and Gurguntius in the *Historia* into an account of Pictish origins. As Dauvit Broun points out, John of Fordun weaves ‘together the history of the Scots and Scotland’.⁸² John separates the Scottish people – who are descended from Scota and initially occupy Ireland – from the territory of

⁸² Dauvit Broun, ‘The Picts’ Place in the Kingship’s Past Before John of Fordun’, in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, ed. by Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 11-28 (p. 25).

Scotland, which is inhabited by the Picts and the Scots at the same time. John's correction of Geoffrey, and his substitution of the Picts for the Scots, subsequently integrates the narrative of the *Historia regum Britanniae* into the origins of the wider history of Scotland.

By revising Geoffrey's story of Scottish – or rather Pictish origins – John also identifies the *Historia regum Britanniae* with Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, which claims the Picts first arrived Ireland before the Scots sent them to Scotland.⁸³

Following Bede, John reports that the Scots gave their 'filias' ['daughters'] (*CGS*, 1.31) to the Picts as wives; however, John transforms Bede's account of racial intermarriage into a national migration story that explains how the Scots left Ireland and moved to Scotland. According to John, 'innumeri parentes' ['numberless kinsfolk'], including 'patres, scilicet, et matres, fratres etiam et sorores, neptes simlitter et nepotes' ['their fathers, that is, and their mothers, their brothers also, and sisters, their nieces and nephews'], left Ireland for the 'herbosa fertilitas' ['grassy fertility'] of Albion (*CGS*, 1.31). Although the Scots and the Picts arrive at a similar time, John's continuator, Walter Bower, adds that

Hec iste. Regnum Scocie inhabitari cepit per Scotos, ut in quondam cronica reperi, ante incarnationem domini m v^{cc} xliii annis. Scotis regnaverunt ante Pictos ii^{cd} xlix annis et tribus mensibus. Picti regnaverunt in Scocia m lxi annis.

[The kingdom of Scotland began to be inhabited by the Scots, as I found in a certain chronicle, one thousand five hundred and forty-three years before the incarnation of our Lord. The Scots ruled for two hundred and forty-nine years and three months before the Picts [came]. The Picts ruled in Scotland for one thousand and sixty-one years].⁸⁴

⁸³ See Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1.1. All further references to Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book and chapter numbers only.

⁸⁴ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Wat et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), I (1993), 1.31.29-38. All further references to the *Scotichronicon* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book, chapter, and line

(SCO, 1.31.26-9)

Bower's comments reinforce John's claim that the 'Picti non regibus sed iudicibus usi sunt' ['Picts had, not kings, but judges'] until Cruchne 'regia violenter arripiens insignia, regnabat insuper in hac gente' ['seizing upon the insignia of royalty, by force, reigned over this nation'] (CGS, 1.35). Bower's dates are derived from a series of regnal lists, which claimed that 'a sequence of Scottish kings [...] ruled in Scotland before the establishment of the Pictish monarchy'.⁸⁵ By using these regnal lists as his main chronological structure, Bower subjects the account of Pictish – and by extent Scottish – origins in Bede and Geoffrey to the authority of his continuous narrative of Scottish history.

In his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, John of Fordun rationalises Geoffrey's account of the Scots and the Picts in the *Historia* to suit his own model of history based on the succession of Scottish kings. Although John does not solely follow Geoffrey throughout his *Chronica*, the stories of Partholon and Gurguntius demonstrate how the different accounts of British and Scottish history could be reconciled with each other. The cultural contact between the Scots, the Picts, and the Britons in the *Chronica* forms the basis of a continuous historical narrative from a distinctly Scottish point of view.

number of the English translation. In their editorial notes, John and Winifred MacQueen point out that Bower added these lines into the margin of his working copy of John's *Chronica* (p. 151).

⁸⁵ *Scotichronicon*, I, p. 153 (note to lines 31-33). Marjorie O. Anderson points out that 'John of Fordun was the main channel through which the Pictish and early Scottish kings became party of the accepted history of Scotland'; see Marjorie O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), pp. 212-15. She has demonstrated that John of Fordun used the 'X group' of regnal lists, which includes F, D, I, K; and from Kenneth mac Alpin onwards, G (closely related to F), N, and the Verse Chronicle. These alphabetical names are based on the order of the lists in Skene's *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History* (1867). See also Edward Donald Kennedy, 'The Antiquity of Scottish Civilization: King-Lists and Genealogical Chronicles', in *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Edward Donald Kennedy (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), pp. 159-74.

Despite their different aims and intentions, late medieval historians consistently connected their narratives of English, Scottish and Welsh national history to Geoffrey's account of British history. In England and Wales, the final events of the *Historia regum Britanniae* were seamlessly connected to the beginnings of English and Welsh history. Meanwhile, in Scotland, Geoffrey's account of the foundation of Scotland in the *Historia* was revised to conform to the first continuous narrative of Scottish history. These national histories revised Geoffrey's account of British history to accommodate the histories of other insular peoples – including the English, the Scots, the Picts, and the Welsh – who occupied different areas of Britain at different periods of time.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the different models of time in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and late medieval English, Welsh, and Scottish histories. In the *Historia*, Geoffrey uses the genealogy of the British kings as his main chronological structure. This model of time is comparative and continuous, encompassing the events of world history as well as the reigns of the British kings. Between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the chronological structure and the temporal boundaries of *Historia regum Britanniae* were reshaped and redefined. Within different national contexts, the original genealogical framework of the *Historia* was situated in relation to various historical frameworks, including universal Christian history and legendary Trojan past, as well as the English and Welsh present and the beginnings of Scottish history. These chronological and structural changes enabled writers of English, Welsh, and Scottish histories to rewrite and reorganise the events of British history to complement the different narratives of their national histories.

In her catalogue of the manuscripts of the *Historia*, Julia Crick identifies four manuscripts that begin with the following interpolation from Eusebius:

Anno ante incarnationem Domini m.c.lvii. et ante condicionem Rome .ccc.l.xxxvi. et ab origine mundi .iii(m).cccc.xlix annis peractos Eneas cum Ascanio filio diffugiens Italiam nauigio aduiut.

[1157 years before the incarnation and 386 years before the foundation of Rome and 3449 years from the beginning of the world, Aeneas sailed to Italy with his son Ascanius.]⁸⁶

The multiple chronologies in these manuscripts demonstrate how Geoffrey's genealogical model of time could be understood in a universal context. Furthermore, the scribes who inserted these dates into these manuscripts adopt a similar temporal framework to some of the English, Welsh, and Scottish histories discussed in this chapter. Aeneas' flight from Troy to Italy anticipates the beginning of British history and the foundation of Britain, and the relationship between territory, texts, and time is the subject of the next chapter.

⁸⁶ Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV*, p. 95. The manuscripts are Cambridge, St John's College, G.16, Glasgow, UL, 331, London, BL, Cotton Vespasian E.x, and Oxford, Bodleian, MS. Rawlinson B.148. My translation.

3. ‘Britain, best of islands’: The Rhetorical and Ideological Functions of the Description and Division of Britain

The geographical description of Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae* uses a conventional rhetorical motif known as the topos of the *locus amoenus*, or ‘delightful place’. Catherine Clarke defines the *locus amoenus* topos as ‘any literary landscape of delight which is formed self-consciously out of conventional rhetorical elements or motifs’.¹ According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Britain is the ‘insularum optima’ [‘best of islands’],² and in his geographical prologue, he includes details about the size and position of the country, and also comments on the ‘indeficienti fertilitate’ [‘boundless productivity’] (*HRB*, 5.26) and the beauty of the island. In constructing this idealised landscape, Geoffrey uses a variety of textual allusions to and images from *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (‘On the ruin and conquest of Britain’, c. 570), and he transforms Gildas’ Edenic paradise, which is isolated from the rest of the world, into a more contemporary setting that emphasises the diversity of its current inhabitants, as well as the connection between Britain and the continent. For

¹ Catherine A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700-1400* (Cambridge, Brewer, 2006), p. 2. On the classical origins of the *locus amoenus* topos, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953; repr. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 183-202.

² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009), 5.24

Geoffrey, then, the description of Britain is a complex rhetorical, ideological, and intertextual motif.

Although Geoffrey primarily relies on Gildas for his pastoral imagery, similar descriptions of Britain can be traced back to classical antiquity. In *Historiae adversus paganos libri septem* (*Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, c. 416-17), Paulus Orosius describes Britain as

oceanī insula per longum in boream extenditur; a meridie Gallias habet. cuius proximum litus transmeantibus ciuitas aperit, quae dicitur Rutupi portus; unde haud procul a Morinis in austro positos Menapos Batauosque prospectat. 77 haec insula habet in longo milia passuum DCCC, in lato milia CC.

A tergo autem, unde oceano infinito patet, Orcadas insulas habet, quarum XX desertae sunt, XIII coluntur.

[an island in the Ocean, [which] extends for a long distance northward; to the south, it has the Gauls. A city which is called Portus Rutupi [Richborough] affords the nearest landing place in this country for those who cross over; thence, by no means far from the Morini, it looks upon the Menapi and the Batavi in the south. The island is eight hundred miles in length and two hundred miles in width.

Moreover, in the rear whence it lies open in a limitless ocean, rest the Orcades Islands [the Orkneys], of which twenty are uninhabited and thirteen inhabited.]³

Orosius' description, which builds on the entries about Britain in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (c. 77-79) and Ptolemy's *Geographia* (c. 150), establishes two very important facts about Britain that would inform later accounts. First, Britain is an island surrounded by 'oceano infinito' ['limitless ocean'], which is located in the north and which faces Gaul to the south; second, the size of Britain is eight hundred miles long, and two hundred miles wide. Britain is a coveted territory, and as Diarmuid Scully writes, for the Romans, '[v]ictory over Britain was particularly

³ Latin quotation from *Pauli Orosii historiarum adversus paganos libri VII; accedit eiusdem, Liber apologeticus*, ed. by Karl Zangemeister (Vienna: Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 5, 1882), 1.76-8. English translation from Paulus Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 1.76-8.

significant given its perceived size and geographical situation'.⁴ In the Roman cartographical imagination, Britain is 'cut off at the very world's end'.⁵ Orosius' descriptive prologue was the foundation for the first insular description of Britain that was produced by Gildas in the seventh century,⁶ and subsequent historians including Bede, Nennius, Henry of Huntingdon, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, imitated Gildas' geographical description. The descriptions of Britain by these writers are intricately related, and they depend on each other for their authority. For the opening of their historical works, many writers adhered to a formulaic practice, but they could distinguish themselves from other historians through the form, style, and content of their descriptions.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, classical descriptions of Britain were often transformed into cartographical constructions of the island. Recent critical studies on the different representations of the medieval Atlantic archipelago by Kathy Lavezzo, Alan MacColl, and Alfred Hiatt have primarily focused on the location of Britain in regional maps and medieval *mappae mundi*.⁷ Nevertheless,

⁴ Diarmuid Scully, 'Proud Ocean Has Become a Servant': A Classical Topos in the Literature of Britain's Conquest and Conversion', in *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. by Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), pp. 3-15 (p. 5).

⁵ Virgil, *Eclogue I*, in *The Eclogues and The Georgics*, trans. by C. Day Lewis and ed. by R. O. A. M. Lyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 3-6 (p. 6). The distance between Rome and Britain is particularly evident on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (The Peutinger Map), which is an illustrated *itinerarium* that shows the road network in the Roman Empire. On the Peutinger Map, Rome is at the centre of the world, and Britain is positioned at the far western corner of the Empire. The map was produced in the thirteenth century: it is based on a fourth- or fifth-century map (non-extant), which was based on a map prepared by Agrippa in the reign of the Emperor Augustus (27 BCE-14CE).

⁶ On the relationship between Gildas and Orosius, see N. J. Higham 'Old light on the Dark Age Landscape: the Description of Britain in the *De Excidio Britanniae* of Gildas', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 17.4 (1991), 363-72; Neil Wright, 'Did Gildas Read Orosius?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 9 (1985), 31-42.

⁷ On visual representations of Britain in the late Middle Ages, see Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000-1534* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 71-92; Alan MacColl, 'The Meaning of "Britain" in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 45.2 (2006), 248-69; Alfred Hiatt, 'From Hulle to Cartage': Maps, England, and the Sea', in *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*, ed. by Sebastian I. Sobecki (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011),

literary descriptions of the island were still influential in the later medieval period. Geoffrey's description of Britain, as well as his account of its division into England, Scotland and Wales, were consistently translated and adapted throughout the Middle Ages to suit different national contexts. This chapter examines the intertextual nature of the description of Britain across the Galfridian tradition from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, and contends that the descriptive prologue was used to construct the different meanings of Britain, which was a radically changing geopolitical entity during this time. The first section traces the origins of Geoffrey's description of Britain, and examines how he modified his account to suit his own ideological purposes. The second section addresses the reception, translations, and different imitations of Geoffrey's description of Britain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and demonstrates how the geographical prologue was used in England, Scotland, and Wales to express different ideas concerning British national identity. The third section focuses on the tripartite division of Britain between Brutus of Troy's three sons, Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber, which created England, Scotland, and Wales. In particular, this final section focuses on how the story of Brutus' sons was rewritten from English and Scottish perspectives in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to suit respective national agendas, including English expansionism and Scottish resistance to imperial conquest.

pp. 133-58; Alfred Hiatt, 'From Pliny to Brexit: Spatial Representation of the British Isles', in *Our Seas of Islands: New Approaches to British Insularity in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Matthew Boyd Goldie and Sebastian Sobiecki, *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 7.4 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 511-25.

Text and Intertext: The Description of Britain in its Insular Latin Context

A. H. Merrills observes that '[t]he insertion of geographical passages into historical writing was common practice from Herodotus onwards'.⁸ Many late antique and medieval histories begin with a description of Britain, including those by Isidore of Seville, Paulus Orosius, Gildas, Bede, Nennius, Henry of Huntingdon and, of course, Geoffrey of Monmouth. However, the geographical prologue is more than just a set piece description. Merrills goes on to argue that such descriptive prologues 'display an understanding of the importance of geography to an appropriate grasp of history',⁹ and he suggests that such descriptions have a rhetorical purpose that inform the ideological function and the overall worldview of the historical narrative.

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the description of Britain is located after Geoffrey's authorial prologue, and before the flight of Aeneas from Troy at the beginning of Book One. In some manuscripts of the *Historia*, the description is prefaced by an incipit – 'Descriptio Insulae', or 'The Description of the Island' – that separates it from the main historical narrative.¹⁰ The description of Britain is worth quoting at length:

Britannia, insularum optima, in occidentali oceano inter Galliam et Hiberniam sita, octigenta milia in longum, ducenta uero in latum continens, quicquid mortalium usui congruit indeficienti fertilitate ministrat. Omni etenim genere metalli fecunda, campos late pansos habet, colles quoque praepollenti culturae aptos, in quibus frugum diuersitates ubertate glebae temporibus suis proueniunt. Habet et nemora uniuersis ferarum generibus replete, quorum in saltibus et alternandis animalium pastibus gramina conueniunt et aduolantibus apibus flores diuersorum colorum mella distribuunt. Habet etiam prae sub aeriis montibus amoeno situ uirentia, in

⁸ A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 18.

⁹ Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, p. 2.

¹⁰ On the rubrics in the manuscripts of the *Historia*, see Julia C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV: Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp. 121-43.

quibus fonts lucidi, per nitidos riuos leni murmure manantes, pignus suauis soporis in ripis accubantibus irritant. Porro lacubus atque piscosis fluuiis irrigua est et absque meridianae plagae freto, quo ad Galliad nauigatur, tria nobilia flumina, Tamensis uidelicet et Sabrinae nec non et Humbri, uelut tria brachia extendit, quibus transmarina commercial ex uniuersis nationibus eidem nauigio feruntur. Bis denis etiam bisque quaternis ciuitatibus olim decorate erat, quarum quaedam dirutis moeniis in desertis locis squalescunt, quaedam uero adhuc integrae temple sanctorum cum turribus perpulcra proceritate erecta continent, in quibus religiosi coetus uirorum ac mulierum obsequium Deo iuxta Christianam traditionem praestant. Postreme quinque inhabitur populis, Normannis uidelicet atque Britannis, Saxonibus, Pictis, et Scotis; ex quibus Britones olim ante ceteros a mari usque ad mare insederunt donec ultione diuina propter ipsorum superbiam superueniente Pictis et Saxonibus cesserunt. Qualiter uero et unde applicuerunt restat nunc perarare ut in subsequentibus explicabitur.

[Britain, best of islands, lies in the western ocean between France and Ireland; eight hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide, it supplies all human needs with its boundless productivity. Rich in metals of every kind, it has broad pastures and hills suitable for successful agriculture, in whose rich soil various crops can be harvested in their season. It has all kinds of wild beasts in its forests, and in its glades grow not only grasses suitable for rotating the pasture of animals, but flowers of various colours which attract bees to fly to them and gather honey. It has green meadows pleasantly situated beneath lofty mountains, where clear streams flow in silver rivulets and softly murmur, offering the assurance of gentle sleep to those who lie by their banks. Moreover, it is watered by lakes and streams, full of fish, and apart from the straits to the south, which allow one to sail to France, it stretches out, like three arms, three noble rivers, the Thames, the Severn and the Humber, on which foreign goods can be brought in by boat from every land. It was once graced with twenty-eight cities, some of which lie deserted in lonely spots, their walls tumbled down, while others are still thriving contain holy churches with towers rising to a fine height, in which devout communities of men and women serve God according to the Christian tradition. It is finally inhabited by five peoples, the Normans, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots; of these the Britons once occupied it from shore to shore before the others, until their pride brought divine retribution down upon them and they gave way to the Picts and the Saxons. It remains now to relate how they landed and from where, as will soon be explained.]
(*HRB*, 5.24-47)

There are five main components of this description: first, the geographical location of Britain; second, the fertile landscape of Britain; third, the rivers of Britain; fourth, the cities of Britain; and fifth, the different inhabitants of Britain. According to Neil Wright and Siân Echard, Gildas' *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (c. 570) and

Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* ('Ecclesiastical History of the English People', c. 731) are the main intertexts for the description of Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae*.¹¹ While Gildas and Bede are Geoffrey's primary influences, the descriptions of Britain produced by Nennius and Henry of Huntingdon are also relevant. This section examines the wider intertextual nature of Geoffrey's description of Britain, and demonstrates how Geoffrey transformed this set piece description to suit his own idea of Britain, which is intricately connected to the overall narrative of the *Historia*.

The location of Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae* only contains a few basic facts. For Geoffrey, Britain simply lies 'in occidentali oceano inter Galliam et Hiberniam' ['in the western Ocean between France and Ireland'] (*HRB*, 5.24-5, and he writes that it is 'octigenta milia in longum, ducenta uero in latum continens' ['eight hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide'] (*HRB*, 5.25).¹² Like Gildas, Nennius, Bede, and Henry, Geoffrey repeats the traditional measurements of Britain that were first determined by the fifth-century Gallaecian historian, Paulus Orosius; but the position of Britain is often relative to each of these historians' socio-political interests. Gildas describes the islands of Britain as lying 'in extreme ferme orbis limite circium occidentemque versus' ['virtually at the end of the world, towards the west and north-west'],¹³ and specifies that the country faces Belgic Gaul. Here,

¹¹ See Neil Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian Literature*, 2 (1982), 1-40; Neil Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Bede', *Arthurian Literature*, 6 (1986), 27-59; Siân Echard, 'Palimpsests of Place and Time in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', in *Teaching and Learning in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Gernot R. Wieland on his 67th Birthday*, ed. by Greti Dinkova-Bruun and Tristan Major (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2017), pp. 43-59.

¹² The measurements of Britain originate from Orosius, who modified Pliny the Elder's estimation that Britain was 800 (Roman) miles long, and 300 miles wide. See N. J. Higham, 'Old Light on the Dark Age Landscape', 363-72.

¹³ Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. by Michael Winterbottom (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), 3.1. All further references to Gildas' British history are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the chapter; references are to the book and chapter number only.

Britain is located firmly within the Roman worldview, and Gildas' reference to Belgic Gaul alludes to Britain's historical status as a Roman province. Bede, however, re-orientates Britain towards a wider European nexus, with the island located opposite Germany, Gaul, and Spain.¹⁴ Gaul and Spain are both mentioned by the seventh-century historian Isidore of Seville; however, the reference to Germany indicates the proximity between the Britons and the foreign Germanic tribes, and so anticipates the Saxon conquest and the direction of Bede's historical narrative. Henry of Huntingdon is aware of further compass points, and describes how Britain is surrounded by Germany and Denmark to the east, by Ireland in the west, and Gaul in the south. Similarly, the references to Germany, Denmark, and Gaul allude to the Saxon, Viking, and Norman invasions, which are built into his model of history. Henry describes how Gaul is now divided into two parts: 'in eam scilicet que uocatur Pontica, et in eam que uocatur Normannia, ubi modo Normanni, gens noua sed ualidissima, degunt' ['one part is called Ponthieu and the other Normandy, where the Normans, a new but extremely powerful people, are now settled'].¹⁵ In contrast to these earlier historians, Geoffrey mentions only France (Gallia) and Ireland (Hibernia) in his description of Britain, and in the *Historia* both of these territories are brought under British control during the reign of King Arthur. Britain is clearly situated within the Norman imperium: Gaul – specifically western Francia – is the original home of the Norman people, while Britain and Ireland represent their conquered – or soon to be conquered – territories. While each historian's positioning

¹⁴ Bede, 1.1: *Brittania Oceani insula, cui quondam albion nomen fuit, inter septentrionem et occidentem locata est, Germaniae Galliae Hispaniae, maximis Europae partibus, multo interuallo aduersa* [Britain, once called Albion, is an island in the ocean and lies to the north-west, being opposite Germany, Gaul, and Spain, which form the greater part of Europe, though at considerable distance from them]; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1.1.

¹⁵ Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Diana E. Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1.2.

of Britain is different, they all agree that Britain's geographical location and position within Europe makes it an easy target for foreign conquest.

Geoffrey's description of Britain's fertile landscape reveals the 'indeficienti fertilitate' ['boundless productivity'] (*HRB*, 5.26) of the island. In comparison to those of Bede and Henry of Huntingdon, Geoffrey's description is short and concise: Britain is rich in metal; it has pastures and good soil for the growing of crops; it has vast forests, where wild and domestic animals live, and where flowers bloom; and finally, there are lofty mountains where rivers flow. Most of this description derives directly from Gildas: there are numerous correlations between the Latin of the two historians, and both of them use the phrase 'amoeno situ' (literally 'pleasant site') to describe Britain.¹⁶ Yet whereas Gildas finishes his geographical prologue with this pastoral image of Britain, Geoffrey opens his description with the *locus amoenus* topos in order to rationalise his source material. Both historians focus on agricultural production. Gildas mentions 'campis late pansis collibusque' ['wide plains and agreeably set hills'] and 'montibus alternandis animalium pastibus maxime convientibus' ['mountains which are suitable to varying the pasture for animals'] (*DE*, 3.3). Britain, in all its beauty, is a subject to be desired and gazed upon, and Gildas compares the bounteous and fertile land to 'electa veluti sponsa monilibus diversis ornata' ['a chosen bride arrayed in a variety of jewellery'] (*DE*, 3.3). These idyllic descriptions construct an image of Britain in a Golden Age, where nature is static and resistant to progress. Geoffrey, however, introduces the laws of time. He refers to the harvesting of crops and the pollination of flowers by bees. Furthermore,

¹⁶ See Neil Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian Literature*, 2 (1982), 1-40 (pp. 34-40). The appendix to Wright's article directly compares passages from *De Excidio* and the *Historia regum Britanniae*, including the description of Britain, to demonstrate Geoffrey's dependence on Gildas and to emphasise the linguistic similarities between the two writers.

Geoffrey explicitly mentions the practice of transhumance, whereby ‘livestock were overwintered close by the farmyard and then drive[n] out to seasonal pastures for the summer months’.¹⁷ Each image focuses on seasonal rotation, suggesting a pattern of continual reform and renewal that prefigures and informs his cyclical vision of history.

The ‘tria nobilia flumina’ [‘three noble rivers’] (*HRB*, 5.35-6) of Britain – the Thames, the Severn, and the Humber – function as the primary divisions of the landscape. Geoffrey’s description of the rivers stretching out like arms across the country again derives from Gildas. The Thames divides the south of Britain, and flows through the main locus of power, London (or *Troia Nova*) – and forms a major trade route between Britain and the continent. The Severn, of course, divides England from Wales, and the Humber divides the south of Britain from the north (including Scotland). Wyman H. Herendeen writes that Geoffrey ‘uses the rivers of Britain to underscore his heroic version of the history of the kings of Britain’,¹⁸ and several of the rivers are sites of public memory, which inscribe the history of Britain into the landscape. Geoffrey provides etymologies of two of the main rivers of Britain, explaining how the Severn was named after Habren, who was drowned by her stepmother Guendolena (*HRB*, 25.58-64), and how the Humber was named after the king of the Huns who drowned in a battle against Locrinus and Kamber (*HRB*, 2.24.15-18). This mention of the Humber is unique to Geoffrey’s prologue. Bede and Henry of Huntingdon both mention the rivers of Britain, but they do not name any specific rivers. Meanwhile, Gildas and Nennius mention only the Thames and the

¹⁷ Higham, ‘Old Light on the Dark Age Landscape’, p. 370.

¹⁸ Wyman H. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 109.

Severn, which ‘praeclariora ceteris fluminibus’ [‘excel beyond the rest’].¹⁹ The Humber often functions as a geographical border in the *Historia*; indeed, Marganus and Cundegagius, Brennius and Belinus, Iugenius and Peredurus, and Edelfridus and Caduan, all divide Britain according to the river: the northern part of the island extends ‘trans Humber extenditur uersus Kantanesiam’ [‘from the Humber to Caithness’] (*HRB*, 32.271), while the southern part of the island constitutes Logres, Cornwall, and Wales. The Humber is also an ecclesiastical boundary, and the dioceses of Deira and Scotland, which are part of the archdiocese of York, ‘quas magnum flumen Humbri a Loegria secernit’ [‘are separated from Loegria by the river Humber’] (*HRB*, 72.424). This particular river, then, is a natural division that has significant geopolitical implications.²⁰

The twenty-eight cities of Britain indicate the inhabited areas of the country and spread of the population. Gildas, Nennius, Bede, and Henry all mention the cities, and they are a symbol of fortification and military defence. Henry even gives the names of the cities in the British tongue, which he sourced from the Vatican Recension of the *Historia Brittonum*.²¹ These cities do not feature in classical descriptions of Britain by Orosius or Isidore, and N. J. Higham suggests that Gildas

¹⁹ Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. by John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1980), §9.

²⁰ Geoffrey’s geopolitical landscape reflects the reality of twelfth-century Britain. Judith A. Green observes that, before 1100, Norman power ‘had been very thin on the ground north of the Humber, and were concentrated chiefly in south Lancashire and lowland Yorkshire, with the Norman bishop of Durham holding a lonely and dangerous outpost in the north-east’. Norman power increased in the region through political intermarriage between the Normans and the Scots under Henry I, ‘but there was no attempt to integrate the north fully into the shire system of the rest of England south of the Humber’; see Judith A. Green, *The Government of England Under Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 131-2.

²¹ In her edition of Henry’s *Historia Anglorum*, Diana E. Greenaway notes that ‘[a]s Bede does not name his 28 cities, Henry takes 28 of the 33 cities listed in *HB Vat.*, c.3 [...]. He arranges them in a different order, and adds *Kair Dorm* [...] to bring the actual total to 29’; see *Historia Anglorum*, p. 13 (n. 12).

could have supplied them from an alternative written source, or more likely, from a map.²² Geoffrey elaborates on the description of the cities, and comments that Britain

Bis denis etiam bisque quaternis ciuitatibus olim decorata erat, quarum quaedam dirutis moeniis in desertis locis squalescunt, quaedam uero adhuc integrae templa sanctorum cum turribus perpulcra proceritate erecta continent, in quibus religiosi coetus uirorum ac mulierum obsequium Deo iuxta Christianam traditionem praestant.

[was once graced with twenty-eight cities, some of which lie deserted in lonely spots, their walls tumbled down, while others are still thriving contain holy churches with towers rising to a fine height, in which devout communities of men and women serve God according to the Christian tradition.]

(*HRB*, 5.38-42)

The cities that have been razed to the ground are juxtaposed against those that still survive as sites of worship. The contrasting cities are a symbol of the rise and fall of civilisations, and the image of the cities embodies the rise and fall of the Britons.

One of the most significant features of the description in the *Historia* is Geoffrey's list of the inhabitants of Britain. Geoffrey includes the Normans, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots in his description, and comments that 'ex quibus Britones olim ante ceteros a mari usque ad mare insederunt donec ultione diuina propter ipsorum superbiam superueniente Pictis et Saxonibus cesserunt' ['of these the Britons once ruled from shore to shore before the others, until their pride brought divine retribution down upon them and they gave way to the Picts and the Saxons'] (*HRB*, 5.44-6).²³ Geoffrey's list of inhabitants is explicitly connected to his cyclical model of history, and is, perhaps, most comparable with Henry of Huntingdon's description of Britain in his *Historia Anglorum*:

Quinque autem plagas ab exordio usque ad presens immisit diuina ultio Britannie, que non solum uisitas fideles, sed etiam diiudicat infidels. Primam

²² See Higham, 'Old Light on the Dark Age Landscape', p. 366.

²³ Neil Wright observes that the list of inhabitants in the *Historia* is a modernisation of chapters seven and nine of Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*; see Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', p. 5.

per Romanos, qui Britanniam expugnauerunt sed postea recesserunt. Secundam per Pictos et Scotos, qui grauissime eam bellis uexauerunt, nec tamen opitinerunt. Terciam per Anglicos, qui eam deballauerunt et optinent. Quartam per Dacos, qui eam bellis optinuerunt, sed postea deperierunt. Quintam per Normannos, qui eam deuicerunt et Anglis inpresentiarum dominator.

[From the very beginning down to the present time, the divine vengeance has sent five plagues into Britain, punishing the faithful as well as unbelievers. The first was through the Romans, who overcame Britain but later withdrew. The second was through Picts and the Scots, who grievously beleaguered the land with battles but did not conquer it. The third was through the English, who overcame it and occupy it. The fourth was through the Danes, who conquered it by warfare, but afterwards they perished. The fifth was through the Normans, who conquered it and have dominion over the English people at the present time.]

(HA, 1.4)

Henry's list of inhabitants is structured in a linear chronology, which follows the historical narrative of British history. In comparison, Geoffrey positions the Normans before the Britons, and then lists the Saxons, the Scots, and the Picts. Geoffrey clearly privileges his Norman patrons, who were the last to arrive on the island and who currently hold power over the majority of its inhabitants, but he also emphasises the territorial dispossession of the Britons. Whereas Henry's model of history is continuous, Geoffrey's historical vision is set within a specific time frame, and his geographical prologue clearly identifies the subjects of his narrative.

Comparing the description of Britain in *Historia* with a wider selection of insular historians, including Gildas, Bede, Nennius, and Henry of Huntingdon, demonstrates Geoffrey's unique contribution to this genre of geographical writing. For Geoffrey, Britain is part of the Norman imperium and it represents the ideal of insular unity; however, the island is also subject to change and impermanence, occupied by multiple inhabitants, and divided across national and natural borders. Geoffrey appropriates the conventional formulae of this rhetorical set piece description to suit his own ideological vision of history, and he uses the prologue as

an account of the development of the island from its original foundation by the Britons in the distant past to its conquest by the Normans in the present time.

Union and Disunion: The Political Landscape of Britain

In his descriptive prologue, Geoffrey refers to Britain by its classical name, *Britannia*. Geoffrey distinguished his idea of Britain from that of other twelfth-century historians, such as Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury, through his emphasis on ‘aboriginal unity’.²⁴ However, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English, Welsh, and Scottish histories often substituted the name of Britain for Prydein, Albion, or England, and each of these terms has different political, ideological, and geographical associations. As R. R. Davies points out, Britain is a ‘precise, even neutral, geographical term’,²⁵ and in the Middle Ages it ‘presented a prospect of unity and simplicity in what was a fragmented and fissile world of ethnic divisions and short-lived hegemonies’.²⁶ Prydein, which is the medieval Welsh term for Britain, had precise geographical reference points, ‘from Caithness to Cornwall, and Anglesey to Kent, or from the North Sea to the Irish Sea’.²⁷ Julia Crick notes that Albion, which originated from Pliny and was later used by Bede to refer to the whole island of Britain, was popular in the tenth century and ‘encapsulated aspirations of insular dominion’.²⁸ Finally, England is a separate sovereign nation, which is defined against Scotland and Wales.

²⁴ R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in The British Isles, 1093-1343* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 41.

²⁵ Davies, *The First English Empire*, p. 35.

²⁶ Davies, *The First English Empire*, p. 36.

²⁷ Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition’, *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 20 (1976), 29-40 (p. 31).

²⁸ Julia Crick, ‘Edgar, Albion and Insular Dominion’, in *Edgar: King of the English, 959-975: New Interpretations*, ed. by Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 158-70 (p. 169).

Focusing on texts written in Welsh, English, and Latin, this section examines the transmission and transformation of Geoffrey's description of Britain in England, Scotland and Wales, and demonstrates how thirteenth- and fourteenth-century historians used this rhetorical motif to emphasise the unity and the disunity of the island of Britain. In England and Wales, the description of Britain from the *Historia regum Britanniae* survives in three chronicles: the *Brut y Brenhinedd* ('The Chronicle of the Kings'), Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* (c. 1270), and *Castelford's Chronicle* (c. 1327).²⁹ These translations negotiate between different authorities on British history, and they also use the different names of the island – including Albion, Britain (or Prydein), and England – to emphasise the history of domination and conquest. Meanwhile, in Scotland, John of Fordun challenged Geoffrey's image of a unified Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae*: he used the term Albion in his *Chronica gentis Scotorum* ('The Chronicle of the Scottish People', c. 1385) to construct an island made up of liminal spaces and border territories, which indicated that Scotland had always been separated from England.³⁰

Albion, Britain, and England: Domination and Conquest

The *Brut y Brenhinedd* generally adheres to the idea of Britain that Geoffrey describes in the *Historia regum Britanniae*. The Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*, which was produced in the fourteenth century, was the first version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* to

²⁹ These texts are all derived from the vulgate version of the *Historia regum Britanniae* rather than Wace's *Roman de Brut*, which excises the description of Britain entirely.

³⁰ On the literary, geographical, and historical representations of the Anglo-Scottish border, see Mark P. Bruce and Katherine H. Terrell, 'Introduction: Writing Across the Borders', *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity 1300-1600* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-14; and Katherine H. Terrell, 'Depicting Identity: Cartography, Chorography, and the Borders of Pre-Reformation Scotland', in *The Shaping of Scottish Identities: Family, Nation, and the Worlds Beyond*, ed. by Jodi A. Campbell, Elizabeth Ewan, and Heather Parker, Guelph Series in Scottish Studies 2 (Guelph, ON: Guelph Centre for Scottish Studies, 2011), pp. 79-96.

include a Welsh translation of Geoffrey's authorial prologue.³¹ In the Welsh text, Geoffrey's prologue and the description of Britain are not separated by an explicit, and so the transition between prologue, description, and narrative appears seamless. The whole of the narrative begins with the declaration that 'y llyur hwnn aelwir y brut nyt amgen noc ystoriaeu brenhined ynys brydeyn ac ev henweu or kyntaf hyt y diwethaf' ['This book is called the Brut, that is, the Histories of the Kings of the Isle of Britain and their names, from first to last'].³² The geographical prologue begins by asserting that Britain 'a elwit weith arall gynt albion' ['at another time used to be called Albion'], but the text denies the political implications of this term by asserting that it simply means 'ynys yssyd' ['White Island'] (*BYB*, p. 3). Instead, 'ynys brydein' ['the island of Britain'] (*BYB*, p. 3) takes precedence in this text, which invokes a much older and more archaic idea of Britain. *Ynys Prydein* refers to a period in history when the Britons were the sole inhabitants of the island, and this concept can be traced through the various Welsh texts, in particular the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* ('Triads of the Island of Britain', c. 650).³³ The description of Britain in *Brut y Brenhinedd* also addresses the model of history in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, which Geoffrey used to explain the rise and fall of different nations. In the *Historia*, Geoffrey reports that the Britons 'cesserunt' ['gave way'] (from 'cedo' meaning 'to yield or to submit') to the Picts and the Saxons, which indicates the natural course of human history; however, the Welsh *Brut* indicates that the Britons were

³¹ On the prologues of the Welsh *Brut*, see John Jay Parry, 'Introduction', in *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. by John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), pp. ix-xviii (p. xiv).

³² *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. by John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. 3.

³³ On the concept of *Ynys Prydein*, see Brynley F. Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 20 (1976), 29-40; P. P. Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales', in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. by Tore Nyberg et al (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1985), pp. 97-131; Davies, *The First English Empire*, p. 36.

‘darystngassant’ [‘subjugated’] (from ‘darostyngaf’ meaning ‘to subdue, or to subjugate’) to the Picts and the Saxons, which emphasises the effect of imperial conquest and the subsequent territorial dispossession of the Britons. The translation of the Latin into Welsh indicates the oppression of the Britons, and reinforces that they are original inhabitants of the island – all the other peoples are merely foreign invaders, with no rightful claim over the territory.

Time, territory, and nation are foregrounded at the beginning of *Castleford’s Chronicle*. This text primarily follows the geographical description that appears in Geoffrey’s *Historia*, and it provides a faithful translation of the Latin into Middle English. Yet, before this description begins, the text provides a brief history of the island of Britain:

Menyng is maid in mannys thought
 Of wonders fele in Yngland wroght,
 That forme was called Hyle Albyon
 Of Brut it wane þarin to wone.
 Brut wane yt of gyantes thrurowe might,
 And so of Brut Brytayne yt hyght –
 That name yt bare in thys werld here
 Wel ner past two thousand yer.
 Thane the Saxons Brutons out drave,
 And wane the land, foreuyr to have,
 And Yngland they it namyd þane,
 So yet it callys eurylk a mane.³⁴

As Anke Bernau points out, this passage demonstrates a ‘slippage between two kinds of temporality’: first, it outlines a ‘linear history that moves from name to name, conquest to conquest’; but the ‘interchangeable’ names – Albion, Britain, and England – also contradict the idea of ‘clear, unidirectional progression’.³⁵ The text

³⁴ *Castleford’s Chronicle, or, The Boke of Brut*, ed. by Caroline D. Eckhardt, 2 vols (Oxford and New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1996), I, ll. 235-46. All further references to *Castleford’s Chronicle* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text; references are to the line numbers only.

³⁵ Anke Bernau, ‘Beginning with Albina: Remembering the Nation’, *Exemplaria*, 21.3 (2009), 247-73 (p. 259).

does not indicate whether these names represent the same geographical entity or political entity, and the landscapes of Albion, Britain, and England seem to be one and the same. Time, place, and space collapse within the proper geographical prologue, which begins with a description of ‘Brutayne the best’ (CC, l. 255), and ends with the peoples that live ‘wythin Ynglandes bondes’ (CC, l. 320). The change of names of ‘Brutayne’ to ‘Ynglande’ in this prologue enables the chroniclers to move from the past to the present day, and it represents the chronological framework of the narrative, which spans from the foundation of Britain until early fourteenth century. The text also constantly negotiates between the various authorities who have written about the island: it begins first with the ‘words of Gyldas and Bed’ (CC, l. 262), before moving on to the description of Britain by ‘Galfryd’ (CC, l. 266). The text demonstrates an awareness of multiple sources of British history, but it also eradicates the distinctions between the terms that each of these historians use to describe the island.

The geographical prologue of Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* owes more to Henry of Huntingdon, than to Geoffrey of Monmouth. With the exception of Laȝamon’s *Brut*, Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* was the first English translation of the *Historia regum Britanniae*; however, the opening prologue, which begins ‘Engelond his a wel god lond’,³⁶ clearly follows the structure of Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum*.³⁷ England – not Britain – is clearly the focus of this text, and the preference for Henry over Geoffrey at the beginning of the *Chronicle* signals a move towards a more Anglocentric mode of historiography. This

³⁶ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, 2 vols (London: Printed for G. M. Stationery by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887) I, l. 1. All further references to Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* are to this edition and are given in the body of the text; references are to the line numbers only.

³⁷ The primary sources for Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* are Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Laȝamon.

change in source text is perhaps not surprising given that Robert's *Chronicle* was the first text in the Galfridian tradition to extend beyond the reign of Cadwaladr, providing a narrative of English history up until the present day (1270). Robert divides Henry's prologue into three sections: first, 'Commendacio Anglie' ['The Praise of England']; second, 'Descriptio Anglie' ['The Description of England']; and, finally, 'Mirabilia Anglie' ['The Wonders of England']. Like Henry, Robert's description provides information on the location of England; the cities of England; the invasions of England; the seven kingdoms of England (or the heptarchy); the shires of England; and the bishoprics of England. This opening description focuses on regional and local descriptions, and complicates the *locus amoenus* topos by emphasising 'the possibility of internal conflict and division'.³⁸ England is divided into regnal divisions, territorial divisions, and ecclesiastical divisions. These divisions are part of a political and clerical system of governance that unites England and its monarchy.³⁹ Nevertheless, the kingdoms of England do not extend into Scotland and Wales, and so the *Chronicle* does not present the island of Britain as a unified political entity that Geoffrey imagined in his *Historia*.

Robert of Gloucester's prologue to his *Chronicle* is also overtly nationalistic. Before the beginning of his historical narrative, Robert departs from Henry's geographical description of England, and introduces a section entitled 'De mundicia et pulcritudine gentis terre' (literally, 'the cleanliness and beauty of the land'). He writes that:

³⁸ Clarke, *Literary Landscapes*, p. 132.

³⁹ As Diana Greenway notes, Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* 'is the story of the unification of the English monarchy'; see Diana Greenway, 'Introduction', in *Historia Anglorum*, pp. xxiii-clxxii (p. lx). Henry's history is notable for the creation of the English heptarchy, and he rationalised the creation of the kingdoms and their subsequent conversions; see James Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. by James Campbell (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1986), pp. 209-28 (pp. 212-13).

So clene lond is engelond . & so cler wiþ outen hore.
 Þe veireste men in þe world . per inne beþ ibore.
 So clene & vair & pur ʒwit . among oþere men hii beþ.
 Þat me knoweþ hem in eche lond . bi sizte þar me hem seþ.
 So clene is al so þat lond . & mannes blod so pur.
 Þat þe gret evel ne comeþ naʒt þer . þar me clupeþ þat holi fur.
 Þat vorfreteth menne limes . riʒt as it were ibrend.
 Ac men of france in þulke vuel . son me such amende.
 ʒit hii beþ ibroʒt in to engelond . ʒware þorʒ may iwite.
 Þat engelond is londe best . as hit is iwrite.

(RG, ll. 180-8)

This passage is a clear celebration of England and the English. The description of the land as ‘clene’ – repeated three times – emphasises the purity and beauty of the territory, and it demonstrates that the land is free from ‘hore’ (corruption or sin) and ‘evel’. Meanwhile, the inhabitants are described the ‘veireste men in þe world’ and their blood is ‘pur’: this is a community that defines itself by excluding others, and its position at the ‘end of the world’ indicates the limits and boundaries of the sovereign nation. The superlatives ‘best’ and ‘veirest’ used to describe the land and its inhabitants reinforce the nationalistic rhetoric that underpins this geographical prologue.

Britain, Albion and Scotland: Borders and Boundaries

Like their English and Welsh counterparts, Scottish historians also used the descriptive prologue in their national histories. In his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, John of Fordun sets out a geographical description of Britain – or rather Albion – which is similar to those by earlier insular historians (including Geoffrey). He writes that:

Albion enim oceani quædam est insula, situm habens in Europa, sub circio, quæ per longum a meridie primo tendens versus quilonem, deinde curvam quasi formam assumens quodammodo vergit in vulturnum. Australes quidem ejus et mediæ regions Hiberniam habent insulam ad occidente. Boreales vero contra polum articum, oceano patent infinito. Habet etiam islandiam a borea, sic a vulturno Norguegiam. Ab oriente Daciam. Ab euro Germaniam vel

Alemanniam. A notho quidem Holladiam et Flandriam. Ab austro siquidem et Affrico Galliam, cum suis provinciis; ac Hispaniam a zephro, quibus oceani maris undique nunc majori jacet intervallo, nunc minori circumsepta. Longitudinis quoque passuum esse traditur octingentorum milium, seu paulo minus. Transverso vero latitudinis quibusdam locis amplissimis ducentorum, quibusdam aliis multo strictior. Nam in sui pene medio miliaria tantum sexaginta quatuor ab oceano tenet ad oceanum, ubi magnis est adeo perfuse fluminibus, quod, præter asperos terræ meabilis amfractus, spatio milium viginti duorum passuum, intersitis nemoribus, arbustis, ac paludibus, eorum ferme capita contrahuntur. Unde fit, quod ex hujusmodi magnorum hinc inde fluminum influential, quamvis adinvicem non plene contingent, eam in duabus quasi divisam insulis nonnulli scripserunt historici, iscut per hæc, quæ sequuntur, scripta clarius apparebit.⁴⁰

[Albion is an island of the ocean, situated in Europe, between the north and west; stretching, along its length, from the south, first, northwards, it afterwards assumes a somewhat curved shape, inclining a little to the north-east. Its southern and middle parts have Ireland to the west of them, while its northern lie open to the boundless ocean, over against the arctic pole. It has, also, Iceland on the north, and Norway towards the north-east; on the east, Dacia; on the south-east, German, or Alemannia; more to the south, Holland and Flanders; on the south and south-west, Gaul, and its dependencies; and Spain further westwards; and it lies hedged round by these countries, with a greater or less interval of ocean between. It is reported, also, to be eight hundred miles in length, or a little under; and also in breadth across, in some of the broadest places, two hundred; in others, much narrowed; for, nearly in the middle, it is only sixty-four miles from sea to sea; and it is there so much cut up by large rivers, that their head waters are nearly drawn together, but for some intricate passes over rough land, for the space of twenty-two miles, with groves, brushwood, and marches interspersed. Whence it arises that, from the flowing down on either side of rivers so large, although they do not quite touch each other, some historians have written that it is, as it were, divided into two islands, as will appear more clearly from the following passages.]⁴¹

This description appears to adhere to convention: it begins with the geographical location of Albion, which is followed by the position of the country in relation to continental Europe. Furthermore, John indicates that Albion is surrounded by a vast ocean, and he also notes the measurements of the island. John follows Bede and Henry of Huntingdon by using the name ‘Albion’, which is an ancient term that was

⁴⁰ *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 2.1.

⁴¹ *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. by W. F. Skene and trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 2.1.

used to refer to the whole island. By using this term, John avoids identifying the island with a single people, and he recounts how the territory was renamed Britain and Scotland respectively when the Britons settled in the south, and the Scots in the north. However, the most significant addition to John's description is his image of the rivers that run through the middle of the island. This part of the island functions as border between the north and south of Albion, which Bower later equates to Scotland and Britain. The wilderness that occupies this territory suggests that the border cannot be easily transgressed, and the rivers function as a further geographical barrier that divide the island into two parts. The idea that Britain and Scotland were separate from each other originates from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and he writes that the Irish and the Picts were separated from the Britons by 'duobus sinibus maris interiacentibus, quorum unus ab orientali mari, alter ad occidentali Britanniae terras longe lateque inrumpit' ['two wide and long arms of the sea, one of which enters the land from the east, the other from the west'] (*HE*, 1.12).⁴² The rivers that Bede mentions here, and which Bower alludes to, are the Firth (east) and the Clyde (west), and on Matthew Paris' map of Britain (British Library, Cotton MS Claudius D.vi, f.12v), these two rivers almost meet to create 'Scota ultra marina' ['Scotland across the sea']. The landscape of Albion described in the *Chronica*, then, ultimately serves John's own political agenda, and demonstrates that Scotland is a separate sovereign nation.

For John of Fordun, the image of the river had real political significance. The description of Albion in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* directly challenges the description of Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae*:

⁴² For further discussion of Bede's idea of Albion as two separate islands, see Alan Maccoll, 'The meaning of 'Britain' in Medieval and Early Modern England', 248-69.

Idem in libri sui prohemio Britanniam de fluminibus commendans ait: Porro Britannia piscosis fluviis est irrigua; nam absque meridian plagæ freto, quo navigator ad Gallias, tria nobilia flumina, Thamensem, Sabrinum, et Humbrum, velut tria brachia, extendit, quibus transmarina commercial ex diversis nationibus eidem deferuntur. Quid igitur? nonne plura sunt in Albione famosa flumina? Verum, si totam Albionem Britanniam diceret, flumina Scociæ, quæ multo supradictis ampliora sunt fluviis, piscosiora, meliora, necnon utilitatibus cunctis foeundiora, silendo minime tacuisset; sicut flumen de Forth, quod et austral dicitur fretum vel mare Scoticum; fluvium Esk, quod dicitur Scotiswath, sive Sulwath; flumen itaque de Clid; flumen etiam de Tay. Et flumen borealis freti sive Crombarthty, quod, propter suæ firmitatis excellentiam, a natuis Zikirsount nomen habet.

[Again, in the introduction to his book, commending Britain for its rivers, he [Geoffrey] says: – Further, Britannia is watered by rivers abounding with fish; for, besides the channel on the southern coast, which one sails over on the way to Gaul, it stretches out three noble rivers, the Thames, the Severn, and the Humber, like three arms, by which the commerce of various nations beyond the sea is imported into it. What then? Are there not any other famous rivers in Albion? But, in truth, if he had called the whole of Albion, Britannia, he would certainly not have passed over in silence the rivers of Scotia, which are much broader than those above mentioned, more full of fish, better, and more useful in every way; such as the river Forth, which is also called the Southern Firth, or Scottish Sea; the river Esk, which is called Scotiswath or Sulwath (Solway); as also the river Clyde, and the river Tay, and the river of the Northern Crombathy (Cromarty) Firth, which, by reason of the excellence of its holding-ground, gets the name of Zikirsount from seamen. (CGS, 2.2)

As Wyman H. Herendeen points out, rivers are ‘natural vehicles for thought, expression, and self-realization [... which] reveal more about the authors’ intellectual inheritance than about the landscape itself’.⁴³ Indeed, John’s list of rivers presents a challenge to Geoffrey’s authority by showing that he knew very little about – or was not interested in – Scottish geography.⁴⁴ Furthermore, John implies

⁴³ Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ W. F. Skene and J. S. P. Tatlock have also commented Geoffrey’s ignorance concerning Scottish geography on. Tatlock writes that ‘[n]o wonder Scottish chroniclers hated Geoffrey. His personal ignorance of Scotland is clear. Such knowledge as he shows is partly archaic, and partly contemporary, and partly due to traditional knowledge in Wales, as for example the name Albania, Alclud, Loth earl of Lothian, and *nemus Colidonis*. Conspicuously absent in a book always ready to pounce on any bit of picturesque tradition, is any vestige of acquaintance with the special traditions of the Scots and the Picts. From the appearance of thing Scottish in the *Historia* one would fancy the author a man of the world with somewhat scholarly tastes and with Anglo-Norman sympathies’; see J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae*

that the Scottish rivers are so well known that, by not mentioning them, Geoffrey can only be referring to southern Britain. The first two rivers that John mentions are particularly important as they function as territorial boundaries. The Firth of the Forth, which flows between Fife and Lothian, was the boundary between the Celtic peoples in Cumbria, who were part of the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde, and the English tribes in the North East – particularly in Northumbria.⁴⁵ Stirling Bridge, which crosses the Forth, is also remembered in Scottish historical memory as the site of William Wallace's victory against the English in the First War of Scottish Independence (1296-1328). The River Esk flows through Dumfries and Galloway, as well as into Cumbria, and it was the southern marker of the area known as Debatable Land, which both England and Scotland made claims on in the fifteenth century.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the other rivers that Bower mentions – the River Tay and the Cromarty Firth – are well known for their fish, fresh produce, and marine life. The Tay is also the longest river in Scotland. John comments that the rivers of Scotland are more productive and more useful than the rivers of Britain, and they are 'procellis oceano periclitantibus incomparabili refugio tutiora' ['incomparable places of refuge from the perilous tempests of the ocean'] (CGS, 2.2) Through his extended description of the network of Scottish rivers, John questions Geoffrey's knowledge of Scottish and – by wider implication – British geography, and he ultimately suggests that Britain only constitutes England and Wales.

In the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, rivers also function as a political border between England and Scotland. As Denys Hay writes, the Anglo-Scottish border

and its Early Vernacular Versions (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1974), pp. 18-19.

⁴⁵ On the various demarcations of the Anglo-Scottish Border, see Denys Hay, 'England, Scotland and Europe: the Problem of the Frontier', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 25 (1975), 77-91.

⁴⁶ The problem of the Debatable Land was not solved until the early seventeenth century when James I (James VI of Scotland) succeeded to the throne and began to pacify the border lands.

‘was not merely a line, notionally following rivers and burns and leaping to standing stones and ditches or dykes. It was also a tract of territory separated in some senses from countries on either side of it.’⁴⁷ John depicts the mutable nature of this frontier with reference to the rivers that run through the north of England:

Ad fretum quoque Scotium Scotia prius initium sumpsit, ab austro deinde quidem as Humbri flumen, a quo cepit exordium Albania. Postmodum vero juxta murum incepit Thirlwal, quem Severus extruxerat ad amnem Tynan. Modo quidem ad amnem Twedem incipit, a finibus Angliæ borealibus, et in longum per quadringenta vel paulominus millaria versus æstivum protensa circum, et in freto Pethlandiæ, quo formidabilis et dira caribdis aquas bibit et vomit omnibus horis, teminatur.

[At first, it began from the Scottish firth on the south, and, later on, from the river Humber, where Albania also began. Afterwards, however, it commenced at the wall Thirlwall, which Severus had built to the river Tyne. But now it begins at the river Tweed, the northern boundary of England, and, stretching rather less than four hundred miles in length, in a north-westerly direction, is bounded by the Pentland Firth, where a fearfully dangerous whirlpool sucks in and belches back the waters every hour.]

(*CGS*, 2.7)

This geographical description of the Anglo-Scottish Border is inextricably bound up with time, history, and politics. The Humber formed the border between the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria and the southern kingdoms, but Scottish kings took the regions of Edinburgh and Lothian in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The wall that John mentions is, of course, Hadrian’s Wall, that ran from the River Tyne to the Solway Firth, which the Roman Emperor Septimus Severus strengthened on his visit to Britain (cf. *HRB*, 74.19-22). Finally, the Solway-Tweed became the fixed Anglo-Scottish Border in 1237 when the Treaty of York was signed between England and Scotland.⁴⁸ The rivers that Bower mentions, and which demarcate this boundary, are

⁴⁷ Denys Hay, ‘England, Scotland and Europe’, p. 80.

⁴⁸ After the Treaty of York in 1237, the Border was never significantly modified again, with the exception of the incorporation of Berwick into England in 1482. The Boundary was formally re-established in 1552 when the Scots’ Dike was built to mark the division of the Debatable Lands. See Hay, ‘England, Scotland and Europe’ and Bruce and Terrell, ‘Introduction: Writing Across the Borders’.

witness to the radically changing territory of Scotland. The rivers demonstrate that Scotland was separate from England in the past, as well as in the present day, and they also imply that Scotland will remain an independent state in the future because the physical landscape of Britain reinforces the national divisions between England and Scotland.

In contrast to Geoffrey of Monmouth, who imagined Britain as an ideal of insular unity, English, Scottish, and Welsh chroniclers represented Britain as a fractured and divided island. These later chroniclers recognised that Britain had many names that were the products of different conquests, and they also realised that the island was divided by its geographical landscape and between its inhabitants. Rather than simply presenting Britain as an island located in the western sea between France and Ireland, these chroniclers redefined Britain as a territory divided by various borders and boundaries, and split into multiple local, regional, and national divisions.

The Division of Britain: Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey of Monmouth recognises ‘the unity of Britain and its traditional divisions’,⁴⁹ and he uses the story of Brutus’ three sons – Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber – to explain the tripartite division of Britain into England, Scotland, and Wales. Geoffrey writes that

Cognouerat autem Brutus Innogin uxorem suam et ex ea genuit tres inclitos filios, quibus errant nomina Locrinus, Albanactus, Kamber. Hii, postquam pater in .xx.iiii. anno aduentus sui ab hoc saeculo migravit, sepelierunt eum infra urbem quam condiderat et diuiserunt regnum Britanniae inter se et secesserunt unusquisque in loco suo. Locrinus, qui primogenitus fuerat, possedit mediam partem insulae, quae postea de nomine suo appellata est Loegria ; Kamber autem partem illam quae est ultra Sabrinum flumen, quae

⁴⁹ Roberts, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition’, p. 37.

nunc Gualia uocatur, quae de nomine ipsius postmodum Kambria multo tempore discta fuit, unde adhuc gens patriae linguis Britannica sese Kambro appellat ; at Albanactus iunior possedit patriam quae lingua nostra his temporibus appellatur Scotia et nomen ei ex nomine suo Albania dedit.

[By his union to Innogin, Brutus had three fine sons, named Locrinus, Albanactus and Kamber. When their father passed away, twenty-four years after his landing, they buried him in the city he had founded and divided up the kingdom of Britain among them, each living in his own region. Locrinus, the first-born, received the central part of the island, afterwards called Loegria after him; Kamber received the region across the river Severn, now known as Wales, which for a long time was named Kambria after him, and for this reason the inhabitants still call themselves Cymry in British; Albanactus, the youngest, received the region known today as Scotland, which he named Albania after himself.]

(*HRB*, 23.1-11)

According to this story, Britain is a single kingdom, or ‘regnum’, and the individual regions of Britain are not separate sovereign states; rather, they are merely separate parts of the whole island. By allowing each son to inherit part of the island, Geoffrey subverts the Norman practice of primogeniture that had developed in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries.⁵⁰ The story of Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber provides a model of inheritance based on equality that is also used for other siblings in the *Historia*, such as Goneril and Regan (and eventually Cordeila), or Brennius and Belinus, who divide Britain between them.

In the fourteenth century, Edward I used the story of Brutus’ sons in a letter to Pope Boniface VIII to assert that England held sovereignty over Scotland; however, the Scottish lawyer Baldred Bisset refuted this claim, and used complex rhetorical strategies in his own letter to Boniface to disprove Edward’s argument.⁵¹

Victoria Flood has recently examined how Edward’s use of the Brutus story

⁵⁰ On the development of the patrilineage and the practice of primogeniture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. by Cynthia Postan (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); and R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁵¹ For an overview of the epistolary exchanges between England, Scotland, and Rome, see G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 113-14.

influenced the production of prophetic material circulating in the Anglo-Scottish border at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁵² Using a similar comparative approach, this section addresses the impact that the epistolary dispute between England and Scotland had on contemporary historical writing: it analyses how fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English and Scottish historians rewrote the story of Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber and reshaped the geography of Britain to suit their different national agendas.

Dominion and Sovereignty: Asserting Locrinus' Right to Scotland

Edward I's letter of 1301 to Pope Boniface VIII is a prime example of the English reception of the *Historia regum Britanniae* in the early fourteenth century.⁵³

Composed as a response to Boniface's *Scimus fili* (1299), which condemned the English invasion and occupation of Scotland, this letter uses the division of Britain in the *Historia* to explain England's right to hold Scotland.⁵⁴ The letter subtly rewrites the story of Brutus' sons in the *Historia* to emphasise the power of Locrinus, the eldest son, over his brothers Albanactus and Kamber. The text states that

Et postea regnum suum tribus filiis suis divisit, scilicet Locrino primogenitor illam partem Britanniae que nunc Anglia dicitur et Albanacto secundo natu illam partem que tunc Albania a nomine Albanacti nunc vero Scotia nuncupatur, et Cambro filio minori partem illam nomine suo tunc Cambria vocatam que nunc Wallia vocatur, reservata Locrino seniori regia dignitate. Itaque biennio post mortem Bruti applicuit in Albania quidam rex Hunorum nomine Humber et Albanactum fratrem Locrini occidit, quo audito Locrinus rex Britonum

⁵² Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England: From Geoffrey of Monmouth to Thomas of Erceuldoune* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2016), pp. 66-109.

⁵³ Edward also frequently used the Arthurian legend from Geoffrey's *Historia* for his own political purposes; see Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast', *Speculum*, 28.1 (1953), 114-27 (p. 117); John Carmi Parsons, 'The Second Exhumation of King Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury', *Arthurian Literature*, 12 (1993), 173-7; James P. Carley, 'Arthur in English History', in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. by W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 47-58.

⁵⁴ On Edward's response to Boniface see, E. L. G. Stones, 'The Mission of Thomas Wale and Thomas Delisle from Edward I to Pope Boniface VIII in 1301', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 27 (1981), 8-28.

prosecutes est eum qui fugiens submerses est in flumine quod de nomine suo Humber vocatur et sic Albania reveritur ad dictum Locrinum.

[Afterwards he [Brutus] divided his realm among his three sons, that is he gave to his first born, Locrine, that part of Britain now called England, to the second, Albanact, that part then known as Albany, after the name of Albanact, but now as Scotland, and to Camber, his youngest son, the part then known by his son's name as Cambria and now called Wales, the royal dignity being reserved for Locrine, the eldest. Two years after the death of Brutus there landed in Albany a certain king of the Huns, called Humber, and he slew Albanact, the brother of Locrine. Hearing this, Locrine, the king of the Britons, pursued him, and he fled and was drowned in the river from which his name is called Humber, and thus Albany reverted to Locrine.]⁵⁵

Locrin is clearly the most powerful of Brutus's sons, and he is fashioned as 'rex Britnour' ['king of the Britons'] – such an epithet was never ascribed to him in Geoffrey's *Historia*. Edward uses a passive grammatical construction to describe Scotland's submission to England: Albania (or Scotland) is the patient subject; 'reveritur' (from 'revertō') is the passive verb; and Locrin is the active subject (or agent). As the successor of Locrin, Edward insists that Scotland should be subjugated to England, and that he should have control of the whole island.

As in Edward's letter to Boniface, the division of Britain the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* to 1272, which was written before 1307, also presents Scotland as subject to England.⁵⁶ In this text, the island is divided between two of Brutus' sons immediately after the foundation of Britain:

E quant Brut quoit encerche tute le terre de lunge e de le, il troua vne terre ioinaunt a Bretaine en le north, e cele terre don ail a Albanac son fiz, e il la fist appeler Albanie apres son noun, qe ore est appelle Escoce. E Brut troua vne autre pais vers le west, e cele terre dona il a Kambor, lautre fiz, e il la fist appeler Kambre, quore est appelle Gales.

⁵⁵ 'Sanctissimio Patri Bonifacio, or to the most Holy Father Boniface', in *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174-1328: Some Selected Documents*, ed. by E. L. G. Stones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 192-219 (p. 195).

⁵⁶ On the composition of the Anglo-Norman *Brut* and the Scottish Succession Crisis, see Julia Marvin, 'Introduction', in *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 1-71 (p. 41).

[And when Brut searched the whole length and breadth of the land, he found land adjoining Britain in the north, and he gave this land to his son Labanac, and after his name he had it called Albany, which is now Scotland. And Brut found another country towards the west, and that land he gave to Kambor the other son, and he had it called Cambria, which is now Wales.]⁵⁷

This description indicates a political and geographical reconceptualisation of Britain. Britain is clearly synonymous with England, but Scotland and Wales are conceived as separate territories. Indeed, Scotland is ‘vne terre ioinaunt a Bretagne en le north’ [‘a land adjoining Britain in the north’], while Wales is ‘vne autre pais vers le west’ [‘another country towards the west’]. These territories are under English control; however, they are not, necessarily, part of the regnal kingdom. Albanactus and Kamber are essentially given *apanages* by Brutus, and this was a typical concession of a fief by the sovereign to his younger sons, while the eldest son succeeded to the throne after the death of his father.⁵⁸ Locrinus represents the main line of succession, and the narrative of the *Brut* concerns the central kingdom – England. Narrative and nation are emphasised at the beginning of the text, which opens with the declaration that ‘Coment Brut vint primes en Engleterre e conquest la terre ci put hom oir’ [‘Here one may hear how Brut first came to England and conquered the land’] (*ANPB*, ll. 1-2). Scotland and Wales are placed on the periphery in this Anglocentric

⁵⁷ *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), ll. 192-6. Albanactus is the second eldest son, rather than the youngest, in this version of the story, and Julia Marvin notes that this move ‘increases Scotland’s importance relative to Wales’; see *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle*, p. 300 (note to ll. 187-98).

⁵⁸ Apanages were typically used in medieval France; however, Pedro J. Suarez notes that ‘[t]he Angevin and Plantagenet kings also established apanages in England. Whereas John Lackland received only money and the overlordship of Ireland, Henry III’s brother Richard got Cornwall and his younger son Edmund, Lancaster. After Edward I conquered Wales and formally made his eldest son prince there in 1301, it became customary to give younger sons York, Lancaster, Gloucester, or Bedford as ducal apanages, but they never had the aspirations to become independent as their counterparts did in France’; see Pedro J. Suarez, ‘Apanage’, in *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by William W. Kibler and Grover A. Zinn, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 932 (New York and London: Routledge, 1995; repr. 2006), pp. 51-2 (p. 52).

model of historiography, and they are silenced and subjugated to the political interests of the narrative.

After Brutus's death, the Prose *Brut* reports that Locrin became an overlord of the island:

E donque feu Locrin le fiz Brut corone ou grant solempnite de tute la terre de Bretaine. E apres soun corounement, Alabanac e Kambor, ses deux freres, retournerent en lour pais demene et vesquirent a graunt honor. E Locrin lour frère regna e gouerna la terre e sa gente noblemen, qar il fu mult prudome e ame de tute sa tere.

[And then, with great ceremony, Locrin, the son of Brut was crowned king of all the land of Britain. And after his coronation, Albanac and Kambor, his two brothers, returned to their own countries and lived in great honor. And Locrin their brother ruled and governed the land and his people nobly, for he was a very worthy man and loved by the whole land.]

(*ANPB*, ll. 199-203)

This passage also demonstrates the connection between the king, the land, and his subjects: Locrinus is king of the land, he rules the land, and is loved by the land. The focus here is on good kingship: the text foregrounds the importance of a king's duty towards his people, and Locrinus is judged to be a noble and worthy ruler.⁵⁹ Locrin's right to rule over 'tute la terre de Britain' ['all the land of Britain'] is comparable to Edward I's claim that Brutus' first-born son was the 'rex Britnour' ['king of the Britons'] – the former description emphasises territory, while the latter title concerns the people. Furthermore, when the king of the Huns kills Albanactus, the text states that his people fled to Locrinus, who is identified as 'roy de Grant Brutaygne' ['the king of Great Britain'] (*ANPB*, l. 210). With Scotland now under his control, Locrinus' title indicates the extent of his power, and he peacefully unites the island and its kingdoms.

⁵⁹ On the nature of kingship and the ideal ruler in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, see Julia Marvin, *The Construction of Vernacular History in the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: The Manuscript Culture of Late Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017), pp. 57-60.

The First Version of John Hardyng's *Chronicle* (1457) also imagines Locrin as an English overlord. Hardyng writes that England is the 'beste' and 'moste pryncipalle'⁶⁰ part of Britain, and insists that both Scotland and Wales – under Albanactus and Kamber – owe homage to Locrin, who is their sovereign. Hardyng adheres to the laws of primogeniture, which he presents as an ancient Trojan custom:

Thus Locryne had, as come hym welle of right
Of Troyans lawe of grete antiquyté
In Troy so made whan thay were in thaire myght
The eldest sonne shuld have the soveraynté
His brether alle of his pryorité
Shuld hold thaire londe withouten variance
So was that tyme thaire lawe and ordynance.
(Hardyng, First Version, 2.807-13)

This model of inheritance originates from the story of Brennius and Belinus in the *Historia*. The two brothers divide Britain between them, but Brennius is given the crown 'erat enim primogenitus, petebatque Troiana consuetudo ut dignitas hereditatis et proueniret' ['since he was the elder and Trojan custom demanded that the chief inheritance should fall to him'] (*HRB*, 35.5-9). In his *Chronicle*, Hardyng asserts the authority of this law, which is preserved by Brutus of Troy in a treatise called 'Infynytes'. The Trojan law that is written in this book gains its authority from its antiquity, and it connects the mythical genealogy of the Britons with regnal succession. Furthermore, Hardyng's *Chronicle* also reflects a deep cultural anxiety about the need for insular unity during a period of civil discord, and so Locrin is promoted as the ideal ruler who upholds law and order and peacefully unites the island and its kingdoms.

⁶⁰ John Hardyng, *Chronicle: Edited from British Library MS Landsdowne 204: Volume 1*, ed. by James Simpson and Sarah Peverley (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Press, 2016), 2.790. All further references are to the First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle* and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book and line numbers only. The First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle* includes nine verses on Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber, while the The Second Version includes only includes two verses. This is why the First Version has been used in this chapter.

Freedom and Autonomy: Rejecting Locrinus' Right to Scotland

In response to Edward's letter to Boniface, the Scottish lawyer Baldred Bisset prepared two letters, known as the *Instructiones* and the *Processus*, which established Scotland's independence from England. Both of these letters were intended for the papal court, but only the *Processus* is addressed to Boniface. R. James Goldstein regards the *Instructiones* as 'a rehearsal for the *Processus*' since the latter is 'more condensed and more clearly organized'.⁶¹ These letters contest the veracity of Edward's version of the foundation and division of Britain by Brutus of Troy. In his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, the fourteenth-century Scottish chronicler John of Fordun demonstrates a similar scepticism about the Brutus story, emphasising the geographical differences between England and Scotland.

The *Instructiones* addresses the silences and omissions in Edward's version of the Brutus story. The text states that 'rei geste veritatem scribere rex omisit, ea tangens solummodo quo suo viderentur proposito convenire, reliqua veritate suppressa' ['the king omitted to write down the truth about what happened, touching only on what seemed to suit his purpose and suppressing the rest of the truth'].⁶² The *Instructiones* acknowledges that Britain was divided between Brutus' sons, and that the regions were named Cambria, Albany, and Loegria; however, the text also asserts that, when the Scots arrived in Britain, they drove the Britons out of Albany and renamed it Scotland:

Quibus | exactis tali modo Britonibus de Albania per Scotos cum suo rege, leibus, lingua et moribus Britonum, exulavit et inde notorie nomen Albanie cum dominio pristinae Britonum; in locumque eiusdem nominis Albanie nomen successit novum Scocie, una cum eiusdem nominis Albanie nomen successit novum Scocie, una cum Scotorum nova gente suisque ritibus, lingua

⁶¹ R. James Goldstein, 'The Scottish Mission to Boniface VIII in 1301: A Reconsideration of the *Instructiones* and *Processus*', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 70.1 (1991), 1-15 (p. 14).

⁶² Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), VI (1991), 11.49.28-9.

et moribus (quibus nichil commune est cum Britonibus) unaque cum suo rege et dominio novo Scotorum. Et haec pars insulae Britannnie dicta prius Albania, ut rex scripsit, extunc mutatis condicionibus cum nomine vocata est Scocia ista de causa semper postea inviolabiliter et inconcusse.

[When these Britons had been driven from Albany in this way by the Scots, along with their king and the laws, language and customs of the Britons, it is well known that the name of Albany was banished along with the former lordship held by the Britons. The place of the name Albany was taken by the new name Scotland along with the new people, the Scots, with their rites, language and customs – regarding which the Scots have nothing in common with the Britons – and with their king and the new lordship of the Scots. And for this reason, this part of the island of Britain previously called Albany, as the king has written, was from then on inviolably and unshakeably always called Scotland thereafter, since conditions changed along with the name.]
(SCO, 11.49.59-69)

Bisset constructs the Britons and the Scots as two separate peoples, with their own laws, rites, language and customs, and he argues the first Scots claimed Scotland ‘juore eodem et titulo quo Brutus totam prius occupaverat Britanniam’ [‘by the same right and title as that by which Brutus had earlier occupied the whole of Britain’] (SCO, 11.49.54-5). The change of name from Albany to Scotland symbolises the transfer of power from the Britons to the Scots. Furthermore, the creation of a Scottish monarchy separates the new kingdom Scotland from the rest of Britain, and establishes the limits of British power across the island.

In the more rhetorically advanced *Processus*, Bisset challenges Edward’s version of the Brutus story on legal grounds. As in the *Instructiones*, Bisset aims to discredit Edward as he gives evidence ‘in sua propria causa’ [‘in his own case’] (SCO, 11.60), and he directly contests Edward’s account of the division of Britain between Locrinus, Albanactus, and Kamber. He writes that

Nam dictir Brutum illam monarchiam integram habuisse et quod diviserit inter filios suos: non diffitemur ad presens. Sed, quod sic diviserit quod alii subicerentur sibi, plane negamus. Triplici ratione: tum quia division dicit partes ergo equals, cum non appareat de contrario, quiquid ipse scribat. Hinc est quod appellatione partis, ubi non sunt plures partes, dimidia continetur. Tum quia omnia non liquida, si possint, ad jus commune debent redigi, per

quod rex regi, seu regnum regno, non subest, ut superius est notatum. Tum quia divisiones huisnodi paterne solent fieri ut occasio invidie inter liberos post mortem patris evitetur.

[The king [Edward] says that Brutus held that monarchy as a whole, and that he had divided it among his sons: we do not disagree about that. But we utterly deny that he made his division in such a way that the brothers were made subordinate to him for three reasons. First because, whatever the king states, division means equal shares in consequence, when there is no evidence to the contrary; hence it is that where there are not several shares, one share is defined as a half. Second, because matters which are uncertain should if possible be brought into line with common law, by which one king is not subject to another, nor one kingdom to another, as mentioned above. Third, because a father's division of his property of the kind is usually arranged so as to avoid the possibility of jealousy between the children after the father's death.]

(SCO, 11.61.13-25)

In contrast to Edward, who simply relied on the narrative of the *Historia* to support his argument, Bisset uses the laws of inheritance to legitimise his claim. He points out that Scotland 'jure successionis, nisi omnes alli gradus et stirpes deficerent [...] ad ipsum Locrinum non posset obvenire' ['would not fall to Locrinus himself by right of succession unless there was a failure in all the other levels of the family tree'] (SCO, 11.61). As a result of Albanactus' death, Bisset implies that Scotland should have been divided between two remaining brothers – namely, Locrinus and Kamber. Bisset is clearly the more skilled rhetorician who is able to point out the flaws of his opponent's argument. Moreover, by demonstrating that Edward's argument has several false premises, Bisset strengthens his claim that Scotland should be an independent nation, and so he presents a more persuasive case to his recipient, Pope Boniface.

In his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, John of Fordun also critically evaluates the reliability of the Brutus story. Although John directly subverts Geoffrey's account of Brutus of Troy using the legend of Scota and Gaythelos, his approach to the division

of Britain between Brutus' sons is more nuanced.⁶³ In his *Chronica*, John mentions Albanactus, who 'possedit patriam, quæ nostris temporibus Scotia vocatur, cui nomen ex nomine suo dedit Albaniam' ['possessed the country which in our times is called Scotia; and he gave it, from his own name, the name of Albania'] (CGS, 2.4). This chapter also includes several quotations from Bede and Geoffrey that affirm that Scotland was part of Britain (albeit when it was called Albion), and it is designed to be read in dialogue with the two preceding chapters, which quote the same historians, in order to show how these authorities also seem to support the independence of Scotland from Britain. The purpose of this contrast is to cast considerable doubt over the authority of these historians, and, by extension, John also questions Albanactus' right to Scotland. By demonstrating that the works of earlier historians contain irreconcilable differences and 'variis contraria sæpius' ['contrary import'] (CGS, 2.4), John can use these discrepancies to suit his own argument concerning the relationship between Albion and Britain. He asserts that

Verum quicquid hujusmodi variæ definitionis finium Britannia scriptorium vitio reperiatur historiis, vulgaris opinion moderni temporis omnem Albionem a Bruto, qui præter australes ejus regiones cultura redigerat, dici velit Britanniam[.]

[But, in truth, whatever variations of this sort, in the definition of the boundaries of Britannia, may be found in histories, through the fault of the transcribers, the common opinion of modern time is that the whole of Albion was called Britannia, from Brutus, who only colonized its southern regions.] (CGS, 2.4)

Written history has little credence here, and it is public opinion that has the most authority on the matter. The people confirm that Albion is Brutus' territory; but John is careful to indicate that he only conquered the south of the island, and renamed it

⁶³ For comparative analysis of the stories of Brutus and Scota, see Katherine H. Terrell, 'Subversive Histories: Strategies of Identity in Scottish Historiography', in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 153-72; and Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 22-51.

Britain. The careful negotiation between the terms Albion and Britain allows Bower to demonstrate that Britain was not a unified island, and that Scotland was beyond British control.

The doubts that John raised about Geoffrey's narrative also allowed him to reimagine the geo-political landscape of Britain. Bower contests the division of Britain into three separate nations – England, Scotland, and Wales – writing that:

Locria vero Locrini regnum, as meridianam insulæ plagam, Totonensis, scilicet, litus, incipiens, ad Humbri flumen versus boream, et ad amnem de Tharent finem habet. Cambria deinde, fratris quoque junioris [Cambri] region, connexa Locriæ regno, jacet non ad australem ajus finem, ut quidam autumant, neque borealem, sed ad ipsius latus occiduum, ab eo montibus marique Sabrino divisa, quasi collateralis ei versus Hiberniam ex opposite. Albania siquidem regnum Albanacti, tertia region regni Britonum, ad idem Humbri flumen et gurgitem amnis de Tharent habens initium, in fine borealis Britannia, sicut superius est expressum, terminatur. Hujus autem Albania regionis provincias, quæcunque fuerint, quæ sunt inter Humbrum et mare Scoticum, olim [Britones] dominio tantum, et nihil unquam possessionis aplius versus boream, haberunt.

[The kingdom of Locrinus, accordingly, was Locria, and, beginning from the southern shore of the island, that is, the Totonian shore, it was bounded on the north by the river Humber and the Trent. Then Cambria, the territory of his younger brother Camber, adjoined the kingdom of Locrina, lying, not on its southern frontier, as some assert, nor yet on its northern, but on its western side; and though divided from it by mountains and the estuary of the Seven, as it were side by side with it, over against Ireland. Likewise Albania, the kingdom of Albanactus, the third region of the country of the Britons, stretching from the aforesaid river Humber and the estuary of the Trent, is terminated by the northern bounds of Britannia, as above described; and such provinces of this kingdom of Albania as were between the Humber and the Scottish sea were the most northerly possession of the Britons, who never gained a footing farther north.]

(CGS, 2.6)

This division of Britain in the *Chronica* is based on the geographical landscape, and is more detailed than Geoffrey's account in the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Indeed, John provides a brief survey of Britain and shows how the kingdoms of Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus are positioned against one another. Once again, the rivers of Britain become part of its political geography, and they are used to demarcate the

boundaries between the three separate territories. However, in this account of the division of Britain, Albanactus is not given Scotland: instead he inherits the north of Britain, which is distinct from Locrinus' kingdom in the south. In rewriting Geoffrey's original narrative, the Scots reimagine the landscape of Britain, and they also reject Albanactus as the founder of their nation. Scotland is conceived as a separate territory that also has its own founder: the Egyptian princess, Scota.

The rewriting of the story of Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus in these texts was influenced by political documents related to the Anglo-Scottish conflicts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Following the example of Edward I, English chronicles used the story of the sons of Brutus of Troy to assert the unity of the island, which is expressed through the character of Locrin, the eldest son. In contrast, the Scottish chroniclers use the geographical description of Britain to their advantage, and refer back to the original text of the *Historia regum Britanniae* to contest the divisions of the island into three separate nations. The foundation of Britain and its subsequent division provided potent political propaganda that could be easily applied to either side, according to their own national interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the rhetorical and ideological function of the description and the division of Britain in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and its subsequent translations and adaptations. The geographical prologue in the *Historia* demonstrates the formulaic and intertextual of the *locus amoenus* topos that was popular with many insular historians from Gildas onwards. Geoffrey's version of the description of Britain emphasises the importance of insular unity, and he also adapts this motif to suit his own ideological model of history that focuses on the decline and fall of the

Britons. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Geoffrey's description of Britain was substituted for descriptions of Albion, Prydein, England, and Scotland. These new geographical terms emphasise the regional, natural, and national divisions of the island, and the historical descriptions reflect contemporary political concerns. The account of the division of Britain between Brutus' sons, which was rewritten in response to the territorial disputes between England and Scotland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, further demonstrates how the original description of Britain in the *Historia* could be used for a range of ideological and political purposes.

For late medieval historians, then, Britain was clearly divided between different inhabitants whose political, social, and cultural differences could not be easily reconciled. The different peoples of Britain are best described in John Major's (or John Mair's) *Historia majoris Britanniae, tam Angliae quam Scotiae* (*History of Greater Britain, including England and Scotland*, 1521). At the beginning of his history, Major recounts how the various invasions of Britain caused the land to fracture into many different kingdoms, and he also describes how sixteenth-century Britain consists of two regnal kingdoms: England and Scotland. While these regnal divisions undermine the unity of the island, Major proposes that the name 'Briton' offers a way of uniting diverse groups of people and respecting their claims to the island. He declares that:

Et tamen hi omnes sunt Britanni, quod ex dictis liquere arbitror. Sed hoc ipsum adhuc paucis illustrare nitar. Vel soli primi Insulam inhabitantes sunt Britanni, & sic soli illi in Vallia commorantes Britanni erunt, contra omnes loquentes; vel Angli qui a Saxonibus & aliis alienigenis originem duxere, in Insula nati, sunt Britanni, & hac via Scotos in Insular natos Britannos dicere necessum est. Et parti ratione Pictos pro ea tempestate qua in Insula orti sunt, sicut in Gallia natos, Gallo dicimus, & ita dicere oportebat. Dico ergo omnes

in Britannia natos Britannos, qui per oppositum ab aliis omnibus Britanni segregate non essent[.]⁶⁴

[all the inhabitants are Britons – a fact that I think is established by what has been said. I will try, however, in a few words, to make good my contention. Either the original inhabitants of the island alone are Britons, and therefore the dwellers in Wales at this present will be the only Britons, against all common use of language; or the English, who are descended from the Saxons, and others of foreign origins, but are natives of the island, are Britons; and in this way it will behove us to speak of the Scots born in the island as Britons also, and by like reasoning we will say that the Picts too are Britons in respect that they were born in the island; just as we ought to call those men Gauls that were born in Gaul. I say, therefore, that all men born in Britain are Britons, seeing that on any other reasoning Britons could not be distinguished from other races].⁶⁵

According to Roger Mason, ‘Mair was an unashamed advocate of union’ who supported the creation of a British monarchy ‘through a series of dynastic marriages [...] which would in time unite the hitherto sovereign crowns of Scotland and England in the person of a single ruler’.⁶⁶ Major appropriates the Galfridian term ‘Briton’ to support the construction of the Early Modern British state, and his representation of the island provides evidence of the legacy of this formulaic set piece description in the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ Rhetorical motifs, such as the description of Britain, could easily be adapted to suit different political and national contexts, and the following chapter examines the style, structure, and function of the letters between Britain and Rome in the *Historia*.

⁶⁴ *Historia Maioris Britanniae, tam Angliae quam Scotiae, per Ioannem Maiorem, nomine quidem Scotum, professione autem theologum, e vetero monumentis concinnata* (Paris, 1521), 1.4.

⁶⁵ John Major, *A History of Greater Britain, as well England as Scotland; translated from the original Latin and edited with notes by Archibald Constable, to which is prefixed a life of the author by Aeneas J. G. Mackay* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the Scottish Historical Society, 1892), 1.4.

⁶⁶ Roger A. Mason, ‘Scotching the Brut: Politics, History and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain’, in *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, ed. by Roger A. Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), pp. 60-84 (p. 66).

⁶⁷ See also Denys Hay, ‘The term “Great Britain” in the Middle Ages’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 89 (1955-6), 55-66.

4. ‘We will fight for our freedom and our country’: Letter Writing, Community, and the Discourse of Freedom

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, speeches and letters are arguably the main expressions of national identity. Three of the strongest kings in the *Historia* – Brutus, Cassibellaunus, and Arthur – all deliver speeches or write letters that glorify the achievements of the Britons. For example, in Book One of the *Historia*, Brutus writes to Pandrasus – the captor of the dispersed Trojans – to demand the emancipation of his people:

Pandraso regi Graecorum Brutus dux reliquiarum Troiae salutem. Quia indignum fuerat gentem praeclare genere Dardani ortam aliter in regno tuo tractari quam serenitas nobilitatis eius expeteret, sese infra abdita nemorum receipt; praeferibat namque ferino ritu, carnibus uidelicet et herbis, uitam cum libertate susentare quam uniuersis deliciis refocillata diutius sub iugo seruitutis tuae permanere. Quod si celsitudinem potentiae tuae offendit, non est ei imputandum sed uenia adhibenda, cum cuiusque captiui communis sit intention uelle ad pristinam dignitatem redire. Misericordia igitur super eam motus, amissam libertatem largiri digneris et saltus nemorum quos ut seruitutem diffugeret occupauit eam habitare permittas. Sin autem, concede ut ad aliarum terrarium nations cum licentia tua abscedant.

[Brutus, leader of the survivors from Troy, sends greetings to Pandrasus, king of the Greeks. It was unjust that people from the famous stock of Dardanus should be treated in your kingdom otherwise than their serene nobility demanded, and so they have retired to the heart of the forest; in order to maintain their freedom, they preferred to eke out their lives eating meat and grass like wild beasts, rather than to enjoy every delicacy, while still enduring the yoke of slavery to you. If your highness’ power is offended by this, you should not criticise but pardon them, since every captive will always wish to recover his former liberty. Taking pity on them, therefore, do not refuse to restore their lost freedom or forbid them to stay in the forest glades where

they are seeking refuge from bondage. Otherwise, grant them permission to depart and join foreign nations.]]¹

Brutus' epistle is a prime example of the letters found in the *Historia*, which are usually sent from the Britons to a foreign authority figure; they also typically include a reference to the noble lineage of the Britons and make a demand for freedom from servitude. The sender of the letter is identified as the figurehead of the British people, while the main content of the letter positions the Britons against the recipient, who holds power over them. The tone of the letter is hostile, and the letter functions to construct the Britons as an independent community.

The letters in the *Historia regum Britanniae* are examples of fictitious documents that reflect the principles of *ars dictaminis*, which was the medieval art of prose composition – specifically the writing of letters (or *dictamen*) – that emerged during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Letter writing was considered to be a branch of rhetoric: it was taught in cathedral and monastic schools, and later in the medieval universities across Europe. Letters were produced in ecclesiastical and secular chanceries and courts, and they accelerated the growth of government bureaucracy.² Official letters – or *negotiales* – were considered to be public documents: they belonged to the realm of discourse (*oratio*), and typically included 'serious argumentative matter'.³ These types of letters, which were usually produced in the

¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009), 8.92-103.

² The number of letters produced in England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries increased progressively and, on average, the output of royal letters doubled every two or three decades: 15 letters per annum were produced during the reign of William I (1066-1087); this rose to 41 letters per annum under Henry I (1100-35) and 115 letters per annum under Henry II (1154-89). Meanwhile, Papal letters were the 'most impressive documents produced in medieval Europe', and during the pontificate of Boniface VIII (1294-1303), 50,000 letters were issued every year; see M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 60-1.

³ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 196.

royal chancery, were a ‘medium for transmitting news, commands, [and] requests’, and they also functioned as ‘a statement of ideology’.⁴ Medieval historians also sometimes wrote letters, or at least included them in their works. Bede used a number of papal letters in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’); Henry of Huntingdon included his letters to Henry I, Waurin the Breton, and Walter, Bishop of Leicester in Book Eight of his *Historia Anglorum* (‘History of the English’); and the thirteenth-century continuation of the *Chronica Majora* (‘Greater Chronicle’) by Matthew Paris contains a large number of letters, as well as charters and mandates, which were collected in an appendix known as the *Liber additamentorum* (‘Book of Additions’).⁵

The letters in the *Historia regum Britanniae* have received very little critical attention. Only P. M. Mehtonen has examined the letters in any detail, arguing that they disrupt the chronological structure of the *Historia* and ‘introduce present-tense discourse into a past-tense narrative’.⁶ Yet the letters in the *Historia* are not just structural devices, as they are based on models of classical rhetoric.⁷ This chapter discusses the letter exchanges between Julius Caesar and Cassibellanus, and Emperor

⁴ William D. Patt, ‘The early *ars dictaminis* as response to a changing society’, *Viator*, 9.1 (1978), 133-55 (p. 152).

⁵ On the letters in the histories by Bede, Henry of Huntingdon, and Matthew Paris, see Neil Wright, ‘The Place of Henry of Huntingdon’s *Epistola ad Warinum* in the Text-History of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*: A Preliminary Investigation’, in *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays by Members of Girton College, Cambridge in Memory of Ruth Morgan*, ed. by G. Jondorf and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), 71-113; Björn Weiler, ‘Matthew Paris on the Writing of History’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 35 (2009), 254-78; Joanna Story, ‘Bede, Willibrord and the Letters of Pope Honorius I on the Genesis of the Archbishop of York’, *The English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783-818.

⁶ P. M. Mehtonen, ‘Speak, Fiction: The Rhetorical Fabrication of Narrative in Geoffrey of Monmouth’, in *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c.1100-1400*, ed. by Panagiotis A. Agapitos and Lars Boje Mortensen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012) pp. 81-101 (p. 83).

⁷ On the revival of classical rhetoric in medieval historiography, see R. W. Southern, ‘Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 1. The Classical Tradition from Einhard to Geoffrey of Monmouth’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 20 (1970), 173-96; M. S. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

Lucius and King Arthur, in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and a selection of translations and adaptations of Geoffrey's history; it contends that these letters use argumentative rhetoric, myths of descent, and the discourse of freedom to construct a unified community against enemy invasions. The first section begins with a brief survey of the principles of *ars dictaminis* in the twelfth century, and then assesses how Cassibellanus' letter adheres to and deviates from these conventional formulas. The second section examines how Cassibellanus' official letter articulates British resistance to imperial Rome through an analysis of the discourse of freedom across a selection of Middle English and Welsh texts. This section also addresses the letter exchange between the Scots and Julius Caesar in a selection of Scottish chronicles, which imitated Cassibellanus' letter in the *Historia* in order to express the freedom and independence of the Scottish people. Finally, the third section compares the letters between Arthur and Lucius, and demonstrates how the formalised letters between Britain and Rome construct rival communities that were intended to defend their political interests.

Ars Dictaminis: Theory and Practice

Medieval letters were largely formulaic; indeed, as William D. Patt writes:

[t]o the Middle Ages, a letter was not a spontaneous and natural expression of thought or sentiment, but rather, a matter of rigid convention. Letters were supposed to be written according to definite rules, which over the course of time became increasingly formalized. There were rules for addressing superiors, inferiors and equals, rules which divided a letter into parts, rules for ordering those parts, and so on.⁸

⁸ Patt, 'The early *ars dictaminis*', p. 134.

The principles of letter writing were formalised during the twelfth century, and an anonymous treatise known as the *Rationes Dicandi* (*Principles of Letter Writing*), was produced in Bologna in 1135. This text defines a letter, or epistle, as

a suitable arrangement of words set forth to express the intended meaning of its sender. Or in other words, a letter is a discourse composed of coherent yet distinct parts signifying fully the sentiments of its sender.⁹

According to this treatise, a letter should typically be structured in five parts, including the *salutatio*, the *benevolentiae captatio*, the *narratio*, the *petitio*, and the *conclusio*. These sections were roughly based on Cicero's six parts of speech.¹⁰ The *salutatio*, or formal greeting, is the equivalent of the *exordium*, or introduction; the *benevolentiae captatio*, or securing of good will, is the only part of the letter which has no Ciceronian equivalent; the *narratio*, as with classical rhetoric, concerns the matter under discussion; the *petitio* is a calling for something, and is comparable with the *confirmatio*, which validates the given material; and, finally, the *conclusio* is the same as the *peroratio*, where the sender or the speaker sums up their arguments.¹¹

The five-part Bolognese model soon became the accepted style of written correspondence across medieval Europe. Cicero's guidelines on rhetoric provided a clear structure for official documents, and medieval letters became a 'vehicle of political decision-making'.¹² This section outlines how Ciceronian rhetoric was adapted to suit the new practice of medieval letter writing, and demonstrates how this

⁹ *Rationes Dictandi*, in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. and trans. by James J. Murphy (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 5-25 (p. 7).

¹⁰ Cicero's rhetorical treatises were popular in the Middle Ages: 59 copies of *De Inventione* survive from the twelfth century, and 45 of these appear with *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* no longer attributed to Cicero; see John Bliese, 'The Study of Rhetoric in the Twelfth Century', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 63 (1977), 364-83 (377-78). Several commentaries on these treatises were also produced, and James J. Murphy views these texts as evidence that *De Inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were used in schools; see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 116.

¹¹ On Cicero's rhetoric and the art of letter writing, see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 225.

¹² Alain Boureau, 'The Letter-Writing Norm, a Medieval Invention', in *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin and trans. by Christopher Woodall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 24-58 (p. 45).

style of rhetoric was used to construct letters as authoritative and argumentative documents. This section also examines how Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar in the *Historia regum Britanniae* conforms to and deviates from the conventions of *ars dictaminis* in order to establish British independence from Rome.

The Theory of *Ars Dictaminis* in the *Rationes Dictandi*

According to the *Rationes Dictandi*, the *salutatio* is the formal greeting that prefaces the main content of the letter, and should convey a 'friendly sentiment' that reflects 'the social rank of the persons involved'.¹³ Salutations can be prescribed, subscribed, or circumscribed, and these types of greeting refer to the order of the recipient's name and certain phrases that describe their status or relationship to the sender.¹⁴ The purpose of the *salutatio* 'is to render the reader docile, attentive, and benevolent'.¹⁵ The *Rationes Dictandi* states that 'the names of the recipients should always be placed before the names of the senders [...] so that his distinction [i.e. the recipient] is demonstrated by the very position of the names'.¹⁶ In letter-writing treatises, the sections on the *salutatio* were typically the most detailed, and the *Rationes Dictandi* includes a large number of formulae. The text provides an example of the Pope's universal greeting, and it also provides guidelines about how ecclesiastics should address each other, how a pupil should address his teacher, and how parents should address their son (among others). The *salutatio* recognises the importance of social

¹³ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Greetings could be prescribed, subscribed or circumscribed. Prescribed greetings put the recipient's name first, followed by conventional phrases to describe that person. Subscribed greetings put the conventional phrases first, with the recipient's name at the end. Finally, circumscribed greetings include the name of the recipient in several different ways; see *Rationes dictandi*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Charles B. Faulhaber, 'The Letter-Writer's Rhetoric: the *Summa dictaminis* of Guido Faba', in *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. by James J. Murphy (Berkeley, LA: University of California, 1978), pp. 85-111 (p. 97).

¹⁶ *Rationes dictandi*, p. 9.

hierarchy based on rank or status, but it also gives the impression of mobility by indicating the sender's position to the recipient.

The second part of the medieval letter was the *benevolentiae captatio*, or the securing of good will, which was designed to 'influence the mind of the recipient'.¹⁷ Good will can be secured in several ways: the sender can demonstrate their humility; the sender can praise the recipient; or the sender can demonstrate their familiarity with or affection for the recipient. The *benevolentiae captatio* determines the overall tone of the letter and the sender 'should seek goodwill immediately and clearly'.¹⁸ The *Rationes Dictandi* also states that 'the largest part of the securing of good will is in the course of the salutation',¹⁹ which reinforces the importance of the appropriate formal greeting at the beginning of a letter. There are, however, some exceptions when a letter does not need to directly establish good will. In a combative letter that is addressed to an enemy or an opponent, and where the matter at hand is dishonourable, the sender can use 'indirection and dissimulation' to secure good will.²⁰ The treatise also describes the effects of these greetings: 'opponents are led into hatred if their disgraceful deeds are cited with cruel pride; into jealousy if their bearing is said to be insolent and insupportable; and into contention if their cowardice or debauchery is exposed'.²¹ These types of greetings inevitably make the recipient of the letter hostile to the sender, and should be used only in exceptional circumstances.

The structure of the medieval letter was designed as 'enthymemic argument from authority, with the *exordium* serving as the major premise, the *narratio* as the

¹⁷ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 17.

²⁰ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 17.

²¹ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 17.

minor premise, and the *petitio* as the conclusion'.²² Typically, the sender used the main content of the letter to assert their claim and persuade the recipient to adopt their point of view. The *Rationes Dictandi* describes the *narratio* as 'the orderly account of the matter under discussion', and the text also adds that this part of the letter should be related 'quickly and clearly for the advantage of the sender's case'.²³ Meanwhile, the *petitio* is more broadly defined as a 'call for something' and there are nine different types, which are classed as: supplicatory, didactic, menacing, exhortative, advisory, reproving, hortatory, admonitory, and direct.²⁴ In the *petitio*, the sender can insist (didactic or direct), urge (exhortative or hortatory), advise (admonish or advisory), or even threaten (menacing) the recipient to perform certain actions on their behalf. Finally, the *conclusio* brings together the argument of the letter and the matter under discussion should be 'impressed on the recipient's memory'.²⁵ The sender then terminates the letter and writes his farewell using the first, second or third person.

The Practice of *Ars Dictaminis* in the *Historia regum Britanniae*

The letters that are sent in the *Historia regum Britanniae* broadly conform to the typical five-part structure of the medieval letter; however, these letters also subvert some of the typical conventions of the letter opening, particularly with regards to the *salutatio* and the *benevolentiae captatio*. According to Murphy, these parts of the letter were 'the most important in the eyes of the dictaminal theorists'.²⁶ As Alain Boreau points out, 'the very hallmark of distinguished letter-writing is the open

²² Faulhaber, 'The Letter-Writer's Rhetoric', p. 97.

²³ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 18.

²⁴ On the different types of the *petitio*, see *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 18.

²⁵ *Rationes Dictandi*, p. 19.

²⁶ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 225.

contempt that is displayed for rules that are taught but nobody wants to or can apply'.²⁷ In the *Historia*, the disregard for the principles of *ars dictaminis* demonstrates the disdain that Cassibellanus, the king of the Britons, holds for Julius Caesar. Furthermore, the defiant tone of Cassibellanus' letter reinforces its main argument that the Britons are independent of Rome.

Cassibellanus' letter is a direct response to Julius Caesar – as consul of the Roman Republic – who demands tribute from the Britons. In Book Four of the *Historia*, Geoffrey reports that Caesar landed in Flanders after he conquered Gaul and looked across to Britain, exclaiming

Hercule ex eadem prosapia nos Romani et Britones orti sumus, quia ex Troiana gente processimus. Nobis Aeneas post destructionem Troia primus pater fuit, illis autem Brutus, quem Siluis Ascanii filii Aeneae filius progeniuit. Sed nisi fallor ualde degenerati sunt a nobis nec quid sit milicia nouerunt, cum infra oceanum extra orbem commaneant. Leuiter cogendi erunt tributum nobis dare et continuum obsequium Romanae dignitati praestare. Prius tamen mandandum est eis ut inaccessi a Romano populo et inacti uectigal reddant, ut ceterae etiam gentes subiectionem senatui faciant, ne nos ipsorum cognatorum nostrorum sanguinem fundentes antiquam nobilitatem patris nostril Priami offendamus.

[By Hercules, we Romans and the Britons share a common ancestry, being both descended from the Trojans. After the sack of Troy our first ancestor was Aeneas, theirs Brutus, whose father was Silvius, son of Aeneas's son Ascanius. But, unless I am mistaken, they are no longer our equals and have no idea of soldiering, since they live at the edge of world amid the ocean. We shall easily force them to pay tribute to us and obey Roman authority forever. However, as they have not yet been approached or affected by the Roman people, we must first instruct them to pay taxes and like other nations submit to the senate, lest we offend the ancient dignity of our ancestor Priam by shedding the blood of our cousins.]

(*HRB*, 54.6-15)

Caesar's speech is subsequently turned into a letter, which is sent directly to Cassibellanus. The Roman consul uses the Trojan myth of origins to indicate the shared heritage of the Britons and the Romans, and he also uses this model of

²⁷ Boureau, 'The Letter-Writing Norm', p. 24.

genealogical descent to justify British submission to the Roman senate; however, Caesar's letter also expresses his hostility towards the Britons as he claims 'ualde degenerati sunt a nobis nec quid sit milicia nouerunt' ['they are no longer our equals and have no idea of soldiering']. This insult explains – and arguably justifies – Cassibellanus' terse reply as he is defending his people from shame and slander.

Cassibellaunus' letter to Caesar begins very unconventionally. He writes that: 'Cassibellaunus rex Britonum Gaius Julius Caesar' ['Cassibellaunus king of the British people sends greetings to Gaius Julius Caesar'] (*HRB*, 55.18). In his greeting, Cassibellanus does not recognise Caesar's office as a consul of the Roman Republic. This greeting also defies the typical conventions of the *salutatio* by listing the sender before the recipient, and such a practice was usually reserved for sworn enemies who had declared war upon each other.²⁸ The style and structure of the medieval letter were intimately intertwined, and Charles B. Faulhaber points out that 'the style of the letter should reflect not only the subject matter, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the rank of the sender and his relationship with the recipient'.²⁹ By referring to himself first, Cassibellaunus assumes a higher status than Caesar, and so the structure of the *salutatio* immediately establishes the defiant nature of the Britons and constructs them in opposition to the Romans.

In his letter, Cassibellanus also refuses to secure the good will of his recipient. The British king declares that

Miranda est, Caesar, Roamni populi cupiditas, qui quicquid est auri uel argenti sitiens nequit nos infra pericula oceani extra orbem positos pati quin census nostros appetere praesumat, quos hactenus quiete possedimus.

[The greed of the Roman people, Caesar, is remarkable. In their thirst for gold and silver, they cannot bring themselves, though we live at the world's

²⁸ Faulhaber, 'The Letter-Writer's Rhetoric', p. 97.

²⁹ Faulhaber, 'The Letter-Writer's Rhetoric', p. 99.

edge amid the perils of the ocean, to forgo seeking the wealth which we have so far enjoyed in peace.]

(*HRB*, 55.18-21)

Cassibellanus does not appear humble, nor does he praise or commend Caesar. His comment about the greed of the Romans is deliberately provocative, and Cassibellanus brings himself into direct contention with Caesar by exposing the avaricious and covetousness nature of his opponent's people. Cassibellanus also notes that the Britons are an isolated community who live at the 'extra orbem' ['world's edge'], implying that his people are beyond the reach of Roman imperial expansionism. Furthermore, Cassibellanus points out that the Britons have always lived in peace, and it is evident that he views Caesar's attempt to force Britain to obey the senate as a violation of the current status quo.

The main composition of Cassibellanus' letter is fairly conventional, and it outlines the main concerns of the Britons. The tone, content, and the argument reinforce the defiant opening of the letter, and Cassibellanus informs Caesar of the shameful nature of his request:

Opprobrium itaque tibi petiuisi, Caesar, cum communis nobilitatis uena Britonibus et Romanis ab Aenea defluat et eisdem cognationis una et eadem catena praefulgeat, qua in firmam amicitiam coniungi deberent. Illa a nobis petenda esset, non seruitus, quia eam potius largiri didicimus quam seruitutis iugum deferre. Libertatem namque in tantum consueuimus habere quod prorsus ignoramus quid sit seruituti oboedire; quam si ipsi dii conarentur nobis eripere, elaboraremus utique omni nisu resistere u team retineremus. Liqueat igitur disposition tuae, Caesar, nos pro illa et pro regno nostro pugnatueros si ut comminatus es infra insulam Britanniae superuenire inceperis.

[Your request disgraces you, Caesar, since the Briton and Roman share the same blood-line from Aeneas, a shining chain of common ancestry which ought to bind us in lasting friendship. Friendship, not slavery, is what you should have asked for, since we are more accustomed to give that than bear the yoke of servitude. We are so used to freedom that we have no idea what it is to serve a master; if the gods themselves tried to take it from us, we would strive with every sinew to retain our liberty. Let it therefore be clear to you, Caesar, that, whatever your intentions, we will fight for our freedom and our

country if you attempt to carry out your threat of landing in the island of Britain.]

(*HRB*, 55.23-32)

The discussion of friendship and slavery arguably constitutes the *narratio* of the letter, while the warning against war functions as the *petitio*. Like Caesar, Cassibellanus uses the myth of Trojan descent to emphasise the shared ancestry of the Britons and the Romans; but he also uses this origin myth to demonstrate the shameful nature of Caesar's actions and to support his argument that the Britons should be independent of Rome. Cassibellanus insists that Caesar should be pursuing friendship – not war – and he also asserts that the Britons have always maintained their freedom since the foundation of their nation. The closing of the letter is clearly menacing in tone, and Cassibellanus asserts that the Britons will fight 'pro illa et pro regno nostro' ['fight for our freedom and our country'] if Caesar declares war against them. Cassibellanus' letter includes no formal valediction, or farewell (*conclusio*), and the abrupt closing sentence reinforces the hostile tone of the letter, as well as further demonstrating the defensive and defiant nature of its sender.

According to Ernst Robert Curtius, the medieval art of letter writing 'grew out of the needs of administrative procedure and was primarily intended to furnish models for letters and official documents'.³⁰ Yet the letters in Geoffrey's *Historia* demonstrate how these formulaic rhetorical practices could be appropriated and applied to literary and historical texts. Through his letter, Cassibellanus argues that the Britons should maintain their freedom, and he publicly declares that his people are willing to go to war to defend their ancestral rights. By using to the Ciceronian model of *ars dictaminis*, Cassibellanus demonstrates that he understands how to use

³⁰ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953; repr. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 75.

persuasive and argumentative rhetoric to his advantage, and he subverts conventional rhetorical strategies, such as the *salutatio* and the *benviolentiae captatio*, in order to assert his power over Caesar. The epistolary exchange functions as a prelude to armed combat between Britain and Rome, and Cassibellanus' letter ultimately derives its authority from its imitation of classical models of rhetoric.

Translation and Imitation: Challenging Political Authority

While the letters in the *Historia* are part of a wider strategy to classicise medieval historiography, they are also evidence of Geoffrey's individual rhetorical style. Following Geoffrey's epistolary model, many translations of the *Historia* produced in England and Wales during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries retained the letter exchange between Caesar and Cassibellanus; however, several texts, including the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* (1272), Pierre de Langtoft's *Chronicle* (1301), and John Hardyng's *Chronicle* (First Version, 1457; Second Version, 1464) excised the letter entirely. The fourteenth-century Scottish historian John of Fordun also invented a letter exchange between Caesar, the Scots and the Picts that was a direct imitation of Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar in the *Historia regum Britanniae*.³¹ In fact, Caesar sends two letters to the Scots, 'clementiae simul et austeritatis direxit [one kindly, and the other harshly, worded]',³² threatening them with war if they do not comply with his demands. Caesar, however, does not intimidate the Scots, and

³¹ On the origins of the Scots' letter to Caesar and its relationship to the *Historia regum Britanniae* see, John and Winifred MacQueen, 'Introduction to Books I and II', in *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Wat et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), I, pp. xiii-xxxiii (xxviii-xxix); Dauvit Broun, *Scottish History and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

³² Latin quotation from *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 2.14. English translation from *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. by W. F. Skene and trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 2.14.

they insist that they will not abandon the ‘amoena nobilique libertatis permum’ [‘the pleasant and noble road of freedom’] for the ‘servili valle teterrima’ [‘most loathsome vale of slavery’] (*CGS*, 2.15).

The letters to Caesar in these English, Scottish, and Welsh histories are similar in form and content to Cassibellanus’ original letter in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and they function to construct united communities that value their freedom and independence. This section examines how the demand for freedom in a selection of English, Scottish, and Welsh texts reflects contemporary concerns about domination, conquest, and subjugation. The first sub-section focuses on the discourse of resistance and rebellion in English and Welsh translations of the *Historia*, and it analyses how several Welsh, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English terms related to servitude and feudal bondage are used to support Cassibellanus’ argument concerning the independence of the Britons. Meanwhile, the second sub-section demonstrates how the Scots’ letter to Caesar in John of Fordun’s *Chronica gentis Scotorum* (‘The Chronicle of the Scottish People’, c. 1385), which was also included in Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon* (1440-7), constructs a counter argument to Caesar’s desire for war that asserts the liberty of the Scottish people; it also briefly addresses how this argument was further developed to address the nature of political authority in the sixteenth century.

Resistance and Rebellion: The Letter from the Britons to Caesar

In the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, Cassibellanus’ demand for liberty is strongly connected to the desire for Welsh independence. The Welsh translation in the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript, which was produced in the fourteenth century, strengthens the tone of Cassibellanus’ letter through the change of discourse, and insists on the political

autonomy of the Britons. Cassibellaunus expresses his disbelief at Caesar's request, and replies to the Roman Emperor claiming that

Yr hon adlyeint wy y hadolwyn ynny ac nyt keithiwet. Canys gnodach uu gennym rodi yn ryd noc arwein gwed geithiwet. Canys kymeint y gordyfnassam ny ryddit ac nawdam vfydhau y geithiwet. Aphetuei y dwyweu eu hunein a vedylnt dwyn an ryddit. Ny alauuriem yw dwyn y ganthunt ac a wrthnebem ydunt yw attal o bop kyfriw lauur ac y gallem. Ac wrth hynny bid hyspys yth aruaeth di vlkessar yn bot ny yn baraud y ymlad dros an ryddit an teyrnas o deuwy di y ynys brydein mal y bygythy.

[This (friendship) is what they ought to ask of us and not servitude, for we were more accustomed to give freely than to bear the yoke of servitude, since we had been so accustomed to freedom that we do not know how to submit to servitude. And if the gods themselves should think to take our freedom away from us, we would try to take it from them, and we would resist them with every sort of effort we are capable of, to keep them from it, and we would hate them. And therefore be it known to your intention, Julius Caesar, that we are ready to fight for our freedom and our realm if you come to the Isle of Britain as you threaten.]³³

Cassibellanus uses the third person plural pronoun *wy* to refer to the Romans rather than the second person plural pronoun (as in the *Historia*), which constructs them in opposition to the Britons. The key terms in this passage are 'ryddit' (or 'ryd') and 'geithiwet'. 'Ryddit' literally means 'freedom' or 'liberty'; however, 'ryddit' can also refer to national independence, and this political usage of the term would have particular resonance for the Welsh after the Edwardian Conquest in the late thirteenth century. Meanwhile, 'geithiwet' means 'bondsmen' or 'serfs', and so the Welsh term refers to a more contemporary concept of slavery than the Latin 'servitus'. The Britons insist that they will not surrender their freedom and that they will maintain their authority over their dominion.

Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* (1270) uses a hierarchy of discourses to construct the Britons in relation to the Romans. In this text, Cassibellanus' letter

³³ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. by John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. 72.

negotiates between Old English and Anglo-Norman terms concerned with freedom, community, and servitude.³⁴ The British king tells Caesar that

Bote þou þerafter vs binime . . . vr franchise al clene.
 To bringe us so fre as we beþ . . . In to so gret seruage.
 Þat we bere þe & þine . . . eueremo truage.
 Gret vilte þou askest ous . . . wanne we of on kunde.
 Beþ come 3e & we as þou ast þi sulf in munde.
 Panne a3t it be inou . . . wanne we beþ of one blode.
 Loue & frendssipe to aski us . . . 3if þou þew el vnderstode.
 Þei þou ne askedest þer vppe . . . þralhede euere mo.
 Siker þou be we ne cone no3t . . . of þralhede ne of wo.
 So muche we abbeþ euere ibe . . . in franchise 3ut her to.
 Þat þei þer vr owe god vs wolde . . . in þralhede do.
 Fondi we wolde a3en hom . . . vor oure franchise wiþstonde.
 Þei þou þer vore sire emperor . . . gret poer abbe an honde.
 Wite to soþe þat we wulleþ . . . vor our franchise fi3te.
 & vor our lond rapen þan we . . . lese it wiþ vnri3te.
 Þis was ek four hondred 3er . . . & four score & þrittene.
 After þa þe boru of rome . . . verst was bigonne ich wene.³⁵

The terms that refer to the shared origins of the Britons and the Romans – including ‘kunde’ (from ‘cynd’), ‘blode’, and ‘frendssipe’ (from ‘freondscipe’) – are primarily derived from Old English, and indicate an inclusive and popular sense of community. In contrast, the Anglo-Norman terms, such as ‘truage’ (‘tribute’) and ‘servage’ (‘servitude’), refer to Caesar’s attempt to subject the Britons to Rome, and Cassibellanus uses these terms to demonstrate the unjust nature of Roman – and by extent feudal – authority. There are also several interchangeable terms in the passage: ‘fre’ and ‘franchise’ both refer to someone not in slavery, while ‘thralhede’ and ‘servage’ refer to serfs or bondsmen. ‘Servage’, however, refers to feudal power structures, and the allegiance that a vassal owes to his lord. Meanwhile, ‘thralhede’ – which is repeated three times in this passage – is more directly related to slavery and

³⁴ On the interrelationship between English and Anglo-Norman, as well as Latin, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

³⁵ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, 2 vols (London: Printed for G. M. Stationery by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), I, ll. 1078-94.

oppression; indeed, ‘thraldom’ was frequently used to describe the captivity of the Israelites, and Lazamon also used it to describe the subjection of the Trojans (later the Britons) to the Greeks.³⁶ ‘Thralhede’ implies that the Britons would have to submit entirely to the Romans and subsequently demonstrates the effects that slavery would have on the British people.

Castleford’s Chronicle (1327) similarly navigates between different discourses to argue for British independence from Rome. This chronicle uses English and Anglo-Norman terms in context with more Latinate terms, and the text reports that Cassibellaunus rejected Caesar by declaring that

Ne yit alle þat yow suffices noght,
 Bot our franchis is be doune broght,
 And we made yow subieccion,
 To qwilk we wer neuer yitte won –
 Askes seruage perpetuele,
 Wiȝ endeles thraldom for to dele.
 [...]
 And na seruge, ne ek thraldom,
 Werse þan we ere for to becum,
 For better vs think, and lesse charge,
 In our fre willes gif giftis large,
 Þan þe iok of seruage to bere,
 Oþer thralles bicum þan we now were.
 We hafe euer bene of so fre state,
 Qat thraldom is naping we wate;
 We haf ben fre of so lang thraw,
 Qwat thraldom is naping we know.
 To our franchis naping it falls,
 Obeisse vs for to be thralles!³⁷

The Latinate terms, such as ‘subieccion’ (from ‘subiectio’, meaning subjugation or submission) and ‘obeisse’ (from ‘oboedio’, meaning to obey or to serve),³⁸ are more

³⁶ On the Britons and the Israelites in Lazamon’s *Brut*, see Carole Weinberg, ‘Recasting the role? Brutus in Lazamon’s Brut’, in *In Strange Countries: Middle English Literature and its Afterlife: Essays in Memory of J. J. Anderson*, ed. by David Matthews (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 46-56.

³⁷ *Castleford’s Chronicle, or, The Boke of Brut*, ed. by Caroline D. Eckhardt, 2 vols (Oxford and New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1996), I, ll. 6966-99.

abstract than the English and Anglo-Norman terms ‘thraldrom’, ‘fre’, ‘seruage’, and ‘franchis’, which refer to specific types of service and freedom that would resonate with a fourteenth-century audience. This version of Cassibellanus’ letter also focuses on the length of time that the Britons have enjoyed their freedom: ‘we hafe euer bene of so fre state’ and ‘we haf ben fre of so lang thraw’. The text emphasises the perennial freedom of the Britons to reinforce the loss that they would suffer by becoming Caesar’ subjects. Furthermore, Cassibellanus recognises that ‘seruage perpetuele’ and ‘endeles thraldom’ would be inescapable, and so the freedom of the Britons is to be upheld at all costs.

In Robert Mannyng’s *Chronicle* (1338), Cassibellanus exclusively uses feudal discourse to defy Caesar’s demand that Britain should be subject to Rome. The text demonstrates the influence of Anglo-Norman on Middle English, especially as it is a translation of Wace’s *Roman de Brut*. In Cassibellanus’ letter, Mannyng contrasts two significant Anglo-Norman terms, ‘seruage’ and ‘franchise’:

Euer ȝit haf we lyued fre
 In þis lond, bot now for þe,
 & we suld life also freli
 [...]
 þou suld not sette vs in seruage
 þat ere of þin awen linage.
 We sale be þeris to ȝow of Rome,
 In alle freedom haf euenly dome.
 Als þou ert ientille & of grete pris
 þat suilk vilany in þe now lis,
 in seruage to putte vs to;
 & we wote nouht how we sale do,
 ne neuer lerid ne nouht wille lere,
 if þat we may, in no manere.
 Of all our kynde, I wist no man
 þat couth of seruise ne yit kan;
 Ne we ne knawe on what wyse

³⁸ *Obeisse* is also related to the Old French *obeir*, but this verb is not found in the Anglo-Norman versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth. *Oboedire* appears in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, which arguably reinforces the view that *Castelford’s Chronicle* is derived from a Latin source.

We suld serue seruage seruyse.
 Fre we ere, so sale we be,
 If hod wille, Cesar, for þe.
 Witte þou wele be our ansuere,
 Tille we may ourseluen were
 & fend our lond & our franchise,
 of vs getis þou neuer seruise
 ne treuage, I gyf be a gyue.
 Þat is to say, to while we lyue,
 We wille be fre & hold honoures
 Als did befor our ancessoures.³⁹

In this extract, ‘fre’ and its variations (‘frelī’ or ‘freedom’) appear five times and ‘seruage’ seven times – ‘seruage’ is even repeated three times in a single sentence: ‘Ne we ne knawe on what wyse / We suld serue seruage seruyse’. ‘Seruage’ or serfdom is clearly placed in opposition to franchise, which indicates free status as opposed to serfdom or *villeinage*. Mannyng also draws on another feudal term ‘treuage’, meaning tribute or tax. The feudal terminology in the passage constructs Caesar as a tyrannical feudal lord who abuses his authority, and who attempts to enslave people who are free by right. The Britons demonstrate that they can speak and argue for their cause using feudal discourse, which functions as the main discourse of power in the text, and they publicly refuse to become Caesar’s willing subjects.

Freedom and Independence: The Letters from the Scots and the Picts to Caesar

The Scots’ letter to Caesar in John of Fordun’s *Chronica gentis Scotorum* is more rhetorically advanced than Cassibellanus’ letter, and it uses the classical technique of *refutatio*. James J. Murphy explains that *refutatio* ‘is [...the] part of an oration in

³⁹ Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *The Chronicle*, ed. by Idelle Sullens (Binghamton University, 1996), ll. 4245-78. All further references to Mannyng’s *Chronicle* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the line numbers only (unless the reference is to the additions in the second manuscript).

which arguments are used to impair, disprove, or weak the confirmation of proof in our opponent's speech'.⁴⁰ He adds that

[e]very argument is refuted in one of four ways: either one or more of its assumptions is not granted, or if the assumptions are granted it is denied that a conclusion follows from them, or the form of argument is shown to be fallacious, or a strong argument is met by one equally strong or stronger.⁴¹

This form of rhetoric is dialectical in style as the speaker is required to directly engage with an opposing argument in order to assert their alternative point of view; indeed, as Cicero states in *De Oratore*: 'you cannot refute the opponent's points without proving your own, nor prove your own without refuting your opponent's'.⁴² In the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, then, the Scots and the Picts refute Caesar's reasons for war and conquest, and they subsequently prove that friendship is better than conflict as it preserves liberty and upholds national tradition.

The Scots' letter to Caesar in John of Fordun's *Chronica* demonstrates the technique of *refutatio* in two ways. First, the Scots refuse to grant Caesar his claim over Scotland as they claim that his desire for war originates from his 'praesumptionis audacia' ['rash arrogance'] and has not been legitimised by the 'Deos in adiutorium' ['ordinance of the gods'] (CGS, 2.15). The Scots also point out that Caesar's desire for war is entirely unprovoked, and they remark that 'nusquam offendimus, sed neque novimus teste mundo' ['we have never offended [you] – nay, we call the world to witness that we do not even know you'] (CGS, 2.15). This counter argument shows that Caesar's desire for war is an abuse of military power, which subsequently undermines the Roman consul's legal authority. Furthermore, the Scots' proclamation of their innocence reinforces the unjust nature of Caesar's

⁴⁰ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 14.

⁴¹ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 14.

⁴² Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, ed. and trans. by James M. May and Jacob Wisse (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.331-2.

intention to conquer Scotland. To further support their claims to freedom, the Scots claim that subjection to Rome would undermine the ‘ordine rationis’ [‘order of reason’] by turning kings into ‘famulemur civibus’ [‘the servants of citizens’] (*CGS*, 2.15). The Scots are a proud race, and they are kings of their own nation: submitting to imperial Rome would present a serious challenge to their nobility and their autonomy.

John of Fordun’s Scots also refute Caesar’s argument by proposing that unity between Scotland and Rome would be preferable to war. The Scots defend their forceful letter to Caesar, explaining that:

Non enim ad bella quasi pompaticè te provocantes hæc rescribimus; sed omni voto pacem humiliter, et, priscorum omnino salvis partum traditionibus, tuam intentius amicitiam obsecrantes. Nan aviæ traditionis libertatem, quæ diligenda nobis super aurum est et topazion, quæque nostro iudicio cunctas longe mundanas et incomparabiliter opes transcendit, et infinite jocalia, quam ad initio magnanimi patres incontaminatam nobis filiis, et usque ad mortem, servabant egregie; similiter et nos profecto, non tamquam nostris demeritis ad eorum degenerate nature, sed quasi suarum imitators legume strenui, nostris post obitum filiis inviolatam servabimus, et absque servili quoquam scrupulo transferemus. Valeas.

[Now, we do not write back this as if, like braggarts, to defy thee to battle; but humbly, with all earnestness, entreating peace and, even more fervently, thy friendship, provided only the traditions our forefathers are saved harmless. For, the freedom of our ancestors have handed down to us, which we must cherish above gold and topaze, and which, in our judgment, far beyond all comparison transcends all worldly wealth, and is infinitely more precious than precious stones; which our high-souled forebears have from the beginning nobly, even to the death, preserved untainted for us, their sons – this freedom, we say, shall we likewise, as not having, in our unworthiness, degenerated from their nature, but as strenuously imitating their standard, preserve inviolate for our sons after our death, and transmit to them unspotted by a single jot of slavishness. Farewell.]

(*CGS*, 2.15)

This counter argument demonstrates how friendship is mutually beneficial to the Romans and the Scots: an alliance between the two peoples prevents the threat of war, and it also allows the Scots to maintain their ancient traditions. The

independence of the Scottish people is strongly linked to their identity: the Scots claim their freedom from their ancestors and they are committed to preserving their liberty for future generations. The Scots value freedom above gold and topaz and they propose that subjection to Rome would compromise their integrity. Unlike the Britons, the Scots have no shared heritage with the Romans since they claimed descent from the Egyptians – rather than the Trojans – and so they are fully justified in asserting their freedom.

The appeals to freedom and liberty in the letter to Caesar in John's *Chronica* can be compared with the Declaration of Arbroath (1320). Written as a letter to Pope John XXII, the Declaration of Arbroath is the strongest expression of national freedom produced in fourteenth-century Scotland.⁴³ The Declaration, which was sealed by fifty-one magnates and nobles, argued that Scotland was an independent sovereign state, and had the right to use military action against unjust attacks. In particular, the Declaration emphasises the unjust nature of Edward I's unprovoked war against Scotland, and claims that the English king 'tunc aussuetum sub amici et confederate specie imicabliter infestauit' ['came in a guise of a friend and ally to harass them [the Scottish people] as an enemy'].⁴⁴ The most famous sentence in the Declaration asserts the importance of political freedom:

Non enim propter gloriam, diuicias aut honores pugnamus set propter libertatem solummodo quam Nemo bonus nisi simul cum vita amittit.

⁴³ On the idea of national freedom in political documents and historiography produced in medieval Scotland, see G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Idea of Freedom in Late Medieval Scotland', *Innes Review*, 30 (1979), 16-34; Edward J. Cowan, 'Identity, Freedom, and the Declaration of Arbroath', in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-Making of Scotland Through the Ages*, ed. by Dauvit Boron, Richard J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), pp. 38-68; and Bruce Webster, 'John of Fordun and the Independent Identity of the Scots', in *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Alfred P. Smyth (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 85-102.

⁴⁴ 'Transcription and Translation of the Declaration of Arbroath, 6 April 1320: National Records of Scotland, SP 13/7', ed. by Sir James Ferguson and trans. by Alan Borthwick, National Records of Scotland (2005). Available online at <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/research/declaration-of-arbroath/declaration-of-arbroath-transcription-and-translation.pdf> [accessed 10/01/2017].

[It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.]

The rhetoric and argument of the Declaration resonates with the letter to Caesar from the Scots and the Picts in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, which also claims that freedom exceeds the value of material possessions. Both documents locate the origins of Scottish independence in the distant past, and demonstrate the continued importance of freedom in Scotland during the fourteenth century.

The letter of the Scots to the Romans was also included in sixteenth-century Scottish histories, such as John Major's *Historia majoris Britanniae* ('History of Greater Britain', 1521) and Hector Boece's *Historia gentis Scotorum* ('History of the Scottish People', 1527). Major briefly mentions the letter, reporting that the Scots rejected Caesar's demands, declaring that 'sin minus vita pro patriæ libertate amitteret [they would spend their life for their country's freedom]'.⁴⁵ Hector Boece, however, substantially develops the narrative context concerning the potential Roman invasion of Scotland, and he expands the argument of Caesar's first letter to the Scots.⁴⁶ In Book Three of Boece's *Historia gentis Scotorum*, the Scots and the Picts help Cassibellanus and the Britons to repel Caesar's initial invasion of Britain, and this victory results in a 'firma pace perpetuo' ['strong and enduring peace']⁴⁷ between the three insular peoples; however, when Caesar invades the country again,

⁴⁵ Latin quotation from *Historia Maioris Britanniae, tam Angliae quam Scotiae, per Ioannem Maiorem, nomine quidem Scotum, professione autem theologum, e vetero monumentis concinnata* (Paris 1521), 1.12. English translation from John Major, *A History of Greater Britain, as well England as Scotland; translated from the original Latin and edited with notes by Archibald Constable, to which is prefixed a life of the author by Aeneas J. G. Mackay* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the Scottish Historical Society, 1892), 1.12.

⁴⁶ Boece develops the letter exchange by recounting the contents of four letters, including two from the Romans and two from the Scots; in Fordun's *Chronica*, there are only three letters.

⁴⁷ Hector Boethius, *Scotorum Historia* (1575 version), The University of California, Irvine (2010), 3.10. Available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/boece/> [accessed 16/12/2014]. All further references to Hector Boece's *Historia Gentis Scotorum* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text; references are to the book and chapter numbers only.

the Britons reject aid from their Scottish allies, and are subsequently conquered by the Romans. With the Britons under his control, Caesar attempts to subdue the Scots and the Picts, and his envoys inform them that they will increase their status and reputation if they become ‘amicos et socios populi Romani’ [‘the friends and associates of the Roman people’] (*HGS*, 3.10). The letter implies that Scots and Picts will maintain their freedom and integrity, and have a powerful ally who will defend their national interests.

Despite the amicable tone of Caesar’s letter, the Scots and Picts strongly oppose the idea of entering into an alliance with Rome. Boece writes that

Haec ubi Ederus rex Scotorumque primores recitata audiverant, fraudem blanditiis subesse vehementer suspicati liberos, coniuges, patriam, libertatem omnia qua possent vi ad extremum se defensuros responderunt, omnemque mortem servitute praeferendam: [...] Quod si bello se petere instituissent Romani nulla irritati iniuria, ut sibi regnum, iura, libertatemque adimerent, se contestatis numinibus, penesque et regum et iniuriarum ulciscendam potestas, ad unum decertando pro patria pulcherrimam mortem oppeturos.

[When King Ederus and the Scottish elders had heard these things being recited, they had a great suspicion that deceit was concealed beneath these fine-sounding words, and replied that they would fight with all their power to the very end in defense of their children, wives, nation, and liberty, and that any manner of death was preferable to slavery. [...] And if the Romans chose to wage an unprovoked war against them to deprive them of their reign, their rights and liberty, they swore by the gods, who had the power to avenge kings and the wrongs they suffer, that they would perish to the last man, seeking a very fair death in fighting for their nation.]

(*HGS*, 3.11)

This defiant tone of this letter in Boece’s *Historia gentis Scotorum* contrasts the more diplomatic letter from the Scots to Caesar in John of Fordun’s *Chronica*, which argues for the importance of friendship and amity between Scotland and Rome.

Nevertheless, the letters in both of these texts demonstrate the value that the Scots ascribe to freedom and independence, especially as ‘mortem servitute praeferendam’ [‘death is preferable to slavery’]. The fact that the Romans take great delight in the

spoils of war also reinforces the Scots' main argument that they conduct *impio bello*, or 'impious war', against their opponents. Indeed, the Scots claim that the Romans are merely motivated by the opportunity to deprive them of 'regnum, iura, libertatemque' ['their reign, their rights and liberty'], and such an abuse of military power would not be legitimate under medieval just war theory. The Scots' reply, then, is a legal refutation that disproves the argument of the letter from Rome and also undermines Caesar's authority.

The second letter exchange between Caesar and the Scots and the Picts explicitly focuses on freedom, subjugation, and the nature of authority. Caesar urges King Ederus and the Scots to yield 'ne libertatem, regnum, vitam cum Romanis dominis orbis temerare decertando in exitiale trahatis discrimen' ['lest you fatally endanger your liberty, your realm, and your lives, by rashly resisting the world's Roman masters'] (*HGS*, 3.11). Nevertheless, the Scots insist that they are 'nec etiam territum minis impelli ad sese amissa sine certamine libertate ultro dedendum servituti' ['not frightened by his [Caesar's] threats into losing their liberty without a struggle and voluntarily surrendering to servitude'] (*HGS*, 3.13). The Scots relate their desire for liberty to their respect for just authority, and they claim that they are 'solitum regibus parere respublicas iure moderantibus, haud regnorum praedonibus' ['accustomed to obey kings who governed their realms by law, not men who stole kingdoms'] (*HGS*, 3.13). This comment reinforces the argument of the first letter that the Scots sent to Caesar, which claimed that the Romans are 'cupidissimi praedones' ['very greedy robbers'] who have 'liberos plerosque populos impio bello subactos turpi presserint servitute, fascibus securibusque subdiderint' ['oppressed many peoples conquered by shameful war with servitude and subjected them to their fasces'] (*HGS*, 3.13). Boece uses 'praedones' and 'praedonibus' – meaning

‘robbers’, ‘plunderers’, or ‘pirates’ – to present the Romans as warmongers who loot and ransack the countries they conquer and who override the authority of law.⁴⁸ The Scots perceive Caesar as a corrupt authority, who is dishonest and does not obey the law. The Scots insist that law and order prevails in their country, and that it is not in their interest to serve a leader who has no divine authority.

The letters to Caesar from the Britons, the Scots, and the Picts advocate freedom and independence, and demonstrate the types of political discourses that were used in late medieval Britain. In English and Welsh translations of the *Historia*, the letter to Caesar from the Britons emphasises the importance of freedom using feudal discourses. Meanwhile, the letter to Caesar from the Scots and the Picts in the Scottish historical tradition articulates freedom as national independence and political sovereignty. John of Fordun and Hector Boece adopt the letter to Caesar in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and use this fictional document to suit their own national agendas. For both of these historians, the rhetorical argument of the Scots to Caesar articulates contemporary concerns about the political sovereignty of Scotland.

Arthur and Lucius: Epistolary and Rhetorical Warfare

Lucius’ letter to Arthur in the *Historia regum Britanniae* is similar in style, tone, and content to Caesar’s letter to Cassibellanus. In his letter, Lucius Hiberius, ‘rei publicae procurator’ [‘procurator of the republic’] (*HRB*, 158.415), reprimands Arthur for his despotism, his pride, and his refusal to pay tribute to the Roman senate. He argues that Britain owes tribute to Rome because ‘tibi senatus reddere

⁴⁸ Frederick H. Russell notes that classical historians – most notably Livy and Cicero – defined a war without a cause as *latrocinium* or piracy. According to Cicero, ‘the pirate was not a *legitimus hostis* but a common enemy of mankind lacking in all honour’; see Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975; repr. 1979), p 8.

praeceperat quia Gaius Iulius ceterique Romanae dignitates uiri illud multis temporibus haberunt' ['it had been paid for many years to Julius Caesar and other representatives of Roman power'] (*HRB*, 158.420-2), and orders Arthur to appear in Rome to be tried for his actions and to receive a sentence approved by the senate. The letter exchange between Arthur and Lucius in the *Historia* negotiates between the spoken and the written word. Lucius' letter to Arthur is read aloud at court by an envoy, and it generates a heated discussion between the British nobles who agree to support Arthur if he decides to go to war against Rome.⁴⁹ The details are historically accurate: in the twelfth century, letters were often regarded as 'symbolic objects', necessary formal documents that were frequently read aloud, and M. T. Clanchy notes that '[b]earers of letters were often given instructions which were to be conveyed *viva voce*, either because that was convenient and traditional or because information was too secret to be written down'.⁵⁰

The hostile tone of Lucius' letter and its oral delivery in a public space unites the British community against the Roman people. Arthur addresses the British nobles and claims that Lucius 'cum irrationabili cause exigat tributum quod ex Britanniae habere desiderat' ['has no justification for demanding the tribute he wishes to have from Britain'] (*HRB*, 159.455-6). His argument is based on two premises: first, Arthur insists that tribute Rome demands is unjust as Caesar's subjection of Britain was attained by 'armata manu' ['force of arms'], and he maintains that '[n]ichil enim quod ui et uiolentia acquiritur iuste ab ullo possidetur qui uiolentiam intulit' ['Whatever is obtained by force of arms is never the rightful possession of the

⁴⁹ On the origins of the Roman war in the *Historia*, see Mary L. H. Thompson, 'A Possible Source for Geoffrey's Roman War?', in *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence*, ed. by Mary Flowers Braswell and John Bugge (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 43-53.

⁵⁰ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 263.

aggressor’] (*HRB*, 159.461-2). Second, Arthur asserts that Rome owes tribute to Britain since his ‘antecessores’ [‘predecessors’] (*HRB*, 159.468), Brennius and Belinus, conquered Rome. He also points out that his ‘cognatione propinquus’ [‘close relatives’] (*HRB*, 159.473), Constantine and Maximianus, both ‘thronum Romani imperii adeptus est’ [‘sat upon the throne as emperor of Rome’] (*HRB*, 159.474). As Siân Echard points out, ‘Arthur’s Roman exploits in the *Historia* are simply the strongest expression of what is in fact a quite systematic shifting of British history away from any kind of subjugation, military or cultural, to Rome’.⁵¹ Arthur’s speech undermines Lucius’ authority, but he does not recognise the shared heritage of the Britons and the Romans. Instead, Arthur proposes that the Britons are an independent community and one that, he argues, has a right to rule Rome through his descent from two legendary British kings.

In the *Historia*, Geoffrey emphasises the reception and discussion of Lucius’ letter by the Arthurian court, and he does not formalise Arthur’s response to the Roman senate. The text merely reports that

Imperatoribus autem per eorundem legatos mandavit se nequaquam eis redditurum tributum ne cob id ut sententiae eorum adquiesceret Romam aditurum, immo ut ex illis appeteret quod ab illo iudicio suo appetere decreuerant.

[To the emperors he [Arthur] sent a message by their own envoys to the effect that he would never pay them tribute, nor was he coming to Rome to face their sentence, but rather to demand from them what their court had decided to demand from him.]

(*HRB*, 162.534-7)

⁵¹ Siân Echard, “Whyche thyng semeth not to agree with other histories...”: Rome in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his Early Modern Readers’, *Arthurian Literature*, 26 (2009), 109-29 (p. 116).

Nevertheless, some chronicles, as well as chronicle-romances, produced in England did specify that Arthur composed a letter and sent it directly to Lucius.⁵² In Lazamon's *Brut*, Arthur composes a writ to send to Lucius, while in Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle*, the content of Arthur's speech to his nobles is transformed into a letter. Arthur also dictates a response to Lucius in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* (1380-1400), which subsequently influenced Malory's account of the Roman war in his *Morte Darthur* (1469-70). The Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* and John Hardyng's *Chronicle* each contain a version of Arthur's letter to Lucius that demonstrate the influence of *ars dictaminis*. This section examines how Arthur's speech to the Britons in the *Historia* is transformed into a written document in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* and John Hardyng's *Chronicle*: it analyses how the formulaic structure and argumentative content of Arthur's letter is used to publicly undermine Lucius' claim to Britain, and also addresses how this public document constructs the Britons and the Romans as rival communities that operate according to their own rule of law.

Titles and Pronouns in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*

In the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, the emperor Lucius represents the community of the Roman people. Following Wace's *Roman de Brut*, this text conflates Lucius

⁵² In his letter to Henry II in Etienne of Rouen's *Draco Normannicus* (1167-9), Arthur describes the letter exchange between Britain and Rome in the *Historia*: 'Ut sibi restituam terras hortatur, ab Anglis / Tunc sub iure meo, dura tribute petit. / Que duo contemnens, uerbis breuibis duo mando, / Romam nec timeo, debeo nilqui sibi. / Respondo tali fuit arduus ille senatus, / Imperiumque suum deperiisse gemit' ['So Rome demanded that I restore the lands to her; from the English under my write she sought harsh reparation. / Scorning these demands, I sent two brief replies; / "I do not fear Rome, and I myself owe her nothing." / I responded in this way so that the Senate would be incensed; / and the Empire itself agonize that it might be lost']; see *Epistola Arturi regis ad Henricum regem Anglorum*, in *Latin Arthurian Literature*, ed. and trans. by Mildred Leake Day (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 236-58 (ll. 84-9). On King Arthur in the *Draco Normannicus*, see J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Geoffrey and King Arthur in *Normannicus Draco*', *Modern Philology*, 31.1 (August, 1933), 1-18; J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Geoffrey and King Arthur in *Normannicus Draco*', *Modern Philology*, 31.2 (1933), 113-25; Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 85-93.

Hiberius, procurator of the republic, with the Roman Emperor, Leo. In this text, then, the letters between Lucius and Arthur is an exchange between emperor and subject:

Lucies qe ad tute la seignurie de Rome, emperor de grant poeste, maunder au Roi Arthur son enemy ceo qil ad deseruy: mout nous esmerueilloms qe tu es vnefoiz si hardi de ouerir loil de la teste de prendre kontek e estrif encounter nous de Rome qe deuoms tut le mound iuger. Mes tu ne as vnquore proue ne assaie la force des Romains, mes tu les esproueras en breue terme.

[Lucies who holds all the authority of Rome, emperor of great might, sends notice to his enemy King Arthur of what he has incurred: we marvel greatly that you have once been so bold as to contemplate entering into strife and conflict against us of Rome, who should judge all the world. But although you have not yet tested or tried the strength of the Romans, you will try them soon.]⁵³

The opening of the letter establishes Lucius' status: he holds 'tute la seignurie de Rome' ['all authority of Rome'] and describes himself as 'emperor de grant poeste' ['emperor of great might']. The Roman Emperor refers to Arthur as his 'enemy', and he addresses Arthur using the informal singular pronoun *tu* (rather than *vous*) to demonstrate his superior status. Lucius also reinforces his authority by using the first person plural pronoun *nous* to convey his message to Arthur, and he supports his demand for Britain to pay Rome tribute by stating that 'Iulius Cesar nostre ancestre conquest Bretaine e emprist truage, e nostre gente le ont pus eu longement' ['Julius Caesar our ancestor conquered Britain, and our people have had it long since'] (*ANPB*, ll. 1818-19). Lucius speaks directly to Arthur in personal capacity, but he also acts as leader of his nation and speaks on behalf of the Roman people. Indeed, Arthur's unlawful conquest of France is conceived as a crime against the Roman people, and he is summoned to appear in front of the 'communalte de Romains' ['commonwealth of the Romans'] (*ANPB*, ll. 1822), rather than just the senate.

⁵³ *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), ll. 1812-17.

Arthur's response to Lucius is formalised for the first time in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, and the letter is designed to counter Lucius' claims that Arthur unlawfully holds France. The text states that

Arthur, roi de Bretagne e de Fraunce, respount al emperour e a les Romains par cestre letter: sachez par entre vous qe ieo sur oi de Bretagne, e Fraunce tink e tendrai, e la defenderai des Romains. E a Rome prochainement serrai, ne mie pur trewes rendre, mes pur trewes prendre. Qar Constantin fiz Seint Eleine estoit emperour de Rome e de tut lonur qili apent, Mazimian roi de Bretagne conquist tute Fraunce e Alemaine, Mountioie passa e conquist Lumbardie, e ces deux furest mes auncestres. E ceo qil tindrent e auoient, ieo tendrai e auera si deu plest.

[Arthur, king of Britain and of France, replies to the emperor and to the Romans with this letter: know among you that I am king of Britain, and I hold and will hold France, and I will defend it against the Romans. And I will soon be in Rome, not to make tribute, but to take tribute. For Constantine son of Saint Eleine was emperor of Rome and of the whole domain appertaining to it, Maximian king of Britain conquered all France and Germany, he crossed Mont Joux and conquered Lombardy, and these two were my ancestors. And what they had and held, I will have and hold if God wills.]

(*ANPB*, ll. 1838-45)

This letter is based on the oral message that Arthur relays to the Roman envoys in the *Roman de Brut*, and it also includes elements of Arthur's speech to the British nobles present at his court.⁵⁴ Arthur interprets Lucius' letter as an insult against his authority, and his reply asserts his ancestral right to hold Rome and France. He fashions himself as 'roi de Bretagne e de Fraunce' ['king of Britain and of France'] in order to assert his own status and to present himself as a rival to Lucius. Unlike Lucius, however, Arthur speaks using the first person, and the future constructions of the verbs 'tenir' (meaning 'to hold') and 'defender' (meaning 'to defend') indicates

⁵⁴ Compare Arthur's letter to Lucius in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* with Arthur's message to the envoys in Wace's *Roman de Brut*: 'A Rome, dist il, poëz dire / Que jo sui de Bretagne sire. France tienc e France tendrai / E des Romains la defendrai. E ço sachiez veraïement / Qu'a Rome irrai prochainement, / Nun mie pur treü porter / Mai spur treü d'els demander' ['In Rome, he said, you can say I am lord of Britain. I hold France and will hold it and defend it against the Romans. And know indeed that I shall shortly to Rome, not to bring tribute but to demand it']; see Wace's *Roman de Brut: A History of the British: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Judith Weiss, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), ll. 11051-8.

the actions that he will take against the Roman people. Arthur defends Britain's overseas territories, and his ancestral claims to Rome, France, Germany, and Lombardy constructs his empire as a rival to the Roman imperium.

Law and Order in John Hardyng's *Chronicle*

In the First Version of John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, the letter exchange between Arthur and Lucius reflects on the nature of just authority. Lucius' letter to Arthur begins with a conventional greeting:

Lucys of Rome the emperoure
And procuratoure for all the hole Senate
Of the publyke profyte chief governoure
By hole Senate made and denominate
To Arthure kynge of Bretayne inordinate
Sندیث gretyne as thou haste deserved[.]⁵⁵

In the opening of his letter, Lucius identifies himself through a variety of different titles: he is the 'emperoure' of Rome, as well as 'procuratoure' and 'chief governoure' of the Senate. As emperor, Lucius represents the 'estate imperialle' (Hardyng, First Version, 3.3245) of Rome. Meanwhile, as procurator and governor of the Senate, Lucius is also recognised as the head of the Roman Republic and its citizens. Lucius relies on the Senate for his legal authority, and his letter is '[w]ritten at Rome in the Consistory / By hole advyse of alle the wyse Senate' (Hardyng, First Version, 3.3262-3). The consultation between the emperor and the senate demonstrates Lucius' respect for democracy, and Arthur's refusal to pay tribute to Rome compromises the integrity of the Republic.

⁵⁵ John Hardyng, *Chronicle: Edited from British Library MS Landsdowne 204: Volume 1*, ed. by James Simpson and Sarah Peverley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2015), 3.3227-32. All further references to the First Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the book number and line numbers only.

In contrast, Arthur's response to Lucius focuses on the unlawful nature of Roman power. In his reply to Lucius, Arthur completely undermines Roman authority:

Arthure the kynge of alle the Grete Bretayne
 And emperoure of Rome by alkyns right
 With wronge deforced by Lucyus Romyne
 Pretendyne hym for emperoure of might
 To the same Syr Lucys of his unright
 Usurpoure of the se imperialle
 Sendyth gretynge as enmy moste mortalle.

To the Senate of Rome it is wele knowe
 How that Cesare Julyus with maystry
 Had trewage here Bretayne than was so lowe
 By treson of Androges and trechery
 That brought hym in by his grete policy
 Withouten right or tytyle of descente
 Alle fulle agayne the barons hole consente.
 (Hardyng, First Version, 3.3276-89)

Arthur's response sets him in direct opposition to Lucius: he addresses the emperor as his 'enmy moste mortalle', and he also calls him '[u]surpoure of the se imperialle'. Lucius is considered to be a usurper since his predecessor, Julius Caesar, did not have the legitimate authority to claim Britain. Hardyng explains that Caesar conquered Britain through the treachery of Duke Androgeus, who in the *Historia regum Britanniae* betrayed his countrymen and helped Caesar defeat Cassibellanus (cf. *HRB*, 61.164-92). Like Mordred, Androgeus is a traitor figure who is vilified by Hardyng, and he emphasises the problems of internal strife and political dissent. Androgeus' treachery is further commented upon in the Second Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle*: the text states that Caesar 'vniustly' subjected Britain to Rome through 'iniurye' – meaning injustice or dishonor – and that Duke Androgeus helped

Caesar maintain his ‘false policye’.⁵⁶ The focus on treason and treachery also applies to the turbulent political climate in fifteenth-century England, and Arthur’s letter reveals how conflict and discord can overpower legitimate authority.

Arthur’s reply to Lucius also legitimises Britain’s claim to Rome. In a Latin subtitle, the text states that ‘Quicquid iniuste ab aliquot rapitur, numquam ab alio iuste possidetur ut in lege civili et imperatoria patet’ [‘Whatever is snatched from someone will never be justly possessed by someone else, as (it is stated) in civil and imperial law’] (Hardyng, First Version, p. 210). Arthur uses a similar argument in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, but the text does not relate this claim to ‘civil and imperial law’. The emphasis on law and authority in the First Version of Hardyng’s *Chronicle* reinforces the illegitimate nature of Lucius’ claim to Britain. Arthur’s letter also foregrounds the right of inheritance, and Arthur argues he is emperor of Rome through his descent from Constantine and Maximianus who both held Rome. This argument is summarised in a second Latin subtitle, which compares dynastic succession to democratic election: ‘Cui descendebat imperium tam per mortem patris quam per electionem Senatoriam quam per electionem totius comitatus Romani’ [‘To whom rule descended as much by death of his father as by the senatorial election (and) by the election of the whole Roman people’] (Hardyng, First Version, p. 211). This comparison supports Arthur’s right to Rome and indicates that his authority expands beyond Britain to the Roman senate. In contrast to Lucius, who illegitimately holds the title of emperor, Arthur’s rule is legitimised by royal descent and he seeks to regain Rome through the power of the senate.

⁵⁶ *The Chronicle of J. H., containing an account of public transactions from the earliest period of English History to the beginning of the reign of King Edward the fourth. With the continuation by R. Grafton, to King Henry the Eighth*, ed. by Henry Ellis (London: British Library Historical Reprints, 2011), p. 140. All further references to the Second Version of Hardyng’s *Chronicle* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

The closing of Arthur's letter emphasises his imperial ambition. In Hardyng's *Chronicle*, letters often reveal the political objectives of medieval monarchs, and Sarah Peverley suggests that 'the decision to link Arthur's response to Lucius solely in letter form may originate from a desire to link Arthur's epistolary exchange with other instances in the *Chronicle* where kings [including Edward I, Edward III, Henry VI] have asserted their territorial claims through letters'.⁵⁷ Arthur claims Rome through 'law preordynate' (Hardyng, First Version, 3.332), and he declares that he will hold the 'Empyre the se imperialle / By juste tytyle of law judicialle' (Hardyng, First Version, l. 3324). Furthermore, Arthur informs Lucius that

Wharfore we wylle to Rome come and aproche
By that same day whiche tha thou haste prefyxe
The tribue whiche thou wolde to thee acroche
Nought forto pay, as thou haste sette and fyxe.
Bot of the thare with Senate intermyxe
To take tribute and holde the soveryn se
In alle that longe to the emperialté.
(Hardyng, First Version, 3.3325-31)

Arthur's intention to reclaim Rome and to overthrow the usurper Lucius represents a return to law and order. In the Second Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle*, Arthur fulfills his ambition to become 'emperour moste principall' (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 145). Arthur defeats Lucius in battle, and the Roman people crown him with 'good and whole assent' (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 144) at the Capitol. Arthur's coronation as emperor unites the Britons and the Romans, and he restores the British imperium that existed under his ancestors.

The letters between Lucius and Arthur clearly follow the formal conventions of letter writing. Both leaders use their titles to indicate their status, reinforce their authority, and construct rival communities. Meanwhile, the content of their letters

⁵⁷ John Hardyng, *Chronicle*, p. 281 (note to l. 3272).

articulates their legal arguments and support their territorial ambitions. In the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* and John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, the transformation of Arthur's speech into a letter directly undermines Lucius' claim to Britain and publicly affirms Arthur's right to Rome. Arthur and Lucius bolster their arguments using political and legal terminology, and their letters are indicative of the rhetorical style of medieval historiography.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the types of rhetoric and styles of discourse that are used in the letters between Britain and Rome in the Galfridian tradition. Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar in the *Historia* is evidently based on classical rhetoric that was adopted by medieval epistolary theorists in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This letter uses the shared origins of the Britons and the Romans to argue for peace between the two nations, but it also functions as a form of epistolary warfare and a public demonstration of rhetorical prowess. The translations and adaptations of Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar in English, Scottish, and Welsh chronicles emphasise the importance of freedom and independence in different cultural, political, and national contexts from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Meanwhile, the letters between Lucius and Arthur assert the authority of the written word over oral communication, and establish the importance of law and order.

Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar, and Lucius' letter to Arthur, are examples of fictional documents that use classical models of rhetoric to establish their authority. As John O. Ward points out, speeches and letters are 'a tried device of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance historiography', and they usually function as 'ideological

set-pieces' and 'architectural fictions' within a larger rhetorical framework.⁵⁸ The letters in the *Historia* are the product of the revival in classical rhetoric in the twelfth century: Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar functions as an act of *translatio studii* (transfer of knowledge) that precedes the *translatio imperii* – or transfer of power – from Rome to Britain, which is a result of the war between Arthur and Lucius. The letters in the *Historia* also question the boundaries between history and fiction,⁵⁹ and demonstrate the literary and rhetorical features of medieval historiography. The next chapter on the Arthurian tradition in English, Welsh, and Scottish chronicles examines the relationship between history and fiction in further detail.

⁵⁸ John. O. Ward, 'Some Principles of Rhetorical Historiography in the Twelfth Century', in *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, ed. by Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1985), pp. 103-66 (p. 146).

⁵⁹ On the categories of history and fiction, see Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy F. Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 109-30.

5. ‘ruler of the island by lawful inheritance’: Succession, Legitimacy, and Collateral Kinship in the Arthurian Narrative

Geoffrey of Monmouth created the first biography of King Arthur. In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey’s account of Arthur’s life, from his birth at Tintagel to his death at Camlann, is located in an expansive genealogical model of history that ranges ‘a Bruto primo rege Britonum usque ad Cadualadrum filium Caduallonis’ [‘from the first king of the Britons, Brutus, down to Cadualadrus, son of Caduallo’].¹ This continuous narrative of British kings, as Rosemary Morris points out, ‘contain[s] a thorough codification of Arthur’s antecedents, both near and remote, which is scarcely less important than the biography [of Arthur] itself’.² Geoffrey established certain relationships between Arthur and his immediate kin group – most notably Uther, Igera, Anna, Gawain, Modred, and Constantine – and thirteenth-century French prose romance writers subsequently used his network of familial bonds in their cyclical narratives of Arthurian history.

The structure of Arthur’s family in the *Historia* has its origins in the Welsh tradition. Following various triads and genealogies, Geoffrey identifies Uther as Arthur’s father; Guinevere as Arthur’s wife; and Gawain as Arthur’s nephew. For

¹ *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009), 2.10-11.

² Rosemary Morris, *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1982), p. 13.

Geoffrey, as well as the early Welsh writers, Arthur's bloodline features a discontinuous line of descent: Arthur dies without issue in the *Historia*, and Arthur's four sons – Amr, Llacheu, Duran, and Gwydre – are all tragically killed in the Welsh tradition.³ The Welsh texts emphasise the importance of collateral kinship rather than lineal descent.⁴ For example, in the eleventh-century prose tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, Culhwch states that he is 'Kulhwch mab Kilyd mab Kyledon Wledic o Oleudyt merch Anlawd Wledic, uy mam' ['Culhwch son of Cilydd son of Celyddon Wledig by Goleuddydd daughter of Amlawdd Wledig, my mother'],⁵ and Arthur agrees to help him win Olwen because they are maternal first cousins.⁶ Similarly, Gwalchmai son of Gwyar is identified as 'Nei y Arthur, uab y chwaer a'y gefynderw oed' ['Arthur's nephew, his sister's son, and his cousin'] (Bromwich and Evans, ll. 406-7; Davies, p. 190). In the *Historia*, Arthur's collateral relatives also occupy a privileged position, and Gawain and Modred, the sons of Anna and Lot of Lothian, are initially identified as Arthur's heirs. Arthur's extended family compensates for the failure of

³ On Amr's grave in and the *Historia Brittonum*, see Brynley F. Roberts, 'Culhwch ac Olwen, The Triads, Saints' Lives', in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages 1 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 73-96 (pp. 91-2). On Llacheu in Welsh poetry and prose, see 'Notes to Personal Names, in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, ed. and trans. by Rachel Bromwich, 4th edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 408-10; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', *The Arthur of the Welsh*, pp. 33-72 (p. 44). On the death of Duran, see J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 250-1. For the death of Gwydre, see *Culhwch and Olwen: An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), l. 1116-17.

⁴ On collateral kinship in medieval Welsh society, see T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 172-5. On kinship and duty, see R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063-1415*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 122-9.

⁵ Welsh quotations from *Culhwch and Olwen: An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), ll. 168-9. English translation from *How Culwch Won Olwen*, in *The Mabinogion*, trans. by Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 179-213 (p. 183).

⁶ Rachel Bromwich and Simon D. Evans note that '[t]he relationship of first cousins which is postulated between Culhwch and Arthur (and later, by implication, between Culhwch, Arthur, and Goreu fab Custennin), and again between Arthur and Illtud in the *Vita Illuti*, depends on the kinship of their four mothers as four daughters of Anlawd/Amlawd Wledic'; see Rachel Bromwich and Simon D. Evans, 'Introduction', in *Culhwch and Olwen*, pp. ix-lxxxiii (p. xxvii).

his patrilineage, and Constantine's eventual succession demonstrates how the collateral line can be used to construct a continuous narrative of British kings.

In later medieval chronicle and romance, Arthur's relationship to his collateral relatives consistently changes and evolves. This chapter argues that the Arthurian kin group in the *Historia* is based on a residual, collateral model of kinship that had been largely succeeded by the emerging practice of primogeniture in the twelfth century; it also contends that translators and adaptors of the *Historia* used Arthur's collateral relatives – including sisters, aunts, nephews, and cousins – to emphasise problems of legitimacy, inheritance, and succession and to challenge and contest Geoffrey's narrative of British history.⁷ Previous studies of kinship in medieval Arthurian literature by R. Howard Bloch, Elizabeth Archibald, Helen Cooper, and Felicity Riddy have primarily focused on the French prose-romance cycles and the final tales of Malory's *Morte Darthur*.⁸ This chapter, however, demonstrates that the chronicle tradition is equally concerned with anxieties about blood, family, and reproduction. The first section examines how late medieval Scottish chronicles used the changing relationship between Arthur and Anna, his sister, to undermine his legitimacy and assert Modred's right of succession. The second section analyses how Modred's betrayal of Arthur, and his marriage to Guinevere, ruptures kinship bonds based on blood and affinity in a selection of Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Welsh texts. The third section addresses how

⁷ On the development of the patrilineage and the practice of primogeniture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries see Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. by Cynthia Postan (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) and R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁸ See Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 198-227; Elizabeth Archibald, 'Arthur and Mordred: Variations on an Incest Theme', *Arthurian Literature*, 8 (1989), 1-27; Helen Cooper, 'Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-killing in the Prose Romances', in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. by Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 141-62; Felicity Riddy, 'Middle English romance: family, marriage, intimacy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; repr. 2004), pp. 235-49.

the close consanguinity between Arthur, Modred and Constantine compensates for the lack of a direct heir in various English, Welsh, and Scottish chronicles.

Arthur, Anna, and Modred: Consanguinity and Right of Succession

According to Geoffrey, Arthur and Anna are the children of Uther Pendragon and Igerna. In Book Eight of the *Historia*, Merlin prophesises that Uther will be the founder of a successful dynasty. After the death of Aurelius Ambrosius, a comet ‘magnitudinis et claritatis’ [‘of great size and brightness’] (*HRB*, 132.350) appears in the sky, and Merlin explains to Uther that

Radius autem qui uersus Gallicanam plagam porrigitur portendit tibi filium futurum et potentissimum, cuius potesta omnia regna quae protegit habebit; alter uero radius significant filiam, cuius filii et nepotes regnum Britanniae succedenter habebunt.

[The ray that extends over France foretells that you will have a most powerful son, whose might shall possess all the kingdoms beneath it; the other ray indicates a daughter, whose sons and grandsons will rule Britain in turn.] (*HRB*, 133.369-72)

Through his prophecy, Merlin glorifies the achievements of Arthur, but he also implicitly suggests the end of Uther’s patrilineage; indeed, Merlin identifies Anna, rather than Arthur, as the main progenitor of the line of British kings. While Arthur fulfils Merlin’s prophecy by conquering Britain and its surrounding territories, Anna’s children do not succeed to the throne: Gawain dies without issue, Modred is killed by Arthur, and his sons are killed by Arthur’s successor, Constantine.⁹

⁹ Through an analysis of contemporary anxieties about blood and ethnicity in the *Historia*, Greg Molchan suggests that the ‘marriage alliance between Anna and a person outside Arthur’s immediate kingroup [...] forces Geoffrey to recant on the part of the prophecy concerning Anna’; see Greg Molchan, ‘Anna and the King(s): Marriage Alliances, Ethnicity and Succession in the *Historia regum Britanniae*’, *Arthuriana* 24.1 (2014), 25-48. On the war between Constantine and Modred’s sons, see Edward Donald Kennedy, ‘Mordred’s Sons’, in *The Arthurian Way of Death: The English Tradition*, ed. by Karen Cherewatuk and K. S. Whetter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009), pp. 33-49.

Although Merlin's prophecy about Anna is not fulfilled in the *Historia*, several Scottish chroniclers promoted her sons, Gawain and Modred, as the rightful heirs to the British throne.¹⁰ In order to support their claims, these writers redefined Anna's relationship to Arthur: she is either the only legitimate child of Uther and Igerna, or she is the sister of Aurelius Ambrosius, and Arthur's paternal aunt. While French prose romance writers transformed Anna into the unknown Queen of Orkney, and contained her subversive potential through her liminality,¹¹ Scottish chroniclers exploited her fractured identity for their own ideological purposes. This section analyses how fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and sixteenth-century Scottish historians used the changing degrees of consanguinity between Arthur and Anna to legitimise Modred's right to the throne of Britain.

Arthur and Anna: Brother and Sister

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Arthur and Anna are the legitimate children of Uther Pendragon and Igerna. Although Arthur is conceived outside wedlock, he is born into a legal marriage, and when he accedes the throne he is recognised as 'tocius insulae monarchiam debuerat hereditario iure optinere' '[ruler of the entire island by lawful inheritance]' (*HRB*, 143.17-18); however, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Scottish chroniclers, including John of Fordun, Walter Bower, and the author of the *Scottis Originale*, rewrote Geoffrey's account of Arthur's conception so that

¹⁰ For a wider overview of the various Scottish attitudes to Arthur, see Karl Heinz Göller, 'King Arthur in the Scottish Chronicles', in *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 173-84; Flora Alexander, 'Later Medieval Scottish Attitudes to the Figure of King Arthur: A Reassessment', *Anglia* 93 (1975): 28-34; Nicola Royan, '“Na les vailyeant than ony uthir princis of Britaine”: representations of Arthur in Scotland 1480-1540', *Scottish Studies Review*, 3.1 (2002), 9-20; Nicola Royan, 'The Fine Art of Faint Praise in Older Scots Historiography', in *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Cambridge and Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2005), pp. 43-54.

¹¹ On the transformation of Anna and into the Queen of Orkney, see Madeleine Blaess, 'Arthur's Sisters', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, 8 (1956), 69-77; Caroline Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantress: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 122-44.

Arthur was born outside of wedlock, while his younger sister Anna was both conceived and born into a legal marriage. This major rewriting of Arthur's conception can be contextualised with the emergence of Scottish bastardy laws, which were first formalised in the common law book *Regiam majestatem* (c. 1320). Based on Glanvill's *Tractatus de legibus consuetudinibus regni Anglie* ('Treatise on the laws and customs of the Kingdom of England', c. 1185), the *Regiam Majestatem* explicitly states that bastards do not have the right to inherit property. One of the clauses on bastardy in this text is particularly relevant to Arthur: 'a person begotten or born before his father subsequently marries his mother [...] cannot under any circumstances be treated as an heir or allowed to claim the inheritance'.¹² Drawing on legal discourse and rhetorical argumentation, Scottish chroniclers maintain that Anna – rather than Arthur – should have succeeded to the throne of Britain, as she is the only legitimate child of Uther and Igera.

In the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* ('The Chronicle of the Scottish People, c. 1385), John of Fordun acknowledges that Arthur and Anna are brother and sister, but he implies that they occupy different legal positions. In his account of Arthur's succession, he writes that

Cum enim Vther rex Britonum, sicut bonae memoriae frater ejus Aurelius, Saxonum perfidia veneno perisset, filius ejus Arthurus factione quorundam in regno successit, quod tamen illi debitum de *jure non fuerat*, sed Annae sorori potius vel suis liberis. Illa namque de thoro *procreate legitimo*, consuli Loth Scoto et domino Laudoniae, qui de familia ducis Fulgencii processit, nupta fuit: ex qua duos filios genuit Galwanum nobilem et Mordredum[.]¹³

[Now, on the death of Uther, king of the Britons, by poison, through the perfidy of the Saxons (like his brother Aurelius of happy memory), his son Arthur, by the contrivance of certain men, succeeding to the kingdom; which

¹² *Regiam Majestatem and Quoniam Attachiamenta*, ed. by T Mackay, Lord Cooper (Einburgh: Stair Society, 1947), 160-2.

¹³ *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), 3.24. Emphasis added.

nevertheless, *was not lawfully his due*, but rather his sister Anna's, or her children's. For she was *begotten in lawful wedlock*, and married to Loth, a Scottish consul, and lord of Laudonia (Lothian), who came of the family of the leader Fulgentius; and of her he begat two sons – the noble Galwanus and Modred.]¹⁴

John does not state whether Arthur was born after his parents' marriage, but the comparison between Arthur and Anna – when only the latter is specified as 'procreate legitimo' ['begotten in lawful wedlock'] – implies that there is some doubt over his legitimacy. Indeed, Walter Bower, who revised and continued the *Chronica* in the fifteenth century, suggested that Arthur was conceived *in adulterio* and explicitly denounced his right to inherit the throne. This textual intervention identifies Arthur as an infamous bastard – or *infamii spurrii*. As John Witte, Jr points out, spurious children faced 'restrictions on their rights to property, inheritance, and contracts, their capacity to sue or testify in civil courts, and their rights to hold civil or political offices'.¹⁵ Medieval canon law also specified that spurious children could not be legitimised by their parents' subsequent marriage.¹⁶ By emphasising the immoral circumstances surrounding his conception, John of Fordun and Walter Bower both undermine Arthur's claim to the throne of Britain.

Despite his doubt over his legitimacy, John assesses the political situation in Britain to justify Arthur's accession. After the death of Uther, John explains that the British nobles were impelled by 'necessitas' ['necessity'] to elect Arthur as king because the 'Saxones concives suos ex Germania invitaverunt, et duce Colgerino ipssos exterminare nitebantur' ['Saxons [...] had invited over their countrymen from

¹⁴ *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. by W. F. Skene and trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 3.24. Emphasis added.

¹⁵ John Witte, Jr, *The Sins of the Fathers: The Law and Theology of Illegitimacy Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 67.

¹⁶ The fourth clause of the papal decree entitled 'Which Children Are Legitimate' that was issued by Pope Gregory IX in 1234 states that '[n]atural children are legitimized by the parents' subsequent marriage, spurious children are not'; see Witte, *The Sins of the Fathers*, p. 85.

Germany, and under the command of Colgerin, were endeavouring to exterminate the Britons'] (*CGS*, 3.24). He also demonstrates how necessity denied Anna's sons of their birthright:

Haec ille. Ut at propositum revertar notanter dixit. Arguebat autem eos necessitas quae utrobique non habet legem quia necessitas facit licitum, quod alias non esset licitum. Sed quae vel quails fuit ista necessitates multum determinat.

[But let us return to the subject – where it was said that they [the British nobles] were impelled by necessity – which has no law, both with gods and men; for necessity makes that lawful which otherwise were not lawful. But much depends on what manner of necessity that was.]

(*CGS*, 3.25)

According to John, Arthur only succeeded Uther because Gawain and Modred were not in a position to rule: he recalls how, at the time of Arthur's coronation, the twelve-year old Gawain was in the service of the Pope, while Modred was simply too young to ascend the throne.¹⁷ He concedes that 'ideo merito ingruente tanta necessitate potius adolescens tendens ad virum eligitur, quam in cunabulis, puer' ['on so strong a necessity suddenly arising, they [the British nobles] were justified in electing a youth verging on manhood, rather than a child in the cradle'] (*CGS*, 3.25). As Kate McClune points out, John 'display[s] a pragmatism [...] that is appreciative of the dangers of having a child-king in times of hostility'.¹⁸ Furthermore, John quotes extensively from Geoffrey's *Historia* to demonstrate Arthur's virtue and his suitability to rule Britain. Although Arthur disinherits Modred and Gawain, he is not a treacherous usurper. Arthur's authority is limited, but it is not wholly illegitimate.

The *Scottis Originale*, which is a highly abridged version of the Fordun-Bower tradition in Old Scots, reinforces how Arthur's illegitimacy originates from

¹⁷ Gawain's childhood service to the Pope is recorded in the Latin romance *De Ortu Waluuannii*; see Sian Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition*, pp. 131-58.

¹⁸ Kate McClune, 'He was but a Yong Man': Age, Kingship, and Arthur', in *Premodern Scotland: Literature and Governance, 1420-1587: Essays for Sally Mapstone*, ed. by Joanna Martin and Emily Wingfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 85-98 (p. 89).

his parents' infidelity.¹⁹ Each of the texts state that Arthur 'was gottyn on ane other mannis wyf';²⁰ however, the revisions to each version of the text provide different perspectives on the sexual encounter between Uther and Igera. The Dalhousie and Royal manuscripts emphasise the promiscuity of Igera, and claim that Arthur was a 'spurius' child because was is a 'huris son' (Dalhousie MS, ll. 133-4; Royal MS, ll. 128-9). The Royal manuscript also explicitly states that he was a 'bastard' (Royal MS, l. 128). Meanwhile, the Asloan manuscript claims that Arthur was the 'son of adultery' (Asloan MS, l. 122), and foregrounds the culpability of Uther and Igera. The Asloan manuscript is also the most explicit about the implications of Arthur's illegitimacy, and claims that he should 'neuir able to ane crowne' (Asloan MS, ll. 121-2) because of Uther and Igera's adulterous affair. Arthur's conception and birth are evidence of the sexual sins of his parents and, subsequently, Anna – who is 'Arthuris sisteris of full bed' (Dalhousie MS, ll. 127-8) – is identified as the 'pe kiingis dochtir & heir of Brytan' (Royal MS, l. 123; Asloan MS, ll. 114-5). As Arthur's younger sister, who was conceived and born after the marriage of Uther and Igera, Anna's legitimacy is beyond all doubt. Following John and Bower, the *Scottis Originale* locates the right of succession within matrilineal descent, and Anna's claim to the British throne is passed to her sons, Gawain and Modred, who are the 'rychtwis airis' (Dalhousie MS, l. 126; Royal MS, l. 122; Asloan MS, l. 112) to Uther Pendragon. According to the *Scottis Originale*, then, Arthur is a usurper and

¹⁹ The text is extant in three manuscripts that were produced between the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, including: National Archives of Scotland MS Dalhousie GD 45/31/1-II; British Library MS Royal 17.D.xx; and National Library of Scotland MS 16500 (or the Asloan MS).

²⁰ 'The Scottis Originale (The Cronycle of Scotland in a Part)', in *Short Scottish Prose Chronicles*, ed. Dan Embree, Edward Donald Kenney, and Kathleen Daly (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2012) pp. 111-34 (Dalhousie MS, ll. 130-1; Royal MS, l. 127; Asloan MS, l. 121. All further references to the *Scottis Originale* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text of the chapter; references are to the relevant manuscript and the line number.

a traitor, as well as an illegitimate heir, who has no legal grounds to support his authority.

Anna's claim to the throne is based on Arthur's illegitimacy. While John of Fordun does not explicitly state that Arthur was illegitimate, Walter Bower and the author of the *Scottis Originale* subsequently undermined his authority by identifying him as a child of adultery and infidelity. Anna's superior legal status supports the right of her sons to inherit the British throne; however, Arthur's succession denies Gawain and Modred their inheritance. According to John of Fordun, Arthur was crowned out of political necessity, but the *Scottis Originale* maintains he claimed the throne through treachery. Yet regardless of the political situation, Arthur's accession disrupts the natural order of succession based on legitimacy and descent.

Anna and Arthur: Aunt and Nephew

Although she is always recognised as the mother of Gawain and Modred, Anna's relationship to Arthur is unstable in the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Geoffrey initially identifies Anna as Arthur's sister: he describes how Uther gave Lot of Lothian 'Annam filiam suam regnique sui curam dum infirmitati subiaceret' ['his daughter's Anna's hand and stewardship of the realm while he was ill'] (*HRB*, 139.547-8); however, he later implies that Anna is Arthur's aunt, claiming that in 'tempore Aurelii Ambrosii sororem ipsius duxerat, ex qua Gualguinum et Modredum genuerat' ['in the reign of Aurelius Ambrosius [Lot of Lothian] married the king's sister and fathered Gawain and Modred'] (*HRB*, 152.205-7). The different degrees of consanguinity between Arthur and Anna also affect her sons, who can either be classified as Arthur's nephews (second-degree relatives), or his cousins (third-degree relatives). While Geoffrey attempts to clarify Anna's relationship to Arthur through

Gawain and Modred, who are usually identified as Arthur's nephews, some Scottish chroniclers – including Walter Bower and Hector Boece – exploited the discrepancy in the *Historia* regarding Anna's lineage and identified her as Arthur's aunt. These writers contest Arthur's illegitimate succession, and justify Gawain and Modred's right to the throne through their consanguinity to their maternal uncle, Aurelius Ambrosius.

Walter Bower was the first Scottish chronicler to explicitly identify Anna as Arthur's aunt. Bower's predecessor, John of Fordun, acknowledged that Geoffrey was not clear about Anna's identity, but he evaluated the evidence in the *Historia* and decided that 'Modred fuisse sororium Arthuri' ['Modred was Arthur's sister's son'] (CGS, 3.25).²¹ Bower, however, claimed that Anna was 'sorori Aurelii' ['Aurelius' sister'] and that she had married Lot of Lothian, 'qui de nobili progenie ducis Fulgencii processit' ['who was descended from the noble line of Duke Fulgentius'].²² He explains that Anna and Loth

duos filios genuit Wawanum nobilem et Modredum *seniorem*, quem aliter ex adverso genitum nonnulli tradunt sed non tenet, *neconon et illam sanctam mulierem Thaness vocatam matrem Sancti Kentigerni unde jure legitime successionis regnum Britannie Modredo debebatur*. Arthurum regnasse Gourani diebus regnacionis certum est, et post eius decessum vii annis.

[had two sons the noble Gawain and the *elder* Modred (whom some authorities give as completely different descent but unconvincingly) *and a daughter also, that saintly woman called Thaney the mother of St Kentigern. Through Anna by right of legitimate succession the kingdom of Britain was due to Modred*; yet it is certain that Arthur ruled at the time of Gabran's reign and seven years after his death].²³

²¹ Bower, however, does not fully rectify John's account in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, and still includes John's evaluation as to whether Anna was Arthur's sister or Arthur's aunt.

²² Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt et al, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98), II, 3.24.25-31.

²³ The text in italics indicates the material that Bower added to Fordun's account of Arthur in the *Chronica gentis Scotorum*; see Susan Kelly, 'The Arthurian Material in the *Scotichronicon* of Walter Bower', *Anglia* 97 (1979), 431-8 (p. 434).

As Susan Kelley observes, ‘Bower pointedly establishes Anna as the sister of Aurelius rather than Arthur. The effect of this is to free Anna of the filial relationship with Uther, whose immorality and conniving ways are implicitly contrasted with the virtues of his older brother’.²⁴ Anna’s claim to the throne is based on the system of parentelic inheritance, ‘which provided a way of ordering kinsmen to the nearest heir of the *propositus* (the last person who had died rightfully seised)’.²⁵ According to the parentelic system, inheritance could pass to the collateral lines if the deceased had no direct descendants, or if there was a fault in the direct line.²⁶ For Bower, Arthur’s illegitimacy should have prevented him from succeeding Uther, and he maintains that the throne should have passed to Anna and her sons, who were the next nearest heirs. Furthermore, Modred’s claim is legitimised through his enatic and agnatic ancestry: through his mother he is related to the British king, Aurelius Ambrosius, and through his father he is descended from the British noble, Fulgentius, who was allied with the Scots.²⁷ As the son of Anna and Lot of Lothian, then, Modred represents the union of the Britons and the Scots.

While Bower upheld Gawain and Modred as the rightful heirs to the British throne, the sixteenth-century Scottish historian Hector Boece argued that their father, Lot of Lothian, should have succeeded Uther. Boece’s argument is based on Arthur’s illegitimacy, and he insists that ‘Uterum regem ex aliena coniuge suscepisse

²⁴ Susan Kelly, ‘The Arthurian Material in the *Scotichronicon* of Walter Bower’, *Anglia*, 97 (1979), 431-8 (p. 434).

²⁵ Wordby, *Law and Kinship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, New York: Boydell Press for The Royal Historical Society, 2010), p. 40.

²⁶ Wordby, *Law and Kinship in Thirteenth-Century England*, p. 40.

²⁷ On Fulgentius in Geoffrey of Monmouth, John of Fordun, and Walter Bower, see Steve Boardman, ‘Late Medieval Scotland and the Matter of Britain’, in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, ed. by Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 47-72.

Arthurum' ['King Uther fathered Arthur on another man's wife'].²⁸ Through this textual intervention, Boece substantially revises the account of Arthur's conception in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and he describes how Uther abandoned 'sublati pudore ac probitate' ['all sense of shame and probity'] (*HGS*, 9.10) and raped Igera (*cupide compressam*) before murdering her husband, Gorlois. According to Boece, Arthur was a bastard as his parents never married, and he only succeeded to the throne because Uther compelled the British nobles to swear 'ne quem alium praeter Arthurum secundum se in Britannia regnare' ['not to allow anyone but Arthur to reign in Britain after himself'] (*HGS*, 9.11); however, before Arthur's coronation, Boece describes how

Lothus Pictorum rex Britannorum maiores per legatos postulavit ut Britanniae regnum sibi deferrent, causatus legem in Albione longa consuetudine hominumque moribus roboratam ut qui virginem matrimonio sibi copulasset, in eiusdem haereditatem (si quam foret habitura) ipse primum, liberi deinde connubio suscepti succederent. Annam igitur, quam iustam habebat coniugem, Aurelii Uterique regum Britanniae sororem legitimam, quod Uterque sine liberis cessisset fatis, regni esse haeredem.

[King Lothus of the Picts sent ambassadors to the British elders, demanding that the throne of Britain be given to himself. His claim was that there existed a time-hallowed rule in Albion, sanctioned by tradition, that when a man married a virgin, he should be the first recipient of her inheritance, should she have any, and then the sons born of his marriage to her. Therefore his lawful wife Anna, the legitimate sister of Kings Aurelius and Uther, was heir to the throne, since Uther had died without issue.]

(*HGS*, 9.23)

Although Anna is the legitimate heir of Aurelius and Uther, the entirely fictional law of inheritance that Lot cites to support his claim would transfer the British throne from a blood relative to an affine, and would subsequently disrupt the line of succession based on descent. Through his marriage to Anna, Lot is part of Arthur's

²⁸ Hector Boethius, *Scotorum Historia* (1575 version), The University of California, Irvine (2010), 9.11. Available at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/boece/> [accessed 16/12/2014].

extended kin group, and his right of succession is typical of the overtly nationalistic style of Boece's work.

Lot also uses the age of his sons, Gawain and Modred, to assert his right to the British throne. Boece writes that

Ex ea virilis sexus proles suceptas Modredum et Valuanum, quem alii Galuanum dicunt, per aetatem nondum aptos ad regimen publicum. Debere ergo, si legi parendum est, ad filiorum maturam usque aetatem in regni esse administratione, iustisque haeredibus id servare incolume.

[By her [Anna] he had fathered as his male children Modredus and Valuanus (called Galuanus by some), not yet fit for public government because of their age. Therefore, if the law was to be heeded, it was his responsibility to preserve the security of the realm until its legitimate heirs came of age.]
(HGS, 9.23)

In contrast to John of Fordun and Walter Bower, who had legitimised Arthur's succession because Gawain and Modred were too young to rule, Boece argues that Lot could have temporarily acted as a regent.²⁹ Boece's contemporary, John Major, also agreed in his *Historia maioris Britanniae* ('History of Greater Britain' 1521) 'Et fati dixissent quo Modred in viridi aetate coadiutor dari debuir' ['that inasmuch as he [Modred] was under age, a coadjutor should have been given'].³⁰ By asserting Lot's authority as regent, Boece demonstrates that Modred and Gawain have a legitimate claim to the throne; however, the British nobles reject Lot and 'Annae filios' ['the sons of Anna'] because they are 'peregrini sanguinis homines' ['men of foreign blood'] who are 'inidoneos qui Britannicarum rerum potirentur' ['unsuitable to govern the Britons'] (HGS, 9.23). Although Gawain and Modred claim descent from Aurelius Ambrosius, Anna's marriage to Lot of Lothian has effectively diluted

²⁹ Lot's claim as regent reflects the political reality of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland, and between 1406 and 1567, every Stewart monarch ascended the throne as a child; see McClune, 'He was but a Yong Man': Age, Kingship, and Arthur', pp. 85-98.

³⁰ Latin quotations from *Historia Maioris Britanniae, tam Angliae quam Scotiae, per Ioannem Maiorem, nomine quidem Scotum, professione autem theologum, e vetero monumentis concinnata* (Paris 1521), 2.6. English translation from John Major, *A History of Greater Britain, as well England as Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1892), 2.6.

– or rather polluted – the British bloodline. Ethnicity – regardless of descent – acts as a barrier to succession, and Boece explicitly articulates the anxieties about Modred’s otherness that Geoffrey of Monmouth first identified in the *Historia regum Britanniae*.

Bower and Boece both claim Arthur is illegitimate, and they use inheritance systems based on lineage, descent, and affinity to contest his succession. By revising the degrees of consanguinity between Anna and Aurelius Ambrosius, both writers also disrupt the uncle-nephew relationship between Arthur and Modred in Geoffrey’s *Historia*, and demonstrate how extended family members of the Arthurian kin group can claim the right of succession. For Bower and Boece, Modred’s genealogical descent from the Britons and the Scots further bolsters his claim to the throne; but Modred’s authority is also undermined by his age and his ethnicity.

In late medieval Scottish chronicles, Anna occupies the roles of sister, aunt, wife, and mother. The instability of her identity is the product of an unresolved tension in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and Scottish historians exploit Anna’s dual role as Arthur’s sister and his aunt to create a female authority figure who consistently undermines Arthur’s legitimacy. Anna’s power is located in her fractured identity, and her descent from Uther, or her consanguinity to Aurelius Ambrosius, can be used to determine her claim to the British throne. Anna also derives her authority from Arthur’s illegitimacy, and the juxtaposition between Arthur and Anna subsequently establishes Modred’s right of succession. Finally, by advocating the legitimacy of Anna and her son, Modred, Scottish chroniclers demonstrate how power and status can be established through the structure of collateral kinship.

Arthur, Modred, and Guinevere: Kinship, Affinity and Horizontal Bonds

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Modred disrupts the integrity of the kin group and undermines the hierarchy of the traditional family unit through treachery and adultery. After he has defeated the Romans in Europe, Arthur is soon informed of the news of the unfaithfulness of his nephew and his wife:

Adueniente uero aestate, dum Romam petere affectaret et montes transcendere incepisset, nunciatur ei Modredum nepotem suum, cuius tutelage permiserat Britanniam, eisdem diademate per tirannidem et proditorem insignitum esse reginamque Ganhumaram uiolato iure priorum nuptiarum eidem nefanda uenere copulatam fuisse.

[With the coming of the summer he decided to march on Rome, but just as he began to cross the Alps, he heard that his nephew Modred, to whose protection Britain had been entrusted, had treacherously usurped the crown, and that Queen Ganhumara had repudiated her former vows and united with him in sinful love.]

(HRB, 176.480-4)

Geoffrey condemns this ‘infamia praenuntiati’ [‘disgraceful crime’], and denounces Modred as ‘sceleratissimus proditor’ [‘a most foul traitor’] (HRB, 177.10). Modred’s treason is both hierarchical and horizontal. As Megan G. Leitch points out, the hierarchical idea of treason ‘rests on the legal definition of treason as an attempt to harm or kill one’s king, master, husband, or prelate’.³¹ By assuming the throne, Modred publicly breaks his oath of loyalty to his lord and king. In contrast, horizontal treason, which is explored in late medieval English and Scottish Arthurian and romance narratives, can be defined as a ‘betrayal of a personal trust, such as within a family or another affinity group where (mutual) loyalty could be expected’.³² Modred’s betrayal of Arthur, then, breaks the bonds of kinship between

³¹ Megan G. Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.

³² Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 24.

uncle and nephew, and his subsequent marriage to Guinevere ruptures the bonds of affinity between husband and wife.

Subsequent translations and adaptations of the *Historia* produced in England and Wales in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries primarily emphasise the horizontal – rather than hierarchical – nature of Modred's treason, and they locate his betrayal within the immediate kin group, which includes uncle, aunt, and nephew. These texts also make Guinevere complicit with Modred's treason: she openly breaks her vows to Arthur, and willingly enters into an incestuous relationship with her nephew. Many of these texts are influenced by Wace's *Roman de Brut*, which focuses on treachery within the family unit and articulates the breach of relations between uncle and nephew, and between husband and wife. This section analyses how Modred and Guinevere's treachery ruptures bonds of affinity and kinship; it also traces the development of their relations in English and Welsh chronicles from the *Roman de Brut* in the mid-twelfth century to Hardyng's *Chronicle* in the mid-fifteenth century.

Arthur and Modred: Uncle and Nephew

In the *Roman de Brut*, Wace demonstrates how Modred's private desire for Guinevere conflicts with his public loyalty to his uncle. When Arthur instates Modred and Guinevere as regents, Wace states that 'Feme sun uncle par putage / Amat Modret si fist huntage' ['Modred loved his uncle's wife shamefully and was dishonourable'].³³ Furthermore, when Arthur discovers Modred's treachery, Wace exclaims:

³³ Wace's *Roman de Brut: A History of the British: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Judith Weiss, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), ll. 11185-6.

Deus, quel hunte, Deus, quel vilté!
 Sis niez, fiz a sorur, esteit,
 E en garde sun regne aveit;
 Tut sun regne li ot livré
 E en garde tut cumandé.
 E Modred li volt tut tolir
 E a sun ués tut retenir;
 De tux les baruns prist humages,
 De tuz les chastels prist hostages.
 Emprés ceste grant felunie
 Fist Modred altre vilainie,
 Kar cuntre cristiene lei
 Prist a sun lit femme lu rei,
 Femme a sun uncle e sun seignur
 Prist a guise de traitur.
 Arthur oi e de veir sot
 Que Modred fei ne li portot;
 Sa terre tint, sa femme ot prise.

[God, what shame! God, what disgrace! He was his nephew, his sister's son, and had the care of his kingdom; Arthur had entrusted the whole realm to him and put it all in his charge. And Modret wanted to take all away from him and keep it for his own use. He took homage from all the barons and hostages from all the castles. After this great act of wickedness, Modret did another evil deed, because, against Christian law, he took to bed the king's wife; he treacherously took the wife of his uncle and lord. Arthur heard and certainly realized that Modret bore him no loyalty: he held his land and had taken his wife.]

(Wace, ll. 13016-33)

In contrast to Geoffrey, who usually refers to Modred as Arthur's nephew (*nepos*), Wace identifies Modred as his 'fiz a soror' ['sister's son'] to increase the sense of betrayal within the kinship group. Wace also emphasises Guinevere's affinity with Arthur and Modred: she is 'femme lu rei' ['the king's wife'], as well as the wife of Modred's 'uncle e sun seignur' ['uncle and his lord']. These titles demonstrate the unnaturalness of Modred's desire, especially as twelfth-century canon law prohibited marriage 'between persons related by blood or affinity to the seventh degree, and between persons related by spiritual affinity to the fourth degree'.³⁴ Although

³⁴ Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 28. Seventh degree relatives include second cousins once removed and first cousins thrice removed.

Modred and Guinevere are not joined by blood, the marriage between a nephew and his uncle's wife – or his aunt – subverts social norms and undermines the hierarchy of the traditional family unit.

The *Brut y Brenhinedd* emphasises the bonds of affinity and kinship through oaths and promises. As he is due to leave for France to fight the Romans, the text reports that Arthur

Agorchymyn y vedrawt ynei vab y chwaer. Ac y wenhwyuar y wreix briaut llywodreath ynys brydein. Yny delei ef drachevyn: yw gadw yn didwyl gywir fydlawn.

[commended to Modred son of Lot son of Kynvarch, his nephew, son of his sister, and to Guinevere, his wedded wife, all the government of the Isle of Britain, to keep without guile, truly, and faithfully, until he should come back.]³⁵

The final phrase that Modred and Guinevere should rule the land without 'yw gadw yn didwyl gywir fydlawn' ['guile, truly, and faithfully'] are unique to the Welsh *Brut*, and the comments also anticipate Modred's betrayal. The text also constantly refers to the kinship between Arthur and Modred even at the moment of treachery: 'vedrawt y nei vab y chwaer gwisgaw coron ydyrnas a chymryt Gwenhwyuar yn wreic gwely ydaw ahynny ar ostec ac yn diargel' ['Modred his nephew, his sister's son, had put on the crown of the kingdom and had taken Guinevere as his common law wife, and this publicly and openly'].³⁶ By referring to Modred as Arthur's 'sister's son', the text identifies Modred as part of Arthur's extended kin group, and

Fourth degree affines include great grandparents-in-law, aunts- or uncles-in-law, first cousins in-law, nieces and nephews in-law, and great grandchildren-in-law. Archibald also notes that '[t]he prohibited degrees of affinity were eventually reduced from seven to four after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215; see Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, p. 40.

³⁵ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. John Jay Parry (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937), p. 190.

³⁶ Note that Parry translates 'wreic gwely' as 'common law wife', but the more literal translation of the Welsh phrase would be 'bed-wife', meaning 'concubine'.

it would be his duty to protect his uncle's legal rights and social status.³⁷ Yet by marrying his uncle's wife, Modred actively destroys his relationship with Arthur, and the nobles of Britain publicly sanction his actions. For his public crime against the king, Modred is described as that 'ysgymvn dwyllwr' ['damned traitor'] (*BYB*, p. 191), and Arthur's only course of action is revenge against his own nephew.

The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* emphasises the reciprocal relationship between uncle and nephew that is typical in medieval epic. Kinship in heroic literature is typically organised around matrilineal descent and the relationship between the mother's brother and the sister's son dictates certain duties and responsibilities; indeed, as Thomas J. Garbáty points out, '[t]he uncle's duty is to love his nephew, give him power, and avenge him. The nephew must reciprocate'.³⁸ The uncle typically fosters and knights his nephew, who is elected as his successor and heir, and they also depend on each other in the blood feud. In the *Alliterative Morte*, Arthur and Modred consistently articulate the reciprocal bonds of kinship that unite them together: Arthur calls Modred 'my sib, my sister son',³⁹ while Modred addresses Arthur as his 'sib lord' (l. 681). Although Modred is reluctant to act as regent for his uncle, Arthur indicates that he is bound by blood to follow his orders:

Thou art my newew full ner, my nurree of old,
That I have chastied and chosen, a child of my chamber;
For the sibreden of me, forsake not this office;
That thou ne work my will, thou wot what it menes.

³⁷ In medieval Wales, the kindred had legal and social obligations to protect 'the individual's rights and status and stood surety for his behaviour'. Kindred were involved in blood feuds, and '[i]t was the moral duty of the slain man's kinsfolk to avenge his death and to remove the dishonor it had caused them'. For further discussion of the duties of the kindred, see R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales, 1063-1415*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 122-9.

³⁸ Thomas J. Garbáty, 'The Uncle-Nephew Motif: New Light into its Origins and Development', *Folklore*, 88.2 (1977), pp. 220-35 (p. 220)

³⁹ *The Alliterative Morte Arthure*, in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthure and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and revised by Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), pp. 129-284 (l. 689-92). All further references to the *Alliterative Morte* are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the chapter.

(*AMA*, ll. 689-92)

Modred is not just Arthur's nephew: he is also his foster son – or the 'child of my chamber' – who lives in the royal household. Following the news of his nephew's betrayal, Arthur laments the close affinity between him and Modred, who he describes as 'the man that I most traisted' (*AMA*, l. 3569). In order to emphasise the severity of this breach of trust, the text combines the language of kinship with the discourse of treachery and treason: Gawain refers to Modred as '[f]alse fostered fode' (*AMA*, l. 3776) and he is also described as 'traitour by tresoun' (*AMA*, ll. 3782) and 'traitour untrew' (*AMA*, ll. 4227).⁴⁰ By suppressing the blood relationship between Arthur and Modred, the *Alliterative Morte* erases Modred from the Arthurian kin group, demonstrating the severity of treachery and betrayal.

John Hardyng emphasises the hierarchical and horizontal nature of Modred's treachery. In his lament for Arthur, Hardyng asks Fortune why she would allow a nephew to betray his uncle: 'O thou Fortune, executrice of werdes, / [...] Why stretched so thy whele upon Modrede / Again his eme to do so cruelle dede?'.⁴¹ As Leitch points out, '[t]his is a lament for the lack of providence, for the way in which there is no insurance that the righteous prosper and traitors fail, at least as much as it is a lament for Arthur himself'.⁴² Hardyng reprimands Modred for his role in the final tragedy, and he recalls how 'thyne eme the nobleste prynce of might / Putte alle

⁴⁰ Edward Donald Kennedy notes that in the *Alliterative Morte* 'the relationship between Arthur and Modred is uncertain, probably deliberately so, and the audience's interpretation could depend upon their previous acquaintances with Arthurian stories, whether they just knew the English chronicles (nephew), whether they knew the French *Mort Artu* (illegitimate son), or whether they knew the French prose romances (nephew)'; see Kennedy, 'Modred's Sons', pp. 43-4.

⁴¹ John Hardyng, *Chronicle: Edited from British Library MS Landsdowne 204*, ed. James Simpson and Sarah Peverley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2015), I, 3.3878-84.

⁴² Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 125.

his truste so gretely he thee loved (Hardyng, First Version, 3.3894-5). Moreover, Hardyng directly addresses Modred, writing that

The highnesse of thyne honoure had a falle,
When thou beganne to do that injury.
That grete falshode thy prowessse did appale
Alone as in the entred perjury,
By consequent treason and traytory,
Thy lorde and eme, and also thy kynge soverayne,
So to bytratse thy felaws als sertayne.
(Hardyng, First Version, 3.3899-906)

Hardyng emphasises the multifaceted nature of Mordred's treachery: he has betrayed his lord and 'kynge soverayne' uncle, thus rupturing feudal bonds, and he has also defied his uncle and his 'felaws' or companions. Hardyng directly specifies that Modred's treason is a crime against the king, as well as the realm of Britain, and the king's subjects have suffered as a result of his nephew's betrayal.

Modred is bound to Arthur by blood. As Arthur's nephew, Modred is 'a potential heir to a childless uncle, replacing the son that uncle never had'.⁴³ These translations of the *Historia* produced in England and Wales represent Modred's treachery as a family drama, and they demonstrate how the breach of kin relationship bonds is responsible for the final tragedy. Modred's usurpation of the throne, and his subsequent marriage to Guinevere, undermine Arthur's authority, destabilise the social order, and drive Britain towards civil war.

Arthur and Guinevere: Husband and Wife

In the Arthurian tradition, the nature of Guinevere's relationship with Modred depends on his consanguinity to Arthur. As Elizabeth Archibald points out,

in the Arthurian narratives in which Mordred is Arthur's nephew, Guenevere does yield to his advances; but in the stories in which Modred is Arthur's son

⁴³ Judith Weiss, 'Mordred', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), pp. 81-98 (p. 98).

she makes every attempt to escape from Mordred (not only out of loyalty to Arthur, but also presumably because in these stories she is committed to Lancelot). Thus the attempted mother-son incest is obscured because it is not consummated and because of the stress on the love affair of Lancelot and Guinevere.⁴⁴

Scholars have often condemned Geoffrey's Guinevere for her betrayal of Arthur and her adultery with Modred; indeed, Fiona Tolhurst notes that 'this female figure has traditionally received much less scholarly attention than the Gueneveres [*sic*] of Chrétien de Troyes and Sir Thomas Malory, and what little attention she receives is often negative'.⁴⁵ She argues that the 'negative image' of Guinevere in the *Historia* a 'distortion',⁴⁶ particularly as Geoffrey does not state whether her relationship with Modred was consensual.

In contrast to Geoffrey, who does not comment on the queen's agency, later chroniclers made Guinevere complicit in Modred's treachery, and she willingly breaks her bond of affinity to Arthur. In the *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155), Wace uses the queen's guilt as evidence that there was a mutual affection between Modred and Guinevere:

Membra lui de la vilainie
 Que pur Modred s'esteit hunie,
 Le bin rei aveit vergundé
 E sun nevou Modred amé;
 Cuntre lei l'aveit espusee
 Si en esteit mult avilee;
 Mielz volsist morte ester que vive.
 Mult fud triste, mult fud pensive;
 A Karliun s'en est fuïe,
 La entra en une abeïe,
 Nune devit iloc velee,
 En l'abeïe fud celee.
 Ne fud oïe, ne fud celee.
 N'i fud trovee ne seïe,

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Archibald, 'Arthur and Mordred', p. 22.

⁴⁵ Fiona Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 29.

⁴⁶ Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, p. 29.

Pur la veguine del mesfait
E del pechié qu'ele avait fait.

[She remembered the wickedness she had done in tarnishing her honour for Modret's sake, shaming the good king and desiring his nephew. He had married her illicitly, and she was badly degraded by it. She wished she were dead rather than alive. Filled with misery and dejection, she fled to Caerleon and there entered an abbey. There she took the veil and was concealed; she was neither heard nor seen, neither known nor found, because of the shame of her misdeed and the sin she had committed.]

(Wace, ll. 13207-22)

Guinevere's recognition of her guilt indicates that she is a 'full participant in an incestuous and treasonous relationship'.⁴⁷ This passage describes the queen's interior emotions using the discourse of shame and honour: her incestuous relationship with Modred has brought shame on Arthur, and she has also publicly disgraced herself. Guinevere's reputation is dependent on her public relationships with men: her betrayal of Arthur, and her marriage to Modred. As a shamed woman and unfaithful wife, Guinevere has no position in aristocratic society, and so she seeks refuge in a nunnery where she can be 'Ne fud oïe, ne fud celee. / N'i fud trovee ne seüe, [neither heard nor seen, neither known nor found]'.⁴⁸

Later English chroniclers focused on the adulterous – rather than the incestuous – nature of Guinevere and Modred's relationship. Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng both hold the queen in contempt for willingly committing adultery, calling her a 'luper quene'⁴⁸ and a 'hore'.⁴⁹ Both chroniclers comment on the sexual licentiousness and moral depravity of the Guinevere, who has sacrificed her reputation and public status to become a mere concubine. *Castleford's Chronicle* also implies that the queen was complicit with Modred's treason:

⁴⁷ Tolhurst, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend*, p. 73.

⁴⁸ *The metrical chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright (London: Printed for G. M. Stationery by Eyre and Spottiswoode), l. 4503.

⁴⁹ Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *The Chronicle*, ed. by Idelle Sullens (Binghamton University, 1996), l. 13481.

qwene Gainore,
 Qwam Kyng Arthur had wedede bifor,
 Scho had her yiolden vnto Modrede,
 Wi3 him in spousebrek life to lede,
 Wi3 him agains lagh to be queen,
 In þar falshede þam to sustene –
 Pus coplede þai þam in licherie!⁵⁰

This text demonstrates how adultery – or ‘spousebrek’ – ruptures the marriage vows between husband and wife.⁵¹ Furthermore, Guinevere’s incestuous relationship with her nephew undermines the sanctity of marriage, and she chooses to live in ‘falsehede’ and ‘licherie’ with Modred. The relationship between Guinevere and Modred is condemned as unnatural and immoral, and the consummation of their marriage disrupts the social order. Guinevere acts of her own free will: she actively destroys her marriage to Arthur and voluntarily unites with Modred.

The *Alliterative Morte* demonstrates how the Roman war ruptures the affinity between Arthur and Guinevere, and strengthens the bonds between Guinevere and Modred. Before Arthur leaves Britain, Guinevere laments that his war against Lucius ‘warnes me worship of my wedde lord’ (*AMA*, l. 700). Nevertheless, Arthur installs Modred as regent, and assures Guinevere that

I have made a keeper, a knight of thine owen,
 Overling of Yngland, under thyselfen,
 And that is Sir Mordred, that thou has mikel praised,
 Shall be thy dictour, my dere, to do what thee likes.
 (*AMA*, ll. 709-12)

Arthur entrusts the care of his wife to his nephew, instructing him that ‘I will that Waynor, my wife, in worship be holden / That her want no wele ne welth that her likes’ (*AMA*, ll. 652-3). The text emphasises the pragmatic and political union

⁵⁰ *Castleford’s Chronicle, or, The Boke of Brut*, ed. by Caroline D. Eckhardt (Oxford and New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1996), ll. 23576-82.

⁵¹ Robert of Gloucester also used ‘spousebruche’ in his *Chronicle*; see *The Metrical chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright (London: Printed for G. M. Stationery by Eyre and Spottiswoode), p. 317.

between Guinevere and Modred, who is Arthur's 'leutenant' (*AMA*, l. 646) and 'sektour' (*AMA*, l. 665); however, Modred's role as the Queen's guardian is sexual, as well as political, and he is 'able to replace [his] uncle on the throne and in the bed'.⁵² Arthur neglects his marital duties for the pursuit of military honour, which subsequently allows Modred and Guinevere to fulfil their sexual desires.

The bond between Guinevere and Modred in the *Alliterative Morte* is strengthened by the conception of their child. When Arthur is away on campaign, he is informed that Modred

has wedded Waynor and her his wife holdes,
And wonnes in the wild boundes of the west marches,
And has wrought her with child, as witness tells!
Of all the wyes of this world, wo mot him worthe,
Als warden unworthy women to yeme!
Thus has Sir Mordred marred us all!
(*AMA*, ll. 3550-5)

As Jeff Westover points out, Modred's 'sexual potency' is contrasted with 'Arthur's evident sterility', and he argues that the king's 'childlessness suggests the failure of his manhood'.⁵³ Guinevere's pregnancy in the *Alliterative Morte* also subverts the tradition of infertile adulterous queens in medieval romance. According to Peggy McCracken, a queen's 'lack of progeny is [...] linked to a sexuality that both transgresses moral and civic law and, perhaps more importantly, potentially disrupts dynastic succession'.⁵⁴ Arthur recognises that Modred and Guinevere's child, who is the product of incest and adultery, is a threat to his legitimacy, and he orders the child to be 'slely slain and slongen in waters / Let no wicked weed wax ne writhe

⁵² Weiss, 'Modred', p. 98.

⁵³ Jeff Westover, 'Arthur's End: The King's Emasculation in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*', *Chaucer Review*, 32.4 (1998), 310-324 (p. 313).

⁵⁴ Peggy McCracken, 'The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body in French Romance', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 38-64 (p. 38). For further discussion of adulterous desire and the disruption of lineage see, Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 108-27.

on this erthe' (*AMA*, ll. 4320-2) in order to maintain the integrity of proper succession.

Through her relationship with Modred, Guinevere betrays her husband and her king, and her marriage vows to Arthur are effectively dissolved once she marries his nephew. The chronicle tradition denounces Guinevere for her disloyalty and her unfaithful behaviour, and her act of adultery implicates her as one of the causes of Arthur's downfall and eventual death. Modred's political opportunism and sexual urges, along with Guinevere's willing submission, causes the separation of wife and husband, and so Arthur and Guinevere are estranged from each other, both legally and romantically.

In the chronicle tradition, Modred and Guinevere's betrayal of Arthur is presented as a form of horizontal treason that breaks the bonds between family members. The Middle English and Middle Welsh texts consistently emphasise the bonds of collateral kinship between Arthur and Modred to articulate the illegitimacy of treason and adultery. The breach of relations between uncle and nephew – a relationship that is sometimes akin to father and son – locates Modred's act of treason within the immediate kin group rather than the wider political sphere. Meanwhile, the incestuous union between aunt and nephew violates the prohibited degrees of affinity, and undermines the hierarchical structure of the family unit. The adulterous offspring of Modred and Guinevere present a further challenge to Arthur's authority by creating the possibility of dynastic stability; but their right of succession is undermined by their illegitimacy. The continuity of the Arthurian kin group is ultimately destroyed by the acts of treachery and adultery.

Arthur, Modred, and Constantine: Collateral Kinship and Succession

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the absence of a royal heir acts as a catalyst for the final tragedy; indeed, Rosemary Morris observes that

the whole tragedy, from *HRB*, onwards, hinges on the succession. If Arthur had had a legitimate son, or compelled universal recognition of a designee, then Mordred's rebellion might never have happened.⁵⁵

Yet for Arthur and Guinevere, the conception of a legitimate son is impossible. Wace was the first to comment on the childlessness of Arthur and Guinevere, writing that 'Mais entr'els dous n'orent nul eir / Ne ne porent enfant avoir [the two of them produced no heir nor could they have any children]' (Wace, ll. 9657-8). Wace did not indicate whether it was Arthur or Guinevere who was infertile, but in the thirteenth-century prose romances, Arthur is able to conceive a son by his half-sister, Morgause.⁵⁶

Despite his lack of direct descendants, Arthur has two potential heirs in the *Historia*: Gawain and Modred; however, Gawain is killed in combat, while Modred forfeits his right of succession through his act of treachery. With no nephews to succeed him, Arthur names a relative of unknown degree as his heir: namely, Constantine, the son of Cador, duke of Cornwall. In order to strengthen Constantine's claim to the throne, some fifteenth-century historians identified him as Arthur's nephew, possibly in response to the Scottish attempts to justify Modred as the rightful heir of Britain. This section traces the changing degrees of consanguinity between Arthur and his successor, Constantine: first, it examines how Constantine's descent from Arthur's mother, Igerna, was used to consolidate his succession in

⁵⁵ Rosemary Morris, *The Character of Arthur*, p. 139.

⁵⁶ In the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, Arthur actually has two sons: Modred and Loholt. Loholt was the product of Arthur's brief relationship with Lady Lisanor of Cardigan before his marriage to Guinevere.

some fifteenth-century English and Welsh chronicles; second, it addresses how this blood relationship was challenged and contested by the Scottish historian Hector Boece in the sixteenth century.

Arthur and Constantine: Legitimate Succession

Constantine's consanguinity to Arthur is complicated by the range of kinship terms that are used in twelfth and thirteenth-century Latin and Anglo-Norman texts. In the *Historia*, Geoffrey states that Arthur 'Constantino cognate suo et filio Cadoris ducis Cornuabiae diadema Britanniae concessit' ['handed over Britain's crown to his relative Constantinus, son of Cador duke of Cornwall'] (*HRB*, 178.82-3). *Cognatio* is a particularly ambiguous term, and Jack Goody points out that

[i]n medieval times the Latin terms *agnatio* and *cognatio* sometimes meant paternal and maternal kin but more usually the classical usage applied by which *cognatio* referred to the whole bilateral range of kin on both sides, one's ego-oriented or personal kindred, that is the range of kin traced through the father and the mother.⁵⁷

In the *Historia*, the term *cognatio* obscures the relationship between Arthur and Constantine, especially as Geoffrey does not indicate how Constantine or his father – Cador, duke of Cornwall – are connected to the Arthurian kin group. Wace, meanwhile, calls Constantine Arthur's *cusin*, but this term is equally problematic as, until the fifteenth century, it could include nephew and niece and 'virtually any relative outside the nuclear kin, or rather the "line of filiation"'.⁵⁸ Indeed, Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* and the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* demonstrate the

⁵⁷ Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; repr. 1984) p. 223. Note that the modern anthropological and sociological terms *agnate* and *agnatic*, and *cognate* and *cognatic*, are not directly equivalent to their Classical Latin counterparts; see D. A. Bullough, 'Early Medieval Social Groupings: The Terminology of Kinship', *Past and Present*, 45 (1969), 3-18 (p. 6).

⁵⁸ Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, p. 271.

interchangeability between these terms, substituting Wace's description of Constantine as Arthur's cousin for the term nephew (*niés, nevoz, neuou*).

In contrast to their predecessors, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century chroniclers generally avoid the problematic terms cognate, cousin, or nephew, and use genealogical descent to explain the relationship between Arthur and Constantine. Constantine's consanguinity to Arthur is first identified in Sir Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica* (1340s). Gray describes Constantine as 'fitz Cador de Cornewail, soun frere depar sa mere' ['son of Cador of Cornwall, his [Arthur's] brother by his mother'], and states that Arthur 'bailla soun realme a Costentin, le fitz Cador de Cornwall soun freir, a garder tanqe il reuenist' ['entrusted his realm to Constantine, the son of Cador of Cornwall his brother, to guard until he returned'].⁵⁹ John Hardyng adopted a similar genealogy in his fifteenth-century *Chronicle*, and explicitly states that Constantine is the son of Igerna and her first husband, Gorlois:

He gafe his reme and alle his domynacious
To Constantyne the sonne of Duke Cadore
Which Cadore slayne was in that adversacioun
With Arthur so at Camblayne than afore
Whose brother he was alle of a moder bore
But Gorlois sonne, that duke was of Cornwayle
He was sertayne and heyre withouen fayle.
(Hardyng, First Version, ll. 3.3822-8)

This account of Constantine's succession is not included in the Second Version of Hardyng's *Chronicle*, which simply states that Arthur gave 'Britayne that was full solitarie, / To Constantyne, duke Cader sonne on hye, / His neuewe was, for Cader was his brother, / As well was knowen they had but one mother'.⁶⁰ By linking Arthur

⁵⁹ Quotations from Thomas Gray's *Scalacronica* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 133, fo. 82v.2) are cited in Richard Moll, *Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 166.

⁶⁰ *The Chronicle of J. H., containing an account of public transactions from the earliest period of English History to the beginning of the reign of King Edward the fourth. With the continuation by R.*

and Cador through Igerna, Gray and Hardyng emphasise the importance of women within medieval kinship networks. Although he is descended from the dukes of Cornwall, the matrilineal link between Arthur and Cador ensures the continuation of the line of British kings, and Constantine's succession demonstrates that patrilineal kinship can be substituted for bilateral kinship in the absence of a direct heir.

While Constantine's descent from Igerna ensures continuity between the British kings, Hardyng is also aware that Modred has a valid claim to the throne based on his incestuous origins in the romance tradition.⁶¹ In the thirteenth-century French prose romances, Modred is the son of Arthur and the Queen of Orkney, who is described as 'one of King Arthur's half-sisters, his mother's daughter'⁶² in the *Vulgate Estoire du Merlin*, and as 'the king's sister' whom his 'father begat and your mother carried'⁶³ in the *Post-Vulgate Merlin*. Despite his knowledge of romance, in the First Version of his *Chronicle*, Hardyng denies that Arthur was Modred's father, and he adheres to his lineage in the chronicle tradition:

Bot dethes wounde, as cronycle doth expresse,
 Modrede hym gafe that was his syster sunne
 And as some sayne his owne sonne als doutlesse
 Bot certaynté thereof no bokes kunne
 Declare it wele that I have sene or funne.
 Bot lyke it ys by alle estymacioun
 That he cam never of his generacioun.
 (Hardyng, First Version, ll. 3787-93)

Although his illegitimacy would technically prevent his succession, Hardyng undermines Modred's 'generacioun' from Arthur in order to establish the same

Grafton, to King Henry the Eighth, ed. Henry Ellis (London: British Library Historical Reprints, 2011), p. 148.

⁶¹ On the evolution of Modred and Arthur's relationship in medieval romance, see Archibald, 'Arthur and Mordred: Variations on an Incest Theme', 1-27.

⁶² *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle: The Old French Arthurian and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, 10 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), II, p. 138.

⁶³ *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle: The Old French Arthurian and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, 10 vols (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), VIII, p. 3 and p.7.

degrees of consanguinity between Arthur, Modred and Constantine. According to Hardyng, Arthur has two nephews: Modred is his ‘syster sunne’ (Hardyng, First Version, l. 3.3788), while Constantine is ‘his brother son’ (Hardyng, First Version, l. 3.3906). Based on their relationship to Arthur, Modred and Constantine have the same claim to the throne; however, Modred’s betrayal of his uncle challenges his right of succession, and subsequently reinforces Constantine’s position as Arthur’s legitimate heir.

In fifteenth-century versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, Constantine’s genealogy and his consanguinity to Arthur demonstrate the instability of textual production. The Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* states that Arthur ‘gorchmynnws ef coron y dyrmas y custennyn vab kadwr ygar’ [‘entrusted the crown of the kingdom to Constantine Cador’s son, his cousin’] (*BYB*, p. 193); however, John J. Parry notes that a variant reading of the succession occurs in the Black Book of Basingwerk, which claims that Constantine was ‘I nai ap i vrawd kanis mad oedd y kadwe hwnww i wrlais iarll keirnym o eigr verch amlawd wledig mam Arthur’ [‘his nephew, his brother’s son, for that Cador was son to Gorlois Earl of Cornwall, by Igerne, Arthur’s mother, daughter of Prince Amlawd’] (*BYB*, p. 193, note 7). The substitution of cousin (‘ygar’) for nephew (‘vrawd’) can be attributed to the scribe, Gutun Owain. The extended account of Constantine’s lineage in the Black Book of Basingwerk is derived from the twelfth-century Welsh genealogical tract *Bonedd yr Arwyr* that identifies Igerne as the daughter of Prince Amlawd, and records ‘*Kunstentin* ap Kadwr ap Gwrlais iarll Kernyw nai ap brawd vnvam ac Arthur’ [‘Constantine son of Cador son of Gorlois earl of Cornwall nephew to Arthur and

son of his maternal half-brother’].⁶⁴ In addition to the Black Book of Basingwerk, Gutun Owain produced two of the manuscripts that contain *Bonedd yr Arwyr*, including Llanstephan MS. 28 and Peniarth MS. 131.⁶⁵ By using the entries in *Bonedd yr Arwyr* to inform his genealogy of Constantine in his version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, Gutun Owain establishes continuity between the British kings and reinforces the importance of Welsh historical tradition.

Between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries, Constantine was transformed from a distant, unidentified relative of Arthur to his fraternal nephew. Constantine traces his consanguinity to Arthur through his father, Cador, duke of Cornwall, who is the son of Igerna and Gorlois. Constantine’s descent from Igerna legitimises his position as Arthur’s heir, and demonstrates the importance of collateral relatives for a childless monarch.

Modred and Constantine: Contested Succession

In Hector Boece’s *Historia gentis Scotorum* (‘History of the Scottish People, 1527), Arthur formally names Modred, the son of Anna and Lot of Lothian, as his heir. Modred’s right of succession is based on a treaty between Arthur and Lot of Lothian, which unites the Britons and the Picts against the Saxons; however, on the advice of the British nobles, Arthur substitutes Modred, his cousin for Constantine, the duke of Cornwall, and breaks the terms of the treaty. Boece juxtaposes Arthur’s two potential heirs against each other in order to assert Modred’s right to the throne, and he also

⁶⁴ *Bonedd yr Arwyr*, in *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. by Peter C. Bartrum (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 85-94 (p. 94). Emphasis in original. Translation my own.

⁶⁵ There are eight manuscripts that are wholly or partially written by Gutun Owain, including: Llanstephan MS. 28; Jesus College MS. 6; Peniarth MS. 131, 71-138; Peniarth MS. 27, pt. iii; Mostyn MS. 88; NLW MS. 7006 D (*Llyfyr Du Basing*), 89-308; Peniarth MS. 27, pt. i; Peniarth MS. 186. All of the manuscripts were produced after 1470, and most between 1475 and 1495; see J. E. Caerwyn Williams, ‘Gutun Owain’, in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Volume Two, 1282-1550*, ed. by A. O. H. Jarman, Gwilym Rees Hughes, and Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 240-55.

transforms the battle of Camlann from a civil war between an uncle and his nephew into a tragedy of succession between the Britons and the Picts.

As Arthur's heir, Modred has the capacity to unite the Britons and the Picts.

In order to defeat the Saxons, Arthur creates an alliance with Lot of Lothian, the leader of the Picts, which guarantees Modred's right of succession. Boece writes that

Foederis leges erant Arthurus ad vitae exitum in Britannia regnaret; eo vita functo, Modredo eiusque inde liberis (si qui homini nascerentur) Britanniae regnum deferretur. Picti cum Britannis adversus Saxones acciti facerent commilitium. Cum Scotis in veteri perstarent foedere. Quantum agrorum trans Humbrum Saxonibus bello adimeretur, tantum Pictis cederet. Modredus Gawolani viri secundum regem inter Britannos nobilissimi filiae copularetur matrimonio, qui ex eo connubio nascerentur liberi in Britannia avi cura educarentur et tutela. Gawanus germanus Modredi, praediis et stipendiis donatus ab Arthuro, inter regios amicos numeratus cum eo et domi esset et militiae. Erant ad haec et aliae leges aliis foederum conditionibus adiectae.

[The terms of this pact were that Arthur would rule in Britain until the end of his life; after his death, the throne of Britain would devolve upon Modredus and then upon his issue, should any such exist. When summoned, the Picts would join the Britons in fighting the Saxons. They would continue in their ancient pact with the Scots. As much land beyond the Humber could be won from the Saxons would be given to the Picts. Modredus would marry the daughter of Gwalanus, the most noble man among the Britons next to the king, and whatever children might be born from that marriage would be raised by the care and supervision of their grandfather. Modredus' father-in-law was to be granted estates and a stipend by Arthur, and to be counted among the king's friends both at home and in the field. Other conditions were likewise stipulated.]

(HGS, 9.27)

This treaty unites the Britons and the Picts on several different levels: first, the proposed marriage between Modred and Gwalanus' daughter creates a union between the Britons and the Scots; second, their descendants embody the union of two different peoples and their respective bloodlines; and finally, the eventual succession of their children will unite the British and the Scottish crowns. The treaty between the Picts and the Scots functions as a public recognition of succession, and

also rectifies Arthur's previous disinheritance of Modred and Gawain. This legal documentation reinforces Modred's claim to Britain.

In contrast to Modred, who is linked to Arthur by blood, Constantine is elected Arthur's heir on the basis of his virtue. Boece explains that, during Arthur's reign, the title of heir or prince was achieved by 'haereditario iure aut electorum suffragiis' ['right of inheritance or the vote of electors'] (HGS, 9.37). Despite the treaty between the Britons and the Picts, the British nobles reject Modred as Arthur's heir on the grounds that it would be dishonorable or unsafe 'Pictici sanguinis virum rei summam inter eos administrare' ['for a man of Pictish blood to govern them'] (HGS, 9.37). In order to appease his counsellors, Arthur suggests that they should elect a young man 'veteri regum sanguine honestatum' ['ennobled by the ancient blood of their kings'] (HGS, 9.37). Constantine is linked by blood to the British kings through his father, Cador, duke of Cornwall; however, as Rosemary Morris points out, 'Boece [...] suppresses Constantine's relationship to Arthur in order to compound the villainy of the British'.⁶⁶ The British nobles privilege the continuation of the national bloodline rather than the bloodline of the current monarch, especially if there is a foreign threat to political stability. Furthermore, Constantine is distinguished more by his virtue than his ancestry: he is 'egregium adolescentem, corpore validum, aetate florentem' ['a fine young man, strong of body, flourishing in his youth'], who displays 'varia ac multa probitatis signa omnibus' ['various signs of moral uprightness to one and all'] (HGS, 9.37). Constantine imitates Arthur's monarchical behaviour, and his election upholds the honour of the British people.

The election of Constantine as Arthur's heir disrupts the terms of a treaty between Arthur and Lot of Lothian. In an attempt to uphold the authority of the

⁶⁶ Morris, *The Character of Arthur*, p. 139.

treaty, the Picts appeal to Arthur to employ his ‘dignitate’ [‘royal dignity’] to preserve ‘quaeque publice sancita essent regia’ [‘that which had been publicly agreed upon’] (*HGS*, 9.38); however, Arthur refuses to be bound by the agreement, and Boece writes that

Ad haec, authoribus Britanniae primoribus, responsum: foedera inter Arthurum regem et Lothum icta ea lege ut, eorum altero vita functo, alterum non tenerent; idcirco quod Constantinum, virum clarissimum, in quo praeclara virtutum omnium essent seminaria, Lotho vita functo, populo ostendissent post Arthurum publicae administrationi admovendum, haud in foederis leges peccavisse. Regnantium esse ne regna in peregrini hominis potestatem venirent, summa tueri et ope et providentia. Constantinum Britannici sanguinis virum insigni probitate, Modredum Pictici, a quo hominum genere Britannos, si quando in Modredi cederent potestatem, quia illi semper Britannicae saluti fuissent adversarii, non posse non aliquid formidare iniuriae: difficile siquidem esse duas gentes, quae inter se per tam multa secula depopulationibus, caedibus, atque id genus iniuriis aliis desaeviscent, sub alterius gentis principe in unum concordemque populum coalescere, quandoquidem consueviscent principes originis suae gentem caeteris mortalibus praeferre. Pictis ergo suis terminis, si saperent (ut saperent potius) contentis non esse aliena expetenda regna, foreque si rem tentarent pristino more vicinis iniurii esse pergentes, ut quantum incommodi sua ipsis afferet temeritas, quando aliter pacari non possent, propediem essent experturi.

[To these words, speaking as instructed by the British nobility, Arthur gave his reply [to the Picts]: the treaty between King Arthur and Lothus had been made with the stipulation that, at the death of one of them, it would not be binding on the other. Therefore, since Lothus had deceased, he had displayed to the people Constantine, a right noble man, in whom shone forth the bright seeds of all the virtues, and in promoting him to rule after himself he had not sinned against the terms of the treaty. For it was the duty of rulers to strive might and main to ensure that that their realms not fall under the power of a foreigner. Constantine was a British-born man of outstanding uprightness, whereas Modredus was a Pict, and the Picts were a race of men whom the British could not help but fear, if ever they fell under Modredus’ power, for they had ever been antagonistic to British security. It would be difficult for two nations, which for so many centuries had savaged each other with plundering, murder, and suchlike wrongdoings, to unite into a single people under a ruler belonging to either nationality, inasmuch as they had been habituated to prefer a sovereign of their own nation to all other mortals. Therefore, if they were well advised (or rather, because they were well advised), they should rest content with their own borders and not chase after foreign kingdoms. For, should they attempt this and continue bothering their neighbors in their traditional way, any day now they would discover how

much trouble their temerity would bring down on themselves, since they could not otherwise be pacified.]

(HGS, 9.38)

Arthur's grounds for dissolving the treaty are entirely legitimate as medieval treaties were concluded between individual rulers – rather than nations – and the death of one of the contractual parties invalidated the treaty.⁶⁷ Despite this legal justification, Boece uses Arthur's breach of the treaty as evidence of the faithlessness of the Britons who are 'nullum teneret sacramentum' ['bound by no oath'] and feel 'nullumque puderet violasse foedus' ['no shame about breaking their treaties'] (HGS, 9.39). Arthur also emphasises the ethnicities of Modred and Constantine to justify the election of his chosen heir: Constantine is of 'Britannici sanguinis' ['British birth'], while Modred is a Pict. The term 'peregrine hominis' – from 'peregrinus' meaning 'foreign, or alien' and 'homo' meaning 'man' – further reinforces the otherness of the Picts, especially as 'peregrinus' was traditionally used to describe someone without legal standing. By disinheriting Modred, Arthur undermines the chance of a political union between the 'duas gentes' ['two nations'], and he claims that the Britons 'principes originis suae gentem caeteris mortalibus praeferre' ['prefer a sovereign of their own nation to all other mortals'] (HGS, 9.38). In order to defend Modred's right to the throne, the Picts declare war against the Britons – or rather their 'perfidum hostem' ['treacherous enemy'] (HGS, 9.39) – and Arthur and Modred's deaths at the battle of Camlann are the result of a tragedy of succession.

In the *Historia gentis Scotorum*, Modred's claim to the British throne is based on a legal agreement that Boece considers to be contractually binding. For disinheriting Modred, Boece presents Arthur as an unfaithful king who shows no

⁶⁷ Thanks to Jenny Benham in the School of History, Archaeology, and Religion at Cardiff University for informing me of this matter.

respect for treaties, oaths, and promises, and he subsequently justifies Modred's rebellion as an attempt to protect his political interests and to guarantee his right of succession.

As Helen Cooper observes, '[t]he "historical" Arthur has no direct heir to ensure a safe linear succession; but in the prose romance versions [including the French Vulgate cycle and Malory's *Morte Darthur*], any possibility of a rightful succession is disastrously compromised by the existence of an incestuous son'.⁶⁸

Although linear succession is problematic for the Arthurian kin group, this selection of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chronicles demonstrate that collateral relatives – including cousins and nephews – can compensate for the lack of direct heir.

Collateral bonds between uncles, nephews, and cousins are based on the descent from a common ancestor, which creates the impression of continuity between Arthur and his potential heirs, Constantine and Modred.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the relationships between Arthur and his extended kin group change across time and space, which subsequently emphasise problems concerning legitimacy, inheritance and succession. With no direct descendants, Arthur's family is primarily based on a collateral model of kinship, and Anna, Modred, and Constantine all claim varying degrees of consanguinity to Arthur in the *Historia*. Later chroniclers subsequently used – and often revised – these bonds of blood and kinship for their own ideological purposes. Scottish chroniclers exploited the subversive potential of Anna to challenge Arthur's authority and establish Modred's right of succession. English and Welsh chroniclers used the breach of

⁶⁸ Cooper, 'Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-killing in the Prose Romances', p. 151.

horizontal and collateral bonds between Arthur and Modred to demonstrate the illegitimacy of treason and adultery; they also revised the degrees of consanguinity between Constantine and Arthur to emphasise the importance of political stability and dynastic continuity. In contrast, the Scots maintained that Modred could reconcile the Britons and the Scots and provide national unity.

For a childless king like Arthur, the collateral model of kinship provides substitute heirs who can counteract dynastic failure. According to English, Scottish, and Welsh chroniclers, the consanguinity between Arthur and his potential heirs, Constantine or Modred, provides some degree of genealogical continuity between the successions of British kings. Yet in the *Historia*, Geoffrey uses the succession of Constantine – who is Arthur’s kinsman rather than his son – to emphasise the problems of dynastic discontinuity and marks the initial decline of the Britons. By transforming Constantine into Arthur’s nephew, and creating a narrative of continuity based on inheritance and succession, English and Welsh chroniclers eliminate the disjuncture between these two kings and attempt to counteract the beginnings of the loss of British sovereignty. The next chapter examines the loss of British sovereignty in more detail through an analysis of the linguistic and geographical construction of the British landscape.

6. ‘as time passed and languages changed’: Etymologies, Geography, and British Sovereignty

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the loss of British sovereignty is synonymous with the loss of British identity. Following the death of Cadwaladr, Geoffrey describes how Britons lost control of the island and states that

Barbarie etiam irrepente, iam non uocabantur Britones sed Gualenses, uocabulum siue Gualone duce eorum siue a Galaes regina siue a barbarie trahentes. [...] Degenerati autem a Britannica nobilitate Gualenses numquam postea monarchiam insulae recuperauerunt.

[As their culture ebbed, they were no longer called Britons, but Welsh, a name which owes origin to their leader Gualo, or to queen Galaes or to their decline. [...] The Welsh, unworthy successors of the noble Britons, never again recovered mastery of the whole island[.]¹

According to Geoffrey, ‘Welsh’ – or *Gualenses* – has multiple origins and multiple meanings. In his *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville suggested that words could be derived from: their rationale; their origin; their derivation from other words; or their sound.² Geoffrey’s etymologies of *Gualenses* are based on origin (from ‘Gualo’ or ‘Galaes’) and rationale (‘trahentes’, meaning ‘dragging’ or ‘trailing’); however, none of these explanations are correct as *Gualenses* actually derives from the Old English

¹ *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2007; repr. 2009), 207.592-9.

² See *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. by Stephen A. Barney et al (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.29.

vealh, meaning foreigner or slave.³ Geoffrey's false etymology, then, allows him to establish a contrast between the noble Britons and the unworthy Welshmen.

Etymologies are a recurrent motif throughout the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Geoffrey's invented etymologies are primarily applied to people or places: Britain and the Britons are both named after Brutus; Corineia and the Corineians are named after Corineus; Loegria, Kambria, and Albania – or England, Wales, and Scotland – are named after Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus respectively. Etymology is a powerful linguistic tool and, as Derek Attridge points out, it can be used

to confirm a dominant ideology, to deny the possibility of purposeful change, to reinforce the myth of objective and transcendent [*sic*] truth; but it can be used to unsettle ideology, to uncover opportunities for change, to undermine absolutes and authority – and to do so without setting up an alternative truth claim.⁴

While Geoffrey uses etymology to demonstrate territorial dominion, he is also aware that names change throughout time; indeed, he notes that Albania is 'his temporibus appellatur Scotia' ['known today as Scotland'] (*HRB*, 23.11); Kambria 'nunc Gualia uocatur' ['[is] now known as Wales'] (*HRB*, 23.8); and Corineia is now called Cornwall 'uel a cornu Britanniae uel per corruptionem praedicti nominis' ['either after Britain's horn or through corruption of the name Corineia'] (*HRB*, 21.466-7). The substitution of these names emphasises the mutability of language, and erases the connection between people and place.

³ Despite their colonial connotations, Welsh writers in Latin did use *Wallia* and *Walenses* during the twelfth century. Huw Pryce argues that that '[t]he adoption by Cambro-Latin writers of English terms for Wales and its people is [...] probably best understood in terms, not of cultural domination, but of a wider dynamic of cultural interaction and adaptation in twelfth-century Wales'; see Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), 775-801.

⁴ Derek Attridge, 'Language as History/History as Language: Saussure and the Romance of Etymology', in *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. by D. Attridge, Geoffrey Bennington and Robert Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 183-211 (p. 202).

This chapter analyses the change of place names in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and its later translations and adaptations, arguing that linguistic change, and the reconfiguration of space and place, undermines claims of British sovereignty. In contrast to R. William Leckie, Jr, who has examined how Geoffrey revised the chronological boundaries of insular history, this chapter approaches the passage of dominion through the construction of British geography.⁵ By examining a selection of texts produced in England between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, this chapter demonstrates how etymologies and place names were used as a recurring motif across the Galfridian tradition.⁶ The first section focuses on the foundation of cities in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, and analyses how the substitution of British place names is linked to Roman imperial power. The second section addresses how Anglo-Norman and Middle English translations of the *Historia* use place names to demonstrate the effect of foreign conquests and to establish the multilingual nature of medieval Britain. The final section examines the renaming of Britain as England in Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, as well as the verse chronicles of Robert of Gloucester, Pierre de Langtoft, Thomas Castleford, and John Hardyng, and addresses how local and regional

⁵ On chronology and the passage of dominion, see R. William Leckie, Jr, *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 87-94. For an alternative interpretation of the passage of dominion in the *Historia*, see Robert Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York and London: Columbia University Press 1966), pp. 121-172.

⁶ Lesley Johnson, Joanna Bellis and Siân Echard have all examined the function of etymologies and place names in the *Historia regum Britanniae*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, and Lazamon's *Brut*, but they have not addressed the use of these motifs in the later Galfridian tradition; see Lesley Johnson, 'Etymologies, Genealogies, and Nationalities (Again)', in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Alan V. Murray, Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson (University of Leeds, School of English, 1995), pp. 127-136; Joanna Bellis, 'Mapping the National Narrative: Place-Name Etymology in Lazamon's *Brut* and Its Sources', in *Reading Lazamon's Brut: Approaches and Explorations*, ed. by Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts and Carole Weinberg (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 321-42; and Siân Echard, 'Palimpsests of Place and Time in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', in *Teaching and Learning in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Gernot R. Wieland on his 67th Birthday*, ed. by Greti Dinkova-Bruun and Tristan Major (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2017), pp. 43-59.

geography is used to mark the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons. This chapter focuses exclusively on texts produced in England as Welsh chronicles often demarcate the loss of British sovereignty outside the boundaries of the Galfridian narrative, while Scottish histories operate in a different historical and national framework that does not directly address the historical significance and impact of the Saxon conquest.

The Cities of Britain: Etymologies and Local Histories

The twenty-eight cities of Britain are an established part of the geographical description of the island. Gildas and Bede both mention the cities in their topographical prologues, and Catherine A. M. Clarke notes that they ‘underline the aesthetics and politics of enclosure which are central to the island *locus amoenus*’.⁷ The cities are first named in the *Historia Brittonum*, and several scholars and editors, including Kenneth Jackson, John Morris, Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews, and Andrew Breeze, have attempted to identify each of the different locations.⁸ In the twelfth century, Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth provided contemporary equivalents for the British cities in the *Historia Brittonum*, but they often misidentified some of the sites. Following Henry of Huntingdon, Alfred of Beverley and Ranulph Higden copied the list of cities into their historical works, and they repeated many of the geographical errors in the *Historia Anglorum*. As early as

⁷ Catherine A. M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700-1400* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), p. 21.

⁸ See Kenneth Jackson, ‘Nennius and the Twenty-Eight Cities of Britain’, *Antiquity*, 12 (1938), 44-55; Keith J. Fitzpatrick-Matthews, ‘The *xxiii ciuitates britannie* of the *Historia Brittonum*: Antiquarian Speculation in Early Medieval Wales’, *Journal of Literary Onomastics*, 4 (2015) 1-19; Andrew Breeze, ‘*Historia Brittonum* and Britain’s Twenty-Eight Cities’, *Journal of Literary Onomastics*, 5 (2016), 1-16. John Morris attempts to identify the cities in his edition of the *Historia Brittonum*; see Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. by John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1980), p. 40 (§66a).

1924, F. J. Haverfield felt it noteworthy to remark that the tradition ‘has had a long history which it did not deserve, and has wasted the time of many men’.⁹

Despite the corrupt textual history of this tradition, the twenty-eight cities of Britain were central to insular history writing in the medieval and early modern periods. This section examines the representations of the Roman-British landscape in the *Historia Brittonum*, Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum*, and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*; it also demonstrates how Geoffrey used this tradition to emphasise the relationship between Britain and Rome, which underpins the ideological framework of the *Historia*.¹⁰

Nennius and Henry of Huntingdon

The list of cities in the *Historia Brittonum* demonstrates how the Romano-British landscape was represented in the early ninth century. The complex textual production of the *Historia Brittonum* affected the enumeration of the different cities: the ‘Harleian’ recension (c. 829-30) identifies the traditional twenty-eight cities, while the ‘Vatican’ recension (c. 944) recognises thirty-three cities, including Cair Gurcoc, Cair Merdin, Cair Ceri, Cair Gloui, and Cair Teim.¹¹ Only twelve cities in the extended list have been successfully identified: Cair Ebrauc is York; Cair Ceint is Canterbury; Cair Segeint is Carnarvon; Cair Ceri is Cirencester; Cair Gloiu is Gloucester; Cair Luilid is Carlisle; Cair Ligion is Chester; Cair Guent is Caerwent;

⁹ F. Haverfield, ‘Appendix: The XXVIII Cities of Britain’, in *The Roman Occupation of Britain: Being Six Ford Lectures Delivered by F. Haverfield*, ed. by George MacDonald (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 289-93 (p. 293).

¹⁰ On Britain and Rome in the *Historia* see, Siân Echard, “‘Whyche thyng semeth not to agree with other histories...’: Rome in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his Early Modern Readers.” *Arthurian Literature*, 26 (2009), 109-29.

¹¹ David Dumville suggests that these five cities ‘could have been added only by a Welshman’. The Vatican recension also incorporates the list of cities into the main body of the text; see David N. Dumville, ‘Introduction’, *The Historia Brittonum: The ‘Vatican’ Recension*, ed. by David N. Dumville (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), pp. 1-58 (p. 49).

Caeir Collon is Colchester; Cair Londein is London; Cair Ligion is Caerleon; and Cair Loit Coit is Wall-by-Lichfield. Several of these cities – including York, Colchester, Gloucester, and London – were major sites of Roman power, while other places such as Caerwent, Canterbury, and Cirencester were local capitals that had ‘undergone a certain degree of Romanization’.¹² In contrast, the more obscure cities that are included in the list are associated with legendary figures in British history, most notably Cair Guorthegern (Vortigern), Cair Custein (Constantine), and Cair Caratauc (Caradoc). These toponyms inscribe each of these heroes into the landscape of Britain, and they arguably provide a model for Geoffrey of Monmouth’s inventive etymologies in the *Historia regum Britanniae*.

Writing in the early twelfth century, Henry of Huntingdon was the first historian who attempted to identify the cities of Britain. In his *Historia Anglorum*, Henry includes the names of the British cities, and their contemporary equivalents, in his geographical survey of the island, which includes the names of cities, the seven Anglo-Saxons kingdoms, archbishoprics, and shires. He writes that

Erat autem et ciuitatibus quondam uiginti et octo nobilissimis insignita, preter castella innumera, que et ipsa muris, turribus, portis, ac series errant instructa firmissimis. Ciuitatum autem nomina hec errant Britannice: Kair Ebrauc, id est Eboracum; Kaer Chent, id est Cantuaria; Kair Gorangon, id est Wignoria; Kair Londene, id est Lundoinea; Kair Lirion, id est Leiceastria; Kair Collon, id est Coleceastria; Kair Glou, id est Gloueeceastria; Kair Cei, id est Ciceastria; Kair Bristou; Kair Ceri, id est Cireceastria; Kair Guent, id est Winceastria; Kair Grant, id est Granceastria, que modo dicitur Grantebrigia; Kair Lion quo uocamus Carleuil; Kair Dauri, id est Doreceastria; Kair Dorm, id est Dormecestre, que sita in Huntendonensi prouincia super flumen quod uocatur Nen penitus destructa est; Kair Loitchoit, id est Lincoloa; Kair Merdin, que nunc quoque sic uocatur; Kair Guorcon; Kair Cucerat; Kair Guortegern; Kair Vruac; Kair Celemion; Kair Meguaid; Kair Licilid; Kair Peris; Kair Legion. In qua fuit archiepiscopatus tempora Britonum. Nunc autem uix menia eius comparent, ubi Usca cadit in Sabrinam; Kair Draitou; Kair Mercipit; Kair Segent, que fuit super Tamasim non longe Redinge et uocatur Silcestre. Hec errant nomina ciuitatum tempora Romanorum et Britannorum.

¹² R. G. Collingwood, *Roman Britain*, rev. edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 54

[In the past it [Britain] was famous for twenty-eight very noble cities, in addition to the innumerable castles which were built with extremely strong walls, towers, and gates with locks. These were the names of the cities in the British tongue: Kaer Ebrauc, that is York; Kair Chent, that is Canterbury; Kaer Gorangon, that is Worcester; Kaer Londene, that is London; Kaer Lirion, that is Leicester; Kair Collon, that is Colchester; Kair Glou, that is Gloucester; Kair Cei, that is Chichester; Kair Bristou [Bristol]; Kair Ceri, that is Cirencester; Kaer Guent, that is Winchester; Kair Grant, that is Granchester, which is now called Cambridge; Kair Lion, which we call Carlisle; Kair Dauri, that is Dorchester; Kair Dorm, that is *Dormecestre*, situated in Huntingdonshire on the river Nene, but almost completely destroyed; Kair Loitchoit, that is Lincoln; Kair Merdin, which is still known by than name [Carmarthen]; Kair Guorcon; Kair Cucerat; Kair Guortegern; Kair Vruac; Kair Celemion; Kair Meguaid; Kair Licilid; Kair Peris; Kair Legion, where there was an archbishopric in times of the Britons, but now its walls are scarcely visible, at the point where the river Usk falls into the Severn [Caerleon]; Kair Draitou; Kair Mercipit; Kaer Segent, which was on the Thames not far from Reading and is called Silchester. These were the names of the cities in the time of the Romans and the Britons.]¹³

Haverfield notes that Henry's identifications of British place names 'appear to be his own devising, and, on the whole, they possess very little value'.¹⁴ Indeed, Henry misidentifies Kair Loitchoit (or Lichfield) as Lincoln; Kaer Guent (or Caerwent) as Winchester; Kaer Segent (or Caernarfon) as Silchester; Kair Bristou (probably Dumbarton) as Bristol; and Kair Lion as Carlisle (probably Leicester). He also appears to have invented Kair Dorm, which may reflect his local knowledge of the area. Despite his misidentifications of certain place names, Henry attempts to construct a landscape that accurately reflects sub-Roman Britain. Following the Vatican recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, he mentions all four of the major Roman 'colonies' – Colchester, Gloucester, Lincoln, and York – as well as the capital city of London. With the exception of Cirencester, Henry names four local capitals that are not mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum* (Chichester, Winchester,

¹³ Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Diana E. Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1. 3.

¹⁴ F. Haverfield, 'Appendix: The XXVIII Cities of Britain', p. 291.

Silchester, and Leicester). Furthermore, Henry's list of cities demonstrates the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the description of Caerleon was only included in the third edition of his *Historia Anglorum* (c. 1140).¹⁵ Henry also borrowed further details about Portchester and Silchester from Geoffrey, and his revisions are evidence of the intertextual relationship between the *Historia Anglorum* and the *Historia regum Britanniae*.¹⁶

Geoffrey of Monmouth

In contrast to Nennius and Henry of Huntingdon, who simply name the cities of Britain, Geoffrey of Monmouth creates foundation legends for many of the different cities and incorporates local details into his larger vision of national history. Antonia Gransden suggests that Geoffrey's interest in the etymology of place names, and his use of eponymous founders, is derived from Roman authors (particularly Virgil).¹⁷ Geoffrey uses this classical strategy to explain the origins of British cities – especially those with Roman associations – and establish sites of historical and political significance.

Many of the British kings in the *Historia regum Britanniae* are builders of cities, but only Ebraucus, Leil, and Leir give their names to local sites – namely York, Carlisle, and Leicester. Geoffrey writes that Ebraucus 'Deinde trans Humbrum condidit ciuitatem, quam de nomine suo uocauit Kaerebrauc, id est ciuitas Ebrauci'

¹⁵ In her edition of the *Historia Anglorum*, Diana Greenway notes that Henry's description of Caerleon 'first appears in the third version of *HA*, c. 1140, [and] is probably based on *HRB*, c. 72, which names three *archiflamines* of Britain as London, York, and *Vrbs Legionum* (Caerleon)'; see *Historia Anglorum*, p. 15 (n. 14).

¹⁶ On the relationship between British place names in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and the third version of the *Historia Anglorum*, see F. Haverfield, 'Appendix: The XXVIII Cities of Britain', p. 292; and J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950; repr. New York: Gordian Press, 1974), pp. 7-84.

¹⁷ Antonia Gransden, 'Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England', *Speculum*, 47.1 (1972), 29-51 (p. 45).

[‘built a city north of the Humber, which he called Kaerebrauc, or the city of Ebraucus, after himself’] (*HRB*, 27.89-91). He also recalls that Leil ‘usus est urbem in aquilonari parte Britanniae aedificauit, de nomine suo Kaerleil uocatam’ [‘built in the north of Britain a city named Carlisle after him’] (*HRB*, 28.111-12), and Leir ‘Aedificauit autem super flumen Soram ciuitatem, quae Britannice de nomine eius Kaerleir, Saxonice uero Lerecestre nuncupatur’ [‘built a city by the river Soar, named after him Kerleir in British, and Leicester in English’] (*HRB*, 31.135-7). As Monika Otter observes, Geoffrey

create[s] a ‘storied’ landscape, a kind of spatial deployment of collective memory: the landscape becomes a substratum for the whole history, which is created by the characters who live on it – in fact, it consists of them – and at the same time underlies, supports, and brings forth their further activities.¹⁸

The landscape of Britain symbolises the events of British history. Furthermore, the etymological link between these different kings and their associated cities constructs a mapped landscape that strengthens British sovereignty over the whole island.

Like Ebraucus, Leil, and Leir, Brutus of Troy is another eponymous founder, and he renames Albion as Britain in order to preserve the memory of his name. Brutus founds Britain’s capital city – *Troia Nova* – but the name of the city changes throughout time. After founding Britain, Geoffrey reports how Brutus

circuiuit tocius patriae ut congruum locum inueniret. Perueniens ergo ad Tamensem fluuium, deambulauit littora locumque nactus est proposito suo perspicuum. Condedit itaque ciuitatem ibidem eamque Troiam Nouam uocabit. Ea, hoc nomine multi postmodum temporibus appellata, tandem per corruptionem uocabili Trinouantum dicta fuit. At postquam Lud frater Cassibellauni, qui cum Iulio Cesare dimicauit, regni gubernaculum adeptus est, cinxit eam nobilissimus murus nec non et turribus mira arte fabricatis ; de nomine quoque suo iussit eam dici Kaerlud, id est ciuitas Lud.

[toured the whole extent of the country to find a suitable site. When he came to the river Thames, he walked its banks and found the very spot for his

¹⁸ Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 70.

plans. There he founded a city which he called New Troy. It retained this name for a long time until it was eventually corrupted to Trinovantum. When Lud, the brother of Cassibellaunus, who fought against Julius Caesar, came to the throne, he surrounded the city with fine walls and wonderfully built towers; and he commanded that it might be named Kaerlud or Lud's city.]
(*HRB*, 22.491-9)

Built on the banks of the Thames, London is one of many cities in the *Historia* that is founded next to a river: Leicester is built by the Soar (*HRB*, 31.135-7); Gloucester by the Severn (*HRB*, 68.334-9); Caerleon by the Usk (*HRB*, 44.217-25); and York by the Humber (*HRB*, 27.89-91). As Wyman H. Herendeen notes, '[r]ivers [... are] overtly associated with the founding of cities and the spread of civilization. The river, in nature and in myth, harmonizes the opposing strains of local identity and imperial suzerainty'.¹⁹ New Troy forms the regional locus of power, and the name of the city represents the shared heritage between the Trojans and the Britons. Meanwhile, the rebuilding of New Troy – or rather *Kaer Lud* – by Lud anticipates Cassibellanus' resistance to Roman imperialism. The names *Kaer Lud* and *Kaer Lundein* create an etymological link with the eponymous founder of the city, Lud, and also recall the name of London in the *Historia Brittonum*.

While Brutus' capital city resembles Troy, Belinus' and Arthur's seat of power at Caerleon imitates Rome. Throughout the *Historia*, Caerleon is identified as a site of British power, a Roman military fortress, and a place of ecclesiastical authority. After Brennius and Belinus have conquered Rome, Geoffrey describes how Belinus returned to Britain and

Renouauit etiam aedificatas urbes ubicumque collapsae fuerant et multas nouas aedificauit. Inter ceteras composuit unam super oscam flumen prope Sabrinam mare, quae multis temporibus Kaerusc appellate metropolis Demetiae fuerat; postquam autem Romani uenerunt, praefato nomine delete uocata est Vrbs Legionum, uocabulum trahens a Romanis legionibus quae

¹⁹ Wyman H. Herendeen, *From Landscape to Literature: The River and the Myth of Geography* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 85.

ibidem hiemare solebant. Fecit etiam in urbe Trinouantum ianuam mirae fabricate super ripam Tamensis, quam de nomine suo cius temporibus istis Belinesgata uocant.

[repaired the existing cities where they were dilapidated and built many new ones. Amongst others he built one on the river Usk near the mouth of the Severn, which became the metropolitan city of Demetia [South Wales] and for a long time was known as Kaerusk; after the Romans came, it was called instead Caerleon, taking its name from the Roman legions who used to winter there. In the city of Trinovantum Belinus made a wonderful gate beside the Thames, which the inhabitants now call Billingsgate after him].

(HRB, 44.217-25)

The original name of the city – *Kaerusk* – is based on the natural landscape. Geoffrey also comments that the city is ‘pratis atque nemoribus uallata’ [‘surrounded by meadows and woods’] (HRB, 156.317), and the idealised landscape at Caerleon represents a localised version of the *locus amoenus* topos.²⁰ The river Usk functions as a transport route between Britain and its surrounding islands, allowing ‘transmarini reges et principes’ [‘kings and princes visiting from overseas’] (HRB, 156.315-16) to attend Arthur’s plenary court. During the reign of Arthur, Geoffrey names Caerleon as one of three archbishoprics of Britain – the other two are York and London.²¹ Caerleon is also ‘deliciarumm copiis praeclara’ [‘renowned for so many refinements’] (HRB, 156.325), and Geoffrey describes how the royal palaces in the city are so fine ‘regalibus praepollebat palaciis ita ut aureis tectorum astigiis Romam imitaretur’ [‘that the gold that decked their roofs reminded one of Rome’] (HRB, 156.317-18). The comparison between Caerleon and Rome functions as an act of *translatio imperii*, and Robert Rouse suggests that Geoffrey creates ‘Caerleon as a

²⁰ On localised versions of the *locus amoenus* topos, see Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England*, pp. 67-89.

²¹ Christopher Brooke suggests that Geoffrey identified Caerleon as an archbishopric to counter the disputes between Canterbury and York; see Christopher Brooke, ‘The Archbishops of St David’s, Llandaff and Caerleon-on-Usk’, in *Studies in the Early British Church*, ed. by Nora K. Chadwick et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 201-42; Christopher Brooke, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth as a Historian’, in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on His 70th Birthday*, ed. by C. N. L. Brooke et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 77-92.

new imperial center, a replacement for Rome, just as Arthur replaces Rome's power and heritage'.²² Caerleon is a site of power and resistance.

In contrast to Caerleon, which represents Roman imperialism, Gloucester – or Kaerglou – symbolises unity between Britain and Rome. The city is constructed to perpetuate 'memoriam tantarum nuptiarum in future tempora' ['the memory of so happy a union'] (*HRB*, 68.333-4) between the British king Arviragus and Claudius' daughter, Gewissa. Geoffrey writes that

Claudius praecepitque fieri urbem, qua de nomine eius Kaerglou, id est Gloucestria, nuncupata usque in hodie diem in confinio Kambriae et Logriae super ripam Sabrinæ sit est. Quidam uero dicunt ipsam traxisse nomen a Gloio duce, quem Claudius in illa generauerat, cui post Aruiargum gubernaculum Kambirici ducatus cessit.

[Claudius agreed and ordered the construction of the city, named Kaerglou, or Gloucester, after him, which to this day stands beside the Severn between Wales and Loegria. Others claim that it took its name from Claudius' son the duke of Gloius, who was born there and became duke after Arviragus' death.] (*HRB*, 68.334-9)

J. S. P. Tatlock suggests that the two etymologies of Gloucester are derived from Geoffrey's 'knowledge of local tradition'.²³ The connection between Gloucester and Claudius is derived from the city's Latin name, *Claudiocestria*, and Geoffrey's contemporary, William of Malmesbury, also recognised the city's association with the second Roman emperor.²⁴ By naming the city after Claudius – or even his son – Geoffrey inscribes the memory of one of the emperors of Rome into the British landscape. Arviragus also builds a temple in Gloucester 'in honorem Claudii' ['in

²² Robert Rouse, 'Reading Ruins: Arthurian Caerleon and the Untimely Architecture of History', *Arthuriana*, 23.1 (2012), 40-51 (p. 42).

²³ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, p. 46.

²⁴ In his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* ('The History of the English Bishops', c. 1125), William of Malmesbury writes that 'Gloecestra est ciuitas super flumen Sabrinam posita, putaturque a Claudio nominata, qui secundus Romanorum imperatorum post Iulium Cesarem Britanniam adiit. Denique Britannice uocatur Cairclau' ['Gloucester is a city on the River Severn, thought to be named after Claudius, who was the second Roman emperor, following Julius Caesar, to come to Britain; for the British name is Cairclau']; see William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: Volume One: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. by M. Winterbottom with the assistance of R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 4.153.

Claudius' honour'] (*HRB*, 70.370-1), and his burial at the site after his death commemorates the relationship between Britain and Rome.

Geoffrey of Monmouth connects landscape and history through etymology. As Monika Otter writes, '[g]eography, real and metaphoric, is an important element in Geoffrey's historiography, and the many uses of place names, topography, and space in the *Historia* form a resonant, coherent, motif pattern that is key to Geoffrey's poetics'.²⁵ Geoffrey incorporates the list of cities in the *Historia Brittonum* into his vision of the British landscape, and the naming and renaming of the main centres of British power symbolise the legacy of imperial Rome. Furthermore, the cities of London, Caerleon, and Gloucester, which are located in Wales and the South of England, demonstrate Geoffrey's knowledge of main sites of political power in the contemporary Anglo-Norman world.²⁶

Palimpsest Landscapes: Conquest, Coexistence, Change

In the *Historia regum Britanniae*, the naming and renaming of British cities constructs a palimpsest that, in physical geography and archaeology, 'is a conceptual model of a place as a multilayered structure that emphasises the coexistence of multiple visions and impacts of different cultures on the landscape'.²⁷ While Geoffrey relates the different origins and meanings of certain place names, in later translations and adaptations of the *Historia*, the multilayered landscape of Britain

²⁵ Otter, *Inventiones*, p. 69.

²⁶ On the contemporary relevance of Geoffrey's British geography, see Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, pp. 7-84. On the political significance of Caerleon in the 1130s, see John Gillingham, 'The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*', in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values*, ed. by John Gillingham (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 19-40.

²⁷ Ivan Mitin, 'Palimpsest', in *Encyclopedia of Geography: Volume 2*, ed. by Barney Warf, pp. 2111-12 (p. 2111).

becomes increasing multilingual. Within a multilingual framework, the places names of Britain are located in a linguistic hierarchy. As Helen Fulton notes,

[l]anguages and discourses acquire hierarchical positions within a social framework: they are ranked higher or lower in relation to each other, in accordance with conditions of political and economic power. The extent to which individuals have access to discourses of power will determine their own position in a social hierarchy.²⁸

This section analyses the relationship between language, power, and place in Wace's *Roman de Brut*, as well as the verse chronicles of Robert of Gloucester, Thomas Castleford, and John Hardyng, and demonstrates how the changing names of cities are used to symbolise the multiple conquests of British history.

In the *Roman de Brut*, Wace explains how the various names of London – including, Caerlud, Londoin, Londene, and Lundres – are associated with the different inhabitants of Britain. In contrast to Geoffrey, who simply recounts the change from Kaerlud to Londres, Wace illustrates the linguistic origins of names in English and French. He writes that

Jesqu'a sun tens longes avant,
Aveit nun Lundres Trinovant,
Mai spur Lud, qui mult l'enora
E mult i fu e surjorna,
Fud apelee Kaerlud;
Puis sunt estrange home venud,
Ki le language ne saveient,
Mais Londoïn pur Lud diseint;
Puis vindrent Engleis e Saisson
Ki recorumpurent le nun,
Londoin Lundene nomerent
E Londone longes userent.
Norman vindrent puis e Franceis,

²⁸ Helen Fulton, 'Negotiating Welshness: Multilingualism in Wales Before and After 1066', in *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c. 800-1250*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Tyler, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 145-70. On medieval multilingualism see also, Robert M. Stein, 'Multilingualism', in *Middle English: Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, ed. by Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 23-37; D. A. Trotter, ed., *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain* (Cambridge Brewer, 2000); Judith Anne Jefferson and Ad Putter, eds, *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520): Sources and Analysis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

Ki ne sourent parler Engleis,
 Ne Londene nomer e sourent
 Ainz distrent si com dire pourent,
 Londene unt Londres nomee
 Si unt lur parole gardeee.
 Par remuemenz e par changes
 Des languages as gens estranges,
 Ki la terre unt sovent conquise
 Sovent perdue, soent prise,
 Sunt li nun des viles changed,
 U acreü u acurcied;
 Mult en purreit l'on trover poi,
 Si come jo entent e oi,
 Qui ait tenu entierement
 Le nun qu'ele out premierement.

[Until this time, and long before, London was called Trinovant, but because of Lud, who showered it with honours and spent much time there, it was called Kaerlud. Then foreigners arrived who did not know the language but said "Londoin" for "Lud". Then the Angles and Saxons arrived, who corrupted the name in turn, calling "Londoin" "Lundene", and for a long time "Londene" was used. Next the Normans and the French came, who did not know how to speak English nor how to say "Londene", but spoke as best they could. They called "Londene" "Londres", thus keeping it in their language. Through alterations and changes by the languages of foreigners, who have often conquered, lost and seized, the land, the names of towns have changed, or become longer or shorter. Very few can be found, as I hear and understand, which have completely kept the name they first had].²⁹

The poetics of the passage emphasises the gap between knowledge ('saveient' from 'saver' meaning 'to know'), and speech ('diseient' from 'dire' meaning 'to speak'), and the rhyme between 'changes' and 'estranges' foregrounds the relationship between linguistic change and otherness. Wace clearly demonstrates that linguistic change is the product of imperial conquest, and subsequently 'Sunt les viles, sunt les contrees / Tutes or autrement nomees / Que li ancesior nes nomerent / Ki premierement les fonderunt' ['the towns and the regions all have different names from those their founders gave them, who first established them'] (Wace, ll. 1243-6).

The diachronic etymology of London is structured around the conquests of insular

²⁹ Wace's *Roman de Brut, a History of the British: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), ll. 3757-84.

history, and Wace also relates these names to the present time for his Anglo-Norman audience, explaining that ‘Londene en engleis dist l’un / E nus or Lundres l’appelum’ [‘People call “Londoin”, “Londene”, in English, and we now call it “Lundres”’] (Wace, l. 1237-8). As Lesley Johnson points out, ‘[t]he substitution of names offers an interesting moment of double recognition of discontinuity and continuity’.³⁰ The evolution of ‘Kaerlud’ to ‘Londone’ follows a clear linear narrative that connects past and present; but this etymological history is ruptured by linguistic change that emphasises the effects of conquest.

The choice of place names in Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* (1272) primarily focuses on the contrast between the past and present. Robert rarely comments on the linguistic change of place names as he often abridges Geoffrey’s account of British history, and so his description of the different names for London is particularly unusual. After Lud’s death, and before his account of Cassibellanus’ reign, Robert writes that

þe toun me clupeþ ludestoun . þat is wide couþ.
 & now me clupeþ it londone . þat is liȝtore in þe mouþ
 & niwe troye hit het er . & nou it is so ago
 þat londone it is now icluped . & worþ euere mo.³¹

Robert repeats ‘londone’ twice in this short passage, emphasizing that the present name takes precedence over the earlier forms, ‘ludestoun’ and ‘niwe troye’. Michelle R. Warren notes that Robert explains changes of names as ‘phonetic rather than colonial events’, and ‘divorces the ethics of conquest from the aesthetics of language’.³² The substitution of place names is the result of the linguistic barriers between the different peoples of Britain, especially as Robert claims that ‘londone’ is

³⁰ Lesley Johnson, ‘Etymologies, Genealogies, and Nationalities (Again)’, p. 132.

³¹ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, 2 vols (London: Printed for G. M. Stationery by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), I, ll. 1028-32.

³² Michelle R. Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1330*, *Medieval Cultures* 22 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 114-5.

‘liȝtore in þe mouþ’ for foreign invaders that ‘ludestoun’. In relation to language, ‘light’ can be defined as ‘readily understandable; simple; easy to pronounce or recite’.³³ The sound of speech, then, necessitates linguistic change.

In *Castleford’s Chronicle* (1327), British and English place names are used simultaneously. For example, the text states that Bladud founded a city ‘of hys name he callyd Cairebad’, but also comments that ‘Saxons in þar langage full ratht / þat Bad was cald pain owe “call” Bath’.³⁴ Similarly, Leicester is known as ‘Caireleyr in Bruttons speech / Leircester cal of þe Saxons’ (CC, ll. 3294-5). The name of Gloucester is also given in British, Latin, and English:

Claudius it namede Caerglou,
 þat na man of it haf it mou,
 And Claudiocestre Britons it calde,
 [...]
 Romans and men þat Latin cuth
 Glouerne þai sounde it in þar muth;
 Saxons si þen, þe soȝ to saie,
 Gloucestre þai calle it to þis daie.
 (CC, ll. 8714-23)

The different names cited in the text are not entirely accurate: *Claudiocestria* is Latin rather than British, while *Glouerne* is French rather than Latin. Despite these linguistic errors, the different names for Gloucester demonstrate the multilingual nature of Britain, which is ‘one culture in three voices’.³⁵

The etymological history of London in *Castleford’s Chronicle* indicates how different peoples and languages coexist in Britain. As in the *Roman de Brut*, the text relates the change from Kaerlud to London to the arrival of the French and the English on the island:

³³ See ‘light’ (adj. 2), *The Electronic Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan. Available at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED25499> [accessed 06.06.2017].

³⁴ *Castleford’s Chronicle, or, The Boke of Brut*, ed. Caroline D. Eckhardt, 2 vols (Oxford and New York: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1996), I, ll. 3222-4.

³⁵ Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 181.

Þorfor of hym þen am to halde,
 Carelud þe folk it calde,
 And siþen, þoru tongues corrumping fonden,
 Þe folk it name Carelonden.

Þoru alienes þe lande onsoght,
 And name into Britaine broght,
 And gat þarof truage and dette,
 In þe tides qilk after ensues,
 In tonges changing, languages neues,
 And Frankys folk, in þar tonges fundres,
 Amangeste þam pai cale it Londres.
 Men born þarin, so yit men said,
 In fele lands er cald Loundrais.
 Þe Saxons siþen amanges þam alle
 Naþing bot Londen þai it calle.

Of Troiens so þe name it loste,
 Þe na[m]e of Lud hald for it moste.

(CC, ll. 6793-809)

The Britons, the French, and the Saxons are presented as distinct linguistic communities that have their own names for London. The different names for London in each of the languages of Britain are indicative of residual, dominant, and emergent cultures. The Britons, who are subject to foreign rule, retain the ancient British names ‘Caerlud’, and its derivative ‘Carelonden’. Meanwhile, the French and English, who control the island and are establishing their ‘languages neues’, use the names ‘Londres’, ‘Loundres’, and ‘Londen’. The multiple names are indicative of a linguistic hierarchy that reflects the position of those who use them.

The First Version of John Hardyng’s *Chronicle* (1457) examines the original name of London, rather than its later constructions. In his account of the foundation of London, Hardyng initially states that Brutus named the city ‘Novel Troy to kepe in wele and wo / In remembrance of Troy his kyn cam fro’, but then claims that the city was actually called ‘Trynovaunt / Of his language natyfe so consonaunt’.³⁶

³⁶ John Hardyng, *Chronicle: Edited from British Library MS Landsdowne 204: Volume I*, ed. by James Simpson and Sarah Peverley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2015), 2.705-8.

Hardyng emphasises the beautiful sound of Brutus' 'modre tonge' (Hardyng, First version, 2.712), and dismisses 'Novel Troy' on the basis of its French origins:

So thynke me wele it shuld hight Troynovaunte
Or els I say that Trynovaunt itte hight
Of Troys language as Turkes yit use and haunte
Rather than to calle it Novel Troy by right.
That Frenshe language was nought to thaym so light[.]
(Hardyng, First Version, 2.716-20)

Although Hardyng's maintains that 'Trynovaunt' is derived from 'Troyane spech', the name more accurately resembles the Latinate *Trinovantum*, which is the second name of London in Geoffrey's *Historia*. By the fifteenth century, *Trinovantum* appears to have replaced – or at least become synonymous with – *Troia Nova*, and a contemporary London chronicle states that Brutus called London 'trinouantum id est Troiam nouam que per tempus longum Trinouans vocabatur' ['Trinovantum, that is new Troy, which for a long time was called Trinovans'].³⁷ Hardyng ignores the Roman origins of *Trinovantum*, and uses its imagined descent from 'Troyane speche' (Hardyng, First version, 2.710) to establish it as the original name of London.³⁸

Like Robert of Gloucester, Hardyng's commentary on place names primarily focuses on the contrast between past and present. Rud Hudibras builds multiple cities, and Hardyng simply remarks that 'Caerkent he made that now ys Cauntyrbyry / Caergwent also that now hatte Wynchestre / Caerpaladoure whiche hatte Shafftesbyry' (Hardyng, First Version, 2.1167-9). Hardyng is also aware of the effect of historical conquests and linguistic change, and acknowledges that London was

³⁷ *A Chronicle of London, From 1089 to 1483: Written in the Fifteenth Century and for the first time printed from MSS in the British Museum, to which are added numerous contemporary illustrations, consisting of royal letters, poems, and other articles descriptive of public events, or of the manners and customs of the metropolis*, ed. by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas and Edward Tyrrell (London: Printed from Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, Paternoster-Row and Henry Butterworth, No. 7, Fleet Street, 1827), p. 184 and p. 176.

³⁸ On the origins of the name *Trinovantum*, see John Clark, 'Trinovantum – the Evolution of a Legend', *Journal of Medieval History*, 7 (1981), 135-51.

called Kaerlud ‘In Bretoun tonge fulle longe and many a day / Tylle Saxons came with language chaunged alle’ (Hardyng, First Version, 2.2208-9); however, he is most interested in sound, pronunciation, and the aesthetics of language, which he discusses in relation to the city of Leicester:

Caerleyre in whiche he [King Leir] dyd most dwelle and wonne
 Leycestre ys now callyd but wherefore
 I wote not why but Leyrecestre afore
 I trow it hight. We leve out R this lettre
 For lyghter speche to make the language swettre.
 (Hardyng, First Version, 2.1201-5)

For Hardyng, the contraction of ‘Leyrecestre’ to ‘Leycestre’ is an example of ‘lyghter speche’ that makes words easier to pronounce and more pleasing to the ear. The linguistic change does, however, erase the connection between the city and its founder, King Leir. Hardyng’s etymology of Leicester, then, substitutes origins for phonetics.

As Warren point out, ‘[e]tymology is an important boundary mechanism, intimately related to territorial identity and genealogy, because it signals relations among groups in the changing forms of their words’.³⁹ These texts use the etymological histories of place names to show how one name, in one language, originates from another name in a different language; however, the distinctions between languages – British, French, and English – and the substitutions of different names creates a hierarchy between peoples that reflects the history of insular domination and conquest. In contrast to Geoffrey, who uses place names to symbolise the historical relationship between Britain and Rome, these later chroniclers use the multiple names of cities to demonstrate the impact that the

³⁹ Warren, *History on the Edge*, p. 12.

Britons, the Romans, the Saxons, and the Normans have had on the insular landscape.

Loegria, Anglia, England: The Renaming and Remapping of Britain

In later translations and adaptations of the *Historia*, the places names ‘Loegria’ and ‘Britain’ are often substituted for England.⁴⁰ While Geoffrey continued to use Britain after the loss of British sovereignty, some twelfth-century chroniclers – including the author of the First Variant, Alfred of Beverley, and Gervase of Canterbury – claimed that Loegria was renamed *Anglia* when the African king, Gurmund, donated it to the Saxons.⁴¹ Indeed, the First Variant (before 1155) states that

Postquam infaustus ille tyrannus totam regionem illa deuastauit, Saxonibus tenendam dimisit atque ad Gallias cum Ysembarto transiuit. Hinc Angli Saxones uocati sunt qui Loegriam possederunt et ab eis Anglia terra postmodum dicta est.⁴²

[After the ill-omened tyrant [Gurmand] devastated all that region he gave it to the possession of the Saxons, and crossed to Gaul with Isembart. So the Saxons who held Loegria were called Angles and henceforth the land was name England].⁴³

Following the First Variant, Wace also describes how the Saxons renamed the territory *Engleterre*. Meanwhile, Lazamon explains how the name *Ænglond* is linked to the geographical origins of the Saxons, who are from ‘Alemainne, aðelest

⁴⁰ On the interrelationship between Britain and England, see Alan MacColl, ‘The Meaning of “Britain” in Medieval and Early Modern England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 45.2 (2006), 248-69.

⁴¹ Leckie, *The Passage of Dominion*, p. 81.

⁴² *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, II: The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), §186/7. The First Variant also includes unique material concerning the creation of various English kings; further information on Augustine’s conversion of the English; and details of a plague that drove the Britons from the island; see Neil Wright, ‘Introduction’, in *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth, II*, pp. xi-cxvi.

⁴³ English translation from Neil Wright, ‘Angles and Saxons in Lazamon’s *Brut*: A Reassessment’, in *The Text and Tradition of Lazamon’s Brut*, ed. by Françoise Le Saux, *Arthurian Studies* 33 (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp. 161-70 (p. 163).

alder londe, / Of þat ilken ændeþe Angles is ihaten [Germany, the finest of all countries, from that particular region which is called Angles]’.⁴⁴

The renaming of Britain – or Loegria – demonstrates how medieval chroniclers used the geo-political landscape of the island to represent conquest and the process of historical change. Focusing on a selection of Anglo-Norman and Middle English chronicles produced between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, this section examines how the renaming and remapping of territory, and the etymological links between the people and place, signifies the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons.

Hengist and the Foundation of England

Hengist is a complex figure in the Galfridian tradition. Margaret Lamont argues that in the *Historia* and the *Roman de Brut*, Hengist is ‘neither a hero nor villain [...as he occupies] an in-between space that mirrors his position as both ancestor and enemy for many of Geoffrey and Wace’s early readers’.⁴⁵ In the thirteenth century, however, Hengist was transformed from a liminal figure into a national hero as, in the Prose *Brut* tradition, he creates the heptarchy of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and formally founds English nation. Indeed, the Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*

⁴⁴ Lazamon, *Brut, or Hystoria Brutonum*, ed. and trans. by W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Essex: Longman Group, 1996), ll. 6911-12. On the relationship between the Saxons and the English in Lazamon’s *Brut*, see Neil Wright, ‘Angles and Saxons in Lazamon’s *Brut*’; Carole Weinberg, ‘Victor and Victim: A view of the Anglo-Saxon past in Lazamon’s *Brut*’, in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; repr. 2006), pp. 22-38; Margaret Lamont, ‘When are Saxons “Ænglisc”? Language and Readerly Identity in Lazamon’s *Brut*’, in *Reading Lazamon’s Brut: Approaches and Explorations*, ed. by Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts and Carole Weinberg (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 295-320.

⁴⁵ Margaret Lamont, ‘Hengist’, in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), pp. 43-58 (p. 46).

explains that England was originally called ‘Engistland’ after Hengist.⁴⁶ This foundation myth confirms the origins and ancestry of the English, and also legitimises their claims over England.

The origins of the story of Hengist’s foundation of England can be found in Geffrei Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis* (1140). At the beginning of his history, Gaimar recalls how Modred gave the Saxons the land between the River Humber and Caithness and, as R. William Leckie, Jr points out, he ‘establishes a direct causal link between Modred’s treachery and English domination’.⁴⁷ This donation of territory enables the Saxons to seize and occupy ‘la terre que ja tint Hengis; / cele claimant en heritage, / car Hengis est de lur linage’ [‘the land over which Hengest has previously ruled and which they, as descendants of Hengest, claim as their rightful inheritance’].⁴⁸ As the Saxons gradually gain power in Britain, Gaimar writes that

pur dan Hengis lur ancessur
les alters firest d’els seignur;
tuzjurs sicom il conquera[i]ent,
des Engleis la reconuissaient:
la terre k’il vont conquerant
si l’apel[ei]ent Engeland.
Este vux ci un’ acheson
parquei Bretaigne perdi son nun.

[On account of the lord Hengist having been their ancestor, the Britons accepted them as their overlords. As the conquests increased, they more and more acknowledged the land under conquest as being that of the English, and therefore called it England. This is one explanation of why Britain lost its name].

(Gaimar, ll. 27-34)

Gaimar uses Hengist to demonstrate the strong relationship between territory and ancestry, and it explains how the marginalised Britons lost control of their homeland

⁴⁶ *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), ll. 1236-40

⁴⁷ Leckie, *The Passage of Dominion*, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Geffrey Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ll. 14-16.

to the hegemonic Saxon invaders. The dominance of the English, as well as their descent from Hengist, ultimately legitimises the renaming of Britain, which is now known as *Engeland*.

The link people and territory – the English and England – would later become one of the main explanations ‘parquei Bretaigne peri son nun’ [why Britain lost its name’] (Gaimar, l. 34). The Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* develops Gaimar’s account by creating an etymological link between Hengist and England. After the Night of the Long Knives, where the Saxons murder 361 Britons (460 in the *Historia*), the text reports that

Engist ala par mi la terre e seist en sa mayn villes, chastels, burghes, e citez, e fist par tut abatre eglises e mesouns de religiouns, e destrute la crestienite par mi ceste terre, [e fyt changer le noun de la tere] issint qe nul homme des soens ne fu si hardi de appeller de cel iour enauant Bretaine, mes Engistlonde, qe ore est appele Engleterre communement.

[Engist went throughout the land and took into his hand towns, castles, boroughs, and cities, and he had churches and houses of religion torn down everywhere, and he destroyed Christianity throughout this land, and he had the name of the land changed, so that from that day forward no man was so bold as to call it Britain, but Engistland, which is now commonly called England].

(*ANPB*, ll. 1236-40)

Hengist’s destruction of Christianity connects him with the African king, Gurmund, who also eliminates any trace of Christian worship before formally granting the Saxons the control of Britain. The foundation of England is arguably inserted into this point of the narrative because there is no legitimate British king. In a text that emphasises the importance of good kingship,⁴⁹ Hengist is presented as an alternative monarch to Vortigern, who murdered Constans, the father of Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, and usurped the throne. Hengist is an opportunist who claims

⁴⁹ On the nature of kingship and the ideal ruler in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, see Julia Marvin, *The Construction of Vernacular History in the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: The Manuscript Culture of Late Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017), pp. 57-60.

England, and offers a greater sense of political stability for his people who were expelled from their homeland. The Prose *Brut* transforms the treacherous Saxon into the first English king, and all of Hengist's successors will be able to trace their lineage back to their original founder.

Hengist's foundation of England is directly linked to the creation of the heptarchy, which is designed to marginalise the Britons. After Hengist has renamed Britain as 'Engistland', the text states that he

departi tute la terre entre ses hommes, e fist seat roys pur afforcer la terre qe les Brutons iammes ne dussent plus entrer. Le primer regne fu Kent, ou Engist mesme regna e fu seigneur e mestre de tuz le autres. Vn autre roi auoit Sussexe, ou est ore Cicestre. Le tierz roi auoit Westsexe. Le quart roi auoit Essexe. Le quint roi auoit tut Northumberlande. Le sisme roi auoit Estlonde, quore est appele Norffolk e Suffolk. Le seatime roi auoit le roialme de Merceneriche, cest assauer le counte de Nicole, Leicestre, Norhamptone, Huntingdone, Hertfor, Bukyngham, Oxenford, Gloucestre, Wircestre, Warrewyk, e Derby.

[divided the whole land among his men, and he established seven kings to secure the land so that the Britons might never enter again. The first realm was Kent, where Engist himself ruled and was lord and master of all others. A second king held Sussex, where Chichester is now. The third king held Wessex. The fourth held Essex. The fifth king held all of Northumberland. The sixth king held the East Country, which is now called Mercia and Suffolk. The seventh king held the realm of Mercia, that is, the counties of Lincoln, Leicester, Northampton, Huntingdon, Hertford, Buckingham, Oxford, Gloucester, Worcester, Warwick, and Derby].⁵⁰

(*ANPB*, ll.1241-9)

The political geography of the island is remapped: Britain previously symbolised regnal unity, but the England of the Prose *Brut* emphasises political division. The heptarchy is one of the great political myths of English history: Bede and William of Malmesbury describe the settlement of the Jutes, Saxons, and Angles across England, and Henry of Huntingdon formally established the division of England into

⁵⁰ In relation to this passage, Julia Marvin notes that 'OV departs from RB and HRB in its account of Engist's seizure of power: it elaborates RB's list of place-names and false etymologies into the first of several descriptions of the Heptarchy, it alone says that the Britons all flee to Wales, and it alone describes the introduction of the name of England at this point'; see *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle*, p. 310 (note to ll. 1235-49).

seven kingdoms in his *Historia Anglorum*.⁵¹ Henry was the first to rationalise the rise of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and he provided a clear account of the conversion of each of the kingdoms to Christianity.⁵² The reference to the heptarchy in the Prose *Brut* may be derived from the manuscripts of Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*: BL Royal MS 13 A XXI includes a diagram of the heptarchy at the beginning of the compilation of the two texts (f. 40), while BL Additional MS 32125 uses a text known as *The Description of England* that describes the multiple divisions of England to divide Wace and Gaimar.⁵³ By inserting the heptarchy into the text after Hengist's foundation of England, the Prose *Brut* forces the Galfridian chronology to conform to a more Anglocentric model of history, which looks forward to the transition of power that occurs after the loss of British sovereignty.

The myth of Hengist's foundation of England survived into the fifteenth century in the two versions of Hardyng's *Chronicle* (First Version, 1457; Second Version, 1464). Hardyng's source of Galfridian history was a Latin version of the *Prose Brut*, which most likely included an account of the foundation of England. The two versions of Hardyng's *Chronicle* negotiate some of the chronological gaps that were apparent in the Prose *Brut* tradition, and they also explain the seemingly

⁵¹ On Henry of Huntingdon and the invention of the heptarchy, see James Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), pp. 209-28 (pp. 212-13). On the sixteenth-century origins of the term 'heptarchy', see Walter Goffart, 'The First Venture into "Medieval Geography": Lambard's Map of the Saxon Heptarchy (1568)', in *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of the Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Jane Roberts and Janet L. Nelson with Malcolm Godden (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 53-60.

⁵² There are some discrepancies between the numbers of the kingdoms in the *Historia Anglorum* and the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*: Henry of Huntingdon lists East Anglia as the fifth kingdom, but in the Prose *Brut* it is the sixth; the sixth kingdom is Mercia, which is here renumbered as the seventh kingdom; finally, Northumberland is usually the seventh kingdom, but here it is the fifth.

⁵³ Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* is actually missing from BL Additional MS 32125, but it is announced in the rubric 'Ci finist le Brut. E comence li Gaimar'. On the manuscripts of Wace and Gaimar see, Alexander Bell, 'The Royal *Brut* Interpolation', *Medium Aevum* 32.3 (1963), 190-202; Alexander Bell, 'The Anglo-Norman *Description of England*: An Edition' in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. by Ian Short (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1993), pp. 31-47 (pp. 31-35); Lesley Johnson, 'The Anglo-Norman *Description of England*: An Introduction', in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, pp. 11-30 (pp. 15-16).

arbitrary link between ‘Engistland’ and ‘England’. The story of Hengist in the first version of Hardyng’s *Chronicle* is directly linked to the passage of dominion. There are only a few lines about the foundation of England, and Hardyng simply comments that ‘Engeste had alle the reme as for his hame / And dalte it for the amonge his knyghtes wyse / By parcelmele as ferre as might suffise’ (Hardyng, First Version, 3.1630-2). The title to the verses on Hengist demonstrates how Hardyng positions the foundation of England within the larger narrative of his chronicle. He writes that

Engiste than did call this londe Engistlonde for his name, which aftir sone for shortnesse of langage men called Englonde, but it dured noght longe for Aurilius, Uther and Arthure put down the name of Englonde and called it Bretayne ayeyn (*again*), to (*until*) the commynge of Gurmund, Kynge of Afrike.

(Hardyng, First Version, p. 166)

This title clearly nuances the events in the Prose *Brut* as Hardyng recognises that the foundation of England did not guarantee the Saxons complete control over the territory as the kings from the House of Constantine – Aurelius, Uther, and Arthur – defeated them on several occasions. The change between the names ‘Britain’ and ‘England’ signifies the conflict between Britons and the Saxons, and ‘England’ is only officially named when the proper passage of dominion occurs.

The second version of Hardyng’s *Chronicle* focuses more on the etymological origins of the name England. The verses that concern Hengist’s foundation of England are, again, prefaced by a short title, which indicates that this section will report ‘How Engist caused Logres to bee called then Engestlande, of whiche the commons putte gets awaye in their common speache, and calle Englande, for shortenes of speache’.⁵⁴ Hardyng insists that the origin of the name of England

⁵⁴ *The Chronicle of John Hardyng, containing an account of public transactions from the earliest period of English History to the beginning of the reign of King Edward the fourth. With the*

can be found in ‘olde chronicles’ (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 114), but the real legitimising force here is the voice of the people – or the ‘commons’ (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 114) – as they are the source who popularise the myth and give it authority. Hardyng recounts how the myth has been transmitted, and how the original name Engestland has become ‘England’. He writes that

Through the comons, yt thought it long to say,
And muche lighter in tongue to saie Englande,
Then with their mouth, ouer long to name it aye,
By producing, to call it Engistislande.
[And thus came first in as] I vnderstande,
As I conceiue, thus came first Englandes name,
For short speech corrupt per sincopene.
(Hardyng, Second Version, p. 114)

This brief explanation of the change in names is indicative of the ways in which myths are created: stories are passed around through oral transmission, and they are changed in the process, with various different meanings being ascribed to them. The story of Hengist and the foundation of England remains a memory in the text: Hardyng references it again at the end after the reign of Cadwaladr, and before beginning his narrative about the kings of Wessex. He comments that two brothers, Inglis and Iue, ‘did call this lande Englande, / After Inglis, as thei had harde afore: / After Engest it was called Engestes lande, / By corrupt speech Englande it hight therefore, / And afterward so that name it hath euer bore’ (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 163). The re-establishment of England makes a connection between the present time and the past moment of foundation, as well as looking into the future to reaffirm the current name of the island, which is under English control.

Founding heroes are often transgressive figures in the Galfridian tradition.

Brutus of Troy murders his father, Albina plots with her sisters to murder their

husbands, and Hengist commits multiple acts of treachery and kills many Britons. The Prose *Brut* appropriates the idea of the heptarchy in order to transform Hengist from a Saxon warlord into an English overlord who has mastery over all the seven kingdoms. Furthermore, the loss of British sovereignty is no longer such a tragic event in the Prose *Brut* tradition: the linear narrative of history replaces Geoffrey's cyclical model, which was concerned with the rise and fall of the Britons, and the focus is on the triumphant rise of the English instead.

The Passage of Dominion and the Division of England

Hengist's initial act of foundation anticipates the passages of dominion when Britain is formally renamed as England. For Wace and the author of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut*, the renaming of Britain as England erases the memory of Brutus, who originally founded the island for the Britons. In the chronicles of Robert of Gloucester, Pierre de Langtoft, and John Hardyng, the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons is also demarcated by the extensive remapping of Britain or Loegria – now England. As Kenneth J. Tiller points out,

[n]ew rulers establish new boundaries, build new structures to cement their power, and often commemorate their accomplishments by giving new names to their new acquisition. These changes to the physical landscape [...] have the effect of permanently altering the landscape itself.⁵⁵

After the loss of British sovereignty, England is divided into seven kingdoms, represented by East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Mercia, Northumbria, Sussex, and Wessex. The creation of the heptarchy demonstrates the transition to an Anglocentric model

⁵⁵ Kenneth J. Tiller, *Lazamon's Brut and the Anglo-Norman Vision of History* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2007), p. 126.

of history influenced of Bede, who first emphasised the political and geographical divisions between the Angles and the Saxons.⁵⁶

In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the renaming of Britain has a complex relationship to time, lineage, and place. After the foundation of Britain by Brutus of Troy, Wace indicates that the passage of dominion occurred when Gurmund 'en chaça les Bretus / Si la livra a uns Saissuns / Qui d'Angle Angelis apelé erent, / Ki Engleterre l'apelerent' ['drove out the Britons and handed it [Britain] over to the Saxons who, from being Angles, were called English and called the land England'] (Wace, ll. 1195-8). This comment does not appear in Geoffrey's *Historia*, and Wace uses the moment of foundation to anticipate the tragic fall of the Britons. Once the Saxons finally seize Britain at the end of the *Roman de Brut*, Wace writes that

Cil unt la terre recuillie,
Ki molt l'aveient encovie.
Pur un lignage dunt cil furent
Ki la terre primes recurent
S'i firent Engleis apeler
Pur lur orine remenbrer,
E Englelande unt apelee
La terre ki lur ert dunee.
Tant dit Engleterre en franceis
Cum dit Englelande en engleis;
Terre a Engleis, ço dit li nun,
Ço en est l'espositiuns.
Des que Brutus de Troie vint

⁵⁶ Cf. Bede 1.15: 'Aduenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis. De Iutarum origine sunt Cantuari et Uictuarii, hoc est ea gens quae Uectam tenet insulam, et ea quae usque hodie in prouincia Occidentalium Saxonum Iutarum nation nominator, posita contra ipsam insulam Uectam. De Saxonibus, id est ea regione quae nunc Antiquorum Saxonum cognominatur, uenere Orientales Saxones, Meridiani Saxones, Occidui Saxones. Porro de Anglis, hoc est de illa patria quae Angulus dicitur, et ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus inter prouincias Iutarum et Saxonum perhibetur, Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merci, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenies, id est illarum gentium quae ad boream Humbri fluminis inhabitant, ceterique Anglorum populi sunt orti' ['They came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now known as Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the Angles, that is, the land between the kingdom of the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this'].

Tut tens Bretaine sun nun tint
 Jesqu'al terme que jo vus di
 Que par Gurmund sun nun perdi
 Si ot novels abiteürs,
 Novels reis e novels seignurs.
 Cil voldrent tenir lur usage;
 Ne voldrent tenir lur usage;
 Ne voldrent prendre altre language.
 Les nuns des viles tresturnerent,
 En lur language les nomerent.

[They acquired the land which they had so ardently desired. After the name of the race who first received the land, they called themselves 'English', in order to recall their origins, and called the land given to them 'England'. What in French is called 'Engleterre' is in English called England; the name means 'land of the English', that is its explanation. From the time Brutus arrived from Troy, Britain always retained its name until the moment of which I'm telling you – when through Gurmunt it lost its name and acquired new inhabitants, new kings and new lords. These wishes to keep their customs: they had no wish to use another language. They altered the names of the towns and renamed them in their own language].

(Wace, ll. 13641-62)

Laura Ashe suggests that, in the *Roman de Brut*, 'the land being named and renamed is the same land, and it provides a stable framework, a literal mapping of historical value'.⁵⁷ Wace refers to the land using a range of different names, including 'Bretaine', 'Englelande', and 'Engleterre'. 'Bretaine' is etymologically linked to Brutus, the founder of Britain; 'Englelande' is the name that the English gave to Britain; 'Engleterre', meanwhile, is a term that Wace uses to the meaning of Englelande – or 'land of the English' – to his Anglo-Norman audience. The name of the land clearly is clearly linked with its inhabitants, and the name of the different peoples clearly reflects their origins. Wace presents the change of customs, language, and names of towns as the natural consequences of territorial conquest, and 'Englelande' and supersedes 'Bretaine'.

⁵⁷ Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 63.

Following Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the Anglo-Norman *Prose Brut* also marks the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons after the renaming of the island. In this text, the moment of transition recalls Hengist's foundation of England, and the relevant chapter title describes 'Coment Gurmund de Affrike e les Sessouns appelerent ceste terre Englund après le non Engist' ['How Gurmund of Africa and the Saxons named this land England after the name of Engist'] (*ANPB*, ll. 2137-8).

The text states that

Quant Gurmund auoit gaste, robbe, e destrute la terre, e les villes artz, chasteux destruz, tours e eglises abatuz, e le regne ad tretut done as Sessouns, e il le ount resceu oue bon quoer, qar il auoient longement desire. E pur ceo qil furent del linage Engist qe primes auoit terre en Bretaine, il se firent appeler Engleis par le noun Engist remembrer. E la terre appelerent en lor langage Englund, quore est appelee Engleterre en fraunceis. E les genz fist appeler Engleis.

[When Gurmund had laid waste, pillaged, and ruined the land, and towers and churches torn down, he then gave the whole realm to the Saxons, and they received it gladly, for they had long desired it. And because they were of the lineage of Engist who first held land in Britain, they had themselves called English in order to commemorate the name of Engist. And in their language they called the land England, which is now called "Engleterre" in French. And they called the people English].⁵⁸

(*ANPB*, ll. 2139-45)

By taking control of England, the descendants of Hengist claim their rightful inheritance, and this public commemoration of lineage and ancestry reinscribes the founder of England back into the landscape. The transfer of power also initiates the re-creation of the heptarchy, and once the English have seized control of England, they try to establish 'fesoient il plusors rois en plusurs countres, sicome il fust en le temps Engist' ['several kings in several regions, as in the time of Engist'] (*ANPB*, ll. 2154-6). The re-creation of the heptarchy looks back to England's original

⁵⁸ In relation to this passage, Julia Marvin notes that 'RB (but not HRB here provides an account of the change of the land's name: OV further elaborates it by specifically citing the name of Engist; see *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle*, p. 319 (note to ll. 2137-49).

foundation by Hengist, and it also looks forward to the history of the Anglo-Saxon kings. The heptarchy, then, functions as a point of transition between the end of British history and the beginning of English history.

In Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* (1270), the transfer of power focuses on the remapping of England, rather than the renaming of the island. Throughout his chronicle, Robert never uses the term 'Britain', and he maintains that the land has always been called *Engleand*, even when the Britons first arrived after the fall of Troy. After the destruction of England by Gurmund, which has brought 'moche sorwe and wo' (RG, l. 4654), Robert describes how the Saxons and the English took control of the island:

Saxons þe englisce . . & hor compaynye
 Adde þo of þis lond . . al clene þe maystrie
 & made hom kings of þis lond . . as hii adde biuore
 Ac þe brutons nadde neuer er . . so clene hor mijte vor lore
 Þe saxons & þe englisce . . in pes hulde þo
 Ech king is kinedom . . þat hii dude er in wo
 Six kinges þer were in some time . . as of kent & of estsex
 Of estangle / of norphumber . . of þe march of west sex
 (RG, ll. 4655-62)

This brief description of the Saxon heptarchy is sourced from Henry of Huntingdon,⁵⁹ and Robert includes a longer description of the counties and shires of England in the early books of his chronicle. The Saxons and the English begin to establish their centres of power in Britain at the expense of the indigenous Britons, who are banished to the periphery. According to Robert, 'Þe Saxons & þe englisce . . come in to þis londe / As wo seiþ at o tyme . . as iche vnder stone' (RG, ll. 4705-6), but he maintains that they settled in different parts of the island: 'Þe englisce in þer norphalf / þe Saxons bi souþe (RG, l. 4705). Located in the south, the Saxons control

⁵⁹ The primary sources for Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* are Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Laȝamon. For a discussion of Robert's sources, and the succession of the English, see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 76-80 and pp. 85-91.

the main locus of power, and a heading that prefaces this section confirms their authority, stating ‘Saxones plene Dominantes’ (literally, ‘The Saxons fully dominate’). The Saxons hold ‘clene þe maystrie’ of England – ‘clene’ meaning ‘complete’ or ‘entire’ – and they subject the Britons to their rule.

Pierre de Langtoft’s *Chronicle* (1301) also focuses on the division and renaming of the island after the Saxon conquest. As in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, Gurmund’s invasion signals the transfer of power, and Langtoft writes that

La coroune de Brettayne desormes est perdue,
Et la monarchye fynement tolue;
La partye petyt ke n’est pas vencue
Des tyrauns mescreaunz en servage est tenue.
Et en vij. realmes est Brettayne purveue,
A partir de deviser, e tenir par trewe.
Les realmes sunt donez, la regalté rescewe.

[The crown of Britain henceforward is lost,
And the monarchy finally taken away;
The small part which is not conquered
Is held in serfdom by unbelieving tyrants.
And Britain is distributed into seven kingdoms,
To share and devise, and hold by tribute.
The kingdoms are given, the royalty received].⁶⁰

The loss of the crown of Britain – the symbol of British sovereignty – marks the beginning of English rule. The Saxons hold (‘tenir’) their new territory like feudal barons, and they receive tribute (‘trewe’, sometimes ‘truage’) from the Britons who are enslaved in their service (‘servage’). The heptarchy confirms the Saxon conquest, and ensures that the Britons have no territorial claims over the England. Langtoft states that ‘Les vij. Regiouns sunt jà replenye / Del gentil linage ke vynt de Germenye’ [‘The seven kingdoms are now filled / With the noble race which came

⁶⁰ *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft: In French Verse from the Earliest Period to the Death of Edward I*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Wright (London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), I, p. 233-2. All further references to Langtoft’s chronicle are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the body of the text; references are to the page numbers only.

from Germany’], but he also specifies that the people from ‘l’ydle joy[n]aunt [à Saxonye] / Lour linage en Estangle unt pris manautye’ [‘from the island adjoining to Saxony; / Their lineage have taken their dwelling in East Anglia’] (Langtoft, I, p. 232-3). For Langtoft, the Saxons are the ancestors of the English, and he links territory and lineage to legitimise their claims: ‘Et parmy la terre puyz lur sank est ramie, / Ke només sunt Englays, e sunt en grant ballye / Ensint est Engleterre kea vaunt fu Brettanye’ [‘And since their blood has ramified through the land / That they are named English, and are in great possession / Thus it is England, which was formerly named Britain’] (Langtoft, I, p. 232-3). The renaming of the island indicates a transition to a new narrative of English history.

In the Second Version of John Hardyng’s *Chronicle*, the loss of British sovereignty results in the division of Britain among its different inhabitants. Hardyng marks the transition of power between the Britons and the Saxons with a chapter heading, which relates ‘How Gurmounde, kynge of Affrycans, conquered Brytayne, and departed it in seuen kyngdomes, to Saxons & Englyshe; and went to wyne moo lands, & made Gurmonde Chester’ (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 152). Following a Latin version of the Prose *Brut*, Hardyng states that ‘Logres [yt] whole was lost’ after Gurmund destroyed the land, and he recalls how the Saxons were called ‘Englishemen’ after their homeland ‘Angulo’. In this text, the remapping of territory focuses exclusively on England as ‘All of Logres and Northumberlande’ is renamed ‘Anglande’ (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 153) after the English. England is constructed as the centre of Britain, and it has multiple inhabitants:

For Saxons, Peightes and Englishemene,
Reigned then through all [the Logres] lande,
Deuided in seuen realms fully then,
Westsex, Sussex and Kente, I vnderstande,
Estsex and Mers, Estangle & Northumberlande,

That droue Brytons into the West countree,
 To Walis and Cornwaile fro [towne and citee].
 (Hardyng, Second Version, p. 156)

Hardyng's positions the Saxons, the Picts, and the English in the centres of power, which are represented by the seven kingdoms. The Britons, meanwhile, are pushed out to the peripheral areas that are outside control of England. The final chapters of British history in Hardyng's *Chronicle* exploit the tensions between the Britons and the Saxons, who fight against each other to win control of the island. This civil strife is finally resolved with the death of Cadwaladr and the loss of British sovereignty, which is followed by the history of kings of Wessex. Thanks to Gurmund, the English control the different regions of England, but they only gain control of Britain when the Britons have left and they dominate the island.

In each of these texts, the etymological links between people and place legitimise English sovereignty over the island. The etymological relationship between Hengist and England, which imitates the link between Brutus and Britain, emphasises the connection between origins, lineage, and territory, and anticipates the passage of dominion that occurs when Gurmund donates the land to the Saxons. The subsequent division of the England into seven kingdoms re-configures the centres of power and re-locates the Britons to the periphery of the island. The heptarchy also demonstrates the disunity of the Angles and the Saxons, who occupy different parts of England. The renaming and remapping of the island is used to establish the transition between British and English history, and the division of England is a part of a wider teleological narrative directed towards the union of the nation under a single king.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the relationship between time, language, and place in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and a selection of later translations and adaptations produced in England between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. In the *Historia*, Geoffrey uses the tradition of Britain's twenty-eight cities as the basis for his etymologies and local histories that are evidence of the shared history of Britain and Rome. While Geoffrey provides the names of different cities in British, Latin, and English, the multilingual landscape of Britain becomes more prominent in Anglo-Norman and Middle English chronicles. These texts emphasise the effects of conquest and linguistic change on the British landscape, and establish a hierarchy of names that represent the power and status of each of the different insular peoples, including the Britons, the Saxons, and the Normans. The renaming and remapping of Britain further destabilises claims of British sovereignty, and the connection between territory, lineage, and history legitimises the transfer of power between the Britons and the Saxons.

By tracing the development of etymologies across the Galfridian tradition, this chapter has demonstrated how place names are important sites of political, historical, and ideological significance. In his study of the fourteenth-century 'Matter of England' romances, Robert Rouse points out that the

intimate connection between history and geography is one of signifier and signified: place becomes a signifier of historical narrative – the land, as much as the text, contains the past.⁶¹

History and geography are also intimately linked in the Galfridian tradition; however, the different etymological histories of place in these texts names often

⁶¹ Robert Allen Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2005), p. 61

reveal the gap between signifier and signified. Geography and history are to persistently subject to change, and represent time and discontinuity. The etymological histories of place names construct a new narrative of British and English history that represents conquest, coexistence, and change.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the rewritings of, and responses to, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* in England, Scotland, and Wales between 1138 and 1530. Comparing historical texts written in Latin, Anglo-Norman, Middle English, Middle Welsh, and Old Scots, this thesis has demonstrated how translators and adaptors used strategies of evaluation, quotation, translation, imitation, and revision to rewrite the *Historia* to suit their own political and national agendas. These strategies also enabled English, Scottish, and Welsh historians to assess Geoffrey's reliability as a historian, influence the critical reception of the *Historia*, and determine the authority of his narrative of British history.

Between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, Latin historians persistently examined the nature Geoffrey's authority and evaluated the veracity of the *Historia*. Most twelfth-century commentators recognised the discrepancies between Geoffrey's history and the earlier works of Gildas and Bede, and chose to trust the established authorities over the *Historia*. From the sixth century onwards, Gildas was regarded as the standard authority on British history, and Bede identified him as the Britons' own 'historicus' ['historian'] in his *Historia ecclesiastica*.¹ In the twelfth century, Gerald of Wales and William of Newburgh promoted Gildas as a superlative example of learning and authority who was committed to truth. His fame and reputation were further confirmed by Caradoc of Llancarfan who bestowed a number

¹ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 1.22.

of titles on Gildas in his *Vita Gildae*.² For example, Caradoc calls him ‘sanctissimus Gildas’ [‘the most holy Gildas’] (*VG*, §6); ‘egregious Gildas’ [‘the illustrious Gildas’] (*VG*, §7); ‘Gildas doctor optimus’ [‘the excellent master Gildas’] (*VG*, §9; ‘Gilda Sapiente’ [‘Gildas the Wise’] (*VG*, §11); and, most importantly for this study, a ‘venerabilis historiographus’ [‘venerable historian’] (*VG* §6).

In contrast to Gildas, Geoffrey of Monmouth never acquired such an outstanding reputation as a historian of British history. His contemporaries and later twelfth-century historians never recognised his pen name, *Galfridus Monemutensis*, and used his birth name *Galfridus Arturus* to undermine his authority. The famous critiques of the *Historia* by Gerald of Wales, William of Newburgh, and Polydore Vergil had a sustained effect on the reception of the text; indeed, William denounced Geoffrey as a liar and a fraud in the sixteenth century, and Vergil re-articulated William’s concerns in the sixteenth century. In the fourteenth century, Ranulph Higden and John of Fordun displayed similar doubts about Geoffrey; however, their analysis of his narrative of British history was usually restricted to a single episode or extract, which they compared with a range of insular and classical authorities. John Trevisa, the translator of Higden’s *Polychronicon*, offered a single defence of the *Historia* in the late fourteenth century, which anticipated the scholarly treatises of John Leland and John Prise. Leland and Prise identified Geoffrey as a translator rather than an *auctor*, and they openly defended the authority of his account of British history.

Despite their reservations about Geoffrey, Latin authors also frequently quoted from the *Historia* in their own insular histories. These historians recognised

² *Two Lives of Gildas by a Monk of Ruys and Caradoc of Llancarfan*, ed. and trans. by Hugh Williams (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1990).

the *Historia* as a source of authority rather than Geoffrey. As Malcolm B. Parkes points out,

Auctoritates were texts rather than persons. They are *sententiae* or ideas excerpted from their immediate context in a work and divorced from the wider context of the writings of an auctor.³

In the Latin tradition, extracts from or references to the *Historia* could either indicate general acceptance of the text's authority, or the textual example could warrant further critical scrutiny. Gerald of Wales and John of Fordun represent both critical responses. In his Welsh writings, Gerald frequently appropriated Geoffrey's stories for his own purpose and accepted them as fact; however, he rarely acknowledged the source of his material. Gerald's use of Geoffrey is similar to Geoffrey's use of Gildas, especially as both writers did not always reference their main sources of British history. Nevertheless, Gerald did cite Geoffrey if he wanted to disagree with him and prove his own authority, particularly in regards to matters concerning Welsh history. In contrast to Gerald, who rarely cited Geoffrey, John of Fordun was more diligent with his references. John assimilated many episodes of the *Historia* into his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, and placed Geoffrey alongside other authorities on British history. John also contested the authority of Geoffrey's narrative when it contradicted other sources, or if it undermined his claims about Scottish independence. For example, John quotes part of description of Britain from the *Historia* to demonstrate Geoffrey's ignorance about Scottish geography – especially the rivers – and to establish the importance of natural boundaries between Britain and Scotland.

³ M. B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1991), pp. 35–70 (p. 34, n. 1).

Vernacular translation was also central to the continuous reproduction of the *Historia* in England and Wales. From the twelfth century, translators adopted the narrative of British history the *Historia* without question. By removing references to Geoffrey and the title of the *Historia*, translators in England and Wales adapted his narrative of British history to suit a range of social, cultural, and political contexts. In England, the process of textual transmission also disrupted Geoffrey's authority, and some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century translations were based on earlier vernacular versions of the *Historia*. Many of the translations produced in England, including those of Pierre de Langtoft, Robert Mannyng, the Prose *Brut*, and John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, are testament to the legacy of Wace's *Roman de Brut* – only Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* and *Castleford's Chronicle* claim the *Historia* as a direct source. In Wales, however, some of the thirteenth-century versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* – most notably Llanstephan 1 – used a combination of the Vulgate *Historia* and the First Variant as their source, while later versions of the text, such as the Red Book of Hergest's *Brut*, were based on the earlier Welsh translations. The different textual and national traditions were often far removed from the original text of the *Historia*, and the process of transmission and translation also erased Geoffrey's authorial identity.

While translators reproduced Geoffrey's narrative of British history, their different linguistic registers had the potential to subvert the authority of their source texts (whether Latin or vernacular). In her study of classical and medieval translation, Rita Copeland compares translation to the practice of academic commentary, noting that '[l]ike commentary, translation tends to represent itself as "service" to an authoritative source; but also, like commentary, translation actually

displaces the originary force of its models'.⁴ The *Historia* was subject to multiple acts of translation into Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Middle Welsh, which subsequently displaced the original Latin text. For example, the different translations of the descriptions of Britain examined in chapter three subverted Geoffrey's original model of insular unity through a change in political and geographical terminology. Translations of the letter from Cassibellanus to Julius Caesar discussed in chapter four located this fictional text in contemporary discourses of political and national freedom. As analysed in chapter six, the different names and etymologies of British cities indicate the interrelationship between Latin, Anglo-Norman and English, and demonstrate the multilingual nature of late medieval Britain.

In their different accounts of insular history, Latin historians and vernacular translators imitated some of the rhetorical motifs that Geoffrey used in the *Historia*. The formulaic style and structure of these motifs meant that they could easily be reproduced to suit a variety of contexts. In the Prose *Brut* and John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, for instance, Arthur's speech to the Britons was transformed into a letter that imitated the style of *ars dictaminis* that Geoffrey used in the *Historia*. In his *Chronica gentis Scotorum*, John of Fordun modeled his letter from the Scots and the Picts to Caesar on Cassibellanus' letter to Caesar in the *Historia*, and John used his own version of this fictional document to articulate resistance to contemporary insular conflicts. John also imitated the description of Britain in the *Historia* – as well as other insular histories – to subvert Geoffrey's idea of insular unity, and to indicate his position within this textual tradition. Meanwhile, in the Prose *Brut*, the

⁴ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 4.

foundation stories of Albina and Hengist established the same links between territory and genealogy as Geoffrey's story of Brutus of Troy in the *Historia*.

Latin and vernacular historians also revised the chronological structure and narrative content of the *Historia*. In contrast to quotation, translation, and imitation, which are based on the process of textual reproduction, revision involves substantial textual intervention, and this strategy presents the strongest challenge to the authority of Geoffrey's text and his narrative of British history. Structural revision was essential to assimilate Geoffrey's account British history from Brutus to Cadwaladr into the more linear and continuous narratives of English, Scottish, and Welsh history. Meanwhile, narrative revision was largely based on political motives. The geographical division of Britain between Brutus' sons, Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus, was substantially revised in England and Scotland during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to support claims of political and national sovereignty. The kin relationships between Arthur and his heirs were restructured to assert different rights of succession. Finally, the loss of British sovereignty was rewritten in Anglo-Norman and Middle English texts to emphasise the remapping of geography and territory by the English kings.

In addressing the major rewritings of the *Historia* across England, Scotland, and Wales, the analysis in this thesis has largely been based on a single version of the primary texts. The comparative methodology that has been used throughout this study could be applied to the different versions and manuscripts of the Prose *Brut* and the *Brut y Brenhinedd*, and an examination of the different witnesses in these historical traditions could further assess how multiple acts of translation affected the textual authority of the *Historia*. This thesis has also focused on the different models of national history writing in medieval Britain, but it is important to recognise that

the *Historia* was also used in universal chronicles, as well as local and monastic histories. Further research into these Latin texts would demonstrate how Geoffrey's narrative of British history was assimilated into different genres of historical writing and would determine how sacred history was used to confirm the events of the *Historia* (and vice versa).

In an essay on the function of fiction in medieval historiography, Monika Otter suggests that 'Geoffrey became something of an *auctoritas* for those who engaged in creative history-making' in the later Middle Ages.⁵ Yet this thesis has frequently demonstrated that Geoffrey's authority was located in his narrative of British history, rather than in his name or the title of his text. While Geoffrey's reputation was subject to persistent critical evaluation, his narrative of British history gained authority through quotation, translation, and imitation, and also survived multiple acts of revision and textual intervention. The success, influence, and longevity of the *Historia regum Britanniae* ultimately relied on the death of its author, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

⁵ Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 109-130 (p. 119).

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