Early Modern Britain’s Relationship to Its Past: The Historiographical Fortunes of the Legends of Brute, Albina, and Scota

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Early Modern Britain’s Relationship to Its Past
STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE
RESEARCH IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE

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Early Modern Britain’s Relationship to Its Past

The Historiographical Fortunes of the Legends of Brute, Albina, and Scota

By

Phil Robinson-Self

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Origins of Origins</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brutal Beginnings: Britain and the Reception of Brutus of Troy</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albina and Her Sisters: Female Foundations</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering Scotland: The Early Modern Reception of Scotia</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthurian Afterthoughts: Princes, Kings, and the Prophetic Past</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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THIS IS A BOOK about the reception in the early modern period of mythologies of national origin; rather like the interlinked myths discussed here, the origin of the telling of this story is difficult to pin down. Certainly, it relies upon the large body of work conducted in this area by criticism of both the academic and popular varieties. But of course it also lies in the particular people who have helped me along the way. In terms of that story, I have many to thank, and probably too many to list. Andrew McRae, Pascale Aebischer, Nick McDowell, Philip Schwyzer, Karen Edwards, Jo Hatt, Oliver Webb, Ulrike Zitzlsperger, Natasha Bellinger, Martina Behrens, Duncan Jackson, and Beth Watts all deserve particular thanks for their encouragement and friendship. Ellie Jones, archivist at Exeter Cathedral, has been a wonderful friend and constant source of good-humored advice over the years. I am grateful to Lynne Fallwell and Keira Williams, who gave thoughtful guidance on what has here become part of Chapter 3, and who were very gracious, along with Routledge, in allowing my inclusion of a reworked version of this material in the present volume. Erika Gaffney, senior acquisitions editor at Medieval Institute Publications, was incredibly kind and supportive throughout the process of writing this book. I am also extremely grateful to the anonymous reader of the manuscript, who provided a productively robust, kind, and very helpful review of the draft work. I am grateful also to Sally Evans-Darby, who provided rigorous and careful editing and proofing, and to Julian Webb for his management of the production process. Any errors, of course, remain my own.

The greatest acknowledgments go to my most beloved points of origin: my wife, Lizzy, and our two wonderful daughters. I would not have written this without them.
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THE PRESENT VOLUME ANALYZES the intertwined literary, political, and historiographical fortunes in early modern Britain of three mythologies of national origin. In the first and probably most influential narrative, Brutus of Troy, descendent of Aeneas, arrives at and civilizes the isle of Albion, in the process renaming it Britain. On the one hand, the myth provided a useful classical heritage; on the other hand, Brutus was a conqueror whose conquest drew attention to the penetrability of the isle. While the question of his historicity exercised some in the period, the question of his morality engaged others; the answers to both questions bear on the particular politics of the period and the more general reception of the past through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Problematic in itself as an origin point (and roundly mocked elsewhere on the continent), the implications of the story of Brutus are further complicated by two directly competing narratives of origin: those of Scota and Albina. In the latter, a late medieval insertion to the existing British mythology, Albina is the leader of a group of sisters who murder their husbands in a bid for agency, are banished from their homeland, and, arriving at the shores of what would become Britain, people the island with monstrous giants via extended copulation with devils. For early modern historiographers, Albina presented a difficult complication in the reception of foundation myth. If Albina was problematic, Scota was perhaps more so: an Irish, and subsequently Scottish, myth of Britain’s origins which competed with the Brutus narrative by positing Scota, a Pharaoh’s daughter, as the origin point of the isle, and which thus held up an Egyptian classical heritage against the Trojan one. For English writers, Scota was at best a fanciful creation; in Scotland, by comparison, female origin could operate as a matter of historiographical pride, and potentially the stuff of national resistance. The accession of Scotland’s King James VI to the throne of England in 1603 only further complicated these narratives, while at the same time sustaining their political relevance into the seventeenth century.
The consideration of these narratives, and their various literary and historiographical representations, is illuminating in terms of how different histories and geographies bump up against one another. Throughout, the present volume explores the ideologically complex interrelationship of these often-competing stories, demonstrating how they may have been used to call into question issues in narratives of history, contemporary politics, religion, and gender. The volume thus places itself in dialogue with recent investigations of the early modern period’s relationship to its past, and also with key questions of concern to a more general readership. How are stories of origin politicized, retold, rewritten? How do narratives resist this type of rewriting? And, as modern-day Britain (among other European countries) continues to consider its future as a geopolitical entity, what implications do these stories have for our own enduring concepts of national origin?

A final preliminary textual note: throughout, I make use of modern and readily available editions of works where possible. In other material, I have emended and regularized u/v, i/j, f/s, and vv/w, and expanded all contractions of m or n represented by a tilde above the preceding vowel.
Introduction
Origins of Origins

Pasts in the Present

A nation without a border is no nation at all. So runs a recent geopolitical theory on the nature of state relations from the US, and if the position has been subject to criticism and argument, it is also one which has been reflected in present-day national movements and counter-movements in the UK, mainland Europe, and elsewhere in the “Western” world. In the past few years, we have seen (or, depending on one’s point of view, we are told we have seen) a renewed focus on the integrity of the individual nation state and the physical and ideological permeability of its borders. Whether this is in terms of particular sovereignties, trade relations, economics, or immigration, political lines of argument are staked along lines which seek to define tangible qualities of nationhood, often in relation to immediate neighbors. If there are ironies in nations on both sides of the Atlantic insisting on their global outlook while feverishly examining their own back yards, believing in being geopolitically unlimited in scope while restating their own geographical limits, these are by no means new ironies. Many times during the work of writing this volume, the reverberation between modern political narratives and those of the early modern period has been striking; whether this reverberation has more to say about the present or the past is an open question. As for these isles about which I write: if a nation without a border is no nation at all, what about a nation with a superfluity of borders? As literary criticism has been at pains to point out for years in relation to earlier periods, despite being continually referred to as an “island nation,” the United Kingdom has external and internal borders in overplus; the politically motivated elision of those borders in favor of an imagined construct is encountered as often today as in writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To put that another way: the present often talks about the past, and with the voices of the past, even when it does not realize it is doing so.
Equally, the feeling of being struck by the resonances between past and present is itself nothing new. Arguably, such resonance has been a key driver of much of the criticism, from a range of intellectual disciplines, which has over the past thirty years or so restructured and reconfigured how we think about the British past. I turn to this body of criticism a little later in the chapter. It is also, though, a feeling very much in evidence in the period under consideration in this volume. The range of generically diverse texts covered in the body of this book, from Henrisoun, Warner, Spenser, Camden, Drayton, and others, are all marked by the impulse to reconfigure the past in, and into, the present. Thomas Middleton makes the point fairly clearly in the prologue to *Hengist, King of Kent* (ca. 1615–1620), an early seventeenth-century staging of fifth-century legendary history. “Fashions that are now called new,” the prologue instructs, pointing at the audience, “Have been worn by more than you / […] So in story what’s now told / That takes not part with days of old?” The point is, perhaps, simply a commonplace: everything old is new again, or at least constantly reused.

But appearing in a play which is explicitly concerned with the transmission and interpretation of the past, the conventional begins to look a bit more pointed. *Hengist’s* plot dramatizes a key moment in the narrative of origin for England and for Britain: the invasion of the Saxons. While the truth of Hengist and Horsa’s leadership of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in a concerted settlement of Britain is very much questionable, the idea of a watershed moment when ancient Britain becomes Anglo-Saxon England has remained an attractive one. Historiographically speaking, the Anglo-Saxons were for the early modern period at times deeply unpopular, at times politically ascendant; and quite which line Middleton’s play itself takes has been subject to argument. Either way, the entry of these peoples into Britain was regarded as a pivotal moment when one type of national history ended and another began. The resultant argument in *Hengist*, as with other early modern dramatizations of the past, that we should “to prove times mutual glory / Join new times love, to old times story,” is a resonant one for the politics of history.

Dramatizing legendary material from a long-gone era, Middleton’s point is not so much that this past is important to appreciate in and of itself, but that the joining of past to present creates a mutuality, an accretion of meaning by drawing a line of events into the here and now. Such an understanding underlines not only the practice but the felt experience of history as one entirely rooted in moral and political purposes: as Ruth Morse puts it, “history has always been rewritten to find contemporary concerns anticipated in its imagined pasts […] the historical ‘search for ancestors’ creates ancestors.” If we may
do our best as historians and literary critics not to bring our subjective selves into the objects of our work, it is worth remembering the inherent difficulties in such a position.

Middleton has a little more than this to say to us about historical method. *Hengist* presents its prologue through the character of Raynulph Higden, a fictionalized version of the Ranulf Higden known for his authorship of the fourteenth-century *Polychronicon*—itself a popular chronicle which reached into the past for the purposes of its own present. Middleton’s version of history, then, is not a straight line from past to present but one that is self-consciously navigated through figures of medieval interpretation. The play opens by drawing attention to the fact that past texts and their authors have already done exactly what *Hengist* is in the process of doing: rewriting history in order to make a contemporary point. The presence of figures of history as narrators of a still-earlier history is by no means unique to Middleton: *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (ca. 1608) famously adopts the same strategy by including the medieval poet John Gower as Chorus, while Anthony Munday gives us John Skelton, complete with a decent mimicry of Skeltonic verse, in *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington* (1598). One of the most influential texts of the sixteenth century, the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559–1610), essentially involves a series of infamous ghosts dragged out of their time to relate their own ends, along with what the present ought to learn from those ends. In Middleton, at least, the point is multi-pronged and ties into what Thomas Roebuck sees as a broader concern in the play with the dramatization of questions of origin: “That the story offers a historical account of national origins which emphasizes crisis, rupture, violence, and betrayal may have been one of the reasons Middleton was attracted to presenting this period on stage.” Anachronisms are quite literally center-stage elsewhere in the play, most famously in Hengist’s momentary use of Old English language, the mangled phrase “Nemp your sexes,” to give the order to slaughter the British. But the moment of verbal verisimilitude, by its very linguistic difference from the surrounding text, draws attention to its fictionality: as Lucy Munro notes, the “extraordinary” anachronism works to expose “the construction of historical narrative.” The Saxons are invaders both in terms of plot and vocabulary; sitting somewhere between authentication and the queasily uncanny, the eruption of the past is in *Hengist* a gesture made overt.

But if the past is everywhere on show, the very real dangers involved in that showing were equally felt. Walter Ralegh, in the Preface to his *History of the World* (1614), states his intent “to write of the eldest times:
wherein also why may it not be said, that in speaking of the past, I point at the present, and tax the vices of those that are yet living, in their persons that are long since dead; and have it laid to my charge. But this I cannot help, though innocent.”14 People will make of history what they will, and read into it how they will; just so for historical writing. The past is usefully malleable for present purposes, and if Ralegh worries that his approach to history might thus be misinterpreted as a veiled attack on political actors of his present, his protestation of innocence also conveys and invites the possibility of its opposite. Steering clear of the present in favor of the distant past, for whatever reason, is a matter of sensible policy. Ralegh imagines the business of reportage as the pursuit of an unpredictable animal: “whosoever in writing a modern History, shall follow truth too near the heels, it may happily strike out his teeth.”15 He had more reason than most to fear the hand of authority, having been imprisoned in the Tower of London since his trial of 1603. But commenting on more recent historical events was widely regarded as a dangerous business all round. Morse writes that tales concerning “Yorkist or Tudor England or Marian Scotland […] remained dangerous for writers for generations […] The safer route for writers is to reach back to prehistory and deal with legendary kings.”16 Holinshed and his collaborators finished up their Irish chronicle within *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577, 1587) in the reign of Edward VI with a short reference to Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger, concluding their history a good two decades prior to the year of printing, and explaining of more recent years that they “would be lothe to be taken in any part thereof, not onely to stumble, but also once to trippe.”17 Even Middleton, no stranger to sailing close to the political wind, omitted certain elements from his dramatic history of Hengist. The Picts, the actions of whom in betraying the southern British to the Saxons were oft imagined and recounted in earlier histories, are conspicuously missing from the play, presumably with the Scots King James VI and I in mind.18

The past is important to the present, the past helps to form the present; and when the present gets too dangerous for comment, the past can act as a useful ideological guide. Whether the actions of Ralegh, Holinshed, or Middleton to whitewash or otherwise avoid certain areas of the past act to frustrate the impulse to make connections between that past and the political present, or in fact work to invite, encourage, and in some ways authorize such an impulse, is open to question. As Kevin Sharpe convincingly argued, warnings to the reader against misreading can also be taken as encouragement: “disclaimer, however, turns out to
be an invitation.” Either way, those participating in the creation of historical narrative seem to have been well aware of their subject’s protean nature: an understanding that the past was not simply fact went hand in hand with an understanding of its fractured, varied uses for present purposes. John Selden, Michael Drayton’s partner on the first edition of the sprawling chorographic history *Poly-Olbion* (1612, 1622), frankly noted the abundance of histories and the problems of aligning them: “the grosse differences of time make all suspicious; so that you may as well beleive none of them as any one.” In other words, as far as the reader is concerned, *caveat emptor*: all history is bunk, and trusting to any historical author is a grave mistake. A gifted antiquarian, Selden’s somewhat nihilistic description of his own trade is engagingly self-aware, even as it runs the risk of leaving the reader with no available history whatsoever. Indeed, taking British history all in all could lead precisely nowhere. Looking at the whole run of English monarchy is, for John Taylor, instructive only in what a game of chance it all turns out to be:

So in two thousand and seven hundred yeeres,
We had thrice 50 Princes it appeares.
This Kingdome here was five times won and lost,
And Kings (as God decreed) oft chang’d and tost.
Sometimes one swaid the Scepter, sometime twaine,
And sometime seven at once did rule and raigne.

The passing from monarch to monarch reveals not the authority of an undying and absolute body politic, or even the sickly natural certainty of a hollow crown, but rather an energetic uncertainty. Taylor seems to encourage such a reading, describing the 400-year duration of the Saxon Heptarchy as a “sometime” moment of chaos while evincing something like surprise in the 150 Princes he himself reveals and lumps together. But while the fabric of time for Selden or Taylor may appear as an unpredictable and sometimes unreadable patchwork, others from all points of the political spectrum were only too happy to provide a framework for comprehending such matters.

Throughout the period, authors of all stripes adopted history, and particularly national histories, for their own purposes. Perhaps most obviously, readings of the past informed (or were used to inform) religious, national, and international conflict. The resolutely Catholic Richard Broughton’s *The Ecclesiastical Historie of Great Britaine* (1633) delved into national origins to show Christianity being planted in Britain by a fortunate visit from Saint Peter. The equally resolutely Protestant, and
rather better known, John Foxe undertook a similarly exhaustive historical enterprise in *Actes and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583) to show an early British Christianity both virtuous and defiantly anti-Roman.  

These are, of course, both simplifications of extremely complex texts, and the religious settlement of Europe was by no means the only reason to consider and harness the weight of history. In daily life, in social and legal relations, in considerations of property, heredity, and local identity, in celebration and commemoration, peering into not just the recent but ancient past appears to have been fairly common practice. This is not, it has to be said, a new observation; as Andrew Hiscock points out, the early modern period has long been regarded as “a culture that was obsessively concerned with the interpretation of the past.” All the same, it is worth reminding ourselves of this obsession with both the relevance of the past and its mutable nature. For early modern practitioners of history, their subject matter was not one fixed thing, but many: consequently Huw Griffiths argues that “early modern antiquarianism, whilst it sets out to discover the truth, to bring the nation’s origins to light, is in fact constantly embroiled in refutations and counter refutations of various accounts of the nation’s ancient past.” From a number of angles, and to a number of purposes, past was prologue and origin was preface.

The reading of this complex and sometimes tortured fabric undertaken in the present volume is one which necessarily touches on the understanding of both historical time and geopolitical space in early modern Britain; it thus operates along the lines of the two main critical impulses of the last twenty years in relation to the period. Through the 1990s and early 2000s, literary criticism, particularly that informed by the linked interests of new historicism and cultural materialism, tended to focus on issues of place, with an emphasis on nation, empire, and colonialism. Into the present decade, this same thread of criticism has experienced a turn to conceptualizations of time, of chronologies and chronicle, the reception and interpretation of the past. I turn to an examination of these critical impulses in the following section; before doing so, it seems important to point out that this is a book which, in drawing from these impulses, covers a relatively long period, and, in making connections between what different authors have to say about the past of their respective nations, makes those connections between very different spaces at very different times. Normally this would amount to what even the most generous historian would term “cherry-picking” for the sake of the argument. However, in this case, the cherry-picking is, perhaps, justified—or, at least, all the fruit comes from the same orchard.
The structure of this book is thus balanced between place and time as motivating concerns, and its organizing approach is thematic rather than geographic or chronological. The following chapters each deal with various mythologies of origin: the linked stories of Brute, Albina, and Scota. In discussing these key figures, they touch on various areas and various periods; however, in choosing to organize this discussion by the narratives themselves, rather than necessarily by place or time, this will sometimes be a story that leaps from place to place, time to time, and from genre to genre. I make no apologies for that: it is indicative of how these myths operate, or, rather, are made to operate. This is also a book which is informed by the continuing impact of gender studies on aspects of both nationhood and the reception of the past. Despite the mass of work on nationhood in the early modern period, this aspect of study has not been given the critical outing it might. As Ralf Hertel argues: “The impact of feminist studies on theories of nationalism has been rather recent, and if the role of gender is discussed with reference to the emergence of national identity at all, it is mostly in the works of female authors.” Two of the key narratives of origin investigated in the present volume, those of Albina and of Scota, involve female founders for nationhood. While those narratives are mostly written, rewritten, and manipulated by men, this does not by any means preclude the interruption and subversion of masculine histories by these vigorous figures of female origin: as Albrecht Classen notes, “it would be erroneous to assume that all male authors pursued a monolithic perspective, representing nothing but male interests, whereas women authors were only arguing for their own gender. There were many different voices, different attitudes and opinions regarding marriage, sexuality, chastity, public influence, social and economic roles, and power structures.” Equally, the bookending of these female origin myths with the masculine stories of Brute and (as afterword) King Arthur, while making sense from a structural perspective, does not imply any other sense of primacy. Both Brute and Arthur are better known now and, probably but not necessarily, were better known in the early modern period than Albina or Scota; but, as we shall see, this does not lead to anything so simple as the replacement of a “feminine” history with a “masculine” one.

Moreover, the literary representation of those myths mattered in ways which are sometimes difficult to appreciate today, as Hiscock recognizes: “the concept of the political nation was being realized in this period at least in part through textual production.” The nation state was coming into being through and within its texts, as well as through institution and statute, economic and military force. The matter of those myths
mattered also: what texts chose to remember, and what to forget, evidences “highly strategic memorial commitment.” Choosing what to instantiate and what to obliterate was, as Middleton, Ralegh, Holinshed, and others well knew, a highly charged political enterprise; what was highlighted as the remembered and what was underlined as forgotten inextricably bound up the literary with the political, and the past with the demands of the present. Throughout, this volume is concerned with the reception and redefinition of existing earlier narratives, the way these play out in the early modern period in terms of, to use Jennifer Summit’s phrase, “an ongoing, politically-driven struggle to redefine and contain the nation’s own medieval past.” This was by no means a process unique to Britain: as Hiscock notes, national, dynastic, social, and religious fissures across Europe provided both the context and the conditions for an “ideological ‘scramble’ for the past.” In terms of the particular ideological scramble undertaken in this volume, though, it is worth acknowledging the impulse of critical trends in early modern studies which have particularly focused attention on issues of British national history, interpretations of origin, and memorial constructions of the past.

Presents in the Past

Our own interests and anxieties around nationality have informed how we interpret the past, and which pieces of the past we are interested in. We ourselves, after all, make remarkable geographical and historical leaps in laying claim to heritage. One instructive example for the present argument is provided by the UK organization English Heritage, or, as it used to be known, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. One of two large bodies responsible in England for the maintenance and upkeep of historic sites “of national interest,” the organization’s publicity tends to highlight the management of those sites which have an enduring cultural appeal. There are strong economic and political arguments for pointing to well-known places, particularly at a time when English Heritage has moved from a state-funded organization to a charitable one dependent on public interest. But in advertising the famous sites that members of English Heritage can benefit from seeing, the organization manages some breath-taking feats of travel, numbering among their key attractions Hadrian’s Wall, Stonehenge, Tintagel Castle, and the Giant’s Causeway. English Heritage thus manages to both inherit and inhabit periods and places manifestly not English: in this case, Roman, prehistoric, Cornish, and Irish. Again, the mirroring of earlier approaches to understanding
and appropriating the past is striking (the idea that the Giant’s Causeway could be *English* heritage would no doubt have set Edmund Spenser shivering, though whether in disgust or delight is hard to say).

The concerns of what became known as the New British History were formed partly in recognition of, and contradistinction to, the long trend of this kind of cultural appropriation. Firstly a response to catalysts among historians, such as John Pocock’s now famous article, “British History: A Plea for a New Subject,” before moving to early modernists across a broad range of intellectual disciplines, the New British History essentially recognized a problem that, at least in English departments, had been there all along: “Constructing a monolithic English tradition, not least a unified literary tradition, involves the assumption of a history and racial memory which never really existed.” 34 That this problem in its British guise was only fully realized and dissected in the late 1980s and 1990s has just as much to say about the immediate political concerns and anxieties of those decades (militant nationalism, the push toward devolution, and crippling poverty on one hand; “Cool Britannia” on the other) as it does about, say, those of the 1580s. The continued influence of new historicism and cultural materialism also prompted reconsideration of the place of place in the construction and deconstruction of canon. And, if one was being entirely cynical, destabilization in the academic job market and the increase in student numbers in higher education, combined with an increase in optionality and modularity in course structures, may also have contributed to not just researching but teaching issues which were likely to get a good number of bottoms on the right seats. If nothing else, New British History was simply a bit sexier than Old British History.

Whatever the case, those working in the area had to adapt, as Patrick Collinson notes, to the idea of “not England but the whole package—England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.” 35 Key work on the early modern period examined that whole package, and considerations of nationhood quickly became more plural considerations of nationhoods. 36 Navigating and making sense of such complexity acknowledged what Derek Hirst has referred to as “a singularly tricky business [...] In the British field, more than most, the settings of authors and texts alike were not only multifaceted, but also multiply fractured.” 37 For that matter, the individual nations at stake were not themselves fully formed in the way we might recognize them today. Scotland and Ireland remained relatively decentralized; Wales only came into being as an external imposition (having previously been composed of various independent kingdoms and principalities); for its part, early modern England has been famously described by Collinson as
“a series of overlapping, superimposed communities which are also semi-
autonomous, self-governing political cultures or ‘republics.’”38 What we
are left with is the shifting indeterminacy of conceptions of Britishness
in the early modern period, as Andrew Escobedo notes: “Depending on
context, ‘British’ in this period could comprise England, Scotland, and
Wales; or it could designate the pre-Saxon identity persisting in England,
especially through the modern Welsh; or, more rarely, it appears to be syn-
onymous with ‘English.’”39 While such multiplicity was on the one hand
invigorating for criticism, trying to talk about all of it at once did also
present conceptual and interpretational problems. As Collinson put it, “to
look out on this complex scene with a vision which stops at Watford is
myopic. Yet to try to look at it from no particular standpoint is as impos-
sible a game as three-dimensional chess.”40

Recognizing the idea of Britain as a thing of nothing and eve-
erything, critics had to accept that the object of their attention was one
which forever threatened to slip out of view; national identity becomes,
to use Hirst’s phrase, “a history of chronic instability.”41 Work which
might, on the whole, not have had to consider ideas of Britain given the
authors chosen for analysis not only did so but adopted it as an organizing
principle. Criticism increasingly dealt with not the “British Isles” but the
“Atlantic Archipelago,” a pleasingly alliterative but fundamentally con-
fusing term which, as Collinson memorably put it, “seems to suggest the
Azores and has little chance of catching on outside academic preciosity.”42
But if the Archipelago did not catch on outside academia, it seems to have
stuck within: much of the best work emerging from the reorientation of
critical view on these islands has deployed the nomenclature.43 As Willy
Maley and Patrick Murray recognize, such work “invites us to look afresh”
at a range of well-known and rather less well-known authors, to place
them within a broader range of voices and a broader range of geopolitical
contexts.44 In that ambition, the thrust of the literary end of New British
History was at its most useful, ethical, and intellectually vibrant. It is also
fair to say, however, that while English literary history had much to gain
in paying attention to non-English and non-anglophone writing (or, for
that matter, anything outside of early modern London’s south bank), it has
been somewhat harder to see the benefit for the traditions of Irish, Welsh,
Celtic, and Scottish Studies departments, which had quite a lot to lose.
Indeed, one of the key criticisms leveled at the New British History, par-
ticularly at those working from the English side of it, is that it was, really,
just English history by another name: at best slightly enriched, at worst a
form of colonialism in and of itself.45
Reflecting back on this line of criticism, one of its major proponents, David Baker, writes: “The British criticism ran into several problems, and today, it’s fair to say, it has also more or less run its course.”46 One of the key problems, for Baker, was a language issue raised among others by Patricia Palmer, who argued persuasively that “the old colonial monologue is being replicated by a predominantly monophone scholarship armed with the well-meaning but dangerous conviction that by listening with finely-honed scepticism to the colonialists’ outpourings—and only theirs—we can somehow hear the voices of the colonized as well.”47 Without attending to voices in their own languages, we cannot really imagine we are attending to an entire archipelago of peoples, Atlantic or otherwise. Baker, at least, felt that this critique “was simply unanswerable [...] A translation problem, one that had been tacit in this antecedent historiography since the early 1970s, had finally worked itself to the fore in the British criticism of the 2000s.”48 Still, while the critique is compelling, whether anyone could truly and fully engage in the necessary range of languages and cultures to be able to comment authoritatively across these islands, and across the early modern period, is an open question; after all, as Richard Suggett and Eryn White remind us, “the history of the spoken word in early modern Britain involved the changing fortunes of seven or eight languages.”49 Much of the excellent work on recovering early modern Irish and Scots Gaelic writing displays somewhat more subtle analysis around texts written in English than those in other languages of these islands; but, given that the alternative would be to ignore such work, that seems a fair trade-off. Meanwhile, those of us with abilities only in English language should not ignore what thinking more broadly about cultural and literary geographies has taught us about English-language texts.

While the geographies of early modern Britain have seen reconsideration, so too have its histories. In a sense this shift in focus partly emerged, from the 2000s onwards, directly out of the work on uncovering the plural and indistinct nationalities of Britain. Nationalities were imaginary, rooted in subjective histories. And if Britain was complex, then the way it understood its various histories must surely have been complex also, as Curtis Perry has argued: “we need to remember that there are multiple ways of imagining the nation, that they do not necessarily dovetail with one another, and that this situation is enabled by a historical culture that can seem, to us, impossibly undifferentiated.”50 Where national geographies had been one battleground, nationally located histories were another, with the latter rising up from, and used
to vindicate, the former: “modes of inscribing and communicating memory changed and diversified,” Kate Chedgzoy notes, “in response to the social, cultural and political changes that were re-shaping the ways in which the inhabitants of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland made sense of the past and looked to the future.” The shift to thinking about such politically inflected histories is also part of a broader trend in recent years from locating arguments in space to looking for them in time, and particularly toward critically encountering acts of memory. Again, it is possible to locate this shift partly in the cultural interests of the previous and present decades (even, perhaps, in turn-of-the-century nostalgia) as much as in a realization that the early modern period itself cared a great deal about memorial forms. Indeed, early on, there was an intensely self-aware recognition of the disciplinary context for this evolution that went hand in hand with its development. Robert Maslen, for example, writes that: “remembering has been foregrounded in the twenty-first century, as we seek to recall the origins both of our discipline and of its current preoccupations in order to ask ourselves [...] where we are now, and what strains in contemporary criticism might point the way to the discipline’s future.” Memory has also been a vital impulse in much excellent work in early modern gender studies, perhaps because the act of recovering lost or otherwise under-researched narrative encourages this type of paradigm. For Amanda Herbert, charting “critical changes in early modern British ideas about identity and selfhood, especially as they relate to gender and to practices of sociability,” naturally involves searching for the origins of these identities, a process that can only be conducted in memorial terms: “what are the origins of our definitions of our selves, our senses of being, our modern identities?”

Across work in the area of early modern memory studies, and akin to reconsiderations of the English canon, all this is material that has been on the table for some time. For Hiscock, “it comes as no surprise that early modern intellectuals frequently returned to the consideration of memory as a consuming source of vigorous, if ultimately irresolvable, debate,” while for Kyle Pivetti there is a clear “cultural and political crisis of the early modern period [...] a crisis of recollection.” Chronologies end up becoming just as fractured, multiplied, and difficult to grasp as geographies, particularly where the two intersect. The matter of nation is not, after all, just about cultural memorialization. Alongside some very precise remembering, it takes a great deal of forgetting to conjure up England, much less Britain. As Morse notes, the British past thus becomes a shared reference point for many authors, even as at the same time it collapses into multiple
conflicting versions: “a moribund antiquity ever gasping, ever at its last, ever futurusque because it supplies an imagined history which remained a shared cultural referent.”

In two or three ways, then, we are presented with the sense of an early modern past, and the early modern sense of a past, which is both vital to recover and essentially unrecoverable—perhaps because it never fully, wholly existed. Instead, Morse argues, we see in the work of early modern writers “the creation of an imaginary past that, like other well-written narratives, influenced and assuaged contemporary wants and needs.” Just as the period attempted to redraw its cultural and national geographies, so it struggled over the history of those geographies. Or, rather, a series of histories, and a series of ways to understand the past; Hiscock points to “the competing cultural formulations associated with time during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” characterized by “prevailing narratives of continuity, cyclical or rhythmic experience, decay, progress and so on.” As we have already seen, those in the early modern period who dealt in the material of history seem to have had a thorough awareness of its difficulties, its fractures. William Camden’s prefatory opening to his *Britannia* (1610) stresses the usefulness of his historical study but, importantly, only for the right sort of person: “in the studies of Antiquity,” Camden rather wistfully notes, “there is a sweet food of the mind well befitting such as are of honest and noble disposition.” While this might be seen as talking up the business in which Camden is involved, or perhaps as isolating particular forms of history for attention, it also reveals an anxiety concerning the capability of the past to be read in multiple ways: what happens to history when those not (at least in Camden’s opinion) of honest or noble disposition get their hands on it? For that matter, could antiquity itself be trusted to deliver the right messages? Those are questions at the root of the investigation conducted in this book. Brute, Albina, and Scota each presented ways of understanding and staking claims over the conflicted histories and geographies of Britain, even as they also operated as areas of conflict themselves, cultural battlegrounds over which to fight. Before turning to the first of those narratives, however, it is worth returning for a moment to the question of the past more broadly for the period—and, specifically, to Camden’s implicit questions about both the trustworthiness of material remains and their interpreters. The answers provided in the period are, again, about both history and geography, and they are bound up with the reception and deployment of the myths of nation discussed in the following chapters.
Worm-Eaten Books

The matter of *when* the past occurred was important; so too the question of *where* it occurred occupied the minds of the early modern period. But the answers could be multifaceted. The entire field of chorography essentially rested on an understanding that history remained into the present and could, with enough care, be physically uncovered. Place was not just geography but the playing out of history: as Howard Marchitello has argued, the charting of local and national landscape provided in the texts produced by chorographically minded authors represented “topography not exclusively as it exists in the present moment, but also as it has existed historically.” Spaces have memories, and a location’s recent, ancient, and legendary pasts, whatever their inherent truth, could be conceived of as indivisible part and parcel of the layered sediment that created them: “the approach,” Richard Hingley notes, “is based on the idea that the character of the land described in particular places persists through time.” In some respects, such sediment wove itself readily into narratives of nationhood, underpinning origin stories. The antiquarian’s role was to sift such sediment for the correct material, and in some cases to rebury that which proved troublesome. After all, some reminders of the past could be intensely uncomfortable, depending on one’s position in relation to that past: the period, in Alexandra Walsham’s evocative image, “inhabited a landscape encrusted with multiple visual reminders of the pre-Christian and Catholic history of Britain and Ireland.” But, as Walsham argues, the reactions to such reminders could also be complex; producing, and produced from, “a pluralistic society in which people of different creeds competed for control of sites in the physical environment, together with the welter of myths and legends that swirled around them.” The earth was pregnant with physical remains which threatened to be reborn at any moment, and which could be read multiple ways, as John Adrian notes: “traces of the past like ruined walls, old coins, fields where armies once clashed, and redolent place names. In other words, the land—because it possesses remnants of what went before—is a reservoir of history [...] antiquarians used the historical remnants that they found to construct new histories of their cities, counties, and nation.” The topographical organization and orientation of such works ensure that what we see is not history per se, but history embedded in and read through particular geographies, the sediment of the past built into the particular present; not necessarily only at the national level but also in terms of the local. The questions raised by such sediment, and the often somewhat hesitant answers
provided in the period to those questions, are integral to the narratives of origin considered in the present volume.

The presence of evidence in the surrounding landscape offered a useful imaginative prompt for mythological narratives, even where (or precisely because) such evidence proved difficult to fully comprehend. Middleton’s *Hengist* memorializes the legendary moment when the Saxons become Saxons, historically and linguistically: with the phrase “Nemp your sexes,” the traitorous invaders reveal their knives, in the process referring to the root word by which they would become known as a people. In revealing their sharp sexes, the Saxons demonstrate why they are called Saxons; the supposed moment of their treachery is also the moment in which they come fully into existence. Hengist’s episode in history could also, it was thought, be witnessed in geography; and it is perhaps no accident that this perilous moment in English national origin should be linked with what would become the nation’s most famous ruin, Stonehenge. In *Philadelphus, or A Defence of Brutes, and the Brutans History* (1593), Richard Harvey sets out the mythical history of the circle of stones:

> Aurely [King Aurelius Ambrosius] desiring to teach the Brutans, to beware of outlandish friendship, which had in his days so intrapped and infected them, caused Merlin by his Art Soveraigne, to fetch the great stones out of Ireland, which are now upon Salsbury plain, and set them neere the place where Hengist and the Saxons against their Oath did murder hundreds of the best Brutans with knives secretly provided for the purpose [...] That when they should see those stones or heare of them, they might remember the stony heartes of outlandish fiendes, the hypocrisie of Saxons, the untrueth of strangers, and either appoint them true overseers, or els away with them out of the Land.

Delivered from Ireland by Merlin’s magic, and re-erected to serve as a memorial to Hengist’s treachery, Stonehenge is written into the British myth, bringing its origins forwards by a few millennia. Rather than simply being there, it is made to stand in for a recollectable (if fictional) moment in the past, as Philip Schwyzer notes: “The unjust Saxon conquest [...] lay at the centre of archaeological consciousness; according to Geoffrey, Stonehenge had been erected as a memorial to a particular treacherous and bloody massacre of unarmed British chieftains.” Not so much English as anti-English heritage, the stone circle appears to become a focal point for understanding this history: Holinshed, Foxe, John Weever, and John Speed give similar origin stories for Stonehenge.
Like much else about the mythological origins of Britain, the myth of Stonehenge was popular and lastingly enduring. Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) references the 300 lords of “British bloud” slain at Hengist’s order, noting that “Whose dolefull moniments who list to rew, / Th’eternall markes of treason may at Stoneheng vew.” William Rowley’s *The Birth of Merlin*, authored in the early seventeenth century though not printed until 1662, similarly features Stonehenge as monument. How seriously the story is treated in either of these texts is questionable; even so, there remains an insistence that the land and its history can mean something, can represent. Whether Alexander Craig believes in the existence of a wizard called Merlin is less important than what can be done with the story: his poem “To his Calidonian Mistris” (1604) makes use of the myth as metaphor:

And when I spide those stones on Sarum plaine,  
Which Merlin by his Magicke brought, some faine,  
By night from farre Ierne to this land,  
Where yet as oldest Monuments they stand:  
And though they be but few for to behold,  
Yet can they not (it is well knowne) be told,  
Those I compard unto my plaints and cryes,  
Whose totall summe no numer can comprise.

The oldest monuments can be understood, although again quite how they can be understood is not certain. While Craig’s unnumbered tears are fairly typical of the complaining lover, their relationship to the stones of Salisbury plain is less immediately clear. The idea that the stones of Stonehenge could be both “few” in number and at the same time unable to “be told” is plainly paradoxical, but it was also, as Craig himself points out, a well-known trope concerning the monument. Richard Carew in *The Survey of Cornwall* (1602) considers the motif of the “doubled numbring” of Stonehenge, whose recounting is “never eveneth with the first,” while in “The 7 Wonders of England” (1598) Philip Sidney refers to Stonehenge as “huge heapes of stones [...] so confusde, that neither any eye / Can count them just, nor reason reason trye.” Throwing his arms up in the air over such a mystery, Sidney can only ponder “What force brought them to so unlikely ground.” The metaphor, it appears, is slippery. As Angus Vine argues, monuments such as Stonehenge frustrated the imagination even as they also provided a useful “locus for poetic reflections on the limits of historical knowledge and the nature of historical interpretation.” The past is not so easily to be pinned down; this recognition of the essential
untrustworthiness of history underlies the mythical accounts of national origin considered in the following chapters.

For if places like Stonehenge could be read as indicators of heroic national history, they also suggested the opposite: the destruction of nations, and the confusing interruption of the historical fabric through which they could be understood. Such ruins spoke of the past, but what they said could not be clearly heard: mystery could invite explanation and exposition, but it could also stand for unreadability, chaos. Ruins of all types were available to multiple avenues of interpretation and, as Griffiths notes, invited “competing and contradictory narratives of national origin.”

For Samuel Daniel, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, the clear exemplar of a deceitful history and a broken line of memory was Stonehenge: “That huge dumbe heape, that cannot tell us how, / Nor what, nor whence it is, nor with whose hands, / Nor for whose glory, it was set to shew / How much our pride mocks that of other lands?” Daniel rejects the story of Merlin’s monument to the fallen British heroes, chalking such legends up to “ignorance” and “fabulous discourse.” Detailing the story at some length, however, the poem feels at this point torn between the imaginative instantiation of an attractive but plainly false narrative, and the alternative: horror at the ruination left by “unsparing Time.” Neither option seems particularly desirable; the story concludes with a key question for the period: “is Antiquitie so great a lier?” For Daniel, at least, the outlook is stark: the past can be false, or it can be nothing.

Samuel Daniel was not alone in this sense of anxiety. Whether the monuments of the past remained readable was a question asked so often as to become stereotype, as Schwyzer notes: “the Renaissance fascination with the persistence of material artefacts across time was matched and perhaps exceeded by a fascination with examples of impermanence, loss, and dissolution.” Shakespeare’s Sonnet 55 famously measures up the qualities of marble and poetry, promising in its opening lines that “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.” The irony in the sonnet is marked by its choice of metaphor: the sword of Mars and “war’s quick fire” which will, we are told, destroy monuments of stone will make far shorter work of the resting place of poetry in manuscript or printed word. As with other juxtapositions of poetic and physical memorials, the sonnet draws attention not so much to the differences as to the similarities. Whether a monument was made from gilded marble or gilded words, it faced the same risk of destruction. Across the period, writers returned to the problem of the ruin time and again. This morbid fascination has often been seen as a result of the upheavals of
religious Reformation, as Schwyzer argues: “That the Elizabetheans should have been attracted to the theme of ruin is in no way surprising, given that their land was littered with substantial ruined structures. The most prominent of these, of course, were the hundreds of medieval religious houses, whose sudden reduction to ruin was still a matter of living memory.”

Some religious buildings were destroyed, some repurposed as protestant cathedrals, some passed into private hands. In another crossing of the fates of text and stone, the great repositories of monastic libraries were dispersed, a process which even the most protestant of antiquaries seem to have regarded with some horror.

Indeed, Walsham charts through the period a developing discourse “of nostalgic lament about the acts of sacrilege committed in the name of religious purification, a rhetoric of guilt and regret that simultaneously counteracted and catalysed the zeal of the godly to carry it through to its ultimate conclusion.”

Whichever way one looked at things, the urge to confront themes of change and passing may well have been inevitable.

Such feelings were not restricted to the experience of immediate memory. For Camden, writing at more of a remove from the Reformation in his Britannia, the ruined monasteries are the key relics of the nation’s Christian heritage: “there are not extant any other more conspicuous, and certaine Monuments, of their piety, and zealous devotion toward God.”

Though things may have gone bad in the end, or as Camden puts it, “in corrupt ages some weeds grew out over rankly,” such places nevertheless speak of the greatness and grace of the country’s religious past. Camden’s focus on remains leads to some slippage, however, in that it is the ruins which provide the indicator of piety rather than their previous existence as complete buildings, still less as centers of religious or social culture. Pushed into the matter of historical memory, monastic remains provide a historical ancestry for Christian devotion which their life apparently could not; their ruin is in some sense required in order to create an acceptable material fabric of the past. At the same time, the careful language deployed by Camden seems also to evince a sigh of antiquarian longing: that there are not other, better monuments that are extant, that are conspicuous or certain. Even as Camden offers monasteries a recovered symbolic status, he undermines it. Recovering an original meaning from such imaginative geographies seems to be marked out as problematic, if not impossible.

As has been recognized, this is a feeling which Camden also evinces in regard to the island of Britain as a whole. The very title of Camden’s Remaines of a Greater Worke Concerning Britain (1605) is pregnant with meaning. A collection of material in English (as opposed to the scholarly
Latin of *Britannia*), the miscellany, Morse argues, “prompts us to consider the uses of the word ‘remains’ (of a proposed larger book) ‘concerning’ geophysical ruins and remnants in a place he calls ‘Britain.”’\(^{92}\) The Britain of both *Britannia* and *Remaines* is one that tells its story through the ruins of its past, an enterprise which might be said to guarantee the generation of morbid as well as heroic history for the nation. *Remaines* foregrounds the problem, with Camden himself framing the work as a ruin, as remains: “being only the rude rubble and out-cast rubbish […] of a greater and more serious worke.”\(^{93}\) The modesty topos manages to conceptualize the work as pointing in three or four directions that are nevertheless parts of an imaginative whole: textually, the *Remaines* features remnants of a larger work; in content it is the description of the remains of Britain in Britain; memorially, it is itself framed as one of those remainders. Arriving in English five years before the full English translation of the Latin *Britannia*, and whether by design, excision, or rejection offering material not included in *Britannia*, the *Remaines* are also their own equal and opposite—something entirely new. For Camden, then, the place in which the past occurred may well be the text in which it is written. Where Shakespeare is concerned that such texts may not always survive, Camden gives us one that is already a ruin. Dealing in fragments of etymology, epitaphs, onomastics, and anecdotes, the *Remaines* pieces together a patchwork of disparate narratives; the effect is not unlike that of the jumbled “huge heapes of stones” which tried Sidney’s mathematical imagination. Unlike Stonehenge, though, the voices of this ruin can be heard; Britain comes into being through a sediment of its past voices ventriloquized by Camden. What such voices end up telling us is less clear.

For modern commentators on the period, the linked, problematic questions of where the past occurred and how its monuments could be recovered, understood, or reconstructed can often best be answered by a visit to the imagination of Edmund Spenser. Particularly crucial in terms of narratives of British origin has been the haunting presence of the two chronicle histories “Briton moniments” and “Antiquitee of Faery lond” in Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*: “These two books,” Pivetti writes, “have presented something of a crux for critics.”\(^{94}\) Exploring the castle of Alma at the close of Canto 9, Prince Arthur and Sir Guyon are led back into its far recesses, to a chamber “removed farre behind.”\(^{95}\) Here, they meet the pleonastic “old oldman,” Eumnestes, and his rather more spry assistant, Anamnestes.\(^{96}\) Granted the opportunity to search through the many assorted rolls, records, and scrolls contained within Eumnestes’s library, Guyon and Arthur both happen across their own family histories.
Presented as texts within texts, these histories occupy Canto 10 and are, of course, fictional. But that may not matter. The rummaging in the chamber of Eumnestes represents an attempt to recover the past: to use Hiscock’s phrase, Guyon and Arthur’s reading is an excited “search for cultural and personal origination.” Where Stonehenge represents one crux of origin, the two volumes presented by Spenser within The Faerie Queene represent another, as Pivetti recognizes: “Spenser looks to the images of Arthur and Brutus, both of whom have signaled rupture in other narratives of England, to remind his readers of nationhood. It is no matter if the state, or indeed the empire, that Spenser ‘remembers’ did not yet exist in 1590. His allegorical forms fashion immaterial nationalism into the ‘matter’ of collective memory, into the ‘matter’ of shared imperial pasts.” As with stories of Saxon treachery, the mythical history considered is of contemporary importance. Spenser’s subject matter is in theory chosen for the same reason that the histories of Ralegh and Holinshed dare not approach the present, the ancient history of “king Arthure” being “furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time.” As Rebeca Helfer comments, though, “nothing could be further from the truth”; Arthur was, as Helfer goes on to note, “a crucial legitimating figure for the Tudors.”

Famously, Prince Arthur’s reading in the castle of Alma is interrupted just as he would have the opportunity to read about himself, with the text coming to an unexpected and uncertain close: “Without full point, or other Cesure right, / As if the rest some wicked hand did rend, / Or th’Author selfe could not at least attend / To finish it […].” The moment when the text fails represents another crux for modern readers of Spenser and perhaps, as Escobedo argues, for early modern readers as well: “This episode’s combination of Arthur’s presence and imperfect ancient records keenly reflects the Elizabethan attempt to formulate a national history out of the Arthurian narratives, especially to the degree that Spenser imagines such a history emerging from the material remains of ancient Britain.”

Whatever one makes of the textual moment, it seems clear that the search for origins is not an easy one.

I return to both Spenser and Camden in the next chapter. For the moment, I want to draw attention to two elements in Book 2, Canto 10 of The Faerie Queene which dwell explicitly on the connections between geographical and textual remains. The first occurs within the chronicle of Briton moniments, when we are introduced to the race of giants which the Trojan exile Brute removes in his conquest and settlement of Britain. These giants, the original inhabitants of the isle, are presented as a “salvage nation […] / That never tasted grace, nor goodnesse felt,” though
they are also noted as being fast, hardy, and courageous. Their strongest, Gogmagog, had a long textual history which drew on the book of Revelation; he would also have an extensive textual afterlife, being well remembered long after Brute was put to rest. His fate in the myth of Brute was to be destroyed. Challenging the invaders to single combat, Gogmagog is met in a wrestling match by Corineus, Brute’s trusted right-hand man. After a long and brutal struggle, Corineus proves the stronger, and literally throws Gogmagog out of the country, hurling him to the rocks off Britain’s coastline. In most retellings of the story, the battle is so terrible as to produce a lasting indicator of this originary excision: when Corineus throws Gogmagog from the cliff, the mighty giant’s fall alters the landscape, in some versions of the story so substantially as to create Cornwall out of the sea. As with Stonehenge, history can be seen in present geography, the remnant evidencing and legitimizing the story of that which has passed. But in Spenser’s retelling of the story, this process is grotesquely literalized. The history is not merely the remainder of the past, a monument which can speak in some way to the present, but is brought directly and violently into that present: not just the giant’s effects on the land, we are told, but also the meat of his broken body remain visible. The interested observer, should they be minded, “well can witnesse yet unto this day / the westerne Hogh [i.e. Plymouth Hoe], / besprinckled with the gore / Of mightie Gōcmot.” There was, at one time, a cut outline in the Hoe which may have represented the figures of Gogmagog and Corineus—but even when present it would have taken a stretch of the imagination to think of this representation as the blood of a giant. Here, the remains are rendered gruesomely physical; it is as if his death had only just occurred. There is a slippage, too, in the question of when “this day,” the day when we are invited to witness Gogmagog’s gore, actually takes place. The presentness of the present is open to question: like much in the text, it slides ambiguously between the “present” of the fictional writing of Briton moniments, the “present” of its reading by Prince Arthur, and the “present” of that moment’s narration in The Faerie Queene. None of these moments are actually the present of the late sixteenth-century reader; all of them are monuments of the past. Spenser demonstrates that the time of the present in relation to that past may be just as difficult to place as the past itself: the testimony of history is slippery, problematic.

The land could deliver its messages in other ways. If the first moment of Brute’s empire-building enterprise in England illustrates one kind of problem in geographic testimony, Arthur’s battle subsequent to his reading of the chronicle delivers another kind. Fresh from his study of Briton moniments, the “present” of its reading by Prince Arthur, and the “present” of that moment’s narration in The Faerie Queene. None of these moments are actually the present of the late sixteenth-century reader; all of them are monuments of the past. Spenser demonstrates that the time of the present in relation to that past may be just as difficult to place as the past itself: the testimony of history is slippery, problematic.
moniments in the castle of Alma, Spenser’s Prince Arthur engages in battle with the imposing figure of Maleger, in a fight which calls physically on the monuments of Arthur’s reading. Deprived of a weapon, Maleger turns to the landscape, wrenching from the ground a “huge great stone, which stood upon one end.” In this he seems to recall or replicate elements of the legendary fight between Corineus and Gogmagog: the giant was well known for his weapon choice of whatever rock came to hand. As Drayton puts it in *Poly-Olbion*, Gogmagog was powerful, but not a swordsman: “for the use of armes he did not understand / (Except some rock or tree, that coming next to hand, / He raised out of the earth to execute his rage).” Maleger’s choice of weapon, though, is a bit more pointed: this particular piece of the earth “had not bene removed many a day; / Some land-marke seem’d to be, or signe of sundry way.” In unearthing landscape heritage to use against Arthur, Maleger deploys a monument against a monument. As is sometimes the way in landscape archaeology, though, nobody quite knows what the monument was for: it seemed to be a landmark, *The Faerie Queene* tells us, or it might have been a road sign. Seeming and signs are both indicators of difficulty in Spenser’s work: signs can mean in multiple ways, and that something might seem is nearly always a warning of its opposite. In this case, that the sign points in sundry directions only emphasizes the multiple and fragmentary nature of such symbols in history, with the action, in Pivetti’s view, “literally claiming the artifacts of ‘Briton moniments’ and exposing their essential meaninglessness.” The memory of the monument fails, its meaning unable to be understood, and in this representational uncertainty can be linked to the (interrupted) memorialization of the past attempted by Arthur’s reading.

Just as Middleton offers us a monument of chronicle history raised to life within his play *Hengist*, Spenser’s *Briton moniments* gives dramatic voice to the past. But the British chronicle contained within *The Faerie Queene* is a facsimile, albeit a structurally convincing one, just as the Higden of *Hengist* is not the real Higden. The textual monument is framed and subjected to scrutiny, presented by way of a book which is both worm-eaten and incomplete, coming to an unwelcome *interruptus* and early conclusion. The worm-eaten quality of history, riddled with holes that confused meaning and broke the line between past and present, was in fact a common complaint. Thomas Nashe, praising the history play as a substitution for, and enlivening of, the dormant substance of history contained within the chronicle tradition, noted that “our forefathers’ valiant acts, that have lain long buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books, are revived, and they themselves raised from the Grave of Oblivion.”
The dramatic form of the play provides an outlet for the past; for Nashe, Munro argues, “the value of drama lies in its power to bring the dead out of time-worn documents and back to life, to allow them to speak for themselves, and to represent their deeds in thrilling verisimilitude.” Recuing the heroic past from the ruin of the historic text, dramatic poetry revitalizes not just by raising the dead, but by raising the right dead, and the right deeds. The problem with the chronicle, the reason why valiant acts lie buried, is not just that their books are full of holes, but, paradoxically, that the material that remains is just not selective enough. As Pivetti puts it: “The ‘worm-eaten books’ are not simply old; they are too inclusive, without an eye toward the relevant, the effective, or the present.” Like Sidney’s description of the historian in his Defence of Poetry (1595), “laden with old mouse-eaten records,” the past is weighed down by a frustrating combination of things that can no longer be read, and things that should never have been written in the first place.

That tension is at the heart of the mythologies of national origin discussed in the following chapters: the urge to find a history, to find a beginning and trace it forward into the present, versus the urge to find the right history for the present moment; just as our institutions of today decide which pasts to maintain, which to investigate. In one sense, the repeated claim of early modern authors concerning the longevity of literature versus stone monuments is proven more or less correct, as voiced by Classen: “a fundamental problem continues to vex historians and literary historians even in the twenty-first century, namely that those who wield the power of the pen also determine our perspective toward the past.” Early modern writers are self-aware about the potential of that power, and they are also painfully aware of its limits. Camden is just as concerned as is Nashe with the revival of acts which have for too long lain buried in old books: in fact, it is at the root of his archival method. “I have,” he explains in Britannia, “poored upon many an old Rowle, and Evidence: and produced their testimonie.” Camden’s insistence on the methodological roots of his historical practice both materializes history and dematerializes; in a sense, he experiences the same problem as those literary historians with an urge to speak with the dead. The past has a voice that can be attended to, testimony that can be understood if one is prepared to listen, but it is one spoken by text: it is the old rolls that speak, that produce, and not the people written about within. The text becomes its own monument. Mouse-eaten records and worm-eaten books are thus useful as the raw material of memory, but always weighed down by the difficulty of interpretation. In that sense, they are no better than ruins themselves:
as Griffiths argues, “the nation’s heritage—its old buildings as well as its works of literature—are revealed as sites of possible invasion, rather than the location of the nation’s self-affirming triumphalism. The ruin places under question the notion of history as a sequential narrative, whilst at the same time insisting on its own historicity.”

This book deals with three textual ruins, each of which operates on the boundary between the useful and useless, between acting as remains which speak and as uncomfortable confusion. Each of them, in different ways, insisted on being remembered even as they questioned the place and the progression of remembering, of history. I turn to the first of those ruins now: Brutus of Troy.

NOTES

1 As David J. Baker comments, problems of the late twentieth century informed interest in Britishness: “the British criticism had its antecedents, not in literary studies, but in lived history. Arguably, what ultimately brought it into being was a protracted crisis, or what Tom Nairn once called the ‘break up of Britain’ over the past forty years.” Baker, “Britain Redux,” p. 21.


3 The tendency of the early modern period in this regard has long been noted. Helen Cooper commented in her 1977 Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance that writers in the period “reused everything and forgot nothing,” a point more recently restated in A. E. B. Coldiron, “The Mediated ‘Medieval’ and Shakespeare.”


5 Middleton, Hengist, 1.0.17–18.

6 Ruth Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 120.

7 The compendium approach of Polychronicon offered new meaning to prior histories such as that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, “giving Geoffrey another lease of life by combining his secular with theological history.” Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 134.

8 On Middleton’s working of history, Thomas Roebuck comments, “One of the effects of this is to historicize the process of historical transmission itself: by creating an anachronistic narrator who seems himself to be the product of several different pasts (cultural, historiographical, theatrical) the viewer or reader of the
play is invited to reflect on the historical specificity of the account of the past the narrator is offering.” Roebuck, “Middleton’s Historical Imagination,” p. 117.

9 Julia Briggs draws out the connection, noting Gower’s appearance as chorus in Pericles, “speaking in a stiff, archaic four-stress metre, much as Higden does in Middleton’s play.” Briggs, “New Times and Old Stories,” p. 114. Munday is not the only one to bring out Skelton or, for that matter, Skeltonic verse, which itself seems to have been regarded as a form redolent of a late past: “The untimely aesthetics of the Skeltonic are especially potent when it is brought onto the stage, which was a perhaps surprisingly regular occurrence.” Lucy Munro, “Skeltonics,” p. 340.

10 On the reception and transmission of the Mirror for Magistrates through the period, see Harriet Archer’s Unperfect Histories: The Mirror for Magistrates, 1559–1610; see also Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield, eds., A Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History and Politics in Early Modern England. As Archer and Hadfield note in their introduction to the latter volume, the Mirror, “in all its various manifestations, is a far more challenging and complicated work than is generally assumed.” A Mirror for Magistrates in Context, p. 2.

11 Roebuck, “Middleton’s Historical Imagination,” p. 117.


13 Munro, “Linguistic Memory in Early Modern Plays,” p. 531. See also Munro’s Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590–1674. Munro examines the phrase itself in more detail in “‘Nemp Your Sexes!’: Anachronistic Aesthetics in Hengist, King of Kent and the Jacobean ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Play.”

14 Qtd in Leah Scragg, “Saxons versus Danes,” p. 93. For recent in-depth discussion of Ralegh’s History, see Nicholas Popper, Walter Ralegh’s History of the World and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance.

15 Ibid. As Scragg comments, “The smoke screen afforded by the past was not always entirely efficacious, as both textual and performance records reveal, but it did provide Renaissance writers with a degree of freedom to explore contentious issues, and it is this freedom which accounts, in some measure at least, for the extraordinary popularity of the history play in the latter half of the sixteenth century.” Scragg, “Saxons versus Danes,” p. 94.

16 Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 130.

17 Raphael Holinshed, The Firste Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande, p. 115. On the complex editorial and authorial history of the Chronicles, see Annabel Patterson, Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles; and Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Pauline Kewes, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles. Throughout, I refer to “Holinshed” for simplicity’s sake but with the recognition that many authors were involved in the production of the Chronicles: “Both editions of the Chronicles were collaborations. Among
the authors and revisers were moderate Protestants (Raphael Holinshed, John Hooker), militant Protestants (William Harrison, Abraham Fleming), crypto-Catholics (John Stow), a convert from Catholicism to Protestantism (Francis Thynne), and Catholics (Richard Stanihurst, Edmund Campion). The result was a remarkable multivocal view of British history stemming not only from the contrasting choices of style and source material but also from the contributors’ divergent responses to the politics and religion of their age.” Archer, Heal, and Kewes, “Prologue,” p. xxix.

18 A common enough rewriting strategy in the Stuart period: *The Love-Sick King*, apparently performed for King James in the northern English city of Newcastle in 1617, has the Scots march south to help the English defeat the Danes: “implying an early English-Scottish rapport conspicuous by its absence from the chronicles.” Gordon McMullan, “The Colonisation of Early Britain on the Jacobean Stage,” p. 125.

19 Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics*, p. 84.


23 Foxe’s work, writes Marsha S. Robinson, was “more than a mere record of the Reformation,” and provided “an historiographic perspective for reading the past and the present and for writing the future.” Marsha S. Robinson, *Writing the Reformation*, p. xvii.


26 Huw Griffiths, “Translated Geographies,” para. 1.


29 Hiscock, Reading Memory, p. 58.
30 Ibid.
32 Hiscock, Reading Memory, p. 97.
33 By all accounts such a strategy pays off. Annual visits to Stonehenge increased by 35 percent in the period 2010–2015, though this may be due in part to their being more accurately measured; see https://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2016/heritage-and-the-economy-2016.pdf.
34 Andrew Hadfield, Edmund Spenser’s Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl, p. 7. At least in the discipline of history, the plea for new avenues of discourse was answered fairly quickly if not all at once: see, for example, Richard S. Tompson’s The Atlantic Archipelago: A Political History of the British Isles. The New British History has also been known as “Three Kingdoms” and “Four Nations” history; the slipperiness of terminology recognizing the evolving understanding of the nationhoods at stake.
36 See, for example, Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber, eds., Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State 1485–1725; Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., The British Problem, c. 1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago; Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707; David Baker and Willy Maley, eds., British Identities and English Renaissance Literature.
37 Derek Hirst, “Text, Time, and the Pursuit of ‘British Identities,’” pp. 256–57. More recently, Elizabeth Yale comments: “The question of what Britain was was difficult to answer in the seventeenth century [...]. Wales had come under English domination in the early fifteenth century, but the Welsh long maintained a distinctive culture and language. In 1603 Scotland came to share a sovereign with England and Wales, but this did not lead immediately to a more thoroughgoing union of either cultures or political and administrative structures. Throughout the century Ireland remained partially occupied, though neither completely controlled by the English nor integrated into Britain.” Yale, Sociable Knowledge, pp. 22–23.
39 Andrew Escobedo, Nationalism and Historical Loss, p. 18. As Escobedo points out, the sense of indeterminacy was diachronic as well as synchronic: “This ambiguity in contemporary usage pointed to a persistent historical problem: was
the national past an English or a British one? Historical writers disagreed about where England’s true ancestry lay.” Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss*, p. 18.

40 Collinson, *This England*, p. 2.


42 Collinson, *This England*, pp. 1–2. Collinson adds that “one justification for it is that we can’t talk about ‘the British Isles’ for fear of offending the Irish, who refer instead to ‘these Islands.’”


45 Collinson writes: “So the ‘new British history’ no sooner invented itself than it had to admit that it had a problem. National history is easier to write, and to teach. Some Irish and Scottish historians are deciding that their first responsibility is to their own national histories after all, and they suspect their English colleagues of using ‘Britishness’ as a cunning vehicle for a new kind of historical imperialism, so-called British history being not much more than an enriched English history.” Patrick Collinson, *This England*, p. 2.


48 Baker, “Britain Redux,” p. 27.


50 Curtis Perry, “‘For They Are Englishmen,’” pp. 194–95.

51 Kate Chedgzoy, *Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World*, p. 76.

52 For representative work in the area, see Garrett A. Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama*; Andrew Hiscock, *Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature*; John S. Garrison and Kyle Pivetti, eds., *Sexuality and
Memory in Early Modern England: Literature and the Erotics of Recollection; Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollman, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen, eds., Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe; Paul D. Stegner, Confession and Memory in Early Modern English Literature: Penitential Remains. For a current overview, see Kate Chedgzoy, Elspeth Graham, Katharine Hodgkin, and Ramona Wray, “Researching Memory in Early Modern Studies.”

53 In introducing an issue of the Journal of the Northern Renaissance on memory, Robert Maslen comments: “No doubt an element of millenarianism is involved. With each significant anniversary we feel afresh the need to reassert the validity of our dating system by reflecting on the current state of affairs in any given discipline.” R. W. Maslen, “Editorial: Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future,” para. 4.

54 Maslen, “Editorial: Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future,” para. 4.

55 See, for example, Kate Chedgzoy, Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550–1700.

56 Amanda Herbert, Female Alliances, p. 9. Compare Megan Matchinske: “Given the teleological incentive of western culture, its focus on where we are going, it is essential that we reveal its originary points as nonoriginary and demystify the aura of ‘History’ that covers the past. Historical paradigms will not shift unless there is a basis from which to begin contesting them.” Megan Matchinske, Writing, Gender and State, p. 22.

57 Hiscock, Reading Memory, p. 8; Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 3.

58 If early modern texts were concerned with remembering, they were also prone to forgetting: on this point, see Christopher Ivic and Grant Williams, eds., Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe’s Legacies.


60 Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 119.

61 Hiscock, The Uses of this World, pp. 8–9.

62 Camden, Britannia, “4v.

63 Howard Marchitello, Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England, p. 78.

64 Richard Hingley, Hadrian’s Wall: A Life, p. 8.


67 Ibid., pp. 561–62. Walsham’s view represents a revision of previous positions, and draws out a subtle line of argument which sees the appropriation of the past as not simply iconoclastic but as part of a more gradual and complex adaptation “to changing social and cultural circumstances and the subtle

68 John M. Adrian, *Local Negotiations of English Nationhood, 1570–1680*, p. 80. It is worth remembering that while for us a “monument” is perhaps most obviously a physical construction built to remember the past, for the Renaissance it seems often to be experienced as something closer to the eruption of the past into the present: the ruins and remembrances of previous ages, monument as “a term that Tudor antiquarians often used to refer to the physical remains of the past, such as old statues, artifacts, and manuscripts.” Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss*, p. 48.

69 John Adrian notes the importance of local geographies in topographical works, where “local claims” are important and “not merely convenient [...] each geographical area of England has a rightful ‘claim’ to some sort of heroic history.” Adrian, *Local Negotiations of English Nationhood, 1570–1680*, pp. 91–92.

70 Commenting on the play, Roebuck notes: “One of the chief etymological theories for the origin of the word ‘Saxon’ was that it was derived from ‘seaxes,’ the knives that were treasured by the warlike Saxon people [...] It is a moment of betrayal which is woven etymologically into the history of the name of the Saxons themselves.” Roebuck, “*Middleton’s Historical Imagination*,” p. 124.

71 Harvey, *Philadelphus*, p. 85. Dedicated to Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, the work is as militant as its dedicatee. I return to it in more depth later in the volume.


74 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.66, 7; 8–9.


76 Craig, “To His Calidonian Mistris,” *The Poeticall Essayes of Alexander Craige Scotobritane Seene and Allowed*, E4r.


80 Griffiths, “Translated Geographies,” para. 4.


82 Ibid., line 367. Discussing *Musophilus*, Schwyzer comments: “It is as if, having forgotten what Stonehenge was for, the English can never trust their
memories again [...] Stonehenge is silent—stubbornly, eternally, even treacherously so.” Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, pp. 82–83.


84 Shakespeare, Sonnet 55, lines 1–2.


86 Schwyzer, *Archaeologies*, p. 73.

87 On Lambarde, otherwise happy enough to see the Reformation at work, Collinson notes: “Paradoxically, he, and the hot Protestant Bale, bitterly regretted the dispersal of the monastic libraries and the loss of their manuscripts.” Collinson, *This England*, p. 296. It is worth noting also Collinson’s warning concerning “the problematical, and perhaps unprofitable, business of determining what religious labels it may or may not be appropriate to pin on representatives of the generation whose lives were intercepted and diverted by the Protestant Reformation.” Collinson, *This England*, p. 295.


90 Ibid.

91 As Huw Griffiths notes, “Ruins in this period are, almost necessarily, ironic. They disclose failure in the place of achievement.” Griffiths, “The Sonnet in Ruins,” para. 5.

92 Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 121.


94 Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 65. Pivetti offers a useful summary of investigations proceeding from this aspect, for his part seeing Book 2 “as the memorial production of an author with distinctly national interests.” Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 56.

95 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.9.55, 2.

96 Ibid., 5. Of the episode as a whole, Pivetti comments: “In Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene* (1590), Edmund Spenser plays the antiquarian [...] an extended sequence in which knights put aside their weapons and go to the library.” Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 55.

97 Hiscock, *Reading Memory*, p. 31.

98 Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 55.


102 Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss*, p. 46.
Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.7, lines 1–3.


Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.10, lines 6–8.

Ibid., 2.11.35, line 7.


Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.11.35, lines 8–9.

As Griffiths notes, this may also be an issue with the whole chronicle: “The word ‘moniment’ is an archaic form of the current word ‘monument,’ but which also encompasses the sense of ‘admonishment’—a warning sign or guidance. It is also a word that Spenser seems to prefer over the more common ‘monument’ throughout his writing. ‘The Ruines of Time’ makes use of this word throughout the poem, almost as a kind of motif.” Griffiths, “Translated Geographies,” para. 14.

Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 74.

Despite being brought out as the text which authorizes the play, the *Polychronicon* is not the source for Middleton’s material, and its actual content has little bearing on the plot of *Hengist*.

Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse his Supplication to the Devil*, p. 212.


Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 93.


Classen, *The Power of a Woman’s Voice*, p. 3.

Camden, *Britannia*, *4r*.

In relation to this semantic slippage, it is worth remembering that the term monument could, among its other meanings in the period, also refer to a “written document or record.” “monument, n.” http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/121852.

Griffiths, “Translated Geographies,” para. 4.
Chapter 1

Brutal Beginnings
Britain and the Reception of Brutus of Troy

For early modern Britain, the origins of nationhood were a brutish history. Brutish in the sense that the mythological foundations of that nationhood (or, rather, nationhoods) revolved around the actions of Brutus of Troy; and brutish in the sense of being composed of what amounted to a series of violent, often sexualized, conquests and appropriations. The central figure in this chapter, Brutus (or Brute), descendent of Aeneas, was imagined to have arrived at, conquered, and civilized the isle of Albion, in the process renaming it Britain. On the one hand, then, Brute was a founder, the creator of a nation with a classical inheritance and an imperial destiny; on the other hand, he was an aggressor, a foreign conqueror whose conquest drew attention to the penetrability of the isle, and whose actions within that isle drew attention to its fractured nature. At different times and in different areas, Brute was hero, coward, invader, civilizer, barbarian, ancient truth, or embarrassing fiction. Sometimes, he was any and all of those things at once.

In the present chapter, I trace this complex, multifaceted image of Brute through a number of texts. In some senses, this is a retracing: as set out in the previous chapter, critical response to the traditions of British mythical prehistory has been with us for some time, and Brute is a key figure in that history. But while Brute and his position in the historiography of Britain have been relatively well-trodden ground critically speaking, there are aspects of his story which are perhaps less familiar but nonetheless received a good deal of attention through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The subsequent chapters in this volume deal with the ways in which other competing but complementary myths intersect with that of Brute. In characters such as Albina and Scota, Brute had mirrors; equals and opposites which reflected the (often, if not always, antagonistic) ways in which the various component nations jostling within what would become Britain thought about their own and their neighbors’ pasts. In that sense, it is useful to first provide an overview of Brute’s place
in early modern constructions of those pasts: how the period dealt with Brute at different times is instructive in terms of the complexities in the way the myth was interpreted and reinterpreted.

But Brute also draws attention to a more general continuing concern in the period with resolving both the near and ancient pasts into something both comprehensible and meaningful for the contemporary present. There are, certainly, aspects of this concern that may be viewed in terms of a push toward nation-building; the frictions and contradictions produced, as Jodi Mikalachki notes, by “anxiety about native origins and the corresponding difficulty of forging a historically based national identity in early modern England.”¹ The dogged question of Brute’s historicity in the period, and the particular flavor of that historicity, still has much to tell us about conceptualizations of nationhood: which people believed (or, perhaps more to the point, said they believed) Brute was real, why, and for how long they did so all bear on this point. Mostly, this has been interpreted in terms of national politics and nascent empire: the reasons for, and effects of, imagining and engineering a *translatio imperii* from east (Rome, Troy) to west (England), to further west (Ireland), and much further west still (Virginia). But, as more recent criticism has come to recognize and as discussed in the previous chapter, there are also questions to be addressed concerning the interpretation of the past in general, and its presence in the minds and lived experiences of the early modern present. In this sense, the mythology of Brute is again relevant: it seems important to recognize Brute not just as an aim, but as a means of reading the past. As I aim to demonstrate, interpretations of his story stand in the period as an index for the problems and opportunities of dealing with history; his very fictionality allowed for consideration of what the past meant, and what it could be made to mean.

**Long-Lived Brute**

Despite, or perhaps because of, the uncertainty of his historicity, Brute had an extensive existence beyond what might have been expected. The conventional story is that Brute became a useful political tool in contestations between England and Scotland, with the English claiming Brute’s ancient overlordship of the isle as demonstrating their claim to suzerainty over the Scots.² Through the sixteenth century, Brute’s Britishness was also a welcome tool for Welsh-origin Tudors in need of dynastic support, and, just as he might have gone out of fashion, he became useful again in the seventeenth century to an incoming Stuart dynasty keen on uniting the
island under one rule. Deriving founding myths from the ancestry of Troy in order to shore up dynastic authority and to compete with rival claimants was certainly not a strategy individual to early modern Britain. Many countries, regions, and cities throughout Europe had had similar stories concerning their origins: “narratives of precedence” were, as Morse notes, “widespread among the European nations, all equally fantastic appeals to the precedence of aristocratic descent from Troy.” But, for the most part, the rest of the continent also learned to let go of those stories rather sooner. Understandably, this left open a wide avenue for criticism that only grew wider as time wore on, as Schwyzer points out: “the continued allegiance of the English to Brutus the Trojan, at a time when other European peoples had relinquished their own mythical Trojan founders, made them a laughing-stock among continental scholars.”

Antiquarians in Britain, on the other hand, demonstrated over many years decidedly mixed feelings concerning the relevance of a Trojan ancestry. Often imagined as the harbinger of a more rigorous style of history, William Camden’s Britannia could regard the story of Brute as nothing short of a fairy tale, while still making allowance for the potential usefulness of such a tale:

> For mine owne part, let Brutus be taken for the father and founder of the British nation; I will not be of a contrarie minde. [...] Let Antiquitie heerein be pardoned, if by entermingling falsities and truths, humane matters and divine together, it make the first beginnings of nations and cities more noble, sacred, and of greater majestie.5

Of course Brute was not actually real, Camden seems to say, but if the fiction serves a purpose then its fictionality can be forgiven. The intermingling of false and true makes history better than it might have been, more noble; in this case, at least, the ends of historiographical practice justify the means. But if we can imagine Camden’s comments here to be delivered with something of a chuckle, it is instructive to recognize that at other times he appears genuinely worried about how he will be received. Indeed, Camden opens the discussion of the origins of Britain’s name with an outright apology: “I will by way of Preface beseech our Britans to speake and thinke favorably of me, that while they are desirous to learne, they would be willing to pardon [...] let it not bee imputed as a haynous offence unto me, who am unwilling to impugne the Storie of Brutus, to deduce it from somewhat else, if I can.” If the origin myth of Brute is going to be laid aside, it must be with the utmost care. Finding other
possible origins for Britain becomes an act of pained deduction which, Camden is keen to add, does not mean he holds any maleficence for the story of Brute. As Laura Ashe puts it, *Britannia* “affords an interesting case of early modern ambivalence in the treatment of myth.” Such ambivalence in relation to the material of the past was widespread: even the hectoring Polydore Vergil, who was infamously dismissive of the British mythology of Trojan descent, held firmly on to populist myths with a political end. Though Vergil derides the story of Brute, he is impressed with the (also fictional) history of the Order of the Garter. Given that Tudor England made heavy use of both narratives, Vergil’s position as debunker seems awkward: less about the rigorously skeptical and more about the politically motivated. While Camden is somewhat kinder to Brute, his carefulness in dealing with this material springs from a similarly politically driven historical practice, arguing around the issue with some artfulness, while treating the myth with guarded respect. He is not the only one to adopt such an approach.

Other writers, too, give more serious credence to Brute well into the seventeenth century. In *Troia Britanica: or, Great Britaines Troy* (1609), Thomas Heywood boldly sets up the point from the beginning, tracing Britain to Brute, to Aeneas, and via them to biblical Genesis: “From Adam then and Evabs first Creation, / It followes we derive our Brittish Nation.” It follows, and that is that. If this sort of thing might be put down to the first flush of James I’s reign, a self-declaredly British king, Heywood remained remarkably attached to the idea of this kind of chronology throughout his career. As late as 1637, two decades after his own *Troia Britanica* and a good half-century after the first edition of Camden’s *Britannia* (not to mention a full century after Polydore Vergil’s 1534 *Anglia Historia*), Heywood still finds Brute useful for his civic pageant, *Londini Speculum: or, Londons Mirror*. Celebrating Brute’s mythical founding of London, Heywood appears quite content to find time and space in a relatively short text for an apparently outmoded chronology:

Her antiquity she deriveth from Brute, lineally descended from AEneas, the sonne of Anchises and Venus, and by him erected, about the yeare of the world two thousand eight hundred fifty five: before the Nativity of our blessed Saviour, one thousand one hundred and eight. In the turbulence of the late 1630s, it is true that Heywood, not to mention his audience, might find a certain comfort in the retelling of traditional history. But the idea seems to have some currency beyond a sense
of tradition: the feeling of exactitude generated by the generous peppering of historical dating in his text suggests at least some acceptance of this civic genealogy as near-fact, or at least the wish to present it as such.\textsuperscript{13}

That Brute gradually fell out of favor amongst the educated, becoming something of a scholarly embarrassment, has been a common critical position. Such a position has also tended to see this as part of a trajectory toward a more modern historical practice. Escobedo, for example, argues that “the charge of fictionality began to undo the historical authenticity of the Brutus and Arthur narrative as the sixteenth century drew to a close.”\textsuperscript{14} Alongside this position, there has been an increasing recognition that Brute was not easily dismissed, and may in fact have increased in popularity, at least in some circles: John Kerrigan argues that, from Vergil’s attack onwards, Brutus and company “began to lose plausibility” even as their narratives “gained in contemporary resonance.”\textsuperscript{15} This is a useful summation of the feeling one gets from the overall pattern of Brute’s reception in the period, although it leaves us with a question around why this occurs—why it is that we continue to see, as Pivetti puts it, “the enduring presence of Monmouth in an age that had witnessed his debunking.”\textsuperscript{16} This may, though, be a case of looking for a problem or disjunction in historiographical method that is not really there, or at least was not felt by the period in quite the way we might expect. After all, as Morse notes, history need not be entirely true for it to be useful: “precedence, antiquity and tradition offer a historiography which matters less as true or false than as shared matter.”\textsuperscript{17} The material textual contexts in which such historiography took place also lend weight to a sense of flexibility in the early modern reception of the past. Studies dealing with the materiality of the book have demonstrated that the way texts circulated and recirculated in the period encouraged a viewpoint which was accepting of a certain stylistic multiplicity. Printers regularly reissued works of proven popularity, as Anne Coldiron writes: “For largely practical reasons […] in the hands of printers and readers alike, books remained among the ‘durable goods’ of the Early Modern world, and their contents remained viable longer than we moderns, accustomed to the disposable, might at first assume.”\textsuperscript{18} Equally, the practicalities and economics of manuscript collection encouraged transmission rather than revision. Alongside (sometimes hand in hand with) texts which doubted his history, Geoffrey of Monmouth was still widely in manuscript circulation. Indeed, the very variations in those manuscripts suggest a widespread way of reading this type of material which accepts variation; a “tolerance,” as Morse puts it, “of the variety of rhetorical historiography.”\textsuperscript{19} Printed material, too, often presented compendiums or
digests of multiple narratives, sometimes offering competing viewpoints simultaneously. In his Life of Merlin (1641), Heywood promises a pocket book of history for the general reader:

if thou beest desirous to be instructed, and faithfully informed in the knowledge of our English Annalls: For in the stead of a large study book, and huge voluminous Tractate, able to take up a whole yeare in reading, and to load and tyre a Porter in carrying, thou hast here a small Manuell, containing all the pith and marrow of the greater, made portable for thee (if thou so please) to beare in thy pocket, so that thou mayst say, that in this small compendium or abstract, thou hast Hollinshed, Polychronicon, Fabian, Speed, or any of the rest, of more Giantlike bulke or binding.

In Heywood’s ironic take on what he calls “our English annals,” it is not just the monstrous enemies of Brute who are of giantlike bulk, but the books which contain them. Still, while the following history is indeed shorter than, say, Britannia, Heywood’s volume is nonetheless a substantial several hundred pages long, and is thus “portable” only in the loosest of senses or via the largest of pockets. In promising to offer, in one digested package, Holinshed, Higden’s Polychronicon, Robert Fabyan’s Fabyan’s Chronicle, and John Speed, Heywood also offers his readers a compendium of texts produced centuries apart, and in jumbled order. The impulse toward anthology and summary constructs these prior volumes as at once remembered and replaceable: having his one book, Heywood insists, means his readers can do without the others. The value of his text is paradoxically produced by both the work on which it claims to rest, and its ability to replace and stand in for that work: its forebears need to exist in order to be laid aside, and remembered in order to be forgotten. Again, the method of history is not so important as the matter, and the matter is only important as a purchasable gestalt whole. History becomes product: something to bear, to hold to one’s chest. And if the pattern of that history were generally useful, then whether a particular moment diverged from the whole, or indeed from strict truth, did not matter so much as what it could achieve by doing so.

For British historiography of all stripes an obvious lie seems to have been far easier to swallow than an unattractive truth, and either of those possibilities was still much better than a gap in historical narrative. John Higgins, editor of the 1574 version of the Mirror for Magistrates, admits to such a fearful possibility, worrying that “Amongst divers and sondry Chronicles of many Nations, I thincke there are none (gentle reader)
so uncertaine and briefe in the beginninge as ours.”

Though the use of parenthesis is something of a textual habit in Higgins’s writing, it is particularly pronounced in the preface addressed to the reader; one wonders whether the interjection to the gentle reader in this case operates as a delicate but deliberate positioning, an appeal to shared and perhaps slightly unwelcome, shamefaced understanding. The introduction of foreign classical sources into the accepted course of history can only be a bad thing: learned writers, Higgins complains, might easily improve and enlarge upon history rather than remaking it. In so doing, historians might take English chronicles “and make them as ample as the Chronicles of any other Country or Nation. But they are faine in stead of other stuffe to talke of the Romaines, Greekes, Persians, &c. and to fill our Historyes with their facts and fables.”

Far from being opposites, facts and fables are joined together alliteratively and thematically; both foreign elements equally spoil good native British history. What a shame, Higgins notes, almost with a sigh, that such good histories have in the past also been “most barraine”; those accounted the best are not always the most useful, and “the greatest Bookes, titles and Tomes containe not most mater.”

Higgins’s editorial answer to the narrative dearth in his source material is straightforward: “I was often faine to use mine own simple invention (yet not swarving from the matter) because the Chronicles (although they wente out under divers mens names) in some suche places as I moste needed their ayde wraete one thing: and that so briefelye that a whole Princes raigne, life and death was comprised in three lines.” In other words: if your sources let you down, make things up instead.

The burgeoning material of Brute thus filled a hole which could not otherwise adequately be accounted for. As Edmund Bolton starkly put it in his Hypercritica (ca. 1621), if such history were simply removed we would instead be faced with “a vast Blanck upon the Times of our Country, from the Creation of the World till the coming of Julius Caesar.” Until something better comes along, the argument seems to go, there is no real harm in believing in Brute. Just so for Dekker and Jonson in the pageants for the royal entry of King James into London, The Magnificent Entertainment (1604): “Rather than the City should want a Founder, we choose to follow the received story of Brute, whether fabulous or true.” All this points to quite a subtle appreciation of the place of Brute which stands as an exemplar of what Megan Matchinske has seen as the early modern approach to history as a whole: “Early modern history writing was not then simply a matter of subject matter, methodology or form. It did not derive its legitimacy from fact gathering, authorial intent or fidelity to source.”
of the British material, truth is very much less important than continuity; accuracy and veracity less important than the movement of history unbroken from point of origin—not necessarily always in the sense of drawing an exacting continuity but rather in the sense of being part of a continuum. Dynasties may come and go; but there is comfort in knowing that they have always done so. In *The Perambulation of Kent* (1576), William Lambarde takes Polydore Vergil to task, not because Vergil is wrong to doubt the historicity of Brute and company, but because he is wrong to say it out loud. If British history is discredited and disregarded simply “for that in some parts it containeth matter, not only unlikely, but incredible also: then shall he both deprive this Nation of all manner of knowledge of their first beginning, and open the way for us to call into question the origin and antiquities of Spain, France, Germany, yea, and of Italy his own country.”

Once the pursuit of truth is begun, no country’s past is safe: “that which Livy reporteth of Romulus and Remus, Numa and Aegeria, is as far removed from all suspicion of truth, as any thing whatsoever Galfride writeth, either of Brute, Merlin, or King Arthur himself.”

Even in the supposedly more credulous sixteenth century, the argument is not at all that the story of Brute is true, but that everyone else is equally false. In this case, two wrongs make a right: keep quiet about our national fictions, Lambarde reasons, and we will keep quiet about yours.

Whether or not Brute had ever existed had little bearing on his continuing existence, on his ability to generate meaning. As Pivetti says of Spenser’s approach to the British royal line proceeding from the Trojan, their memory is more important than their reality: “a recognizable (if imaginary) line of ancient heroes who can be recalled, even if they cannot be located in physical evidence.”

There is in the understanding of Brute throughout the period, perhaps, something of a reversal of Gordon Teskey’s formulation that state authority “can be defined as the power to compel the public forgetting of what is privately remembered: it is hegemonic amnesia.” In the case of the matter of Britain, we often meet with something like the inverse: authority compels us to publicly remember what is privately forgotten. Richard Harvey’s historical-political position on ignoring the Anglo-Saxons in favor of remembering the legendary British in *Philadelphus* overtly admits to, and insists upon, historical falsification as an act of present truth: “If I omit some histories of Saxons, I do but my duetie.” It is duty, a just requirement, which moves this omission, and which would lead one to reconstruct the victors as the conquered. “What have I to do with them,” Harvey asks, “unlesse it were to make them tributary to Brutans?” In a reversal of the often-noted ruination of
the monuments of the British, Harvey wishes and enacts this fate instead upon the Saxons: “Let them lie in dead forgetfulnesse like stones [...] let their names be cleane put out, and not come among the righteous.”

Harvey makes no bones about his aims, and no secret of his practices; the history that will be told is the one that he wants to tell.

Throughout the period, authors make clear in various ways that the history of Brute, indeed history in general, is only as good as the historian doing the writing. Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* manages somehow to keep Brute as both a foundational figure within the text and at one remove from that text, in what John Curran calls “a kind of dual historiographical vision.” This is signaled at the start of Book 2, Canto 10, which introduces Brute as part of the fictional history of *Briton moniments*: the narrative will be an “Argument worthy of Maeonian quill, / Or rather worthy of great *Phoebus* rote.” What we will receive is a history that cannot even agree on the right simile for its worth. Throughout, Spenser is carefully at one remove from his material, presenting a recounting of the British book (and how much of this recounting amounts to repetition, and how much approximation, we are never quite sure), rather than the book itself. *Briton moniments* is not the thing itself, but a monument of a monument. Indeed, the presentation of this material in *The Faerie Queene* is not a million miles away from the textual conditions presented by Geoffrey Monmouth’s own *Historia regum Britanniae*, where we meet with insistence that this work is a rendering of a yet more ancient original. Spenser, in Pivetti’s view, “remains a translator, one who can depict memory for his readership but cannot actually recover the immediate text. [...] His words are not the bodies of knowledge themselves, but an approximation that reminds readers of that knowledge. Spenser thus differentiates between two readers, one who rejects the poem out of hand as fiction and one capable of interpretation.”

The book necessitates passing through several types of translation before coming to us. Held in the hidden-away backroom of the castle of Alma, heavily conditioned by the ability of Eumnestes and Anamnestes to record and preserve the right material, brought to light and reread in the hands of a character who ought to be included in the fictional histories presented, and itself textually incomplete, the book in which Brute is delivered is conspicuously contained and constrained matter. In archival, textual, and interpretational terms, *Briton moniments* is, to borrow Hiscock’s words, “both partial and perplexing,” a failure of both national and personal memory. But failure here is also opportunity, and if the historical material of Brute runs out and breaks down, Spenser is only too happy to bridge the gap;
or rather, to draw extended attention to how big that gap is, and then carry on regardless. In *The Faerie Queene*, Pivetti writes, Spenser “has to play the role of Anamnestes [...] he has to supplement the historical past with those images that bring it into the memory of his readers.” The chronicle history presented by Spenser exposes the practices of this type of history, but it also demonstrates its worth.

Just as the presence of history in Spenser works to demonstrate its own narrative practices, Camden draws on an equally overt memorial narrative to underpin and authorize the work of *Britannia*, telling his readers that the endeavor essentially springs from the encouragement of Abraham Ortelius. Creator of the groundbreaking atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), or, as Camden describes him, “the worthy restorer of Ancient Geographie,” Ortelius appears at once as both harbinger of the new and remembrancer of the old. Ortelius’s cartography, for Camden, recovers and reveals. As one agent of restoration to another, Ortelius provides the impetus for Camden’s scholarly work, albeit at some chronological remove: “arriving here in England, above thirty foure yeares past, dealt earnestly with me that I would illustrate this Ile of BRIT AINE, or (as he said) that I would restore antiquity to Britaine, and Britain to his antiquity.” Rising up from the reported past to urge Camden to action, the figure of Ortelius, or at least what he represents, is not qualitatively different from Joseph of Arimathea striding into the country to create a new Jerusalem. For that matter, it is not qualitatively different from the textual work accomplished by Brute: the passing of an intellectual torch from Ortelius to Camden is in its own way as much a *translatio imperii* as that produced by the movement of ancient Trojan to modern Englishman; both convey humanist authority westward. Like the fictional Brute, Camden’s textual Ortelius is a patriarchal, generational figure coming to bring the light of truth and from whose self Camden’s scholarship springs.

Whatever the precise truth of their encounter, its relation to Camden’s text is fascinating in accomplishing the work of memory in actively memorial terms. The reported meeting between the two, used to underwrite the project of British history, grew increasingly removed as *Britannia* went through edition after edition. By the 1610 vernacular version translated by Philemon Holland, Ortelius had been dead for over a decade, only adding to his ghostly appearance in Camden’s work. In terms of providing a sure footing for intellectual endeavor, this is less about transmission from one scholar to another and more about Camden searching for roots. Rather like the ghost of Hamlet’s father, Ortelius cries “remember me”—and, for good measure, remember Britain (and
have Britain remember itself). And, like Hamlet, Camden can be seen to vacillate in his memorial response. Comparing the earlier, Tudor versions of Britannia with the later editions produced under a Stuart monarchy demonstrates Camden’s willingness to be flexible with his material in the cause of shifting political interests: as Curran notes, “the English translation of Britannia in 1610 sanctified the Stuart’s dual monarchy by including Scotland in Lucius’s kingdom.” In more than one way, then, Ortelius is a fitting figure to authorize Camden. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum was not, for all its scholarly ingenuity or landmark status, a new investigation, but rather a compendium of existing knowledge with Ortelius acting as editor of the work. Ironically enough, the only British author within the pages of Theatrum Orbis Terrarum was the Welsh Humphrey Lluyd, with the scholarly disquisition De Mona Druidum insula. In the Additamentum Theatri Orbis Terrarum (an addition to the original atlas printed in 1573), Ortelius added among other new material Lluyd’s map of Wales, the Cambriae Typus; he also published his Commentariolus descriptionis Britannicae fragmentum (1572). Translated into English by Thomas Twyne as The Breviary of Britayne (1573), Lluyd’s text offers, in Schwyzer’s view, a Galfridian history “from which is derived the vision of Britain that runs throughout his work.” The collection that represents the jumping-off point for Britannia’s inquiry into antiquity is thus also one which includes as its sole authority on that antiquity a strong defense of precisely the legendary history which Camden treats with such anxiousness. This type of paradox is at the heart of the work that Britannia conducts with history, characterized for Pivetti by “irony, shifts in emphasis, and varying tones.” But it is also entirely representative of the early modern response to history as a whole.

What does all this mean for Brute? On the one hand, we have a general instability in historical practice, or, rather, a sustained stability in remaining open to ideas of multiplicity and flexibility of interpretation; what Erin Murphy has described as “the open and experimental nature of historical discourse” in this period. On the other hand, we have a character at the founding of the English version of Britain who was fecund in terms of his availability to such multiple brands of interpretation. Calling upon the ancient history of Britain could become an invocation not of triumph or ancestral grandeur, but of conflicted and multiple meanings. The key figures in that history were, as Curran points out, “important but shadowy entities in people’s minds.” Such mutability offered opportunity: as a collection of narrative meanings, Morse argues, “the British antiquity exists as a repository [...]. The breadth of retellings ranges through all
kinds of interpretations.”49 Did anyone really believe in Brute, at any time? Maybe, depending on precisely what is meant by belief: as Ashe notes, “the debate over the mythical prehistory of Britain […] is only partly a matter of historiographical scepticism or empirical method. Sixteenth-century historians capable of critical clear-sightedness in the assessment of other peoples’ origin myths can appear to have lost all powers of analysis when it came to their own.”50 But appearances can be deceiving. The ideological double-vision of historical nationalism is something Camden himself recognizes when he pauses to note that “as we cannot but smile at the fictions of strangers, so the devices coined by our owne countrymen passe not currant with general allowance.”51 Similarly to Lambarde, Camden is fully aware of the truth. We laugh at strangers’ fictions, Camden says, and they laugh at ours—that is just the way things are. But in willfully suspending disbelief in fictions of origin, interpretations of Brute could instead turn him to more subtle use. In all sorts of ways, interpretation of a shadowy past could be a useful and powerful tool.

Brute’s Bones

The Trojan heritage offered a sense of masculine classical inheritance and manifest destiny; but, even if taken at face value, it also depended on a recognition that Troy itself had ended in failure, destruction. Aeneas himself, Brute’s mighty progenitor, was presented as a hero who was also, at least in some versions of the narrative, a traitor, and whose Achilles’ heel was in a sense his very masculinity. The medieval period seems to have acknowledged this duality; it was also a sense that persisted through renderings and interpretations of the myth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.52 Marlowe’s Dido, Queen of Carthage (ca.1593) gives us an Aeneas who, in Lisa Hopkins’s view, is barely able to relate, or indeed relate to, the history of his own life: “Bedraggled, bemused, and unable even to recognize his own mother, Marlowe’s Aeneas seems consistently to mistake or misunderstand his own destined trajectory, and to have no idea of the narrative with which Marlowe’s original audience would have been so easily familiar.”53 For her part, Dido is presented with the opportunity to hear the greatest story of the age straight from the Trojan horse’s mouth, as it were, and asks the question anybody would in the circumstances: “May I entreat thee to discourse at large, / And truly too, how Troy was overcome? / For many tales go of that city’s fall, / And scarcely do agree upon one point.”54 Aeneas’s initial response is to demur, at which
Dido asks incredulously: “What faints Aeneas to remember Troy?”\textsuperscript{55} Though Aeneas, encouraged, goes on to relate the fall of Troy at length, his momentary hesitation, along with both Dido’s pointed question and her note that the stories of the city’s end simply do not add up, all give voice to the early modern experience of a multivalent, confused narrative of Troy. The clues may also point to Aeneas’s potential role in the city’s fall, as Hopkins asserts: “what Marlowe’s audience would almost certainly have known was that in one of those variant versions Aeneas was himself the betrayer of Troy.”\textsuperscript{56} Aeneas and his fellow Trojan exiles could be at once traitorous and a high race of nation-builders. While from certain standpoints these things might be more complementary than contradictory, from others the duality threatened (or presented the opportunity) to expose the glaring holes in the national past.

This type of mutability was replicated in the myth of Brute; though such features may be in some ways characteristic of medieval mythology, their presence endures into the early modern period and is put to full didactic use. The origin of Brute himself is a case in point. As with the adventures of Aeneas, the supposed reasons for Brute’s journey into Britain (what we might term the origin of origin) were not in themselves particularly heroic. They were also equally well known. Richard Robinson puts the first Briton’s prehistory plainly enough in his discourse on \textit{The Ancient Order, Societie, and Unitie Laudable of Prince Arthure, and His Knightly Armory of the Round Table} (1583). Here, the origin story of Brute appears in off-the-cuff style. Written as a series of “assertions,” Robinson’s volume promises in its third section a narrative “Englishe Hystorical”; the piece is emphatically written from a standpoint of British-as-English history, probably unsurprisingly so given the militant nature of the early 1580s. The section opens with a quick glance at Brute, theoretically in the name of getting a history of English strength off to the best of starts: “now my penne / Approche the prowesse and the praise of native \textit{Englishmen}.”\textsuperscript{57} But the history given of the origin of Englishmen’s nativity is gaspingly brief, and quite what it ends up saying about that nativity is at best uncertain:

\begin{verbatim}
From Brute the Troyans time, who as hee used shooting theare
When unwares he his Father slew, in forest hunting deare.
After hee had by that mischaunce his Sylvius deare bereft,
Aryved in this our Albion then his native Troy so left.
The Brytons his successors ruled this Lande, till Caesar hee
Conquerd the same, till long before Christes nativity.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{verbatim}
The speed of Robinson’s British history demonstrates how well known that history is, but also that it could be used with a wry edge. While skipping over the details of Britain’s Trojan roots might sometimes be a sign of historiographical anxiety, here it seems more like an opportunity for comedy. At least, the episode of Brute which Robinson does manage to relate is apt for the text. Robinson’s Arthurian book turns over figures of myth and history for a present purpose picked up in the text’s subtitle: “With a Threefold Assertion friendly in favour and furtherance of English Archery at this day.” Robinson seems to have at least one good eye on the commercial applications of history: his dedications in the book are to Thomas Smith (or Smythe), “chief customer to her majesty in the port of London,” a bought position in charge of collecting customs duties, and to the worshipful society of Archers (of which Smith was a key member). While a predisposition to draw attention to famed accounts of archery is, then, to be expected, the effect achieved by citing Brute’s experience in the area is ambiguous. After all, the accidental killing of one’s father does not seem on the face of things to provide a fine example of the efficacious use of archery, nor one exactly guaranteed to win Robinson any friends in the society of Archers.\footnote{59}

If Robinson’s text betrays more than a few qualms about the honor of Britain’s founding father, his is not the only one. Writing on the art of “Woodmanship,” or huntsmanship, some forty years later, John Taylor also finds Brute’s somewhat spotted career in archery springing to mind: “Our ancient Progenitor or first King of this Iland (Brute) was so expert in this Woodman-ship, that he kil’d his owne father Silvius, shooting him with an arrow, mistaking him for a Hart, a Stagge or a Bucke.”\footnote{60} Expertise in woodmanship makes for skilled archery, it seems, but not necessarily for skilled target-picking: being so expert as to mistake one’s father for an animal and commit murder in the process, if not outright sarcasm, does seem to require Taylor to at least have tongue firmly placed in cheek. More tellingly, Brute’s accidental act of parricide is immediately compared with the similar mishance experienced by William Rufus (the late eleventh-century Norman King William II), who “was by the like mishance of a shot made at a Deere, (by Sir Walter Tirrell Knight) slaine with the glance of an arrow against a tree, in the Newforrest in Hampshire.”\footnote{61} The point of comparison for Brute is an interestingly weighted choice: on the one hand, it might be seen as a piece of historiographical sleight of hand, moving from the legendary Brute to the historical William and jumping over several thousand years, not to mention the Saxons, in the process. But, on the other hand, if the comparison works to render Brute’s historicity, it
also demonstrates what can be done with that historicity. In this case, it
aligns Brute’s killing of his father with a royal death long regarded as suspi-
cious: William was by all accounts an unpopular ruler, and his accidental
death may well have been a planned assassination.\(^6\)\(^2\) Brute can be real, but
that reality may not turn out to be an entirely desirable one.

Elsewhere in his works, Taylor revisits this mythical moment. In the
version of *A Memorial of all the English Monarchs* collected by Taylor in
All the Works of John Taylor the Water Poet (1630), he is exacting about
Brute’s historical status, and precisely what convinces him of that status:

> Brute being of the age of 15 yeeres, as he shot at a wild beast the
> arrow glanced unfortunately and slew his Father Sinius AEneas,
> for the which he was exiled […] many Writers doe neither write or
> allow of Brutes being here, accounting it a dishonor for our Nation,
> to have originall from a Parricide, and one that derived his descent
> from the Goddesse (*alias* strumpet) Venus. Howsoever, Histories
> are observed and clouded with ambiguities, some burnt, left,
> defaced by antiquity; and some abused by the malice, ignorance, or
> partialitie of Writers so that truth is hard to be found. Amongst all
> which variations of Times and Writers, I must conclude there was
> a BRUTE.\(^6\)\(^3\)

According to Taylor, many writers skip over the details of Brute as a
result of the dishonor which would be caused to England in being des-
cended from a parricide, and by him from a “strumpet.” Taylor, on the
other hand, has no problem whatsoever in pointing out these two dishon-
orable facets of the story for his readers. Indeed, it is precisely this part
of the fiction which seems to convince him to conclude that Brute existed,
whether because England needs a founder preserved from the deface-
ments of antiquity or because it particularly suits the nature of the country
to have a founder of such dubious moral standing. As part of a narrative
of the English monarchy, though, it is interesting if not leading to begin
with these elements: the story does not so much underpin the history of
monarchs it precedes as undercut it, perhaps working to prepare and warn
the reader in how to interpret what follows.

The misfortune which sets Brute on his way to Britain appears in
other texts. Rather like John Higgins’s solution to a dearth of source mate-
rial for *Mirror for Magistrates*, the story also appears to be embellished
wherever possible; such embellishment carries the stamp of the individ-
ual author in quite telling ways. The satirical, darkly whimsical edge to
the story as Taylor relates it feels entirely appropriate to the work of the
water poet. Similarly, the approach taken by Camden feels quite typical of
him in displacing any blame for his subject material onto its source. The account given in Britannia of the parricide, we are told, comes straight from Geoffrey of Monmouth,

wherein he writeth that Brutus a Trojane borne, the sonne of Sylvius, nephew of Ascanius, and in a third degree nephew to that great Aeneas descended from supreme Jupiter (for the goddess Venus bare him), whose birth cost his mother her life, and who by chance slew his owne father in hunting (a thing that the wise Magi had foretold), fled his countrie and went into Greece.64

Relating this story, Camden professes to be unsure about it. Still, any inconsistencies in this strange tale, along with the more fantastical elements, can obviously be put down squarely to its unfortunate provenance from Geoffrey, and the reader will have to take it for what it is. But this is not objective historiography, of course; nor does it seem to accurately represent what Geoffrey’s Historia regum Britanniae had to say on the subject. Indeed, the story as it appeared in Monmouth refers only briefly to the killing of Brutus’s father:

the young man killed his father by an unlucky shot with an arrow, when they were out hunting together. Their beaters drove some stags into their path and Brutus, who was under the impression that he was aiming his weapon at these stags, hit his own father below the breast. As a result of this death Brutus was expelled from Italy by his relations, who were angry with him for having committed such a crime.65

By comparison with Camden, the plot seems fairly matter-of-fact in delivery and supplies a reasonable, if tragic, context for the accident in the actions of the beaters. There is little of the mystical in this. Camden, combining and summing up Geoffrey as a whole, brings together the extraordinary descent from Venus and adds a prophecy from the Magi, increasing the strangeness of the narrative through compression. Similarly, he reduces the narrative of the event itself so that it becomes Brute “by chance” slaying his own father, links this straight to the death of Brute’s mother during childbirth, and for good measure makes Brute a coward as well, having him flee the country rather than being exiled. All in all, Camden makes a series of additions and alterations to a narrative which he then packages as Geoffrey’s, allowing himself a freer rein in the telling.
Where Camden makes full use of the historian’s toolset to emphasize Brute’s unfortunate start in life, Drayton puts the poet’s skills to work to similar ends. In Poly-Olbion, the river Dart argues strongly for Brute, while also suggesting some alternative readings of his history. The Trojan is lauded by the river as “My Britaine-founding Brute,” while the landing of “his puissant fleet / At Totnesse […] shall renowne my streame.” The river argues for Brute as “My Britaine-founding Brute,” while the landing of “his puissant fleet / At Totnesse […] shall renowne my streame.”

Though his arrival in Albion is “fortunato” (itself not entirely a positive term), his journey from Greece is a “fataall flight.” The reasons for this hasty exit from his homeland are again made abundantly clear:

Who in his Mothers wombe whilst yet he did remaine,
The Oracles gave out, that next borne Brute should bee
His Parents onelie death: which soone they liv’d to see.
For, in his painfull birth his Mother did depart;
And ere his fifteenth yeere, in hunting of a Hart,
He with a lucklesse shaft his haplesse Father slew:
For which, out of his throne, their King the Latines threw.

As with Britannia, and probably resting on Camden’s narrative, Brute’s misfortune is prognosticated in Poly-Olbion by oracle. Again like Britannia, Brute is not just a parricide, but a matricide too—if unknowingly so. In compressing together the events of fifteen years, Drayton produces a Brute who becomes his parents’ “onelie death,” a pregnant phrase which serves to emphasize the action. Putting this story of Brute in the mouth of a feminine river, who heralds his conquest of Britain, also increases the relevance of the origin of Brute to the rest of his adventures. Personification is part and parcel of Poly-Olbion, but here the effect is to draw a connecting line between different elements of Brute’s myth. The female river tells a story about the hero in his womb, who kills his mother in childbirth: a type of death tragically common in the period, but here, as in Camden, viewed as part of a continuum and hence indicative of the sort of treatment Brute hands out. The father of Britain is both a parent-killer and an exile, and full of bad luck; his conquest of the isle might well be viewed in the same light. This is, of course, only one possible reading in a text characterized by generic and narrative hybridity. Indeed, the multivocal nature of Poly-Olbion itself supports multiple, often divergent, readings: John Adrian, for example, finds the text’s “proud, assertive, and querulous voices” to be energetic, even celebratory, with an effect “of ebullience rather than frustration,” while comparing
this view with Andrew Hadfield’s perhaps more common interpretation of the narrative as fragmentary and anxious. Either reading seems possible to maintain, and probably depends rather on the reader. That is precisely the point: Drayton manages to deliver a story that by its nature and structure opens itself to question.

In some ways, patricidal butchery fits quite neatly with other early modern versions of British prehistory, which frequently subjected bodies, lineages, and genders to intense inspection. The way that this occurs with Brute tends toward a rereading of his history, an appropriation of elements of the myth to reorient the message of the myth as a whole. Even the rather more positive spin from Heywood’s *Troia Britanica* still manages to link the two deaths of Brute’s parents: “*Brutes* Mother in her painfull throwes deceast, / (Hunting) his glancing Shaft his Father slew, / For which with melancholy griefes infest / From Italy, the Prince himselfe withdrew, / Ten thousand voluntary men unprest, / Consort him, strange adventures to pursue.” Rather than being expelled or fleeing the country, Heywood’s Brute exiles himself out of grief, and for the love of their heroic prince, 10,000 volunteers join him on his travels. Even so, this does not seem entirely a whitewash; or, at least, the presence of death remains in the narrative. Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* takes a similar tack, with the chronicle of *Briton moniments* noting quickly (and perhaps just a little too quickly) that Brute was “driven by fatall error” toward his destiny, a phrasing that perhaps informed Drayton’s fatal flight. Quite what Spenser expects us to make of this bit of detail is hard to say. Still, if Brute gets off more easily at this moment than he does elsewhere, Spenser’s text is far from an unadulterated championing of the history—this is something I return to in the next chapter in his dealings with Brute’s predecessor, Albina. For the moment, it is worth noting that even in texts which are, at least on the surface, in favor of Brute, his precise meaning to the present is open to question.

In the remainder of this section, I want to consider how this reading of the ancient Trojan and his British successors plays out across one ostensibly “pro-Brute” work, William Warner’s metrical history *Albions England* (1586, 1592). Doing so affords us the opportunity to remind ourselves of the textual richness of the early modern chronicle: it seems important to look in detail at how the myth plays out in such a text because of the prevailing view, voiced by Curran, that “Englishmen offered up not Brutiads but mere epic catalogues, skeletal outlines of the British History which did not linger much (if at all) over the details of the story.” Many
of these works do appear as catalogues of rulers; indeed, some play up this aspect. Taylor’s *Memorial of all the English Monarchs*, for example, provides an illustration for every ruler alongside their description, in what must have presented a type-setting nightmare for the printer. But the catalogues are also weighty, and within their format work to add meat to the skeleton of the British myth. If at times they did not linger, it may have been because the stories were well known; equally, the details they do decide to fill in are worth pausing over. Warner’s *Albions England* presents a useful example of the genre. Extending from Noah to the Norman Conquest in the first edition, the text was popular enough to warrant an extension to Elizabeth’s reign in the second edition of 1592, while a continuation was published posthumously in 1612. Though regarded as a minor figure amongst the literary giants of the period, Warner was well enough known to be referred to in Francis Meres’s *Palladis Tamia* (1598) as “our English Homer.”75 Weighing in at over 300 pages, *Albions England* satisfies the claim on Homer in length if not quite in poetic achievement. Warner introduces the founding figure of his text in a similar fashion to other writers we have seen:

*Posthumus Sylvius* perrishing in Chace amongst the brakes,
Mistooke for Game, by *Brute* his sonne: *Brute Italie* forsakes.
And to assosyate his Exile, a many *Trojans* moe
At all adventures put to Seas, uncerten where to goe:
To whom did Fortune, Fortune-like, become a friend and foe.76

So far, so standard: although there is some quibbling here over whether he leaves Italy willingly or is forced out, the idea of Brute as an uncertain adventurer tossed by fortune may well be an attractive one as part of a pre-destined *translatio imperii*. But if that is the purpose of this starting point, it is startling that in his subsequent history of Brute’s descendents Warner seems to dwell entirely on the depressing elements: fortune is on show, but not as a friend. It is worth spending some time in order to appreciate how extended this focus becomes in Warner’s text across the sequence of episodes concerning legendary British history.

From Brute, Warner moves very quickly to the next available British king to discuss, the eldest of his sons, Locrine. Locrine was important (at times, crucial) to English versions of British history: Brute famously split his British kingdom between his three sons, conveniently imagined as current territory. Loegria, or England, passes to Locrine; Albania, or Scotland, came under the rule of Albanact; and Cambria,
or Wales, went to Camber. As the eldest son, Locrine was said to have had overlordship of the isle: early modern authors, particularly if not exclusively in England, were often all too keen to point out this original legendary hierarchy in relation to their present. Warner, though, has rather less to say about Locrine’s overlordship of the isle (half a line) and rather more to say about his sexual incontinency, the resulting war with his wife, Gwendolyn, and the murder by Gwendolyn of Locrine’s mistress Elstrid and their daughter, Sabrina (the following twenty-eight lines). The shift of emphasis humanizes the foundations of England in the chronicle history, but it also undermines the use of this foundation as a political tool. Here, the story concentrates on Locrine’s weakness and betrayal. Having seen off an attack by the Scythians under the leadership of their king, Humber (whose death in the northern river was imagined as the explanation for its name), Locrine is immediately captivated by Humber’s daughter:

Where Humbles Daughter, Parragon for beautie, such a Dame
As Love himselfe could not but love, did Locrine inflame,
That Guendoleyne, the Cornish Duke his daughter, Locrins Queene,
Grew in contempt: and, Coryn dead, his Change of Choyse was scene.77

His wife, Gwendolyn, daughter of Coryn, or Corineus, is herself of an impressive line: Corineus being the mighty warrior to whom Brute turned when in need of giant slaying. In Warner’s retelling of the story, Corineus’s death is what encourages (or allows) Locrine to pursue the affair and indulge his desires with Humber’s daughter, Elstrid. This seems to have been a recurring theme: in the anonymous play The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine (1595), a fairly cowardly King Locrine keeps the affair secret during the lifetime of Corineus. But, like the Gwendolyn of that play, Warner’s queen is not to be trifled with or pushed aside so easily, and she quickly summons up an army to be revenged upon her husband:

To Cornwall goes the wrothfull Queene to seaze her Fathers Land,
From whence she brought, to worke revenge, of warriours stout a band,
And bids her husband battell, and in battell is he slaine:
And for their Sonne in Nonage was, she to his use did raine.78
Gwendolyn acts much like her famous father when provoked, springing into action in Cornwall. The detail of her Cornish army makes sense given her father’s control of the territory, but it may also reflect contemporary views of the peninsula county, regarded throughout the period as something of a source of trouble for the rest of the country. It is also an interesting bit of detail in terms of gendered readings of history: at the time of Warner’s writing, a daughter might well have been hard pressed to prevent a father’s lands reverting to the crown. That Gwendolyn simply seizes these lands for her powerbase is indicative of her characterization. Removing Locrine from power, apparently with some ease, Gwendolyn rules in the minority of their son, before passing the kingship on to him. Again, this is a potentially provocative detail in the way the myth is remembered: as far as England went, the protectors of royal minorities had been male relatives. To look for a female protector, though, one did not have to go too far: Mary of Guise had successfully ruled in the minority of her daughter Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots.

The material of Gwendolyn was a traditional element of the British myth; but the extent to which Warner dwells on particular elements of this mythology is telling. Heywood, by comparison, gives us the history of the episode in a fairly matter-of-fact fashion in Troia Britanica: “Locrine raigned twenty yeares, his wife him slew, […] Mother and Child bold Guendolina threw / Into the Severne streames, who there name tooke / From Sabrine.” As is usual in Troia Britanica, the narration is breathless and seems to have time only for the key points. Warner’s narration, by contrast, dwells on the details; it is not alone in this textual focus. Spenser’s retelling of the myth, for example, also seems to have time to spare and fits in some important details. Firstly, Locrine’s leadership in the island is twice confirmed: “Locrine left chiefe Lord of Britany,” and, later, “Locrine was left the soveraine Lord of all.” Spenser also makes rather more of Locrine’s battle against the invaders than either Heywood or Warner, reinforcing the Scythians’ alienness in making them a “nation straung,” and a foe whose strength is of biblical proportions, flooding the world: “through the world then swarmd in every part, / And overflow’d all countries farre away.” But although in Spenser’s version of the story Locrine appears at first uncomplicatedly heroic and courageous, this is quickly undercut. Indeed, Locrine only seems to be a good king when in battle against an enemy exterior to the island. In peacetime, his nobility falters, and in the chronicle history provided by Briton moniments this comes as a direct cause of not fighting:
The king returned proud of victorie,
And insolent wox through unwonted ease,
That shortly he forgot the jeopardie,
Which in his land he lately did appease,
And fell to vaine voluptuous disease:
He lov’d faire Ladie Estrild, lewdly lov’d,
Whose wanton pleasures him too much did please,
That quite his hart from Guendolene remov’d,
From Guendolene his wife, though alwaies faithfull prov’d.85

Fittingly, given its narration in a book of temperance, Locrine’s part of the story is played for his particular flaws. His affair with Elstrid is voluptuous, lewd, while Gwendolyn is the faithful and noble daughter of Brute’s right-hand man and most able fighter, Corineus. The episode is thus intimately linked to Brute. Against an internal, domestic foe, Locrine seems to lack his father’s martial abilities: bringing her husband to ground as easily in Spenser as in Warner, Gwendolyn, “gathering force, and courage valorous, / Encountred him in battell well ordaind.”86 Defeated, Spenser’s Locrine flees the battlefield, in a reminder of Brute’s enforced remove from his homeland: the apple, it seems, does not fall far from the tree. Gwendolyn is not the type to forgive and, pursuing Locrine, throws him in irons, “where he till death remaind.”87 In each retelling, similar events occur: it seems clear that the episode is regarded as a key moment in the British narrative worth remembering. But what is remembered does not easily or neatly fit with nationalistic interpretations of Britain’s ancient history. As with Brute, no retelling treats Locrine as an unreservedly good king. For that matter, some go to great imaginative lengths to fill in the edges of the story.

For his part, Warner gives full voice to Gwendolyn, painting her as a wrathful and mighty queen. Having removed Locrine from power with the permanence of a deathstroke, Gwendolyn moves to mete out her revenge on his lover and daughter. Waxing dramatic, Warner’s narrative bursts from third-person description into a gripping speech by Gwendolyn, the queen having pursued her quarry to the water’s edge:

There binding both, and bobbing them, then trembling at her yre,
She sayd: if Scythia could have hild the wandring King thy Syre,
Then Brittish waters had not bin to him deserved bayne:
But Estrild, snout-faire Estrild, she was sparde, forsooth, to traine
With whorish tricks a vicious King: but neither of you twaine,
Thou stately Drab, nor this thy Brat, a bastard as thy selfe,
Shall live in triumph of my wrong: first mother, and her Elfe,
Shall fish in Flood for Humbars soule, and bring him newes
to hell,
That Locrins wife on Locrins Whore revenged her so well. 

Choosing to spend this amount of time on Gwendolyn provides her with an enhanced space in the British narrative. Rather than acting as a two-dimensional archetype or stereotype, as she appears to be in some other versions of the story, Warner’s Gwendolyn is given motivation, emotive pause. John Taylor, too, has time for Gwendolyn. Indeed, in his _Memorial of all the English Monarchs_, Taylor imagines more lines for Gwendolyn than he does for either Locrine or Brute. For Taylor, too, Gwendolyn is a martially imposing figure, personally encountering Locrine in war and putting him “to the Sword,” indulging in a “revengefull bloody slaughter” on the battlefield, and, having pursued Elstrid and Sabrina, “drownd them both (to quench her jelous flame).” About her reign itself, Taylor has only a couplet to offer, albeit a positive one: “When 15 yeeres this Queen had wisely raign’d, / She dy’d, and then her son the kingdome gain’d.”

Though short, the detail is important: here, Gwendolyn does not rule in her son’s minority but in her own stead, only passing the crown upon her death. Her rule was a wise one, rather at odds with her prior representation as a thing of war, but certainly contrasting with Locrine. Both Taylor’s and Warner’s versions, by adding detail to the character and narrative of Gwendolyn, bring out a different kind of history from early Britain, one that complicates and questions the masculine progression of kings. Warner’s Gwendolyn in particular is textually rich and, though her speech is perhaps not the subtlest, it is also stridently righteous and emotionally compelling. For Warner, working his way through the reframing and representing of chronicle material, Gwendolyn seems to have stood out from her surroundings in a way which other monarchs did not.

Gwendolyn was not the only element in the dramatic episode of Locrine which proved attractive to writers. The women she kills, Elstrid and Sabrina, are also reserved for characterization and utilized for political comment, as has not been lost on modern commentators. Sabrina was taken to be the point of origin for the name of the Severn, the river which in more than one sense formed a fluid representation of Wales. As Spenser puts it, “the sad virgin innocent of all, / Adowne the rolling river she did poure, / Which of her name now Severne men do call: / Such was the end, that to disloyall love did fall.” While Spenser’s narrative has some sympathy for Sabrina, she also serves as little more than landmark,
a moral from the past which remains present in geography. Other authors offer fuller characterization to Locrine’s daughter: both Milton’s *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* (1634) and Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* have been viewed by Erin Murphy as adopting similar approaches in “their parallel transformations of Sabrina into a figure who speaks after her death.”\(^93\) Both approaches operate in a tradition with roots in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, where Sabrina speaks from the dead, embodied (or, perhaps, disembodied) as a pitiable ghostly presence. Constructing a female narrator who acts as commentator on and arbitrator of her narrative, such characterizations challenge, in Murphy’s view, “the boundary between the past and the present” and offer some authorial power to Sabrina: “she directly adjudicated competing national stories and resolves them by becoming a prophet of the nation’s story to come.”\(^94\)

Warner, too, affords narrative space to Gwendolyn’s victims, shifting sympathies with eye-watering speed. Directly following the queen’s vengeful speech, Warner delivers the picture of mother and daughter about to be put to the sword:

> They lifting up their lillie hands, from out their lovely eyes
> Powre tearses like Pearles, and washe those Cheekes where naught save beautie lyes:
> And seeking to excuse themselves, and mercie to obtaine,
> With speeches good, and prayers faire, they speake and pray in vaine.\(^95\)

This British incident as it is presented in Warner is an interesting case in terms of gendered myth. Essentially, all the tropes of womanhood in the period are made to square off against each other: the wife, the whore, the virgin, the supplicant, the wronged, the amazon. It also seems to be the case that these tropes are highlighted precisely as tropes by the verse, which relies on time-worn simile for its effect: lily hands, lovely eyes, tears of pearls. But in the dramatic nature of this episode in the poem, these tropes are also expanded on and humanized. At the least, Warner spends time on scripting a voice for the queen, and allowing each of these figures room within the narrative. That said, exactly what Gwendolyn’s voice represents or achieves is less clear. The years of wise rule noted by Taylor are absent from *Albions England*, which instead seems to focus on the queen as an example of violent, martial rule.

It is worth pausing over one further iteration of Gwendolyn for the light it sheds on this question. The Gwendolyn of *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine* is similarly homicidal, although she spares some pity
for Sabrina, who in this version commits suicide rather than being killed. While reserving only anger for Elstrid, who she describes as the author of the war, this Gwendolyn finds a place to honor Locrine, if only on the strength of his parentage: “Because he was the sonne of mightie Brute,” Gwendolyn pronounces, “He shall be buried in a stately tombe, / Close by his aged father Brutus bones.” Choosing where and how to dispose of Locrine’s corpse, Gwendolyn is once again a commanding, vibrant force. She is also literally vibrant: it is her voice that remains and continues in and beyond the world of the play, her voice that frames the preceding action. By comparison, Brutus is nothing but remains: what is material and present about the mighty Brute are his aged bones. In something of a double insult, Brutus is both dead and aged, his bones only useful to demarcate the past. Just as the giant Gogmagog’s broken body can be seen in the gore spread across Spenser’s Plymouth, so Brute’s bones can be witnessed in their stately tomb. Consigning her erstwhile husband to this past, Gwendolyn constructs a particular reading of history: if Locrine’s and Brutus’s bones are made to rattle together, their stories might be seen to do the same. In both the play Locrine and in Warner’s poem, we are presented with two lines of history: one in the traditional progression represented by Brute and Locrine, and one in the commentary on that progression provided by Gwendolyn.

All in all, the episode as it appears in Warner is not a glorious one for Britain. There is more to come. As an example of unmerciful violence and murder, Gwendolyn’s episode is a synecdoche for what happens in the line of Brute’s progeny. Indeed, the way Warner moves from one British monarch to another highlights this effect:

As this his Grandame, such appear’d Mempricius, Madans sonne,
Whose brother Manlius traytrously by him to death was donne.
And since of noble Brute his line prodigious things I tell,
I skipping to the Tenth from him will shewe what then befell.97

Having detailed one civil strife within the nation, Warner moves immediately forward to another with the reign of Gwendolyn’s grandson, Mempricius, who killed his brother. That bleak point stated, Warner moves straight on again in his catalogue, drawing a neat line in legendary history which marks and connects the various elements of violence. His claim to speak of the “prodigious” elements of Brute’s line is precise: prodigious in the period meaning portentous, astonishing, or even monstrous (rather than, or perhaps in addition to, the more modern
positive sense). Warner’s choice again seems not to fit a heroic idea of British history as, “skipping to the Tenth” from Brute, the narrative lights upon King Lear. This king, at least, would become well known, and like his ancestor Brute was all too fond of distributing the nation amongst his children. Like his more famous Shakespearean cousin, Warner’s Lear makes the mistake of separating his estate based on a grave misreading of his children’s love:

When, doting on his Daughters three, with them he fell in hand
To tell how much they loved him: the Eldest did esteeme
Her life inferior to her love, so did the Second decease:
The Youngest sayd her love was such as did a childe behove,
And that how much himself was worth, so much she him did love.
The formost two did please him well, the youngest did not so.

The Lear story in Warner passes familiarly enough: the virtuous Cordelia with her husband Gallia (a somewhat more historically accurate King of France) eventually rescues Lear from the murderous clutches of her elder sisters. Unlike Shakespeare’s play, of course, Cordelia lives to succeed Lear. Still, Warner tells us, she did not reign for long: the story concludes with a mention of the fatal war between Cordelia and her nephews. From there, Warner concludes the chapter, and opens the next by again shifting forward from one tragedy to another, jumping over eighteen reigns to deliver the story of Gorboduc’s “double issue,” Porrex and Ferrex. The narrative jump is again prompted by theme: one violent division of the kingdom perhaps deserves another. Again, the story will be familiar to anyone who has encountered Gorboduc (1561); like that play, the strife between the two brothers heralds the end of the kingdom. The story in Warner is both brief and brutal. Having permanently seen off Ferrex, Porrex rules alone until his mother murders him in revenge. A dying Porrex, who has no breath left to express himself in speech, finds time enough to make his displeasure known by gesture: “And maketh signes, as who would say, ah mother, thou hast done a deede, as never mother earst did practise on her Sonne.” It is not entirely clear what signs from Porrex would produce this meaning; his mother, in any case, does not appear to be moved. Not satisfied with simply killing him, she rips up the corpse and flings it apart, “that his bodie, peecemeale tore, about the Lodging flyes.”

Following this bit of ghastly detail, Warner rounds off chapter 15 by noting that he will now skip forty British reigns in order to get to the
good parts: “From Porrex forti Kings in scilence shall remaine: / Save only valiant Brennus, and his brother Belyne: thay / Unpraised for their warres and workes shall not escape away.”103 The praise that is delivered, however, is as elsewhere in Albions England not exactly fulsome. As we are soon reminded, the brothers Brennus and Beline were well known for being not so much valiant as traitorous, and their wars were mainly conducted against each other. “These Brothers,” Warner explains, “thristing amplier Raynes, did martially contend.”104 Driven by ambition and greed, the brothers turn on each other. In stressing the fratricidal nature of this element of chronicle history, Warner was not simply interfering in the past but potentially the present also. Like Brute, Brennus and Beline were directly drawn on to shore up dynastic ambitions: Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, used the brothers specifically as evidence of Tudor imperial descent. Warner takes a line on the story that diverts from and enlarges on the myth. As with his sources, he has the two brothers make peace following intervention from their mother, and Beline becomes sole ruler. Following this maternal intercession, the poem moves on to discuss Brennus’s impressive conquests abroad: “That this side and beyond the Alpes subdued all by fight. / The stateliest Townes in Italie had Brenn their Buylder, and / Even Rome, the terror of the World, did at his mercie stand.”105 The threat of civil war at home is turned outward: internecine domestic conflict becomes external conquest. But while the imagined conquest of Rome and its dominions in antiquity might be for others in the Tudor state a moment of triumph which both prefigured and underlined the English right to empire, Warner makes it a moment of horror. After putting Parnassus to “sacke and spoyle,” the British military camp descends into chaos and, as divine punishment for their sins, Brennus’s army is visited with tempests, earthquakes, and plagues, “That most did perish, fewe disperse, and all were out of harte.”106 Brennus is understandably distraught at the condition to which his followers are reduced: “Brenn himselfe discouraged did change in every parte. / He looking after, and upon, the scattered, and the slayne, / Did seeme a second Cadmus, save lesse patient of his payne.”107 Less patient indeed, as, “with a selfe-wrought wound,” Brennus kills himself.108

All in all, the British chronicle given by Warner, while extensive, is also fundamentally a chronicle of mistakes. In the run of ancient British history presented in Albions England, we are offered traitorousness and cowardice, patricides, fratricides, and suicides, but for examples of good rulership we must look elsewhere. Certainly, Warner had other places in
British history in which he might have spent more time, and which had a more positive note to strike. Indeed, he admits as much himself, noting at one point that “The rightuous Gorboman might add fresh Subiect to our Muse, / But skipping to his Fathers Sonnes, of them it thus ensewes.”109 Again, Warner highlights the skip, foregrounding his own historiographical practice, his hand in what history he tells. He is clear that he could, if he wished, talk about someone unambiguously virtuous; the British muse might be refreshed. Instead, though, he elides the reign entirely in order to skip to Gorboman’s sons. In this case, at least, the issue is not that there was nothing available to say about Gorboman’s reign: as the medieval chronicler Jehan (or Jean) de Wavrin put it, “This Gorboman was gentle and amiable, just and faithful, for he would never tell a falsehood, nor suffer a wrong to be done to any one if it was in his power to prevent it.”110 Geoffrey of Monmouth, too, found the king to be just, while Holinshed named him a man of virtuous life, a description that would filter through to Spenser’s view of him as devout.111 Each of these authors finds time to pause over Gorboman’s reign. In Warner, Gorboman is ignored in favor of talking about the successive depositions of his brothers, Archigallo and Elidurus, before skipping forward to the invasion of Britain by Caesar.

Albions England is also a chronicle which makes fairly clear that the history it narrates offers few underpinning dynastic claims for the present. At the death of Porrex, the narrative rather matter-of-factly states: “And thus from noble Brute his lyne the Scepter then did passe: When of his bloud for to succeede no heire surviving was.”112 With a couplet, Warner disinherits the Tudor line.113 As Curran has noted of the similarly disastrous situation presented by the conclusion of King Lear, “Such maxims as ‘manage the succession well,’ or ‘do not divide the kingdom,’ or ‘avoid civil strife’ seem of little use with all the putatively historical characters dead; apocalypse, not politics, prevails.”114 The message which emerges from Warner’s chronicle is one of cyclic disaster, a repeated sequence in which the glorious history of Brute becomes a succession of tragedies, depositions, and monstrous murders. The story, as far as Brute is concerned, ends with the undoubted extinction of his bloodline, blood which does not seem to have been worth very much in the first place. The story is presented as true, but this ceases to matter when one only tells the bad parts: again, the historicity of Brute is less important than what that historicity is used to say.
Brute is a founder about whom it is unwise to say too much, not so much because of his fictionality but because what could be said about him pointed so clearly to what Mikalachki terms “the constant degeneration associated with this period of ancient British history, where the establishment of a new monarch was generally the first stage in the next cycle of war and division.” History, when read into the present, does not necessarily tell the story the present might like to hear. In Brute’s case, it could offer a dynastic and ancient past, but it could also offer a constantly repeating cycle of violent mistakes. In that respect, Brute was not unlike his mythical predecessor in the isle, Albina, to whom we now turn.

NOTES

2 On the relationship to Scotland, see Roger A. Mason’s “Scotching the Brut: Politics, History and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain,” in Scotland and England 1286–1815, ed. Roger A. Mason. On the influence of the story as told in Geoffrey of Monmouth, David Armitage notes: “Geoffrey's Historia Regum Britanniae (1136) enshrined a vision of English dominance over Britain within his legendary history. Brutus's eldest son, Locrine, ruled England; the younger sons paid homage to him on account of his seniority, just as the respective kingdoms of Scotland and Wales were held to owe homage to England: seniority implied superiority within the post-Brutan feudal composite monarchy.” Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, p. 37.
4 Schwyzer, Literature, Nationalism, and Memory, p. 77.
5 Camden, Britannia, pp. 8–9.
6 As Pivetti notes, “What is too often ignored in readings of Camden, however, is that even as he assumes the posture of the esteemed scholar, he hesitates. To reject Monmouth’s histories, it appears, requires the subversion of Britain’s self-defining icons.” Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 2.
7 Camden, Britannia, pp. 24–25.
8 Laura Ashe, “Holinsheed and Mythical History,” p. 155. Camden, in this case, might be viewed as “less the conquering historian standing triumphantly over the body of Monmouth and more a writer willing to alternate between different styles.” Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 5.
9 Pivetti notes that Vergil has been “widely credited as among the first to look askance” at British history. Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 60. See also James P. Carley, “Polydore Vergil and John Leland on King Arthur: The Battle
of the Books.” Vergil’s “surprisingly indirect attack,” as Pivetti puts it, probably did not deserve the vitriolic response it received. Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 61.

10 Stephanie Trigg notes: “Set against his reputation for scepticism, even irreverence, his apparent support for the popular tradition of the garter narrative sparked equal measures of fascination and resistance.” Trigg, “The Vulgar History of the Order of the Garter,” p. 96. See also Trigg’s more recent book-length study, Shame and Honor: A Vulgar History of the Order of the Garter.

11 Heywood, Troy Britannica, p. 2. The use of Tables of Nations, which drew links to ancient classical history in order to get further backwards to Adam, was a common strategy in chronicle history.

12 Heywood, Londini Speculum: Or, Londons Mirror, p. 89.

13 I discuss the handling of this type of history in civic pageantry in Philip Robinson, “The Multiple Meanings of Troy in Early Modern London’s Mayoral Show.”

14 Escobedo, Nationalism and Historical Loss, p. 141.

15 John Kerrigan, Archipelagic English, p. 115. Kerrigan’s is a useful summation of the critical position as it stands.

16 Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 5.


19 Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 134. In separating these works we see, and create, “distinctions among different uses of history-like material that its authors and readers may not have shared.” Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 134.

20 As Munro notes, “Early chronicles by writers such as Gildas, Matthew Paris, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Thomas Walsingham, Caradog of Llancarfan, William of Malmesbury, and Henry of Huntingdon appeared alongside and within the work of Tudor historians such as Polydore Vergil, Richard Grafton, John Leland, John Stow, Raphael Holinshed, and Henry Savile.” Munro, “O Read me”, p. 60. On the reception and continuation of medieval manuscript collections into the early modern period, see Jennifer Summit, Memory’s Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England.

21 Heywood, Life of Merlin, “To the Reader.” Heywood’s complaint about the size of books, along with his eagerness to provide just one book that can do the job of all of them, does point to a class (or at least an economic) issue being also at stake: “Elaborate printing considerations also proved a sticking point in much antiquarian production as the expense of quality paper, ornate frontispieces and the inclusion of maps, charts and engraved illustrations increased printing costs—costs that had then to be passed on to consumers.” Megan Matchinske, Women Writing History, p. 42. The cost of academic books is not, unfortunately, a problem that has been solved.
John Higgins, *The First Parte of the Mirour for Magistrates*, “Higgins to the Reader.” Higgins was in a better position to comment than most: “The personal acquaintance of Holinshed with John Higgins, the compiler of the expanded 1587 edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and Holinshed’s influence on the content of that volume, strengthens the connection between these works.” Harriet Archer, “Holinshed and the Middle Ages,” p. 182.

Higgins, *The First Parte of the Mirour for Magistrates*, “Higgins to the Reader”.

Ibid.

For their part, Higgins’s readers would probably not have blamed him: “Most early modern English readers, however, worried little about methodological matters such as source purity.” Matchinske, *Women Writing History*, p. 25.

Quoted in Mary Floyd-Wilson, “Delving to the Root,” p. 105.


Harvey, *Philadelphus*, p. 97.

Ibid.

Schwyzer discusses Harvey’s position on the Saxons in *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, p. 39.


Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.3, lines 1–2.

Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 70. Brute’s appearance in Spenser has similarly been viewed as a balancing act between “a sense of the ridiculousness of the Brute myth with a sense of its powerful meaning for the nation.” Curran, *Roman Invasions*, p. 111.

Hiscock, *Reading Memory*, p. 31.

Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 76.

Vine discusses the relationship and correspondence between Ortelius and Camden in chapter 3 of *In Defiance of Time*, “Restoring Britain: Courtesy and Collaboration in Camden’s *Britannia*,” esp. pp. 80–84. Vine argues, convincingly, for *Britannia* as a collaborative project reliant on the antiquarian material and interpretation provided by numerous correspondents.
The feeling of paradox may be in this case modern, rather than early modern: “We would probably categorize cartographers as among those looking forward, but Ortelius felt affinity with Camden and his historical reach back into the past, both tracing the palimpsests of historical geographies.” Morse, “Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain,” p. 121.

Camden, *Britannia*, *4r.*
Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form*, p. 5.
Erin Murphy, “Sabrina,” p. 93.
Curran, *Roman Invasions*, p. 100.
Ashe, “Holinshed and Mythical History,” p. 158.
Camden, *Britannia*, p. 5.

As C. David Benson comments, “Medieval England knew many different stories of Troy—versions of the founding of Britain by Trojan Brute, the pseudo-classical *Excidium Troiae* and its Middle English translations, and the classical accounts of Vergil and Ovid, to name only the most prominent.” Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature*, p. 5. For medieval readings of Troy, see also Sylvia Federico’s *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages*; Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell, eds., *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*.

Ibid., 2.1.118.
Hopkins, *Renaissance Drama on the Edge*, p. 54. Hopkins draws on Emma Buckley’s argument that the moment depends for its effect on a tradition of variation, so that “a certain degree of skepticism inevitably attaches itself to Aeneas’s narrative.” Buckley, “‘Live False Aeneas!’: Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the Limits of Translation,” p. 130.
Ibid.

On the society of archers, we might note that “Robinson’s *Auncient Order* is a major source of information about a mysterious London archery society which imitated Prince Arthur and the knights of the Round Table in the 1580s, including members such as customer Thomas Smith (Prince Arthur), Hugh Offley (Sir Lancelot), and Richard Mulcaster, although Robinson does not state whether he himself was also a participant.” R. C. L. Sgroi, “Robinson, Richard,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The concern to maintain archery as a national skill was certainly genuine amongst the elite. See, for example, Steven Gunn, “Archery Practice in Early Tudor England.”

61 Ibid.
63 Taylor, *All the Workes of John Taylor the Water Poet*, p. 269.
64 Camden, *Britannia*, p. 5.
67 Ibid.
69 With precisely what effect is, of course, open to question. Curran finds the narrative magisterial: “In placing the Brute story in the first song, Drayton was obviously making a statement about its importance. As the vanguard of the poem, the Brute myth is perhaps the most sacred of the relics of antiquity the *Poly Olbion* has been charged to protect, the one most representative of the poem’s mission. Thus, steps are taken to support Brutus, such as Drayton’s apparent attempt to hierarchize different types of legendary British history.” Curran, *Roman Invasions*, p. 109.
70 Murphy, for example, sees *Poly-Olbion* as “a generically hybrid text that stages the split and exchange between poetry and history, fable and fact, myth and event.” Murphy, “Sabrina,” p. 94.
73 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.9, 8.
74 Curran, *Roman Invasions*, p. 106.
75 Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury, Being the Second Part of Wits Commonwealth*, p. 282. *Albions England* seems to have been popular throughout the period: the text was revised (1589), corrected (1592), continued (1596), and reprinted (1597, 1602, and 1612).
77 Ibid., p. 57.
78 Ibid.
79 In Thomas Lodge’s “The complaint of Elstred,” appended to *Phillis* (1593), his collection of sonnets, Gwendolyn’s army is emphatically regional both in origin and outlook, a “warlike Cornish crew.” Lodge, *Phillis*, K3v.
80 Negotiation of property law in the period was often complex; for a discussion see Tim Stretton, “Women, Property, and Law.”
83 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.13, line 7; 2.10.14, line 1.
81 Ibid., 2.10.15, lines 1; 3–4. The depiction of the Scythians has been seen
as part and parcel of Spenser’s view on the Irish: for discussion, see Andrew
Hadfield, “Briton and Scythian: Tudor Representations of Irish Origins.” For
an introduction to the Irish contexts of The Faerie Queene (a large critical area,
to say the least), see Richard A. McCabe, “Ireland: Policy, Poetics and Parody.”
More generally and foundationally, see Andrew Hadfield, Edmund Spenser’s Irish
Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl, and Willy Maley, Salvaging Spenser:
Colonialism, Culture and Identity.
85 Spenser, Faerie Queene, 2.10.17.
86 Ibid., 2.10.18, lines 3–4.
87 Ibid., 2.10.18, line 7.
89 Taylor, A Memorial of all the English Monarchs, B1v.
90 Ibid., B2r.
91 See, for example, Schwzyer’s “Purity and Danger,” and Murphy’s “Sabrina.”
92 Spenser, Faerie Queene, 2.10.19, lines 6–9.
93 Murphy, “Sabrina,” p. 90.
94 Ibid., p. 94.
96 The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine, K4v.
com/view/Entry/151951.
100 Ibid., p. 59.
101 Ibid., p. 60.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 61.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., p. 66.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., p. 67.
109 Ibid.
110 Jehan de Wavrin, A Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of
113 As Lisa Hopkins notes: “To contest the continuity of the translatio imperii
in this manner by blithely declaring that the entire progeny of Brutus was
eradicated wreaks a devastating blow to the pretensions of all subsequent ‘British’
kings. The idea that the line of descent from Brutus had been wholly broken is
not a totally unique view—it is for instance also found in Thomas Hughes’s *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, where we read that ‘There lay the hope and braunch of Brute supprest,’ and it is also the view implied at the end of *Gorboduc.*” Hopkins, *The Cultural Uses of the Caesars*, pp. 107–8.

115 Mikalachki, *Legacy of Boadicea*, p. 75.
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Chapter 2

Albina and Her Sisters
Female Foundations

MYTHS OF ORIGIN IN Britain haunted the early modern period for much longer, and with greater impact, than one might expect. They were also not fixed, but could, as David Wallace argues, be adapted to serve particular ends: “across the Reformation divide, models of continuity seem more persuasive than any search for fundamental alteration of historiographical design—except that the continuity in question, before and after 1547, is creative adaptation of sedimented pasts to current political need.”1 Writers across the period adopt the material of myth to their immediate purposes; the ends may change, but the means do not. Equally, however, the act of rewriting history did not overwrite previous versions, nor remove these from circulation. Origin was palimpsest: one story rested on others and could, in details both said and markedly unsaid, reveal those other shared, competing versions of the past. One striking instance of this process is provided by the legend of Albina.

If Brute represented the story early modern England wanted to tell about its past, but could not speak of too loudly, Albina represents all the stories England could tell, but would rather not. A medieval addition to the existing mythology of Brute, the legend of Albina created a female predecessor for Brute’s masculine rule. While the details vary in different accounts, the key elements of the myth are simple enough: in a British version of the Greek Danaides legend, Albina is the eldest of a number of sisters who are married at their father’s behest, and who subsequently make the decision to murder their unwanted husbands on their wedding night. For this crime (and it is not always entirely clear whether the crime is the actual murder, the filial disobedience involved in betraying their father’s wishes, or both), they are subsequently banished from their homeland and set adrift at sea. Arriving at the shores of what would become Britain, they claim it for their own. Finding no men present, the sisters proceed to people the island via copulation with the native population of monsters and/or devils, producing a progeny of monstrous giants. So it is
that Albina founds and gives her name to the isle of Albion, at one and the
same time acting to provide genealogical origins for the savage race which
Brute would quell in civilizing Britain, and offering a rather different nar-
rative of British nationhood.

In this chapter, I reconsider Albina’s reception in the early modern
period, and her importance in terms of conceptions of national origin.
The first section deals in depth with this myth, and sets it in relation to
that of Brute. In the second section I widen the story slightly, via a brief
consideration of the presentation of Voada in Warner’s *Albions England*. 
Here, as in other English texts of the period, Voada is related to Boudica,
the first-century queen of the Iceni who famously (if ultimately unsuc-
cessfully) resisted the Roman conquest of Britain. Representations of
Boudica’s rebellion, like Albina’s occupation of the island prior to Brute’s
fortuitous arrival, construct originary martial women as proud but con-
quered; the suggestion being that such a conquest was necessary, and
probably for the best. The figure is, as Wallace notes, a “recurring conceit”
in the period: “unruly females [...] need both to display native courage and
(by way of authorising imperial designs at future dates) to be subjected to
masculine conquest.” In terms of both history and historiography, foun-
dational women may have been viewed as a threat to be expunged. On the
other hand, they are not simply removed but consistently represented, and
in Warner’s poem, that representation is a powerful one indeed. Albina
is part of a tradition, a monstrous matriarch who is constructed as the
first in a sequence of powerful and violent British women. Such women,
Mikalachki argues, “loomed large in early modern visions of national ori-
gins [...] these powerful and rebellious females in native historiography
threatened the establishment of a stable, masculine identity for the early
modern nation.” This threat was, I suggest, part of the reason why sto-
ries of Albina and her sisters (both familial and intertextual) continued to
have resonance and remained attractive.

Throughout the period, visions of female rule reoccur and are sub-
jected to intense scrutiny. This was, of course, in no small part due to
contemporary context. In the mid-sixteenth century, both Scotland and
England were in fairly quick succession faced with female rulers: Mary
Stuart in 1542 and Mary Tudor in 1553. Both were also faced with outside
rule by association: in the 1540s Scotland would quickly become con-
tested between the auld alliance of France and the old enemy of England,
while for its part England had to come to terms with the influence of
Spain following Mary’s marriage to Philip II. Though neither Mary Stuart
nor Mary Tudor were the first powerful female figures in Britain, nor even
the first female rulers of their respective dominions, the prospect of two queens in one isle cemented by the ascension of Elizabeth I in 1558 does seem to have prompted reflection in a way that two kings in one isle had not. The consequences of such reflection were, as Anne McLaren comments, momentous: “The attempt to conjure up a king in the context of ‘two queens in one isle’ inaugurated what proved to be a conclusive move away from belief in kingship as embodied essence to its abstract conceptualization as an office of state: one that was, in the last resort, divorceable from both the blood and the person of the king.” The reception of originary figures like Albina must, then, be considered in the context of “the intimate, and increasingly ideologically charged, connection between gender, marriage, and kingship in sixteenth-century Britain.”

It is in this ideologically charged context that we turn to the myth of Albina. But in considering a female figure who is presented as murderer, adulteress, and deviant, it is important to note one final preliminary point. Generally speaking, the presentation of a female figure as morally questionable has been regarded in critically negative terms; this may, however, have prevented our seeing meaning and value in such characterizations. Just as, today, being a “nasty woman” can turn from insult to rallying cry, so the early modern presentation of Albina as violent, malevolent, or monstrous should not mean we dismiss her out of hand. As Linda Pollock has argued, “Research on female culture so far has, to a great extent, been shackled by three problems: the assumption that an assembly of women automatically equates with a display of solidarity; the aversion to dealing fully with the fact that alliance making is based on the rejection of some individuals in favour of others; the privileging of female benevolence at the expense of female malevolence.” Searching only for the positive, communal, or affirmative aspects of feminine power in the period may in some ways have served to reinforce the very patriarchal constructions of womanhood which gender studies set out to break down. The violent origin story offered by Albina suggests other types of female power; examining this narrative requires a shift in perspective, but it also, I hope, contributes to a fuller conception of figurations of the feminine in the period.

Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know

From its probable early fourteenth-century beginnings as an addition to the account of Brute provided in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, the Albina myth seems to have circulated quickly in Anglo-Norman and, shortly thereafter, in English and Latin. This movement across languages,
coupled with the sheer number of surviving versions, speaks to the popularity of Albina through the medieval period. But while the medieval reception of the Albina myth has received critical attention, the enduring use of the myth into later periods bears further comment. Speaking of the Middle English use, Lisa Ruch notes that “the tale of Albina and her sisters is a vibrant tradition that, like many medieval narratives, took on different shapes over the centuries to meet a variety of textual needs and tastes,” but it is with the closing of the medieval period that this tradition of vibrancy is considered to end. Certainly, while medieval narratives such as the prose *Brut* or *Des Grantz Geanz* could present both Brute and Albina alongside each other in a comparatively untroubled and even potentially complementary fashion, writers in early modern England seem to fall over themselves in a rush to quash the story of Albina and her sisters. For Ruch, the ultimate “dismissal” of Albina can be traced to early modern authors such as Spenser and Milton.

Indeed, the story of Albina was dismissed, at least on the surface, by many authors of the period. From Camden to Milton, through Anthony Munday, Thomas Heywood, John Speed, and Michael Drayton, Albina’s story is noted and explained in some detail only to be denounced and ridiculed as an improbable, salacious fantasy. As Camden says of the “pretty tale” in *Britannia*, “who can abide to hear it without indignation, as the most loud lie of some leaud lossell [rascal]?” In accounts such as these, Gordon McMullan has argued, Albina’s presence is regarded as “dangerously female,” historiographically trumped by the “temperate manhood” offered up by Brute’s subsequent conquest. From this perspective, Albina appears to have presented for early modern historiographers a problematic, and problematically female, point of origin, as Anka Bernau notes: “not a glorious foundation myth à la Brutus, but one that posits an inherently flawed and troubled beginning for British history.” I suggest, however, that while the female origin myth may be dismissed in favor of (predominantly masculine) others, the very number of times this type of dismissal occurs in the period suggests that more is at stake. Equally, although the Albina story may be glossed over in various seventeenth-century texts, it is also in the process instantiated, remembered. Albina presents a powerful, energetically violent, and sexually profligate anti-heroine as national foundation; though her voice may be represented somewhat queasily, it does not appear to have been easily silenced.

At the least, Albina does not seem to have been forgotten by early modern England quite as quickly as has been suggested. When in need of a villain, particularly a female one, Albina was worth remembering.
Stephen Jerome, an early seventeenth-century preacher, found the myth an easy enough example to provide for his flock to follow. In a sermon dealing with the ineffable nature of the divine plan, Jerome notes the various sorts of murders ordained by the almighty: “we consider Husbands slain by their Wives, as the Husbands of the fifty Daughters of Danaus, so the Husbands of those thirty Sisters of Albina, slain by their wives, Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, King Sarematar by Circes, Antonius the Emperor by his Wife Luulla.”17 “God hath fore-known them,” Jerome insists, “fore-seen them, and disposed of them.”18 Whatever one makes of Jerome’s arguments on preordination, there are two things we can take away about Albina: firstly, that the exemplar is well known and fits neatly in Jerome’s mind alongside examples we might consider more famous; secondly, that it held some enduring moral value as a story. Jerome, at least, thought the point worth making twice, repeating the example in Seven Helps to Heaven (1614).

Similarly, in Roland du Jardin’s A Discourse of the Married and Single Life (1621), Albina again pops up readily enough as exemplar. Here, Jardin offers to entertain the reader with “diverse examples of Women that have murdered their husbands”; in fact, Jardin can only recall eleven specific examples, although he promises that there are a thousand more to be found.19 In a similar listing to Jerome’s, we are told that “Agamemnon was slain by his wife Clytemnestra; the sons of Aegistus, of the daughters of Danaus: and so it happened to the husbands of the sisters of Albina.”20 The full title of Jardin’s discourse on married and single life continues: “Wherein, by discovering the misery of the one, is plainly declared the felicity of the other.” There are, of course, no prizes for guessing which side of the argument Jardin is on—but that the story of Albina still has a currency seems beyond doubt. As with Brute, whether Albina actually existed was less important than what her story could be used to demonstrate.

The question of exactly what the figure of Albina means, however, is a little more complex. In Jerome’s discussion of preordination (which seems to resolve itself as a sense of “what-goes-around-comes-around”), it is not absolutely clear in which direction the moral of the myth points. Is Albina’s fate the punishment for her sin of murder, or is the murder the punishment for their father’s tyranny? There are similar slippages in other texts. For example, Lodowick Lloyd’s The Pilgrimage of Princes (1573, 1586) offers, as did many works of the period, advice on the methods and morals of rule. “And this we read and see daily by experience,” Lloyd instructs, “that the end of Tyrants is to die in tyranny, and as they deal with others, so are they dealt withal themselves.”21 This is sound
advice along the lines of Jerome’s, if by this point in the history of advice books not a little expected. Still, Lloyd follows the point with numerous examples, all explained as to how they fit the moral, until he gets to the problem of daughters. Here, again alongside their literary fellows in the daughters of Danaus, “we read of the thirty sisters of Albina which [...] made an end of thirty husbands in one night. The sequel of tyranny was such, that what wanted in the father, was fully employed in the son, for amendment is rare seen.”

There is danger in reading the morals of the present into those of the past, but, as with Jerome, one might wonder exactly which actions were tyranny, and which the reactions to tyranny: the marriage or the murders.

What is clear, though, is that the myth was accessible, and it had not disappeared: Albina’s evil was well known to writers, and popular enough to return to more than once. William Slatyer devotes a large part of his *Palae-Albion* to the legend, remaining engagingly blunt about what is at stake in presenting national history: “many Nations for their fame, / Traverse out their first founder’s name.” As late as 1661, Percy Enderbie’s *Cambria Triumphans, or, Brittain in Its Perfect Lustre* returns to the myth with some gusto. Thomas Heywood returns to Albina some three times in *Gynaikeion* (1624), all the while consistently refuting the historicity of the story. A multifaceted author who dealt in poetry, drama, prose narrative, and history, it is perhaps unsurprising that Heywood’s response to the myth would be complex. In the fast-paced *Troia Britanica*, Heywood warns the reader that for the sake of brevity he will only glance at major historical episodes in Britain’s past: “In a briefe Chronicle, our Muse next sings: / Much matter in few words: swift runs our Glasse, / We many Ages in one instant passe.”

The glass may run swift, but not so swift that it misses Albina. Despite being pressed for space, and despite his insistence elsewhere that they did not in fact exist, Heywood devotes two verses to the murderous sisters. “AEgyptian Danaus daughters landed here,” Heywood tells us, “After long search, who for they had of late, / Theyr nine and forty husbands by th’austere / Injunction of their Sire, brought to sad Fate: / Were in a Mastlesse ship to exile throwne, / And landing here, cald this Isle Albion.” Underscoring the point, a marginal note is added which makes clear the derivation of the island’s “original” name: “Albion of Albania the eldest sister.”

Though Albina is denied on the surface, her myth remains in circulation. This may be partly because the particular types of villainy embodied in Albina resonated with readers. Many texts of the period deal with questions and anxieties concerning feminine sexual autonomy...
and choice in marriage (or rather, the lack of both). While Albina and company take things to something of an extreme by murdering unwanted husbands and coupling with monsters, the issues the tale raises were still highly relevant. In some ways, Albina represents contemporary social dynamics where, as Elizabeth Cohen writes, “cheaply published tales of murderesses, including suicides, fed a lively market for titillating moral indignation.” If women contained within marriage were regarded with suspicion, those outside of marriage were even more suspect, and both their numbers and comparative power were growing; in cities like London, almost one-fifth of women remained unmarried. As murderesses and confirmed bachelorettes, Albina and her sisters perhaps held a certain attraction as a means of reference to a real source of anxiety.

Certainly, many of the authors who engaged with the myth are only too happy to dwell on the details. Heywood, at least, does not pull any punches on the question of precisely how Albina and her sisters, with no men among them, are able to people the isle:

Some say of these Viragoes spirits begot
Gyants, that were of huge and monstrous size,
Who when they grew to stature, spared not
Affinity, for Sonne with Mother lies,
Brother with Sister: so the learned Scot
Marian, doth in his Chronicles comprize:
And of these lustfull Ladies, in small while,
Twelve thousand Gyants peopled this large Ile.

Although Heywood does distance himself slightly from the sexual elements of the legend with the ventriloquizing interlocution of “some say” and the reference to the “learned Scot” (the eleventh-century Irish chronicler Marianus Scotus), the point is still made, and Albina’s presence still remembered as a violently licentious force in the origins of the isle. As with so much else in Troia Britanica, the episode is also precisely dated, apparently occurring “in the yeare / Threescore and twelve” of Ayoth, judge of Israel, with a marginal note to the authorizing views of Hugh, the book of Genesis, and Hardyng. Although Heywood claims to have no time for such stories, he has time enough to note them and draw attention to their literary pedigree. The incestuous peopling of the isle presented in the story offers both an alternative and a mirror for Brute’s actions in civilizing Britain. On the one hand, it inscribes one all-too-familiar traditional view of the perverse feminine, a narrative of “diabolical generativity,” to use Pauline Reid’s phrase, in which women “were coded as (re)productive
but unruly [...] exuding milk, blood, urine, wind, watery tears, corporeal matter, and, of course, other bodies.”

In this view, Brute offered the orderly masculine alternative to unruly generativity. But if distinctions could be drawn between the two foundation myths, so could similarities; in this way, as we shall see, the Albina myth also acts to provoke questions about Brute.

For while the story of Albina’s evil offered a moral discourse to some writers, others were more stimulated by the intimately linked question of the legend’s worth in historiographical and political terms. Here again, Albina appears to be remembered in the very process of being rejected. Early in *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1612), John Speed goes to the trouble of looking into the origins of the history of Albion, naming “Marianus the Monk, John Rous, David Pencair, and William Caxton, from others more ancient” as those who “do fetch the name thereof from Albina the beautiful daughter of Dioclesian King of Syria.”

For Speed, the myth comes from an “impudent liar, which is worthily rejected by Badius, Volateranus, Harding, Bale, John Rous, and others.” The point is perhaps not helped by John Rous’s appearance in both lists as believer and rejecter. Nor does the simple fact of declaring the story an impudent lie prevent Speed from enjoying the detail of that story:

> with her sisters, thirty in number, for the slaughter of their husbands, were banished their Country, and without man, oars, or tackles, were committed to the mercy of the Seas, who after many adventures, lastly arrived upon this shore, where they inhabited, and gave name to this Island, calling it Albion after the name of their eldest sister: and accompanying with Devils, brought forth a progeny of Giants.

While Speed may be clear that he considers the story false, the dismissal also instantiates: by supplying the details, Speed ensures a narrative presence and a lasting impact for Albina, and provides an invitation to consider the legend alongside others presented in the text.

This is an approach that becomes familiar in the weightier historiographical works of the period. As noted above, Camden’s *Britannia*, generous in its approach to many of the popular aspects of British history, appears to dismiss the story as an awful fabrication. In context, however, the dismissal looks a little different:

> As for that pretty tale, how Albion was so called of Albina, one of those thirty daughters of Dioclesian the King of Syria, which at their very wedding solemnity, slew their husbands, and beeing
Indignation over Albina, in terms of both her evil and the evil of her being fictitious, moves Camden to poetic alliteration. The similarly fictional conquest of her successor, Brute, is a falsehood which can be forgiven because it renders Britain’s beginnings “more noble, sacred, and of greater majesty.” Albina, on the other hand, is a loud and lewd lie. Albina does, however, seem to be important enough to Camden to be added to his index to the volume, just in case the reader needs guidance toward said lewdness. As with Speed, the apparent dismissal of Albina’s right to be remembered seems guaranteed to do exactly the opposite: Camden’s inclusivity, over-determined and almost playful in its treatment of the myth, gives us all the grisly detail before telling us of its terribly unspeakable nature.

Speed and Camden are far from the only authors to adopt this strategy of directly dwelling on the details of Albina’s myth while purporting to dismiss its significance. In The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, Holinshed and his collaborators open the history of England by drawing the reader’s attention to the instabilities and unresolved questions in that history: “whereas it is not denied of any, that this Isle was called anciently by the name of Albion, yet there be diverse opinions how it came by that name.” We might in passing note the political and geographical slippage involved in beginning a history of England with the island of Albion, neither the first nor last of its type; the historiographical point made here, however, is that while it is certain that England was once called Albion, nobody is sure how it came by the name. The point serves to undermine the history of the nation in its opening moments. Coming to the tale of Albina, the Chronicles embark on the whole story, sparing none of the details:

These ladies thus embarked and left to the mercy of the seas, by hap were brought to the coasts of this Isle then called Albion, where they took land, and in seeking to provide themselves of victuals by pursuit of wild beasts, met with no other inhabitants, than the rude and savage giants mentioned before, whom our historians for their beastly kind of life do call devils. With these monsters did these ladies (finding none other to satisfy the motions of their sensual lust) join in the act of venery, and engendered a race of people in proportion nothing differing from their fathers that begat them, nor in conditions from their mothers that bare them.
As it stands, the authors of the *Chronicles* do not seem to have an issue with a starting point for the nation that is rooted in villainous monstrosity. But while it may be intellectually and historically acceptable for the land to have been originally peopled by the products of unions between murderesses and devils, that one of the women should have been powerful enough to give her name to the island is unthinkable: “though we shall admit that to be true which is rehearsed (in manner as before ye have heard) of the arrival here of those ladies; yet certain it is that none of them bare the name of Albina, from whom this land might be called Albion.”

Women can be monsters, ready to be cleansed by Brute and company, but not rulers. The proof offered by Holinshed’s *Chronicles* is astonishing in its overdetermination: to establish that one of the fifty sisters (the number of sisters differs in various versions of the myth) could not under any circumstances be called Albina, the narrative offers names for all fifty:

For further assurance whereof, if any man be desirous to know all their names, we have thought good here to rehearse them as they be found in Higinus, Pausanias, and others, 1 Idea, 2 Philomela, 3 Scillo, [...] 48 Itea, 49 Chrysanta, 50 Hypermnestra. These were the names of those ladies the daughters of Danaus: howbeit, which they were that should arrive in this Isle, we cannot say: but it sufficeth to understand, that none of them hight Albina.

It is safe to leave the matter of the myth as a whole to the reader’s judgement, but that one of the sisters should be called Albina is, clearly, beyond the pale. One moment myth is closed off, one moment open to interpretation. Such a lengthy list as the *Chronicles* provides may be, on the one hand, a matter of rendering fact incontrovertible, but I would argue that it also again tends toward playfulness—almost as if we are invited to share in a joke, albeit a labored or hollow one. Like Camden and Speed afterwards, the denial becomes a weighted invitation to remember. As in other matters, Holinshed provides something of a blueprint for the way in which the early modern period would treat Albina.

Repeatedly, writers claim to forget Albina, or to somehow be in the process of forgetting, without fully managing to do so. Richard Harvey’s vociferous *Philadelphus* has plenty to say about Brute. Yet when it comes to Albina, Harvey appears a little less keen to engage in details: “Concerning Dioclesian and his daughters, I have willingly lost all that delight of reading and answering, although I see evidently, that this Historie which you account a tale may be defended for ought you have alleged.” Given Harvey’s delight in answering and debating generally, his elaborately marked reticence on this particular point is intriguing. The history of
Albina might easily be defended, he insists; its defensibility is evident and readily apparent to Harvey’s clear sight on such matters. Still, even though it would be an easy job to defend the legend, Harvey will not go about it, having “willingly lost” the will to engage in the delight both of reading the tale and of writing about it. This particular piece of history can be laid to one side. In other words, Harvey willingly suspends disbelief when it comes to Brute and willingly applies it when it comes to Albina. In the early 1590s context of Philadelphus, it may well have been politic to focus on Brute and not on Albina. The originary queen is dangerous; she is also, it would seem, dangerous to talk about. Still, even here, Albina is not simply removed from the continuum of mythological history. Albeit perhaps as something of a ghostly afterimage in Philadelphus, her presence remains.

Dismissing or downplaying Albina’s claim on national origin in favor of Brute may be an act of polity toward the prevailing political wind, but consistently reminding the reader of the embarrassing details of Albina’s reign does begin to have the opposite effect. At the least, it is striking that so many writers outline the fictional and immoral nature of Albina directly before introducing Brute: indeed, many texts go out of their way to recall Albina to the reader’s mind without much apparent need to do so. Perhaps, then, the foregrounding of the falsehood of Albina, in the sense of both her morality and her historicity, offered a means of highlighting problematic issues in narratives of nationhood. As discussed in the previous chapter, it may have been wrong to say out loud that Brute did not exist—but that does not mean that authors could not find ways to say it quietly. Equally, even if Brute was presumed to exist, neither his reign nor his legacy were necessarily regarded as morally pure: Albina’s evil offered a means of pointing to such complexities. In offering a reflection on the origin of rule in the country, the myth provided opportunity for political comment.

A more extended example of this kind of engagement with Albina is presented by Edmund Spenser’s Faerie Queene. Both in general themes and more direct episodes, The Faerie Queene offers a number of perspectives on the matter of British legend, even if, as we have seen, it is hard to pin the text down on precisely what those perspectives might mean: as Hugh MacLachlan puts it, “it is uncertain how seriously Spenser regarded the story of Britain’s Trojan ancestry.”42 Seemingly more certain, though, is how he regarded the comparative ancestry represented by Albina, with critical agreement that Spenser dismisses and passes over the legend, deeming it only a “monstrous error.”43 But, as with The Faerie Queene as a whole, the textual structure by which we arrive at Spenser’s version of Albina is complicated. Sheltering at the castle of Alma at the end of Book
II, Canto 9, Prince Arthur and Sir Guyon pause to admire the castle’s impressive library. Searching for reading matter, Arthur happens across a book of British chronicle history: “There chaunced to the Princes hand to rize, / An auncient book, hight *Briton moniments.*” The resultant chronicle that opens Canto 10 promises to take us from “Brute to Uther’s rayne,” and while its end point has received much critical comment, famously coming to an abrupt close just at the moment when Arthur would have the opportunity to read about himself, it is worth noting that its beginning is also unexpected, opening not with Brute as promised but rather with his predecessor, Albina.

Spenser goes to some lengths on the description of the island pre-Brute, and the passage dealing with this strange and savage land is worth considering in full:

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But farre in land a salvage nation dwelt,
Of hideous Giants, and halfe beastly men,
That never tasted grace, nor goodnesse felt,
But like wild beasts lurking in loathsome den,
And flying fast as Roebucke through the fen,
All naked without shame, or care of cold,
By hunting and by spoiling lived then;
Of stature huge, and eke of courage bold,
That sonnes of men amazd their sternnesse to behold.

But whence they sprong, or how they were begot,
Uneath is to assure; uneath to wene
That monstrous error, which doth some assot,
That *Dioclesians* fiftie daughters shene
Into this land by chaunce have driven bene,
Where companing with feends and filthy Sprights,
Through vaine illusion of their lust unclene,
They brought forth Giants and such dreadfull wights,
As farre exceeded men in their immeasurd mights.

They held this land, and with their filthinesse
Polluted this same gentle soyle long time:
That their owne mother loathd their beastlinessse,
And gan abhorre her broods unkindly crime,
All were they born of her owne native slime;
Untill that *Brutus* anciently deriv’d
From royall stocke of old *Assanacs* line,
Driven by fatall error, here arriv’d,
And them of their unjust possession depriv’d.”
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For Spenser it is “uneath,” or terribly difficult, to think of the tale of Albina and to speak of it; of course, true to type, he makes no bones about doing both nonetheless. The marked ambivalence of Holinshed, Harvey, or Camden becomes in the hands of Spenser an exercise in full-blown occupatio. Spenser may be simply stating, as critics have argued, that the story is a “monstrous error,” but there is nothing simple about the way that he states this, as he goes on to offer two stanzas on the details of the story about which it is terrible to think. In the context of the verse as a whole, it seems unclear whether the monstrousness is really the intellectually questionable historicity of the tale, or the morally dubious content of the tale—the act of companying with fiends and sprites in unclean lust—or indeed shades of both. Whatever the case, given that Spenser tells the tale anyway, and in the ensuing chronicle of Canto 10 appears to delight in reeling off every myth of ancient Britain (including an additional few made up for good measure), there may be more going on here than just disdain. Spenser also adds to Albina’s story: her children, for example, are so ghastly that even Albina herself finds them loathsome, and begins to “abhorre her broods unkindly crime,” a humanizing detail apparently of Spenser’s own invention. It is also a passage of wit, with the brood’s unkindliness pointing in several directions: to their monstrous nature, to the act of incest, and potentially to the sisters’ murder of their husbands. As with other writers we have seen, the dismissal of Albina in The Faerie Queene is an ambiguous act, and one that in context acts as instantiation of the myth and as an opportunity for retelling.

Promising to use the chronicle to recount “the famous auncestries / Of my most dreaded Soveraigne,” Spenser’s Faerie Queene recalls and records a less than auspicious start for Elizabeth’s Tudor ancestry. While the ongoing story of Briton moniments is first and foremost generational, proceeding from one ruler to another, the Albina myth with which it opens vividly displays the opposite. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen comments on the Albina narrative more generally, “Until the arrival of Brutus, Albion exists as a hideously closed world of continuous sexual confusion that re-enacts, relentlessly, the failure of the first family triangle established in the narrative.” On the one hand, Albina thus provides the backdrop for the beginnings of Elizabeth’s famous, if mythical, British ancestry. On the other hand, though, Albina’s sexual overproduction, which goes at once everywhere and nowhere, all too easily provides a mirror for the childlessness of Elizabeth and the chaos which that threatened to bring in terms of the royal succession. As Reid puts it, “The problem of dynastic succession under a virgin queen both underpinned and undermined discourses of physical mortality and political immortality.” The origin of the nation
speaks also of its future. Such anxious subjects tended to both invite and create fragmentary responses, as Laura Schechter has argued: “while nationalist historiographers make use of allusions as part of their efforts to create an authoritative, monologic English history and sense of stable, honourable national origins, the allusions themselves may disable this nationalist function by suggesting a multiplicity of origins, a panoply of literary, cultural, and experiential standpoints that do not align neatly.”

The appearance of Brute in *Briton moniments* tells one kind of story about the Elizabethan nation; Albina offers quite another. The children born of Albina’s own “native slime” may be monstrous, but the imagery deployed also leans in the direction of the laudatory. As Diane Watt notes, the period has a fascination with images of women “offering both figuratively and literally their own bodies to supply the needs and wants of their husbands and children.” In a similar vein, imagery of Elizabeth repeatedly made use of the sacrificial symbolism of the pelican, believed to feed its young with its own blood. Spenser’s image represents both a perversion of such tropes and a queasy commentary on them.

In this respect, the deployment of the Albina myth at this point in *The Faerie Queene* can be compared to the later engagement with British chronicle in Merlin’s prophecy to Britomart in Book 3, Canto 3. As with the chronicle of Book 2, Merlin’s prophecy involves an appeal to Elizabeth, and a direct insistence that this is a recounting of her “goodly auncestrie.” Whether either of the chronicle histories are flattering in terms of that ancestry is a different question. The prophecy promises the result of Britomart’s marriage with Arthegall: “For from thy wombe a famous Progenie / Shall spring, out of the auncient Trojan blood.” In place of Albina’s spawning native slime is a springing womb. While one is clearly marked out as preferable to the other, both are equally fecund and both equally contrast with the position of Elizabeth. The womb, Neil Keeble argues, remained “central to the seventeenth century’s physiological conception of woman […] to social and religious thinking about women.” The monstrously generative qualities of Albina could thus invite comparison with the monstrously ungenerative qualities of Elizabeth. As Marjorie Swann notes, “creative interest in the queen’s sexual history was widespread during Elizabeth’s own lifetime, when rumours regularly depicted the queen as producing illegitimate children or, quite to the contrary, suggested she was physically incapable of bearing children at all.”

By the 1590s, Elizabeth was moving into her sixties with no declared plan for the succession. The future was uncertain to say the least, as Catherine Loomis records: “a December 1591 letter to Richard Verstegan, probably
written by Robert Southwell [...] anticipates the violence that he expects to result when ‘competitours to the Crowne’ begin making their claims, and describes Elizabeth’s death as that ‘which no man can prevent, and yet al men shal feele.’” For Southwell (and presumably for Verstegan), a female queen was inherently a danger.

While Albina stands on the one hand as a monstrous alternative to Brute, Spenser’s poetry also works to mark the similarities between Albina and her nation’s eventual conqueror. Whereas Albina is a monstrous error, Brute is driven by fatal error, and both arrive on the shores of their nation as conquerors by chance. Albina’s particular power, like that of Brute, is in her self-claimed ability to name the land around her. In providing the name Albion, Cohen argues, “Albina invokes the reifying power of language, as if she were a hyper-masculine Trojan hero, not a monstrously transgressive Greek woman.” She goes further in creating a progeny capable of inheriting that land; by comparison Brute had famously succeeded only in dividing his kingdom into three squabbling parts. It is interesting, then, that the way in which authors both dismiss and recall Albina is so concentrated around the issue of that power of language—the issue, consistently, is not that such monsters cannot exist, but that they can have no authorizing historical agency. The areas of similarity are also available structurally. The narrative of Briton moniments, having explained Dioclesian’s daughters as a monstrous error, uneath to wene, immediately progresses to the story of Brute. As with other renditions of the mythology, starting the story with a pronounced lie would seem to point up the fictional nature of the rest. The giants that Brute removes in order to bring the country into being also proceed from a markedly uncertain footing. They lack a past; at least, as Pivetti notes, of the textual variety: “The legend that these giants descend from Dioclesian, then, cannot be verified, for the giants lack the sort of text that Arthur now reads. Brutus contends not just with the violence of these creatures, but also with their insubstantial past and their refusal of a secure lineage. [...] Without a guiding sense of the past, let alone any text in which that past is made available, the giants cannot match Brutus’s militaristic invasion.” But the denial of ancestry to the giants also undermines the claims of Brute. The removal of a past for the giant race, a past which Spenser is unwilling to recall (or, rather more complicatedly, that the text within the text of Briton moniments is professedly unable to recall even in the act of recalling it), creates an uncertain starting point for the nation’s identity.

When Spenser goes on to tell of Brute’s overthrow of the native giants, the narrative appears almost sympathetic. Both the giant race
produced by Albina and Brute’s Trojans are marked by violence: the greatest of the giants, “mighty Goëmot,” is dispatched when “in stout fray / Corineus conquered, and cruelly did slay.” As with many a meeting between hero and monster, protagonist and antagonist are linked by their violence as much as differentiated. As a whole, Spenser’s narrative points toward comparisons that must have made themselves readily available, and which may have assisted the use of Albina as commentary on Brute, and on what Brute represented. After all, Brute and Albina are both exiles, both on the losing side of conflicts, both leaders, founders, and conquerors, both descended from ancient royal lines, both travelers adrift at sea who essentially stumble across the right country at the right time, and, at least in some accounts, both more or less from the same place. All in all, Briton moniments offers a troubled origin point for British history, and one that the reader is invited to recall rather than to forget.

At the opening of the seventeenth century, the prehistory of the island again became of the utmost importance, with James VI and I’s 1604 declaration, via royal proclamation, of the (re)existence of Great Britain. To James, Brute offered a heroically masculine origin story, a legitimate foundation for a legitimate nation; Albina’s villainous femininity could be used as a means of interrogating that narrative. Anthony Munday’s A Brief Chronicle, of the Success of Times, from the Creation of the World, to this Instant (1611), offering to be anything but brief, has this to say about Albina: “Also the Story of Danaus Daughters, being fifty in number, that they should arrive in this Island (after the slaughter of their Husbands, the fifty Sons of King Aegyptus) and that one of those Ladies should be named Albina, of whom this Land should be called Albion: I pass it over.” Self-evidently, Munday has not passed it over at all, and in this we might see a rhetorical playfulness similar to that exhibited by previous texts discussed in this chapter. And while the joke may be getting a bit old at this point, it is telling that writers spanning such a long period appear to follow the same rhetorical strategy in dealing with the Albina material: instantiating in the process of appearing to dismiss, remembering by appearing to want to forget. At the least, and given the weight of myth that Munday has waded through to get to this point, it seems odd to give Albina just enough space for a denial that ends up being tantalizingly mysterious.

Moreover, despite the stated desire to leave Albina well enough alone, Munday had already visited elements of the myth in his 1605 Lord Mayor’s Show, The Triumphs of Re-United Britannia. Here, like Holinshed before him, Munday begins a story about the true and only possible origins of Britain by pointing out that there are diverse accounts.
Ever presenting himself as the responsible historian, Munday makes clear the existence of multiple competing versions, informing his reader that “our present conceit, reacheth unto the antiquity of Britain, which (in many minds) hath carried as many and variable opinions.” While the superficial aim of Munday’s introduction might be to correct many divergent stories into the one true history, the text actually accomplishes just the opposite. It seems no accident that a text about the political relevance of the origins of Britain, two years into King James’s reign, should begin with a warning about the nature of mythology. Munday pauses over Albina to note his disbelief: “not any one of them [the sisters] was so named,” he insists, in a more efficient repetition of Holinshed’s argument, “neither do I think the story so authentical.” The Albina story may be glossed over and dismissed, but it is also instantiated, and in the main action of *Re-United Britannia*, it is followed by a chorus of other female foundational figures, each serving to undermine the masculine nationhood of Brute. As McMullan comments, “the self-consciousness of the excision serves the opposite purpose, reminding us of the role of the Albina myth in the construction of English nationalism.” By bringing up Albina before delivering the more politically acceptable myth of Brute and a reunited Britain, Munday offers the reader a careful positioning of that myth in relation to contemporary politics.

One final example should help to underline this point. A similar calling to memory as that offered by Munday is presented in Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, where John Selden dismisses Albina in much the same manner as other writers we have seen:

> From Albina, daughter to Dioclesian King of Syria some fetch the name: others from a Lady of that name, one of the Danaids […] But neither was there any such King in Syria, nor had Danaus (that can be found) any such daughter, nor travelled they for adventures, but by their father were newly married, after slaughter of their husbands: briefly, nothing can be written more impudently fabulous.

At this point, the denial begins to look almost pathological: the daughter did not exist, none of the sisters went anywhere, and they were remarried after murdering their first husbands (a policy which seems at best unwise). As elsewhere in *Poly-Olbion*, the commentary provided by Selden is both at odds with and complementary to Drayton’s poetry in complex ways. Nor does Selden’s apparent horror stop Albina from creeping in elsewhere. The frontispiece of *Poly-Olbion* by William Hole, who also provided the front engraving for Camden’s *Britannia*, offers a vibrant
picture of Britain’s ancient past, and one which seems to at least nod in the direction of Albina. The image depicts a central female figure identified as Great Britain, holding a royal scepter and cornucopia, bedecked in robes representing the topography of the country, and surrounded in the four corners of the piece by her country’s various conquerors: the Norman William I, the Saxon Hengist, Julius Caesar, and Brute. The image remains ambiguous, presenting, in McMullan’s view, “fragmenting, plurally national figures” which are at once celebratory, a rich image of a united nation, and defamatory, a reminder that the history of that nation is composed of disunity and bloody conquest. In the facing poem, “Upon the Frontispiece,” Drayton continues this sense of ambiguity by pointing to the central female figure: “Through a Triumphant Arch, see Albion placed, / In Happy site, in Neptune’s arms embraced.” Drayton’s Albion is not quite Great Britain, nor is her history particularly happy: “In her younger years, / Vast Earth-bred Giants wooed her: but […] Aeneas’s Nephew (Brute) then conquered.” Though Drayton does not name Albina precisely, the wooing of giants here seems a clear sign to the inherited identity of the female Britain, and perhaps offers one route into understanding the complexities of nationhood which Poly-Olbion goes on to explore.

Dismissing Albina, when by all accounts she is so ridiculous as not to need the dismissal, may have represented a relatively safe approach toward articulating anxieties surrounding those myths that could not be dismissed for political reasons. Equally telling here is the dwelling on the sexually transgressive details of a national foundation which should not be discussed: the emphasis on female and demonic sexuality in the legend indicates, for Hadfield, “the crisis at the heart of the genealogy of the nation, which had to rely for self-definition on what it wished to exclude.” Thus, in the action of divesting her of historical authority, authors reinscribe Albina with a kind of historiographical authority. As Ruth Evans argues of the medieval version of Albina’s story, the “presentation of women’s dangerous sexuality, their polluting contact with incubi and their unleashing of monsters, crucially transmits an understanding of political foundations that is inseparable from questions of sexual difference.” For the early modern period, the myth offered a means of pointing out and undermining the politically motivated nature of masculine national histories—indeed, of the very concept of nationhood. For both Tudor and Stuart dynasties in England, the presence of Albina as legendary origin point for the nation was probably best forgotten, an
uncomfortable feminine presence in an otherwise rigorously masculine past. For other readers, and for precisely the same reason, Albina may have proven useful to remember.

I would argue that, whether in relation to real monarchs or to Brute himself, Albina’s power is insistently to point out that her opposite numbers are as false as she—and at a deeper level of falseness than simply being an ahistorical construction. A murderess who builds a nation of monsters, she stands as a comparison point with those around her: in defining her as evil, fictional, or otherwise unworthy of being remembered, early modern texts instead memorialize and instantiate her legend. Albina retains a power of great use in the period in terms of holding up a mirror to the narrative of Britain, and this is a power directly related through the construction of both her gender and her particular evil. The murderous and sexually autonomous Albina and her sisters offered a relatively covert means of commenting on prevailing political strategies of nationhood, acting as an eruption against what Isabel Karremann calls “the concerted attempts of the royal mnemonic policy.” If it made sense to dismiss Albina’s evil in favor of speaking about Britain, it also made sense to remember Albina’s evil as a means of speaking about Britain. At the end of our particular story, and again writing from a crisis point in the nation, John Milton declares in his *History of Britain* (1670): “But too absurd, and too unconscionably gross is that fond invention that wafted hither the fifty daughters of a strange Dioclesian King of Syria.” One wonders what just the right amount of absurdity or grossness would be. The strange thing, though, is that by this point, almost every historically minded writer touching on the origin of Britain has acknowledged that the myth of Albina is untrue, and that it might be left well enough alone. Why continue, then, to deny something that does not need it, unless the denial itself is the point?

**Warlike Wenches and Roman Remains**

Just as physical ruins remained to point at what went before, so the textual passing of Albina’s legacy into the early modern period seems to have acted as something of a focal point: like those physical ruins, the story spoke of problematic origins that ought to be forgotten; it also provided a vibrant reminder of those self-same origins. While Brute is defended long past what one might expect to be his historical prime, Albina is attacked long past hers; again, Albina offers a kind of mirror for the reception of Brute.
There were also, as Mikalahcki points out, other Albins in English history, both real and imagined, “from the universal gendering of the topographical and historical ‘Britannia’ as feminine to the troubling eruptions of ancient queens in the process of civilization by Rome.” Albina had a number of afterlives; perhaps another way of saying that is that she is herself representative of a type or genre which is also figured through other female characterizations. In Warner’s Albions England, Amazon, Scythian, and the story of Albina seem to blend into one powerful female mass:

A warlike Wench, an Amazon, salutes him by his name,  
And said knowe Hercules (if it thou knowest not by fame)  
how that the Scythian Ladies, late expeld their native Land  
by King of Egypt, have contriv’d amongst themselves a bande,  
And with the same have conquered all Asia, Egypt, and all Capadocia.

As foundational women, the Amazons, like Albina, were both powerful and ultimately beaten. In both cases, as Bernau states, the legitimation of conquest in antiquity as a civilizing process could be used to explain the need for similar projects in the present: “The female foundation myth can be read as a precursor explaining and justifying the Trojan conquest of Albion, as well as conquest and colonisation more generally.” Even for those authors who did, like Warner, speak of the Amazons with some respect, it was with recognition of the benefit of temporal distance. Richard Brathwaite’s The Good Wife: or, A Rare One Amongst Women (1618) contains the problem of the Amazons by noting that, while valorous, they are long since dead:

To speake of the effeminate Government and principality of the Amazons (women of incomparable and incredible fortune, valour and resolution) wee have yet those Tombes and Sepulchers of the Amazons celebrated to this day amongst those Pagans, for the infinite numbers slaine by Hercules, in his invasion of Amazon: where the worthie exploits of those (more then women) for their discipline and experience in warres, are in golden Characters registred and recorded.

The best kind of Amazon also happens to be a dead one, and the best kind of dead Amazons are those in infinite number slain by that most masculine of heroes, Hercules. As the ruins of monasteries for Camden say more about the past than do the monasteries in life, so the graves and tombs of martial women are rather more palatable than having to deal
with those women alive, and more useful in terms of providing a blue-
print for processes of colonization.

In these terms, perhaps the most obvious female successor for Albina
in England's history was the legend of Boudica (or Boadicea). In England
at least, Bernau notes, "the story of Boudica was made familiar first of all
by Polydore Vergil, and it rapidly became a permanent and popular feature
in subsequent national histories."81 The historian known (and best known
among modern literary historians) for dismissing Brute replaces the Trojan
with a different kind of original Briton: a violent queen. Bernau also notes
the similarity between Albina and Boudica: "In both cases, originary women
and rebellion appear to have an intrinsic and troubling affiliation."82 Boudica
was imagined as a martial female with a predilection for violence against
men, a widowed mother of two daughters, and a queen who led a predomi-
nantly female army. With Boudica, Mikalachki argues, authors redefine "the
national problem of ancient savagery as an issue of female insubordination
[...] to isolate a complementary tradition of native masculine civility."83 As
the sixteenth century drew to a close, that masculine civility was increas-
ingly seen as having been provided by ancient Rome. In Camden's Britannia,
the invasion of Britain by the Romans is eventually regarded as a blessing in
disguise: "This yoke of the Romanes although it were grieuous, yet comfort-
able it proved and a saving health unto them: for that healthsome light of
Jesus Christ shone withal upon the Britans [...] and the brightnesse of that
most glorious Empire, chased away all savage barbarisme from the Britans
minds."84 Though the point does not entirely ameliorate or overwrite what
went before it in Camden (a long narrative of conflict and slaughter between
Romans and Britons), the violence in the past is, at least in theory, con-
tained in the past and smoothed into a Christian civilization, as McMullan
argues: "The Roman invasion was, for Camden, crucial to the establish-
ment of Britain as a civilised, Christian nation."85 But there are moments,
nonetheless, when the past threatens to break out. If the Romans represent
a civilizing force, their often uncivil behavior is also keenly represented: the
indignities heaped on Boudica and the Iceni produce not merely rebellion
but a strikingly anti-colonial discourse: "By reason of which contumelious
indignity, and for feare of worse, considering they had been reduced into the
forme of a province, the Britans began among themselves to cast and thinke
upon the miserie of servitude, to lay together their wrongs and oppressions,
in ripping of them up to aggravate them by constructions to the highest, in
these terms: that no other good was to be looked for by sufferance, but that
more grieuous burdens should be imposed upon them still."86
The Roman invasion was, then, not uncomplicatedly regarded as a good thing; it could provide a pattern for conquest, but it also provided a reminder that the British had themselves been conquered multiple times. The problem is registered throughout the period: Kerrigan notes that Spenser’s *Ruines of Time* (1591) is “tolerant of Boadicea’s revolt against the Romans, and laments the pride and fall of imperial Rome and its dependant, the Roman forerunner of St Albans, along with the vanities of Lord Burghley’s England.” At least in the English imagination, as Morse argues, “Roman antiquity coincided with contemporary Italy as a place of sensual indulgence and political scheming.” The outcome of the Reformation made it all too tempting to slide between representations of the two. Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (ca. 1610) famously gives us the apparatus of the Roman Republic in Caius Lucius, senators and tribunes on the one hand, and on the other all the rapacious viciousness of the markedly Renaissance Giacomo. Similarly, if from the opposite chronological direction, Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) encounters both sixteenth-century Italy, and, within it, markers of ancient Rome imagined as producing the violent world Jack encounters. On the stage, plays dramatizing both ancient resistance to and reconciliation with Rome seem to have been popular: next to *Cymbeline* one can list *The Valiant Welshman* (1615), William Rowley’s *A Shoemaker a Gentleman* (ca. 1618), and *Fuimus Troes*, published in 1633 but almost certainly written and performed somewhat earlier. Such plays dramatize ancient British heroism but also internal division, followed by reconciliation with Rome from a position of British strength. English authors attempting to reconcile Roman and British histories and historiographies were, as Stewart Mottram engagingly puts it, “Caught between a Roman rock and a British hard place”; staging the problem may have offered a means of working through the difficulties.

Responses to the Roman role in creating Britain were, like responses to the matter of Britain generally, multiple and often double-sided. As McMullan argues, “Britain was understood to be the product of a series of invasions from overseas […]. British history is thus colonial history, an ongoing narrative of the negotiation of national identity in the face of external imposition which does not always view the process of colonisation quite as blithely as proponents of the Virginia venture did the Roman occupation.” The problematic connection between the geography of the past and the geography of the foreign was registered in more than one work. In Drayton’s poem “To the Virginian Voyage” from his *Poems Lyric and Pastoral* of 1606, where the English have come from is
intrinsically linked to where they are going: “And in Regions farre / Such Heroes bring yee foorth / As those from whom We came, / And plant Our name / Under that Starre / Not knowne unto our North.” While at first glance unnervingly jingoistic, the conflation of the past and future by Drayton also recognizes the disjunctions involved. Offering an encomium to colonial projects overseas, and borrowing details from Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* (1589), Drayton encourages adventurous settlement. But while “our name” should, the ode insists, be planted in the soil of a new country, the poem at this point skirts around the thorny issue of what that name actually is; it also carefully avoids the question of exactly who those heroes are from whom we came. The poem draws on the past, asking us to confirm the authenticity of history through present action and future memory, but it also depends on not looking too closely at that past.

The link performed by Drayton’s ode made itself available to other writers. Spenser’s answer to readers who might not believe in the existence of his Faerieland is to point to the new world: “Many great Regions are discovered, / Which to late age were never mentioned. / Who ever heard of th’Indian Peru? / Or who in venturous vessell measured / The Amazons huge river now found trew?” The existence of such regions would not have been believed before they were discovered, a theme which might, Pivetti argues, be applied to the poem as a whole: “One should not, Spenser implies, judge the speculations of a poem like *The Faerie Queene* based only on their physical manifestations.” The British past presented by Spenser is, the poem seems to suggest, just as real as those foreign lands: but the point may also be that such lands are, in their own way, just as fantastic and misrepresented as the fictional history within *The Faerie Queene*. Such a conflation, whatever the seriousness, makes the past part of the future and the future part of the past. In the following century, Thomas Browne’s *Hydriotaphia* (1658) makes a similar metaphorical connection in a statement about the endless pursuit of knowledge: “Time hath endlesse rarities, and show of all varieties [...]. That great Antiquity America lay buried for thousands of years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us.” America is a discovery, but it is also an antiquity; it is newfound land but it is also “in the Urne,” cremated ashes awaiting archaeological exhumation. The position of Spenser’s Prince Arthur at the conclusion of *Briton moniments*—caught between the desire to know more of a history that has broken off, and the fact that he cannot know it without destroying his present—is one which delicately balances
this clash between the then and the now, as Escobedo recognizes: “this image of Arthur at his history lesson implies that national consciousness to some degree depends on the caesura between past and present.”96 As with Drayton’s poem, the vision of empire depends on remembering the past while at the same time not remembering it too well.

In that respect, figures such as Albina or Boudica presented a problem, and an opportunity. Attempting to reconcile conflicting impulses in relation to “ancient British patriotism” and a “civilized union with Rome,” Mikalachki argues that “English historians acknowledged and developed a hybrid nationalist response to the Roman Conquest. Violently patriotic queens played an important role in negotiating this hybrid.”97 That negotiation has been well explored, but it is worth dwelling on for a moment more in its connection to Albina. In the present argument, I want to return to Warner’s Albions England, and the particular blend of savage patriotism bound up in this text’s presentation of the British queen Voadia. Warner’s Voadia seems to be a combination of several figures: while she fulfills the role of Boudica in taking up arms against the Romans, she is named after the legendary Scots queen Voadia (with whom Boudica was often conflated in English histories), and seems in her dramatic presentation to recall Albina.98 For Albina herself, it should be noted, Warner initially seems to have little patience: in his retelling of Brute’s arrival he describes how the Trojan had “suppressed so the state / Of all the feend-bread Albinests, huge Gyants fearce and strong, / Or race of Albion Neptuns Sonne (els some derive them wrong).”99 Albina is again recalled in the act of being dismissed, as McMullan points out: “Warner thus slightly awkwardly elides Albina.”100 In some ways, this is another example of early modern authors seeming intent on pointing out the wrongness of derivation even when not actually quite naming that derivation. But, as McMullan shows, though Warner at first appears to have slight regard for the myth in Albions England, he also seems content to replicate “certain elements of the Albina myth” in Syrinx (1597).101 In Albions England itself, types of Albina also surface.

Warner’s seventeenth chapter opens with Julius Caesar and the resistance provided against him by an island united against a common foe:

This Conquerour of Gallia, found his Victory prolong’d
By Brittish Succoures, and for it, pretending to bee wrong’d,
Did send for Tribute: threatening els to bring the Brutons Warre.
The former going forward first, the Albinests to barre
A common foee, concurr as friends.102
The term Albinest, previously a name for the giants suppressed by Brute, becomes more or less synonymous with the collective native tribes of the British; though here it might refer to the Picts, Warner refers to the same group of people as “the Brutons” two lines later. The line of Albina can survive interruption, it would seem, much as can the line of Brute. In this case, the Albinests join in against the common foe. Caesar, finding the invasion of Britain tough going, realizes there can be only one reason why his foe is so indefatigable, and that is because they are made from the same robustly ancient stuff as he: “for Troy with Troy doth here contend: / This warlike people (fame is so) from whence sprong we descend.”

As both races ultimately descend from Aeneas, Caesar faces his greatest challenge. Unfortunately, in Warner, this just spurs the Roman on: “But what? Shall Caesar doubt to fight against so brave a Foe? / No, Caesars Tryumphes with their Spoyles shall give the braver shoe.”

Defeating the brave British will only make the Roman victory more glorious. As with other renditions of the story, it is traitorousness from within the isle that eventually causes its undoing: “the trayrrous Knight,” the Earl of London, gives up the city while the British are fighting a campaign of guerrilla warfare, and the other cities of the nation soon follow suit. But, just as the yoke of the Romans is exposed in Camden to Boudica’s complaint, so Warner’s Voad a gathers up the British forces in a spirited (if ultimately militarily unsuccessful) resistance. The imposing figure of Voad a again conjures up the language of the Albina myth: surrounding herself with “Albinestes” who “to ayde the Queene assemble at her call,” Voad a seems to take up the lineage of Albina directly, with Warner again using the same term he had earlier used of the giants.

Warner’s Voad a is dynamic, heroic, and strongly linked to both Brute and Troy. This heritage does not replace but goes hand in hand with her martial femininity: she is introduced as “the Queene of Brutes: that like the Amazonian Dame / That beating downe the bloodie Greekes in Priams succour came.” The image unites the war-like female amazon, the masculine ancestry of Troy in Britain, and Troy itself. As the “Queene of Brutes,” Voad a is the inheritor of the masculine Trojan’s name and title, with more than a hint of the noble savage. As the “Amazonian Dame,” she is imagined as metaphorical inheritor of Penthesilea, who fought valiantly in the defense of Troy: her heritage is thus doubly bound up both in her blood and in her actions. In a speech to the assembled Britons, Voad a herself simultaneously rejects and embraces her femininity:
My state and sexe, not hand or hart, most valiant friends, withhild
Me wretched Cause of your repaier, by wicked Romanes ild,
From that revenge which I doe wish, and ye have cause to worke:
In which, suppose not Voda in female feares to lork.
For loe my selfe, unlike my selfe, and these same Ladies faire
In Armor, not to shrinke an yncch where hottest doings are.¹⁰⁸

Ladies can be both fair and unshrinking where “hottest doings are”; the near-rhyme emphasizes the precisely balanced point. Voda is both herself and unlike herself, transitioning with her entourage over the line break from female to female knight, from fair to fairly armored. As in Warner’s earlier presentation of Gwendolyn, discussed in the previous chapter, Voda is given a strong dramatic voice. Giving this voice to his female characters perhaps allowed for a stronger political point to be made: as Susan Broomhall argues, “women’s words could hold specific power, especially in religious, social, and household contexts. […] both women, and men writing through the female voice, might use different emotional presentations and performances to access authority than did men in similar positions.”¹⁰⁹ In this case, women set the tone for a history which questions historical narrative. Voda leads a British force that is both united against the Roman invaders and emphatically multinational, composed of “valiant Brutons, ventrous Scottes, and warlike Pichtes.”¹¹⁰ There is a marked contrast here with the unfortunate history of Brute’s line related elsewhere in Albions England (and discussed in the previous chapter); in the place of a masculine history depicted as cyclic and essentially self-destructive, we receive a strong image of female rule. As it is the crimes against womanhood that are the catalyst for the rebellion, so it is womanhood which will set things right: Roman men, who “valiantly can womenkind oppresse, / Shall knowe that Brittish women can their Romish wrongs redresse.”¹¹¹ Like Camden, Warner’s Voda points out the uncivil nature of the supposedly civilizing Romans, subjecting language to scrutiny and sarcastic paradox: valiant males must be retaught what it actually means to be valiant, and women will teach manliness to men “Whilst they forget themselves for men, or to be borne of us.”¹¹² Small wonder, then, that to the men in her army the women must present the example: singling out the men, Voda asks them not to “envie that our Martiall rage exceedes your manly ire,” but instead to act more like the women. “Then arme ye,” she directs her army, “with like courages as Ladies shall present.”¹¹³ It is hard to underestimate the importance of such language. The womanliness of Voda’s female warriors is the heroic
exemplar not because they reject their femininity in favor of manliness, but because they can enact both. Meanwhile, the behavior of men is unmanly because they forget their originary link to women. Rather like Albina’s giant offspring, men of the world have forgotten their maternity, and from this forgetting springs their brutal actions.

Warner’s Voada, then, does not quite fit with traditional critical interpretations of the early modern presentation of native femininity, which have tended to focus on the connections made between female government and monstrous actions in war. Indeed, Voada specifically instructs her forces not to engage in precisely these sorts of actions against the enemy, instead advising a moderate, tactical take on warfare:

My hart hath joy’d to see your hands the Romaine Standards take,  
But when as force, and Fortune fayld, that you with teeth should sight,  
And in the faces of their Foes your women in dispight  
Should fling their sucking Babes, I hild such valentnes but vaine:  
Inforced flight it is no shame, such Flyers fight againe.\(^\text{114}\)

Voada’s army is for a while victorious, but the Roman reserves are deep: 70,000 Romans are killed in the war before Plancius, “Presedent in Gallia,” summons up another Roman force from France to throw into battle. Again, Warner pictures the British women ordering their troops with tactical acumen, “survaying who was stout, / Controuling Cowards,” but, though they fight valiantly, the day goes to the Romans.\(^\text{115}\) Voada ends up looking upon a battlefield full of “the senceles Troukes of slaughtred friends.”\(^\text{116}\) Preferring suicide over death by a Roman sword, Voada falls upon her lance, but not before a final speech committing her blood to her people and to her nation:

my selfe, my trustie friends, will with my dearest blood  
Keepe Obite to your happie Gosses, that for your Countries good  
Be as you be, and I will be: no Romaine sworde shall boste  
Of my dispatch, So on her Launce she yeelded up her Goste.\(^\text{117}\)

Once again, Voada is both like and unlike herself: as an obituary to her nation’s ghosts, she unmakes herself in favor of becoming her historical representation. Perhaps Voada is an interlude in Warner’s overall narrative, but she is also an intervention or eruption: Warner bears witness to her blood becoming part of the fabric of Britain, both textually and in grisly physical detail. Those traces, like her literary presence, are irreversible and
indelible. While the rebellion against the Romans fails militarily, it succeeds genetically and historiographically: rather than becoming part of a narrative of gradual civilization, she provides a questioning of the nature of that process. Warner’s Voada, like Albina, cannot simply be ignored. Such myths were, as Bernau comments, “instrumental in medieval and early modern English colonial ambitions, yet even as they served this function, they also undermined it.” In the story of Voada, the blood of the Albinests is dramatically rendered. That her blood continues as obituary is important: as I discuss further in the next chapter, such literalized interpretations of bloodlines were fundamental to the tensions in nationalistic conceptions of genealogy. This tension is particularly visible in the final legend I want to discuss in detail in the present volume, the history of Scotia.

NOTES


2 A shorter version of the first section of this chapter was first published as Phil Robinson-Self, “Fifty Sisters Can’t All Be Bad: The Early Modern Reception of the Legend of Albina,” in Gender and the Representation of Evil, ed. Lynne Fallwell and Keira V. Williams (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 13–29. I am grateful both to the editors and to the publisher for permission to reuse this material.


5 “In 1559, the facts of the case were these: Elizabeth Tudor wore the English crown, Mary Stewart the Scottish (but lived in France as the queen consort of Francis II). Thus there were two queens—each with roughly equal blood claims to the English throne—and no king, in a Europe in which the issue of which side fielded the king in any dynastic arrangement was very much a live one.” Anne McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” p. 260.


7 Ibid., pp. 261–62.


9 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Of Giants, p. 60.

10 Lynn Forest-Hill notes that the story “became hugely popular. [...] The many versions of the Albina revision to the Brutus myth demonstrate continuous interest in this story of the foundation of Britain.” Forest-Hill, “Giants and Enemies of God,” p. 243. See also Lisa M. Ruch, Albina and Her Sisters, p. 92.

11 Forest-Hill, “Giants and Enemies of God,” p. 245. For thorough discussion of the medieval reception of the legend, see Ruch’s Albina and Her Sisters, Tamar

13 Ibid., p. 137.
18 Ibid., p. 157.
20 Ibid., p. 82.
22 Ibid., p. 181.
25 Ibid., p. 415.
28 For men, at least. Ulrike Tancke notes that, for a great many women, single life might well look desirable and widowhood was one way to achieve it. See “(M)others and Selves: Identity Formation and/in Relationship in Early Modern Women’s Self-Writings,” para. 19.
30 Ibid.
31 Pauline Ellen Reid, “‘Giddy Lies the Head,’” p. 10. Reid calls attention to the “duality of passivity/generativity in early modern representations of the feminine.” On this subject see also, foundationally, Gail Kern Paster’s *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*, especially chapter 1, “Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy.”
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Camden, *Britannia*, p. 24. Note that in some variants, the father of Albina and her sisters is Danaus, in some Dioclesian.
36 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 7.
40 Ibid.
41 Harvey, *Philadelphus*, p. 12.
43 Bernau, “Myths of Origin,” p. 113; Ruch, _Albina and her Sisters_, p. 137; Curran, _Roman Invasions_, p. 113.
44 Spenser, _Faerie Queene_, 2.9.59, lines 5–6.
45 Ibid., 2.10.7–9.
47 Spenser, _Faerie Queene_, 2.10.1, lines 7–8.
48 Cohen, _Of Giants_, p. 56.
49 Reid, “Giddy Lies the Head,” p. 7.
50 Laura Schechter, “‘As liuing now, equald theyr vertues then,’” p. 184.
52 On the imagery of Elizabeth as Pelican, see Louis Montrose, “Elizabeth Through the Looking Glass,” p. 69. See also Susan Doran, “Virginitiy, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I.”
53 Spenser, _Faerie Queene_, 3.3.4, line 7.
54 Ibid., 3.3.22, lines 5–6.
55 N. H. Keeble, _Cultural Identity_, p. 169. The literal and figural importance of the womb in the period has become so readily accepted as to be forgotten. Erica Bastress-Dukehart provides a helpful reminder: “the womb symbolized everything noble families stood for: it was the cradle of far more than a fetus. It was the harbinger of family honor, the living room of lineal continuity; the pregnant womb nurtured familial immortality.” Bastress-Dukehart, “Negotiating for Agnes’ Womb,” p. 42.
57 Catherine Loomis, _The Death of Elizabeth I: Remembering and Reconstructing the Virgin Queen_, p. 167.
59 Pivetti, _Of Memory and Literary Form_, p. 66. The link is to Irish forms of history.
60 Spenser, _Faerie Queene_, 2.10.10, lines 8–9. The wrestling match between Corineus and the giant Gogmagog (Spenser’s Goëmot) is a key point in the mythology of Brute.
61 Helen Cooper notes, not without whimsy, that “the unlikelihood of navigating the Straits of Gibraltar is never an issue in the many stories that take these unsteerable boats from the Mediterranean to the English Channel.” Cooper, _English Romance in Time_, p. 115.
62 Anthony Munday, _A Brief Chronicle_, p. 471.
63 On London’s Lord Mayor’s Show, see David M. Bergeron, _English Civic Pageantry 1558–1642_; Tracey Hill, _Pageantry and Power: A Cultural History of the Early Modern Lord Mayor’s Show, 1585–1639_. 
64 Munday, *The Triumphs of Re-United Britannia*, lines 1–3.
65 Ibid., lines 42–44.
67 For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of *Re-United Britannia*, see Phil Robinson, “A Brute Brute: The Violent Pre-Histories of Early Modern England in Anthony Munday’s *The Triumphs of Re-United Britannia.*”
69 The frontispiece perhaps recalls Saxton’s 1579 Atlas of England and Wales: “draped in a map replete with Saxton’s topographical symbols, her bare breast recalling the Amazon cult of Elizabeth’s reign.” Mikalachki, *Legacy of Boadicea*, p. 28.
72 Ibid., lines 7–10. As Mikalachki has noted, “a gendered topography is everywhere present in *Poly-Olbion*, from the personification of Great Britain, her robe covered in topographical symbols and her pose suggesting the outline of the island, to the anthropomorphized deities of the landscape, both describing and representing its topographical features. To the extent that Drayton’s epic can be said to have any action at all, it is a dramatization of gender and gender relations.” Mikalachki, *Legacy of Boadicea*, p. 30.
73 Andrew Hadfield, “Reading Between and Beyond the Lines,” p. 176.
79 Bernau, “Myths of Origin,” p. 112.
81 Bernau, “Myths of Origin,” p. 113.
82 Ibid., p. 114.
85 McMullan, “The Colonisation of Early Britain on the Jacobean Stage,” p. 119. “With the publication of Camden’s *Britannia* (1586), the significance of Caesar’s conquest of the Britons was transformed utterly. [...] In *Britannia*, the Roman conquest was conceived to be the turning point in British history—a salutary period that brought civilization to the savage Britons. [...] Yet the loss of a
Trojan ancestry also meant that the genealogy of Caesar’s primitive Britons had become indistinguishable from the savage races that early modern Britain sought to subdue.” Mary Floyd-Wilson, “Delving to the Root,” p. 105.

86 Camden, Britannia, p. 49.

87 John Kerrigan, Archipelagic English, p. 116. Kerrigan registers a shift “from Galfridian imperialism—both the internal imperialism of Brut, who gave suzerainty of Scotland to the kings of England, and the north European empire-building credited to King Arthur—to a colonialism that was inspired by the expansion of classical Rome. In place of Geoffrey’s belief that the Britons resembled the Romans because both descended from Troy, they began to embrace the idea that the Roman mission to conquer and civilize had translated westwards and been inherited by Britain.” Kerrigan, Archipelagic English, p. 116.


89 Stewart Mottram, Empire and Nation, p. 9.


92 The positioning of past in colonial present by Hakluyt and others has been well explored, and is now something of a worn story. See Andrew Hadfield, Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance and, more recently, Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt, eds., Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe.

93 Spenser, Faerie Queene, 2.Proem. 4–8.

94 Pivetti, Of Memory and Literary Form, p. 64.

95 Qtd in Hiscock, The Uses of This World, p. 9. Schwyzer discusses Browne’s Hydriotaphia in some depth in Archaeologies, pp. 175–204.

96 Escobedo, Nationalism and Historical Loss, p. 10.


98 On the historiographical interconnections between Voada and Boudica, see Floyd-Wilson, “Delving to the Root,” pp. 102–4. The conflation recurs, as Schechter notes, in “minor texts such as [James] Aske’s Elizabetha Triumphans and more well-known ones such as John Fletcher’s Bonduca.” Schechter, “As liu-ing now, equald theyr vertues then,” p. 185.


101 Ibid., p. 134.


103 Ibid., p. 70.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., p. 71.

106 Ibid., p. 74.
Ibid., p. 73.
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Ibid., p. 73.
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Chapter 3

Remembering Scotland
The Early Modern Reception of Scota

THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN this chapter is the mythical Egyptian princess, Scota. Like Brute and Albina, Scota was a foundational figure. Also like those two, her story went through multiple versions, handled by multiple authors for multiple purposes, and retaining its currency in different ways for some 400 years. The myth is again deceptively simple: Scota was the daughter of a Pharaoh (in most versions, the biblical Pharaoh of the Exodus). Marrying an interloper in the land, the Grecian Prince Gathelus, the pair either left or were banished from Egypt; in some versions, this is expanded to fall during the ten biblical plagues visited upon the Egyptians by God. The pair wandered Europe, much as in the Brute and Albina myths, with particular attention given to their travels through Spain and Ireland. By various turns, they find themselves in Britain, creating the Scots people. Their more or less equally legendary descendant Fergus MacFerquhard, the story goes, became the founder of the Scots monarchy in Scotland in 330 BC.

Though this is the basic thread, there are many competing versions deployed for various purposes: some versions in defense of the Scots nation, some operating as a slur, some linking with the Scythians, some with Ireland, some operating in terms of religious conflict, and many doing more than one thing at once. As with Albina and other aspects of the Trojan/British material—perhaps more so—the story could sponsor multiple readings. As with these stories too, Scota’s usefulness spanned an incredibly long period which belied the derision with which it was sometimes met in its retellings. In the present chapter I want to tell, or retell, two stories about Scota. In the first, I present an overview of the reception of the legend in England, and what could be done with it; this is a necessarily broad narrative that works its way through a century or more. In the second part of the chapter, I provide something of a counterpoint to this breadth by homing in on a particular example of the deployment of the Scota narrative alongside Brute, in the conflicts between England and
Scotland in the 1540s. Before turning to the first of these two narratives, however, I want to return for a moment to the story of Brute, and to the question of historical practice.

In early modern historiography, one attack deserves another. In his 1593 work *Philadelphus*, Richard Harvey describes the history of Brute as having been “made litigious.”1 Too concerned with rights and wrongs, the British history is again imagined as something that ought properly to have been left in the historic fabric, the dramatic background. “It is manifest,” Harvey explains, “that some have written more of Brute then behooved them, but some have behaved themselves unkindly against Brutans, and done lesse for them, then they should.”2 Whether positive or negative, it is unwise to say too much about Brute. Though Harvey seems not entirely convinced himself of the truth of Brute, or at least not in the modern conventional sense of truth, this does not stop him from coming out swinging. Although he claims, making somewhat transparent use of a modesty topos, not to have the knowledge possessed by some of his fellow historians, he will nonetheless write: on the basis that “as they have freely delivered their opinions with out any stop, so would I show the good will I bear to the one part, without any hatred to the other.”3 For Harvey, Brute was worth defending. Perhaps more to the point, the main target of Harvey’s writing, the Scots historian George Buchanan, was worth attacking. And certainly, if there is not quite hatred for Buchanan in *Philadelphus*, neither is there a great deal of good will. Harvey quickly turns to unleash an attack on the Scot and his historical work:

Master Buchanan, though some call you the trumpet of Scotland, and some the noble Scholler, yet I will be so bold, as answere your larum, touching the history of mighty Brute: because your invective treatise, is in trueth, more factious, then effectuall. You and such hotbraines, have devised a faction, and divorcement of opinions, (I dare say) without fruit, and I beleve, without cause: For my part, your deniall is not able once to move me, and your reasons against Brutes historie, shall never perswade any sufficient reader, to agree with you, and remove the markes and circuites, that Geoffry Monmouth hath set downe.4

In essence, Harvey’s defense amounts to placing his fingers firmly in his ears. Attacking Brute is both without fruit and without cause—there is simply no point to it. Between the lines of Harvey’s defense is the sense that the “markes and circuites” of Geoffrey Monmouth are at this point just too entrenched to do away with. In *Philadelphus*, the defense is organized
along de casibus principles; the various elements of the myth are structurally presented as being useful for their capacity to illustrate moral points. The truth of Brute here is in his narrative usefulness: as Curran writes of this type of approach, “the implication was that the British History should be deemed true because it looked every bit like a proper history—like a good national story that yielded a wealth of wholesome examples.”

Harvey’s defense quickly concedes that both Monmouth and his attackers may be as untrustworthy as each other. But the comparison then becomes one of poetics: “Yet by reading your allegations and probations, we may best areede, who is most credible, he or you, a Monmouth or a Scot, a Moonke or a Travailer, and if neither barrell be better herring, then by their wordes they shalbe saved from blame, and by their wordes they shalbe damned, sayth the wise Judge.” Harvey’s colorful metaphor concerning the quality of fish allows for the possibility that Monmouth and Buchanan are both as bad as each other. If neither deals in actual truth, then only the quality of their words—their writing—can save them. And here, Harvey seems to feel he is on more solid ground with Monmouth than he would be if defending medieval chronicle as fact. Harvey’s choice of metaphor, though, exposes the problem experienced by English nationalism: choosing between the words of the Welsh or the Scots. One can trust the word of a monk and risk calling on an English history rooted in the life of monasteries, a world which has since been destroyed. Or one can trust a traveler, a history and methodological approach borrowed from foreign classicism. For Harvey, neither seems particularly palatable—but at least Monmouth can write. For Harvey, historical method is an unnecessary flourish, one to no purpose. “We compare not Brutus with Romulus,” Harvey declares, “no more then we compare your Chronicle now with this that shall write one 200. or 300. yeares heereafter.” Indeed, Buchanan’s reliance on sources is regarded as a self-aggrandizing textual “florish” which works “to no other purpose, then to shew reading, where it doth no good, and may do some little hurt to a young Reader.” From a number of angles, Buchanan had simply gone too far in his treatment of a myth close to English hearts.

Buchanan’s position, though, was itself not so much an attack as a defense. His influential Rerum Scoticarum Historia (1582), containing the passages to which Harvey takes such exception, opens with a history of the origins of Scotland. Here, Buchanan is incensed by those who have questioned the truth of Scots origins and attempted to supplant the antiquity of the Scots nation with stories of Brute and his successors. English and Welsh authors have offered up unfounded claims on the original
name of Britain, and fought to their last breath for something without any real meaning: “And though the dispute were of a thing of no great consequence, yet, because it concerned the very name of their country, they thought it worth contending for with all their might, as if all the ancient glory of the whole nation had lain at stake.” The amount of time spent on addressing this error, not to mention the position it is given at the opening of Buchanan’s history, gives the lie to the statement. For Buchanan, just as for those he engages with, the dispute was very much of consequence. It had also, as I return to in the second half of this chapter, only very recently been used by the English as part of their justification for armed invasion; it was not just ancient glory at stake. The worst attack against Scots history, according to Buchanan, comes from the Welsh antiquary Humphrey Lhuyd and his Commentarioli descriptionis Britanniæ fragmentum (1572). In this work, Roger Mason comments, Lhuyd “had mounted a fierce attack on Scottish chroniclers such as Boece, disputing the existence of a Scottish kingdom before the fifth century and dismissing as fictions the forty kings who had reputedly reigned over it before that date.” Though Buchanan appears to have had little time for some of the more obviously fictional elements of the Scots chronicle tradition (including the history of Scota), the importance of defending Scotland’s national history was clear. The British past delivered up in Lhuyd’s commentary threatened a colonization of Scotland in antiquity which was in its own way as damaging as that threatened in the more recent past. Moreover, replacing Scotland’s ancient kings with a British royal line did not just question the integrity of the Scots nation, but, at least for Buchanan, undermined its particular character: a monarchy balanced by consideration of the three estates becomes instead a decidedly absolutist hereditary right. The urgent political demands which prompted Buchanan’s attack on British history thus also put him in the position of having to defend Scots history, and, as Mason notes, become a mirror image of Lhuyd in the process: “Buchanan’s own insistence that the antiquity of the Scottish monarchy provided evidence, not only of its original autonomy, but also of its elective nature, was equally tendentious.” For Buchanan, as for Lhuyd or for Harvey, the fictional antiquity provided by chronicle history was too useful to give up without a fight.

The accusations leveled against Lhuyd in Rerum Scoticarum Historia identify the very fears of those like Sidney and Nashe around the worth, the physical and historical integrity, of materials drawn out of the past. The particular British book which Lhuyd holds dear, and from which he draws the original name of the island to be Prudaniae, is, like chronicle history
REMEMBERING SCOTLAND

as a whole, too full of holes. As Buchanan puts it: “Lud, to maintain his assertion for Prudania, useth the authority of a certain old paper fragment, which rust, mouldiness and length of time (and nothing else) have made almost sacred with him. Tho’ he counts that proof firm enough of itself, yet he strengthens it by etymology; by the songs of the bards; by the custom of the country speech; and by the venerable rust of antiquity.”

Calling Lhuyd’s evidence “putris chartae,” rotten paper, Buchanan’s claim is that the British past is every bit as rotten as the books collected in Eumnestes’s chambers in The Faerie Queene. There is a certain irony to this, in as much as Buchanan attacks Lhuyd on the basis of historical evidence before launching into a similarly suspect chronicle of ancient Scotland, just as there is a similar irony in Harvey’s subsequent attack. But none of it is likely to have raised many laughs. The antiquities of both countries played off against each other, and, just as Brute and Albina were intimately and antagonistically connected, so too were Brute and Scota. In charting the connection between these mythical figures, it is worth returning to the beginning of their relationship.

Walking Like an Egyptian

The myth of Scota was from the beginning one of the utmost political and ideological importance, arising, in terms of its incarnation in Scotland, in the fourteenth century and used to compete with English claims to sovereignty in Britain. From John of Fordun’s popular collection, the Chronica Gentis Scotorum (ca. 1360), through to Hector Boece’s Scotorum Historiae (1527), the myth was used for Scotland in much the same way that Monmouth’s material was used for England, essentially inventing a back catalogue of monarchs leading from antiquity into, and hence proping up, the present. There was plenty at stake in doing so, as Clare Jackson outlines: “In addition to providing an account of the origins of the Scottish monarchy, the Gathelus-Scota myth also became the polemical device by which medieval and early modern Scots rebutted English claims that the Scots had traditionally paid homage to their English superiors.”

As Boece put it in his dedication to James V,

For since you are still of that age at which talents are still fully capable of being trained, from this history you will not only learn what was done by your ancestors, and the arts by which this government has been preserved for more than 1,856 years, never subjected to any foreign rule (although we were afflicted by great evils by the Romans and the English, and, albeit unsubdued, could scarcely
keep our heads erect), but also, having gathered all these examples and compared past things with present, you will learn in what way you may best administer your realm.\textsuperscript{17}

The story gives a history for the Scots as a people, and a history of their dynastic claims in Scotland going back nineteen centuries. Despite the aggression of the “Romanis” and “Anglis,” Boece also demonstrates that Scotland had never been subjected to foreign rule, and suggests the application of this history of heroic resistance to James’s political decisions in the present. For Scotland, the descent from Scota and Gathelus forms the starting point of Boece’s history, and shows the antiquity of the race, the “originem sui vetustam” of the Scots.\textsuperscript{18} Unsurprisingly, then, the English were generally dismissive of the Scota myth. For Leland, Boece’s lies were as numberless as the waves in the sea or the stars in the sky.\textsuperscript{19} Meanwhile, of course, Leland’s own historiography continued to champion Brute, a position in turn derided by the Scots. And as with Brute, Scota essentially seems to have been created in the vacuum of anything better: Armel Dubois-Nayt writes that “John of Fordun […] was the first Scot who aimed to make up for the lack of Scottish historical records and documents, something which he blamed on the English invasion that took place under Edward I.”\textsuperscript{20} Boece repeated the claim to those who would point out the lack of any written records backing his version of events:

If it strikes anyone as strange that no written record of those men’s deeds has come to light in all this island, if he will recall how great a destruction of all literature King Edward I of England brought to pass throughout all our realm, and with what frenzy he raged against things both sacred and profane, leaving nothing intact and indeed sparing nothing from utter destruction, when in his crazed fury he had it in mind to obliterate all the remains of antiquity and convert us to English manners, then he will cease to be surprised, inasmuch as Edward burned books throughout all the churches of Scotland and compelled us to celebrate sacred rites according to the customs of the English Church.\textsuperscript{21}

Just like the English with their worm-eaten books, the Scots were in the position of having uncomfortable holes in their histories and looked to both place blame and fill the gap.

Equally, exposing those holes too visibly was not a popular business. In common with the English side of British history, the Scots side had its detractors. John Mair (or, as he is commonly anglicized, John Major) had little time for the myth in his \textit{Historia Maioris Britanniae tam Angliae
REMEMBERING SCOTLAND

quam Scotiae (1521), printed in Paris just prior to the publication of Boece’s work of 1527. Mair took aim squarely at Caxton for his printing of British chronicles such as the Polychronicon, and espoused what we would today regard as a more moderate, considered approach to historical method. But like his southern counterpart Polydore Vergil, Mair does not seem to have had much praise at the time for his efforts, as Mason points out: “Mair’s common-sense scepticism has won him widespread praise from modern historians. Yet there is little to suggest that his immediate contemporaries were impressed by his arguments.”

Boece, it seems, made for better reading: Arthur Williamson argues that “The volume spoke to central problems of Scottish identity and proved extraordinarily validating as a result.”

As with other national myths, whether anyone who claimed to believe in the origin story provided by Scota actually did so was probably less important than what the story meant, and what it could be used to say. John Bellenden’s vernacular version of Boece, the Chroniklis of Scotland (ca. 1540), freely translated and added to the original. Bellenden directly compares the origins of the English and the Scots, noting on the English side the stories of both Albina and Brute and stressing their negative aspects. Of Albina, Bellenden comments: “Yis Albyne (as is allegit) with hir .l. sisteris (eftir that thay had slane al their husbandis) pullit up salis and come out of Grece […] eftir thair cumyng in the said Ile conversit with devillis in forme of men.”

Of Brute, Bellenden notes the Trojan’s descent from Aeneas, but plays up his exile: “becaus he wes exilit an banist for slauchter and othir gret offencis done be hym in Italie, he wes constraint to depart.” In comparison to these stories of violence and butchery, “the beginnyng of Scottis wes in ane uthir maner.” Another manner indeed: Scota’s royalty is pronounced, while Gathelus is notable for his difference from Brute, appearing as “ane rycht illuster and vailyeant knycht discend-ing be lang progressiou and linage of ye blud riall of Grece.” The blood royal was important, descending to the Scots in the present, and gathered up in the dynastic ambitions of the Stewarts. Equally, as a vernacular expression of Scots heritage which provided a relatively accessible collection of national history, the importance of Bellenden’s work itself cannot be underestimated.

In a similar vein to the way in which the feminine mythology of Albina was drawn on in England in the early modern period, so too were female national origins at play in understandings of the Scots past. But while Albina was sometimes an uncomfortable reminder of the fragility of nationhood, the myth of Scota had for centuries underpinned the Scots nation, both in terms of the cultural understanding of that nation by its
inhabitants and its relationship to its southern neighbor. The two stories of Albina and Scota were inextricably related and (antagonistically) dependent upon one another: as Hopkins notes, “the idea of Egyptian origins was not just a myth of origin but an encoding of Scottish hostility to the English.” In calling on two powerful dynasties of the ancient classical world, from Greece and Egypt, the myth directly competed with the classical Trojan ancestry of Brute. As with the relationship between Albina and Brute, the myth of Scota presented a mirror for the mythology of England: William Matthews observes that “the legend of Brutus and the legend of Gathelus are in fact cast from the same mold. There are many differences in detail, but the design of the two migration myths is the same in general pattern and even in details.” There is a clear relationship, too, between the details and general scope of Scota’s journey into Britain and Albina’s adventures, with both featuring motifs of expulsion, misconduct, and a hefty dose of violent conquest.

Indeed, it is more than possible that Albina was originally worked into the English side of the British material, or at least gained initial popularity, as a parody of the Scota myth, one which pointed out what the period perceived as the problems in tracing the nation from a female originary figure. As Ruch points out, “the proliferation of the Albina prologue in the early fourteenth century suggests that it may also have been used as a rebuttal of the Scota legend [...] which appeared in Latin and Middle Scots chronicles of Scottish history beginning in the mid-1300s.” In this respect, Albina worked to characterize both female rule and concepts of female origin as being inherently evil, before showing how such a figure was effectively wiped from the face of Britain by the heroic actions of Brute. That a woman came first in the isle did not matter so long as she could be shown to have been conquered by a man, particularly, as Bernau comments, if she embodied the worst elements of womanhood: “If Brutus’ rule was already used as proof of English sovereignty over Scotland, then the narrative of his purging of the land of violent, primitive, rebellious and perverse giants who are the offspring of an aristocratic female founding figure who has come from over the sea can be read as further demonstrating the Britons’—and therefore English—cultural superiority, undercutting the Scota myth.” Though, as I argued in the previous chapter, the myth of Albina did not remain nearly so straightforward, the relationship between English origin stories and Scota clearly continued to provoke imaginative complaint. A later note on the story of Scota and Gathelus from the English side, in Churchill’s *Divi Britannici* (1675), shows the power of the myth reached well beyond medieval Scotland, and that even in the
late seventeenth century it could still get English antiquarianism’s collective backs up: “the Scotch Antiquaries would have the Name of Gayothel to be with Relation rather to their Descent from one Gayothel a noble Gyant, who married Scota King Pharaoh’s Daughter, not considering that this is to derive themselves from a Monster by the Fathers side, and from a Gipsy on the Mothers side.”33 The testiness is palpable. But the form of the response, phrased in terms of genealogy and descent, paternal monstrousness and maternal foreignness, is also rather telling about the recurring concerns of the period.

The myths of Scota and Albina were cut from the same cloth: female travelers of powerful descent founding the nation. The overt parallels could provoke readers’ minds in various directions, as Bernau recognizes: “The similarities between the Albina and Scota myths meant that they could be read against each other in numerous ambiguous ways.”34 Equally, of course, the myth of Scota in part evolved to be read against that of Brute, although again the precise ways in which this reading played out could not always be controlled. As we have seen, Brute was himself problematic, both as a character and as a primogenitor, producing multiple versions of himself. There was thus no set way to read any of these twinned narratives, though there were certainly preferred readings from various camps. Throughout the early modern period, the myth of Scota thus formed another side of a complex cultural and literary triangle with the narratives of Brute and Albina, and the way its reception played out across the period is both informed by, and continued to inform, that complex picture.35 There is, moreover, a further complexity in that the story of Scota, as a foundation myth for the Scots as a people, was also intimately associated with Ireland. Indeed, it probably began there: the legend as an origin point for the Scots in Ireland is noted in the compilation Book of Leinster (ca. 1160), and reoccurs from then on.36 Baldred Bisset’s Processus (1301) is regarded as having been pivotal in turning the usefulness of this foundational myth to Scotland. This facet of the Scota story would prove problematic for those using the narrative as one underpinning the crown of Scotland; equally, and for much the same reasons, English writers would enjoy pointing it out for some time.

As with Brute and Albina, early modern historiographical approaches to the myth of Scota seem to have often been characterized by the tension between remembering and forgetting, instantiation and rejection. That tension did sometimes lean further in one direction than another. Humphrey Lhuyd’s Commentarioli descriptionis Britannicae fragmentum, so keen to create an ancestry for the British, had rather less
anxiety over what to do with Scota. The vernacular translation of Lhuyd’s work rushed out the following year by Thomas Twyne, *The Breviary of Britayne*, hammers the point home: “But by what cause, or occasion they were called Scots, truly I doo not know. For I doo quite reject the Aegiptian Fables of Scotia. And the selfe same language, and the very same maners, and behavior with the Irishmen and that they be called of the Britaynes by one name: declareth sufficiently, that they came from thence.”37 The manners and behavior of the Irish, at least to Lhuyd, are not worth dwelling on; but they do for him demonstrate the foundations of the Scots. It is relatively safe to leave an originary female at the start of the English national narrative, so long as she is not called Albina and does not give her name to the country. Scota, however, must go absolutely, and her people with her. North of the border, the picture looked rather different: the Scots seem to have had continued interest in the legend as part of a chronicle tapestry, and even amongst those who displayed disregard for the Scota myth, elements of that myth had a hold over the imagination which seemingly proved too tempting to resist. As we have seen, Buchanan sidestepped the legendary history of Scota, but kept what he saw as the useful part of the origin myth: the idea of an elective monarchy. In this version, Scota’s descendent, Fergus, was elected to the throne by the phylarchi, the clan chiefs. This story of ancient elective monarchy was, Colin Kidd argues, “also built on the Gaelic practice of tanistry, under whose inheritance rules a successor was appointed from within the kinship unit [...]. No longer simply a national origin legend legitimating Scottish sovereignty and independence, the history of the Gaels had evolved into a political myth validating a radical interpretation of the Scottish constitution.”38 Though Scota herself might have been for some Scots authors an embarrassment to be pushed aside, the royal line which she was said to have founded was, like Brute, too entrenched not to be recalled; what Mason refers to as the “continued cultural purchase of the Fergusian line” provided an incomparable hook on which to hang political comment and interpretation.39

Such usefulness, along with the disjunctions between English and Scots readings of the myth, came to a head during a number of flashpoints in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I turn to one of those points, the military invasions of Scotland in the 1540s collectively known as the “Rough Wooings,” in the following section. In the present argument, I want to pause over a rather different kind of wooing, prompted at the opening of the seventeenth century by the accession of James VI of Scotland to the throne of England. That story has been well told, as has the impact of the accession, and the resulting union debates, on cultural investments in
nationally oriented myth. As Rowland Wymer put it, “The accession of a Scottish king to the English throne in 1603 gave a further relevance to the collection of myths and legends which made up ‘British history.’” What I would like to consider here, though, is the particular impact of this newfound relevance on the reception of Scota. In England, an imaginary Scots founder who had long been derided now prompted some genealogically ambitious strategies for dealing with the histories of the isle, both real and imagined. Barnabe Barnes, in an advice book of 1606, offers a fascinatingly awkward genetic reading of the British people. “Hengist hath married with Scota,” Barnes maintains, in a figure his text repeats several times, “even as Henry your Majesties royall father, the sonne of L. Matthew Stuarte, and of Ladie Margaret, who married with your mother Mary (daughter to king James the fourth, and to the Dutchesse of Longueville) after the death of her first husband king Frauncis the second, grandchild by the first venture unto that good prince of renowned memorie, king Henry the seventh, as your Highnesses father was by the second venture.” The text binds up recent and legendary history directly into the body of King James, in the process mingling the vagueness of legend with the precision of the detail around the royal line. What begins with a metaphorical marriage of dusty myth becomes exacting genealogy; or, potentially, the genealogy of James is comparable to myth. In one sense the metaphor is just that, but in another it does call attention to the cultural distance that such rhetorical figures are made to traverse. As someone directly involved in the lawlessness of the border counties, Barnes may well have seen the argument for a peaceful union between England and Scotland, even as the reality of such experience undercuts the language and the likelihood of marital bliss.

Metaphors of legendary marriage seem to have been intended to smooth over the disjunctions in the more recent past: remembering one aids the act of forgetting the other. Certainly James himself famously adopted the language of husband and father, declaring in his first speech to Parliament in England: “What God hath conjoyned then, let no man separate. I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body; I am the Shepherd, and it is my flock.” His subsequent plea to merge the two countries of England and Scotland is both a play on such language and determinedly focused: “I hope therefore that no man will be so unreasonable as to thinke that I that am a Christian King under the Gospel, should be a Polygamist and husband to two wives; that I being the Head, should have a divided and monstrous Body; or that being the Shepheard to so faire a Flocke (whose fold hath no wall to hedge it but the foure Seas) should have my Flocke parted in two.” Such
language was, perhaps, intended as a comfort and something of a diplomatic bridge, as Carole Levin and Joseph Ward argue: “When James I succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, following the reigns of two childless queens, the new English king, who already had two male heirs, doubtless assumed that the deployment of patriarchal language would help him to establish common ground with his leading subjects.”

He may not have been far wrong: the Earl of Northumberland assured the incoming king that his people had no eyes for any other contenders for the crown, “for ether in there worthe are thay contemptible, or not liked for thare sexes, wyshing noe more queens, fearing we shall never enjoy an uther lyke to this.”

The final clause, attempting to compliment the recently passed Elizabeth, does not obscure the underlying gynophobia. Having a father (and a father who already had three children to succeed him) was infinitely preferable to having a mother. As Richard Mulcaster mused, in *A Comforting Complaint* (1603), though God “took our Queene, a King he gave / To play the fathers part in mothers losse.” But while the point in such ecomium is to effortlessly balance God’s providence in the transition from one reign to the next, the explication of this in familial terms points to the heavy lifting performed by Mulcaster’s verse in the face of real anxiety. As John Watkins comments: “If Mulcaster’s characterization of James as a comforting father aimed to heighten James’s credibility as a loving sovereign, it risked recalling the longstanding complaint that Elizabeth’s childlessness jeopardized the future of both church and state. James had ‘to play the fathers part’ because England’s virginal mother had rejected an actual husband.”

In both life and death, Elizabeth recalls the monstrousness of Albina. Though potentially a solution to the issue, James risks association with the same paradigm: as a foreign father who was successor to both a childless mother (Elizabeth) and one suspected of being overly generative (Mary Stuart), James was, as Watkins puts it, “a problematic successor to the English throne.”

Metaphors of family and marriage, as critics have pointed out, grew increasingly strained whether deployed by James or those around him. An early indicator of that strain is provided by Barnes’s text, which, in an effort to take account of the contradictions between the various myths it deploys, makes both Scota and Hengist descendents of Brute; while the approach is in a way quite audacious, it also very obviously flies in the face of everything known or understood about these stories. Other English writers seem to have experienced similar problems with incorporating and dealing with the material of Scota. In *Britannia*, Camden rejects Scota in much the same way as had Humphrey Lhuyd: “For, a man may with as great
probability derive the Scots pedigree from the Gods, as from Scotia that supposed and counterfeit daughter of the Egyptian King Pharaoh, wedded (forsooth) unto Gaithelus, the sonne of Cecrops founder of Athens.”

John Speed takes a similar view in The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine, giving the myth exactly as much credence as one might expect from Speed in his opening chapter on Scotland: “this Nations Originall by some hath bin derived from Scotia, the supposed Daughter of the Egyptian King Pharaoh, that nourished Moises, afterwards married unto Gaithelus, the sonne of Cecrops, (Founder of Athens,) who first seating in Spaine, passed thence into Ireland, and lastly into Scotland, where his Wife Scotia gave Name to the Nation.” Finishing off this breathless sentence offering a whistle-stop tour of the myth, Speed dryly finishes: “if we beleev that they hit the mark, who shoote at the Moone.”

But unlike Lhuyd, both Camden and Speed make a strong distinction between the Lowland and Highland Scots. The former, for Speed, “are from the same Original with us the English, being both alike the Saxon branches: as also, that the Picts, anciently inhabiting part of that kingdom, were the in-borne Britaines, and such as thither fled to avoid the Romane servitude.” The Gaels, on the other hand, are “supposed to descend from the Scythians, who with the Getes infesting Ireland, left both their Issue there, and their maners, apperant in the Wild-Irish even to this day.”

Where Hengist had once been a traitor to the British people, he and his Saxon blood now offered the means to unite them; and while Barnes proposes a marriage of peoples, Speed’s argument is to suggest that they had been married all along.

Camden, too, offers to chosen parts of the Scots nation an olive branch proceeding from an English family tree. Apologizing for what he has to say about Scotia, Camden carefully displaces any offense onto the Gaels:

for feare lest evill willers, & frowardly peevish, should calumniously misconstrue those allegations, which I, simply, ingeniously, and in all honest meaning, shall here cite out of ancient writers as touching Scots, I must certifie the Reader before hand, that every particular hath reference to the old, true, and naturall Scots onely: Whose of-spring are those Scots speaking Irish, which inhabite all the West part of the Kingdome of Scotland, now so called and the Islands adjoyning thereto, and who now adaies be termed Highland men.

In any depictions from which his readers might take offense, they should see not themselves but the Gaelic other. The Lowland Scots, meanwhile, are “descended from the same Germane originall, that wee
English men are. [...] In which regard, so farre am I from working any discredit unto them, that I have rather respectively loved them alwaies, as of the same bloud and stocke."  

Camden’s truth, though it may be truer than the story of Scota, is not as simple, ingenuous, or honest as its author may pretend. Stressing the genealogical and historical links between the Lowland Scots and the English, Camden appeals to James and to his own interests, excising the Gaels and linking the project of the Scots to that of the English. And the approach may well have appealed: in 1609, the year prior to the publication of Holland’s translation of *Britannia*, James enacted the Statutes of Iona, which, along with legislation repressing the carrying of arms and the establishment of kirks, also outlawed systems of bardic patronage, and forced firstborn children of Highland clan chiefs to be educated in the English-speaking Lowlands of Scotland. All in all, as Kidd comments, “The Statutes involved an assault on Gaelic cultural difference as well as upon disorder.” But despite Camden’s efforts, there remains a great deal of potential offense here: James’s rights, along with the “civill behaviour” of the Lowland Scots, come only from being associated with the line and history, the “blood and stock” of the English, while the rights of those “old, true, and natural Scots” are disinterred, their genealogical line brought to an end with their offspring in the Highland other. At best, Camden offers the Scots a loaded choice between being conceived of as Irish, or as English; there is no Scots race except as a branch of one or the other. In the coup-de-grâce, Camden reminds his presumed readership amongst the Lowlanders that their own countrymen in the Highlands of Scotland speak against them, calling them “Sassones, as well as we.”

The Anglo-Saxon history (or, as Camden more nationally puts it, English-Saxon) operates as a noose by which the Scots can be brought into the fold, or hung.

Further into James’s reign, English reference to Scota becomes distinctly less polite. In the 1620s, William Slatyer’s *Palae-Albion* bids a belated farewell to Elizabeth with the elegiac, if brief, note that “The world her praise, Westminster her dust, / Heaven has her soule shrin’d with the just.” Turning to the narrative of Scotland, the text pointedly makes an apology for what is about to be presented: “By reason of her successor King James, is enforced the discourse following out of Scottish and other forraigne histories.” The history is enforced, and emphatically lumped in with other histories that are foreign to the English. Here, the pithy verse seems almost to mock the language of union deployed earlier in the century:
The world the shrine, the sea the ring,
Two Realms were wed, the Priest a King:
A Wife unites both *Roses; James*
Both wives and Virgins heire, both Realmes!
The married brings a sonne; her merit
Th’unmarried leaves him crownes t’inherit.
Hence our fourcrown’d King *James* doth flourish
O’re English, Scottish, French and Irish!
Friend me deere *Muses* whiles I bring
From *Scotland*‘s bounds our Englands King.

James is blessed in being descended from two powerful English women, the wife who united the houses of Lancaster and York (Elizabeth of York, who married Henry Tudor), and the virgin Elizabeth who left James the throne. His own parents, let alone Scotland’s line of kings, have no place here: the genealogy provided by Slatyer rescues King James from his Scots roots, literally bringing him out of those “bounds” and creating a king for England. When James’s parentage does finally get namechecked in the poem, it comes in a decidedly less than positive light: “*Henry Lord Darnley, Stewart* borne, / *Scotland*‘s King made in youth’s fresh mornes; [...] But shortly *Henry Stewart* crownde, / In the Queens Orchard’s mur–dred found.” Henry, Lord Darnley, had been murdered in early 1567; suspicion quickly fell on Queen Mary and the Earl of Bothwell, whom Mary later married. Darnley’s murder was a scandal; and although by the time of Slatyer’s poem it was a scandal half a century old, the reminder was a dangerous one to offer.

When we arrive at the history of Scotland in *Palae-Albion*, we are greeted again with a denial of origins: “Scarce thinke I, th’race of *Scottish* Kings / From *Pharao’s Daughter Scota* springs.” Instead, Slatyer offers a history drawn from “reverend *Bede,*” comparing the truth of this English history to the fantasies of Scotland’s chronicle narrative: “though we reade, / In *Scottish Annall’s* how th’ *Aegyptian / Pharao’s Impe Scota,* with her *Graecian / Husband Gathelus* long did raigne, / With their succession Kings in *Spaine; / Whence *Scots* were nam’d!” While Speed and Camden moderate their histories, Slatyer seems barely able to contain his glee at the problems and contradictions presented in the chronicles of Scotland. He reserves particular derision for the history of the Stone of Scone, which he tells twice. The first king of Scotland, Fergus, “brought with him so long agoe, / *Scots* gloried in the fatall Stone, / *Jacob* lay on, in the Land of *Syon.*” This fatal stone is what is sometimes referred to as Jacob’s pillar or pillow, a stone on which the Israelite
patriarch Jacob slept before encountering God in a vision (in Genesis 28:18, 49:24), and which seems to become the rock that Moses strikes in Exodus 17:6 and Numbers 20:11. In many rehearsals of the Scota story, the Pharaoh’s daughter and her Greek husband bring the stone with them out of Egypt, while in other versions the prophet Jeremiah brings it with him to Ireland. In the Irish version, the stone becomes the Lia Fáil; in the Scots version, it becomes the Stone of Scone. The stone was used in the coronation of Scotland’s monarchs until removed by Edward I to Westminster, where it became a part of the coronation process in England (and remains so; the stone was only returned to Edinburgh in 1996). Slatyer repeats both the Scots and Irish versions of the story at some length, while claiming neither are worth the time. Exaggeratedly scratching his head over Scotland’s history, Slatyer plays up the contradictions in where the geographical origin of the Scots race lay: “so from th’ Irish traine, / Came Brytaine Scots, those Scots from Spaine.”

Yet, a plainly amused Slatyer notes, no matter which story is presented, we nevertheless find the stone ever-present: “Still understand, the fatall stone, / Goes with them Jacob slept upon!” Despite Slatyer’s marked incredulity, the stone was not simply foolish ancient history: in the previous century, Hardyng had busied himself with dismissing the claims of Scotland on the stone, and the story would rear its head again in conflicts between the two countries.

But although the stone is for Slatyer an indicator of the scant worth of Scots chronicle, it could for other authors be a point around which to rally. In Richard Broughton’s The Ecclesiasticall Historie of Great Britaine, the history of Scota becomes deeply religious in tone. In Broughton’s retelling of the story, Scota and Gathelus are driven from Egypt as part of the retribution visited upon the Egyptians for their persecution of the Israelites. The Scots’ “best Historians,” Broughton notes, perhaps with a trace of sarcasm, “deduce their name and Originall from Scota a daughte to King Pharao of Egypt, that persecuted the Israelites in the time of Moyse.” For the fervently Catholic Broughton, Scota provides an index not of the nonsense of chronicle but of the power of God: “Driven with her husband, and company out of Egypt, by the greate punishments God then imposed upon that nation, they were so fully persuaded of the majesty of the true God of Israel, and the truth of the preaching of Moyse.” The visitation of the ten plagues accomplishes for Scota and Gathelus what it did not for the Egyptians, a revelation which brings the ancient progenitors of the Scots race to “knowledge of the true God.” In Broughton’s history, Scota becomes that best of pagan figures, a fully and miraculously
converted one. Scota and Gathelus also have the Catholic taste for relics, bringing the Stone of Jacob with them not as an empty prize but as a holy memorial: “for a memory, & holy relike of him, they brought with them (as both continued tradition, and divers historians, verie auncient testifi) the stone whereon Moses preached very miracular.”

Quite what the Israelites would have made of the Egyptian princess and Greek prince making off with this item is left unsaid. What is clear, however, is what the relic becomes to the Scots and to the English. Broughton offers a verse from one of his historical sources in explanation and for verification:

Which stone was holy as some men then did teach,  
And did miracles, so was the common speach:  
In honour it was had, both of great and small,  
And holden for a relike most speciall.  
This stone was called the Regall of Scotland,  
On which the Scottish Kings were set  
At their coronoment, as I can understand  
For holinesse of it, so did they of debt  
All their Kings upon this stone was set,  
Unto the time of King Edward with long shanks,  
Brought it away againe the Scots unthanks  
At Westmonastery it offered to Saint Edward.”

The source in this case appears to be Richard Grafton’s 1543 edition of Hardyng’s chronicle, a volume to which I return in the next section. There is some irony in this ostensibly pro-English source being used to back up Broughton’s version of the history (an irony of which Broughton himself was almost certainly aware). For Broughton, the story of the stone being forcibly removed from Scotland and taken by Edward to Westminster turns from being one of military defeat to a prophetic victory: “and they say it was a propheticall stone to, that wheresoever it was found, it forshewed the Scots should reigne there [...]. Which is now fulfilled in King James, reigning here, as it was by the Scottish long since, in Portugall, Ireland, and Scotland, in all which places they say the Scots have reigned.” There is a wry but deep nationalism here: the removal of the stone from Scotland to Westminster by Edward I in 1296 is here imagined not as bitter defeat or glorious victory, but rather as prophecy of a future victory. Wherever the stone goes, the Scots will rule: James VI and I is not a British pacifier but a Scots conqueror. By the time The Ecclesiasticall Historie of Great Britaine was published, James had been dead for some eight years, but the point remains. For Broughton, negotiating his religious and national
identity in a determinedly Protestant nation was a particular challenge: the ascent of the more tolerant Stuarts perhaps provided him some relief.

Scota was thus capable of supporting multiple readings from a variety of perspectives across the period. She could be an indicator of ancient origin, or of suspect worth, a metaphor for a marriage of peoples or for the breakdown in that marriage. She could represent the Scots people, but as a progenitor her Gaelic associations could also demonstrate the problems in that representation. Equally, her Egyptian heritage could be useful, or a potential point of embarrassment. And, rather like the association of Hengist with the origins of Stonehenge, stories of Scota seem to have collected around a stone monument of memorial and material meaning to the Scots as a people and nation. Just as Stonehenge is about the blood of the British, so the Stone of Scone is about the blood of Scotland, in more ways than one. The “blood and stock” which Camden draws in common between the Scots and English is genealogical, racial. But it was also blood which had been spilled all too often. In the following section, I want to consider this more violent application of origin myth.

**Books and Blood**

The long-running dynastic dispute between Scotland and England was characterized through the sixteenth century by issues of gendered violence, the “Rough Wooings” of 1543 to 1551 being only the most obvious example. The dynastic triangle, and careful balance of power, between Scotland, France, and England was long maintained and interlinked by questions of who could, or would, marry whom, and who had the available male ruler at any time. In this climate, national origin stories of female versus male power were potentially incendiary and maintained relevance as a means of speaking about the contemporary situation. The succession of the infant Mary Stuart in Scotland has long been seen as fundamentally altering this balance of power: as Jane Dawson puts it, “The succession of a female heiress [...] altered the diplomatic triangle by turning Scotland into an inviting prize for France or England. [...] In the 1540s and 1550s the fate of Scotland was of international interest and the European and British contexts merged into a single struggle: the battle for Britain.” This section deals with what Schwyzer has called “the flurry of enthusiasm for British nationalism in the 1540s,” a flurry which can best (if not exclusively) be explained in terms of the violent flashpoint in tensions between the two nations experienced in the decade.
On the English side, the ambitions first of Henry VIII and, later, of the Lord Protector, Edward Seymour Duke of Somerset, to deal with Scotland by uniting Mary Stuart and the young Prince Edward (later Edward VI) prompted somewhat clumsy marital overtures quickly succeeded by military invasions into Scottish territory. Mason comments: “The English crown’s claim to feudal superiority over Scotland was once again invoked and the Scots reacted predictably, branding the English as heretic spawn of the devil, and reasserting the historic and continuing autonomy of their kingdom.”

Scotland, for its part, was not exactly the defenseless ingénue it is sometimes portrayed as in literary history. Firstly, the nation was invested in a broad and international political network. Secondly, the country (or at least the southern parts of it) had its own imperial ambitions. Much has been said of England’s aims to build an empire out of itself and its immediate neighbors, but rather less of Scotland’s similar aims. And yet, in 1469, the Scottish Parliament had declared James III to have “ful Jurisdictione and fre Impire within his realm,” some sixty years prior to similar pretensions from the English Parliament. Just as England was busying itself with territorial assertions in Wales and Ireland, so too was the state in Scotland moving to assert itself more rigorously, particularly over its northern extremities and neighbors. The island archipelagos of Orkney and Shetland, the Western Isles, not to mention areas of the Highlands previously under feudal lordship were increasingly brought directly under the control of the crown.

English actions are rather better known; all the same, English aggression against the Scots in the 1540s must be seen in the light of a string of assertions of superiority on both sides, as much as in the context of the complex reaction in Scotland to English imperialism.

Through this period both Brute and Scota featured heavily as propaganda tools, and in the 1540s the chronicle history came out in force, as David Armitage notes: “proponents of the English cause in the Anglo-Scottish wars of 1543–1546 and 1547–1550 located the origins of the British Empire in the early history of Britain as it had been told by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century.” Henry VIII’s _Declaration, Conteyning the Just Causes and Consyderations of This Present Warre with the Scottis_ (1542) used Galfridian history to make its case, and, even if that history had absolutely nothing to do with the real causes and considerations for the war, it became the means for its narration, the historiographical honey with which to sugar the nationalist pill. Six years later, Somerset’s _Epistle or Exhortacion, to Unitie and Peace_ (1548) argued along similar lines, again using the British myth of settlement and becoming,
according to Armitage, “the regime’s most widely-circulated piece of propaganda” in the process. There were differences in the two regimes’ material aims and commitment in Scotland. Henry VIII mainly had his eye elsewhere: on France, Spain, Rome. Somerset, on the other hand, appears to have seen value in committing substantial resources to the project of bringing Scotland into a British fold. Equally, we should not be blind to the fact that it was not words alone that were in play. The year prior to the Epistle, an English army had defeated the Scots at the ferocious battle of Pinkie Cleugh (1547). As Dawson drily puts it, “Occasionally slipping on a velvet glove and penning a fine line in unionist rhetoric could not disguise the iron-fisted intimidation needed to sustain English garrisons.” But, against the backdrop of military campaigns, the channeling of imperial claims through chronicle history is striking, particularly as that history was itself also a potential battleground. The story of Brute and his successors could be read multiple ways, and in ways which did not always necessarily, or certainly not easily, back up the claims of English seniority.

It is thus useful to explore how these mythical narratives are deployed in the decade, in both English and Scots responses to the military crisis. The force of rhetoric flowing back and forth across the border was, as Dawson argues, perhaps uneven: “Having become an integral part of the English government’s approach since the 1530s, propaganda played its part in the English invasions. Without a properly established printing press or government-sponsored authors, Scotland could not easily reply in kind.” That did not stop the Scots giving it a good go: later in this section I turn to a reading of The Complaynt of Scotland (1549), a text which systematically demolishes the English side of the British history while keeping a hold on the Scots side. The Complaynt seems to have been popular, circulating in manuscript; it was also viewed as important enough to be printed in Paris a year later. On the English side, Somerset in particular deployed a concerted propaganda campaign. The king’s printer, Richard Grafton, was at the center of the production of a number of tracts discussing the virtues of, and ancient historical basis for, a union between the two kingdoms; so, too, were names that would become household (the redoubtable William Cecil was, along with Sir Thomas Smith, a key adviser on Somerset’s campaign in Scotland). As the situation grew more difficult for the English, with the Scots inviting the French King Henry II to send a military force to the country, the tone of the English tracts grows increasingly desperate. Their circulation, too, reflects immediate pressures: the Epitome of the title that the Kynges Majestie hath to the sovereigntie of Scotlande (1548), dedicated to Edward VI by “Nicholas Bodrugal,
otherwise Adams,” delivered what Armitage has regarded as “the most elaborate exposition of the Tudor claim to the Scots throne.” ⁹⁰ That exposition was not for the benefit of the English: the text was quickly translated into Latin for maximum impact in continental Europe. ⁹¹

Though there is not space here to look in full at the tracts, briefly setting two key works in this exchange next to each other is eye-opening in terms of how myths of national origin are used. In this case, both texts come from Scots hands. Of a number of tracts written for the English cause, I consider in more detail here James Henrisoun’s *An Exhortacion to the Scottes to conforme themselfes to the honourable, expedient, and godly union, betwene the two realmes of Englannde and Scotlannde* (1547). A relatively lengthy text, the *Exhortacion* had the uphill task of being aimed, in Dale Hoak’s view, “at an elite, if hostile, audience of Scottish readers.” ⁹² Its author, Henrisoun (or Harrison), was an Edinburgh merchant who, Dawson argues, was “convinced” of the case for union, “and in a series of tracts written from his base in London tried to persuade his fellow countrymen of its merit.” ⁹³ The text of *An Exhortacion* was again printed by Grafton, who also prepared a broadsheet *Proclamation* in Somerset’s name distilling the essence of Henrisoun’s extensive text into a shorter, more immediately digestible version of around 900 words. The political basis of this broadsheet version was, as Hoak notes, all too clear: “Hundreds of copies were nailed onto the doors of toll booths and churches all over Scotland both before and during the invasion; Somerset even tried to distribute copies to the Scottish army at Pinkie on the morning of the battle.” ⁹⁴ Henrisoun’s longer version is, I shall argue, more complicated than this propaganda use might suggest.

Admittedly, it does not at first appear that way. Henrisoun’s opening gambit in the *Exhortacion* is an appeal to “the infallible truthe of Gods woorde”; upon this, he tells the reader, he “will sette my foundacion.” ⁹⁵ Referring to the words of Jesus to the Pharisees recorded in Matthew (12:25) and Mark (3:24), Henrisoun argues that “every kingdom divided in it self, shal be brought to desolacion.” ⁹⁶ England and Scotland are in Henrisoun’s view part of one contiguous whole; one kingdom that ought to be reunited. ⁹⁷ In Henrisoun’s opinion, the whole argument is moot: “If this sentence bee well marked, and the persone of the speaker considered, I shall not nede to bee long in perswadyng you to beleve it.” ⁹⁸ Still, if his reader does seek more evidence than the word of Christ, Henrisoun is more than happy to provide it, delivering a good 14,000 words of persuasion in support. Key to this argument is the past as documented in chronicle history; from one point of authority, God, we are quickly turned to another, books. “Loke well,”
Henrisoun instructs his reader, “upon the Chronicles of this island of Britain, and consider the estate thereof, from the beginnyng, and compare them, with the histories of other nacions, and you shal not lightly heare or read of any one countrey sithe the worldes creacion, more invaded, wasted, and destroyed.”

There is an important distinction here, and it is the same one that Camden makes when he claims to have “poored upon many an old Rowle [...] and produced their testimonie.”

We should look well not upon the testimony itself, but upon its relation in chronicle; rather than being invited to consider the island’s history, we are asked to consider the history of that history. And to be fair, Henrisoun’s description is an accurate enough representation of the violent chronicle narrative of Britain. According to this narrative, the peoples of the island had been cruelly separated from one another, and “have ever sithe been vexed with intestine warres and civill discorde to the irremediable ruine and desolacion therof, until it shal please Gods goodnesse to have mercie on the people, and to reduce the islande to the firste estate, to one Monarchy, under one kyng and governor, as it was in the Britons tyme.”

In leaving Scotland and England each with an infant heir of around the same age, God has “provided that blessed meane and remedy for the glorie of his name, and for our wealth and commoditie,” a providential coincidence that might well have moved some.

Henrisoun’s argument, that division within the isle has brought internecine wars, is sound enough. Henrisoun’s patrons in London were not to know that the argument would come back to bite the English when James VI was to use it in the union debates of the early seventeenth century. Henrisoun’s dedication in the Exhortacion, naturally enough written to Protector Somerset, highlights the strange wonder of discord within a realm so clearly ordained to be one: “the civill discencion and mortal enemitie, betwene the twoo Realmes of Englane and Scotlane, it bryngeth me in muche marveill, how betwene so nere neighbors, dwelling with in one land, compassed within one sea, alied in bloude, and knitte in Christes faithe, suche unnaturall discorde should so long continue.”

One land, one blood, one faith: these were, essentially, to be the same arguments deployed in the union debates at the opening of the seventeenth century, arguments that were equally suspect when delivered from either side of the border—and only more so when one of those sides was in the middle of prosecuting an armed invasion. The question of faith was a particularly problematic one: the process leading to the Scottish Reformation was markedly different from events in England, and while elements of the ruling nobility in Scotland had flirted with promoting stronger ties in liturgical practice to the English Church (most obviously
during the “Godly fit” in the first year of the Earl of Arran’s protectorate),
this proved short lived. Indeed, the Exhortacion, though it alleges that
“the two realmes at the first were not onely united in one Empire, but also
in one Religion,” spends remarkably little time on arguing why or how this
should be so. Questions of land and blood were, perhaps, easier to argue.

But while the chronicle history is used to shore up Henrisoun’s posi-
tion, it also threatens to undermine it. To explicate issues of territorial and
familial connection within Britain, Henrisoun must, he declares, “repete
the estate of this island from the beginnyng, and what were the causes of
this division at the firste, and by what waies it hathe continued from tyme
tyme, and how it is yet norished.” History is a continuum: the causes
of the past continue into the present, and the present can only be under-
stood with respect to its origins. Although the Exhortacion argues for the
truth of one narrative progression of that history, it shares the inclusive
approach of the chronicle tradition from which it borrows, and ends up
delivering at least three potential histories for Britain. Firstly, we again
meet at the opening of the story with the murderously fictional Albina:

this islande of Britayn, whiche conteineth bothe realmes of
Englande and Scotland (as I saied afore) was at the firste, called
Albion, that is to saie the white lande, havyng that name Ab albis
rupibus, that is to saie, of the White Rockes and Cleves [...] whiche
opinion is more probable then the devise of a late Welshe Poete,
ymaginyng how it was called Albion, of one Albina, eldest of the fif-
tie daughters, of one Dioclesian kyng of Syria, whiche havyng killed
fifty kynges, beyng their husbandes, wer for the same exiled. And
after long wanderyng in y’ seas, arrived at laste in this Islande, where
thei ingendered with spirites, & brought furth .l. Giauntes, whiche
wer Gog Magog and his felowes, with suche poeticall fables, not
oneyl without good foundacion, but also mere contrary to al auncien-
t stories, and wellnere against al possibilitie of nature.

Like other writers we have seen in the previous chapter, Henrisoun both
dismisses the Albina myth and dwells on the details. Once again, whether
willingly or not, the narrator appears carried away by the narrative: the
imaginings of a Welsh poet are both improbable and not germane to the
argument, but that does not prevent them from pouring forth. These sorts
of stories are, we are told, poeticall fables. Echoing arguments deployed
by Polydore Vergil, Henrisoun goes on to stress that such stories are a
common problem; after all, “the beginnyng of all nacions for the more
part be fabulous and uncertain.” For that matter, not being able to place
one’s origins is not necessarily bad, and might be a very good thing: “what can bee more auncient,” Henrisoun argues, “more noble, more high or honorable, then to have a beginnyng beyond all memory.” In apparent contradiction to his aims in seeking out the root of Britain, to have an origin that is beyond memory is an honorable beginning. Having made that point, though, Henrisoun immediately turns to memorializing with some precision the name of Britain’s first king:

as by stories is to bee seen, of whom the firste that wee finde, was one Brutus, whiche, whether he came out of Italy or not, is not muche materiall, but certain it is, that suche a one reigned, and was firste Kyng of the whole islande: whiche beginnyng of the people, dooth make muche more with the honor and glory of this islande, then to deduce a pedegree, either from an outlaw of Italy, or a tirauntes sister out of Egipt, as Welshe & Scottishe Poetes, have phantastically fayned.

Henrisoun’s narrative thus very quickly begins to present a difficult, if not unresolvable, series of contradictions. Stories about origins, he tells us, are often fabulous. But, within those self-same stories, we can nevertheless find listed the first British king, Brutus. In another turn, the details of those stories about Brutus, whether he came from Italy or whether he was an outlaw, do not matter and in fact are best ignored. Whether these contradictions are highlighted by Henrisoun, or simply an unintended consequence of dealing in thorny mythical narratives, the problems do seem to gather weight. Brute’s spotted history in Italy was, as we have seen, part and parcel of his narrative; do away with the narrative and its usefulness starts to disappear. Deducing precise “length of tyme” or “processe of years” is, Henrisoun argues, unnecessary when one can claim a history beyond all memory. But we are then immediately offered a precise date for Brutus’s reign, “the yere after the creacion of the worlde, foure thou-sande, C C. and, xli.” The abrupt reversals in argument may be simply a slip, a product of reproducing chronicle, or, perhaps, something more is bound up with this retelling of the story that produces such paradox.

The story progresses as in other versions: Brute had three sons, Locrinus, Albanactus, and Camber, and split his territory between them. The overlordship remained with the line of the eldest son, and therefore, Henrisoun concludes, anyone who accepts the story of Brute must also accept this fact about his sons: “the supreme power and kyngdome, remained alwayes in the eldest: to whom the other twoo were obedient, as to a superior kyng. The profe wherof, if any bee so curious to require, I
aunswere, that the same histories, whiche speake of this particion, declare in likewise of the subjeccion: So that admittyng them in the one, thei muste likewise bee admitted in y‘ other.”

But if anyone were so curious as to consult those histories as Henrisoun suggests, they would discover precisely the sorts of details which An Exhortacion had advised we ignore: that Locrine was ignobly killed and the crown passed to Madan, a tyrant, and then to Mempricius, a fratricide. Henrisoun is at best contradictory, having just asked us not to dwell on the details of Brute before asking us to consider some quite precise details about his reign; having advised us to be selective in our understanding of historical sources before advising us to take all in all, to admit in one point and thus to admit in others. Nor did Scotland accept any of this: Boece replicated the Brute story but, for fairly obvious reasons, did not have any time for the idea of Locrine’s lordship over his brothers. From any angle, this is not an argument calculated to shut down opposition, so much as one which invites its counter.

We might say, perhaps, that this is an instance of historically minded authors advancing skepticism of others’ myths while remaining blind to the problems in their own. As noted in the foregoing chapter on Brute, Ashe writes that “sixteenth-century historians capable of critical clear-sightedness in the assessment of other peoples’ origin myths can appear to have lost all powers of analysis when it came to their own.” There is certainly more than an element of determined blindness in Henrisoun’s work. But there is also a distinct sense of the overdetermined. At one point, for example, Henrisoun calls on the authority of Rome, noting that “the Romaines, beyng most diligent reporters […] yet do thei never name any people called Scottes, ne make mencion of any suche Princes, as is pretended to have ruled over them.” The glorious acts of the Scots, if these acts existed, could not “have been hidden to the Romaines, which contented with all men for glory.” They are not reported, so they could not have taken place. This was, of course, the charge most often laid against Brute, not in favor of him: the argument that the Romans did not know of Scotland’s ancient heroes, and thus those heroes are unlikely to have existed, is an interesting turnaround of precisely the same things said about English heroes, Brute and his successors among them. Such issues and ironies are bound up in the material which the Exhortacion deploys.

Those issues recur in the argument around the legend of Scota, the third of the origin stories encountered by the tract. Having spent some time attempting to convince his reader of the truth of one chronicle origin myth, An Exhortacion spends almost as long arguing the falsehood of another: “there restethe to disprove,” Henrisoun sighs, “the fayned
alligacions of the contrary part, which convey you from Pharao, the tyrant of Egypt. Tackling Scotia appears to be viewed as a necessity. The problem, again, is one of old books not saying the right things and, in this case, not being written by the right people: “I must in part disclose the authors therof, whose untruthes, though I passe over, yet will they bewray it them selves: for it is not unknown what persons they be, that take upon them to write stories and Chronicles, both in England & Scotlande: which for the more parte, be Monkes and Fryers, suche as in name profess Religion, beyn in dede the perverters of all true Religion.”

Chronicle cannot be trusted because of the monastic nature of its authors. The line is a fairly audacious one to take, given that, as Henrisoun would well have known, it was these very sources which the story of Brute rested upon. Essentially, Henrisoun sets up the same choice as Richard Harvey would make after him. In choosing between a Monmouth and a Scot, a “Monk” and a “Traveller,” Harvey settles on Monmouth the monk as the lesser of two evils. In Henrisoun’s case, the monks are displaced to an argument about Scotia, and Monmouth is quietly sidestepped. But the problem is not just one of religion but of textual reliability. The stories of Scots origin are, An Exhortacion tells us, simply too full of holes: “in their stories and chronicles, myngelyng the same with so many sedicious falshodes, as it is in doubte, whether the lines or lies bee mo in number.”

There are a number of further reverberations, worth dwelling on here, in the dismissal of Scotia presented in An Exhortacion. The first involves the worth of poetry in history. Were Scotia simply an acknowledged story, Henrisoun proposes, there would be no need to address the problem of her falsehood: “If the matter wer onely Poetical, or upon desire to shewe an auncient beginnyng, it might happily be borne.” There is something here of William Lambarde’s position on Brute: that “it containeth matter, not only unlikely, but incredible also,” but to remove the Trojan from the historical record on that basis alone would be to deprive the nation of origin, “of all manner of knowledge of their first beginning.” The same
argument might, it seems, be acceptable for Scota. “But,” Henrisoun adds, “seeeyng the thyng is doen of a sette purpose, for norishyng division in the twoo Realmes, I cannot over passe it with silence.” Again, there is some audaciousness to the position: in the midst of a long argument, Henrisoun accuses others of being too longwinded; and in a text aimed at convincing his countrymen of an alliance with England, explicitly titled with that immediate aim, he dismisses those with a “sette purpose” beyond being poetical. Origins are important for Henrisoun partly because they provide a demonstrable exemplar of character. In this case, they provide an index to a falsehood that could not otherwise be fully appreciated: “And because it were long to reherse al their lesynges and vanities, beyng to many to be well numbered, and to appaurant to be hidden (for all bee poudered with like peper) yet in the Scottishe story a greate part of their practises is to bee seen, and that even at the very beginnyng, wher at, if thei stumble, what shall we judge of the reste.” Like the countless, numberless stones encountered by poets at Stonehenge and other sites, the lies are both visible and vanishing, too many to be cognitively encountered and too many not to be. Rather more telling, though, is the place of this origin story in the understanding of Scotland, as a structural parallel with the place of Brute earlier in Henrisoun’s text. Lies at the very beginning of the Brute story had best be ignored in favor of the more important truth that follows; but lies at the start of Scota’s story reveal the dangers of the rest.

When we come to Scota herself, Henrisoun’s dismissal is as exacting and overdetermined as that of Albina produced in English texts. In Holinshed, Albina cannot possibly have existed because fifty sisters can be found with fifty different names, none of which are Albina. For Henrisoun, Gathelus and Scota cannot have founded the Scots race together because, although fictional, they nevertheless lived at different times: “For accomp tyng the tyme of Pharaos reigne, father of Scota, after ye Hebrues, then was she in the yere of the creacion of the worlde, twoo thousand foure hundred yeres: and by our histories, Gathelus was in the yere of the creacion of the world three thousand sixe hundred fourte and three: whiche is difference, twelue hundred yeres and more. THIS beinge true, here were a very unfitte mariage betwene these twoo persones, the Bridegrome beinge elder then y” Bride, by .xii.C. and .xl. yeres.” The detail, so far as it goes, is inarguable, and it effectively denies the combined Greek and Egyptian dynasty at the heart of Scots concepts of national origin. The argument again feels lighthearted, but the joke around the plausibility of myth is thin for those invested in it. Indeed, perhaps Henrisoun himself felt some anxiety around the process of deconstructing dearly held legend: like Camden after him,
an apology goes hand in hand with the dismissal of myth: “I speake not this to minishe the honoure and glory of my countrey, nor to deface y' nobilitie, or the valeaunt actes of the Scottishe kynges, but to shewe that the first inhabitors of this island, wer al Britaines.”

Given everything in the text of *An Exhortacion* which might well be said to have diminished the honor and glory of Henrisoun’s homeland, the denial of intent is striking. Joking aside, national myth was clearly an important business.

Still, Henrisoun does not only rely on old books to make his point, but old blood. It makes sense for England and Scotland to be regarded as one, not because “Scottes be mere Britaynes, or Englishe men mere Britaynes, but that the more parte of bothe people bee discended of Britaynes.” There is a fairly subtle genealogical point here about how blood lines pass across generations; or at least, it is more subtle than that often employed by the Tudor state, where the imagined royal descent from Brute seems somehow to grant all the English a kind of Britishness. But there is also in *An Exhortacion* something quintessentially magic about the properties of British blood, which is able to survive and resist invasion after invasion of external peoples:

For though the Islande hath been often invaded by sundry nacions as Romaynes, Pictes, Scottes Saxons, Danes, and lastely by Normaynes: yet doth it not folowe, y' the whole bloud of Britaynes was so extincte thereby, but that there must great numbre remain in every parte of the island, therby it maie be sated y' the race of them is mixte, but not merely fordoen and extirped: for no countrey can bee so invaded by straungers, y' the whole race of the olde inhabi-ters, can bee wore all out, but that the substaunce or more parte, shall still remain.

Despite successive invasions the blood of the British remains, and not in a small but in the greatest part. Although lands, languages, customs, and even religious faith may have altered and diverged across the island, “yet doth the bloud and generacion remain.” For Henrisoun, British blood can never be extirpated, but, like the physical ruins of the past, remains into the present.

Books and blood are, I would suggest, cruxes at the heart of the understanding of national origin. They recur in the other text I want to draw on in the present argument, *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549), probably if not necessarily authored by Robert Wedderburn. Dedicated to Mary of Guise, in itself a political act indicative of the text’s orientation in regard to the internal situation in Scotland, the work is a miscellany of
various forms, memorializing popular ballads, legends, and advice alongside biblical, pastoral, and allegorical narratives.\(^{130}\) While once known, at least in English literary criticism, as a “curious production” which, according to *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, passes through “a mosaic of verbatim translations from Alain Chartier and others,” the work has more recently been understood as a project not unlike that which Camden would produce in his *Ruines*, one which seeks to define qualities of nation by processes of memorial inclusion.\(^{131}\) Uniting the broad array of material presented in the text is a dream vision involving a lady of “excellent extraction ande of anciant genolgy,” Dame Scotia, and her three sons.\(^{132}\) The sons are identified as the three Estates of Scotland: Nobility, Clergy, and Commons. As a personification of the Scots nation, Scotia’s identity is, like Drayton’s Albion, a “Genius of the place” and less clearly defined than that of her sons. The author of *The Complaynt* steers clear of directly invoking an avowedly Egyptian Scota as its central figure, but there may nonetheless be an available link; at the least, the Irish historian Seathrún Céitinn (known in English as Geoffrey Keating) would draw the connection between the two figures in relation to Ireland’s history in his *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (ca. 1634). Whatever the case, the work offers a strong defense of Scots traditions and rights; the “complaint” as leveled at the nation’s three estates might better be understood as a call to unity and to arms. Linguistically, too, the work is forthright in ideologically advancing Scotland as a nation, being written in what the author, in the “Prolog to the Redar,” calls “domestic scottis langage.”\(^{133}\) In this case, that language is a robust Middle Scots dialect—and that this is claimed and marked out as domestic speaks volumes about the relationship of the Gaelic and Scots vernaculars in Scotland.\(^{134}\)

Here, I focus on the argument of chapters 10 and 11, which take aim squarely at the English propaganda machine. At the opening of chapter 10, *The Complaynt* stakes out its issues with those “oratours of Ingland,” who “at there protectors instance, hes set furtht ane buik, quhair be thai intende to preve that scotland vas ane colone of ingland quhen it vas fyrst inhabit.”\(^{135}\) Under Protector Somerset’s direction, a book has been produced claiming Scotland as an English colony: that could be any of the English tracts produced in the period, though it seems possible that *The Complaynt* might have Henrisoun’s work particularly in mind. Equally, the charge that the English authors blindly indulge in argument backed by evidence which “aperis to them to be invincible, quhou beit thai be bot frevol” feels like an entirely reasonable description of the tracts printed in the 1540s under Grafton, in which
reasons are given for English suzerainty that are both decidedly frivolous and delivered deadpan. The author of *The Complaynt* is also under no illusion as to the grim intent behind all this: “there speciale inten-
tione is to gar there cruel invasions perpetrat contrar our regularme apeir in the presens of forrain princis that thai have ane just titil to mak veyr contrar us and quhou beit that the said poetical beuk be dytit oratourly to persuaid the vulgar ignorans til adhere til inventit fablis contrar the just verite.” Old poetical books supply the excuse for armed invasion, yet, as *The Complaynt* goes on to stress, “realmis ar nocht conquest be buikis, bot rather be bluid.” The point is at once a strong challenge and an acknowledgment of the military reality (if the author of *The Complaynt* was Wedderburn, it is salutary to note that his estate was destroyed following the battle of Pinkie). It is also just a little jarring as part of an argument which is itself delivered in a book, particularly given the nature of that text as one which attempts to define and defend Scots nationhood through a figure named for the country; the contrast recurs as the narrative continues.

In its attack on the English position, *The Complaynt* reserves special attention for the issue of union and its alleged origin point in Brute, again pointing its finger at the books of the English:

> there is ane passage in the said beuk, the quilk the inglismen hes ane ardant desyr to se it cum til effect. The tenor of the passage sais, that it var verry necessare for the veilfayre of ingland and scotland that bayht the realmis var conjunit to giddir, and to be undir the gouernyn of ane prince, and the tua realmis to be callit the ile of bertan, as it vas in the begynnyng, quhen the trojan brutus conquest it fra the giantis.

Such stories, for the author of *The Complaynt*, are not only so much bunk but also represent a suspect irreligious indulgence in works of prophecy: “the inglismen gifis ferme credit to diverse prophane propheseis of merlyne, and til uthir ald corruppit vaticinaris.” To the imaginations of Merlin, the English “gyve mair faitht” than to the visions of biblical prophets, “to the prophesie of ysaye, Ezechiel, Jeremie, or to the evangel.” The lessons of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and John the Evangelist are all ignored; instead the English pay attention only to their “rusty ryme.” Once again, the *Complaynt* slings mud calculated to stick. That the English were prone to giving more credence to the prophecies of Merlin than to the Gospel was not only a Scots complaint. Roger Ascham, who was acting as tutor to Princess Elizabeth when *The Complaynt* was printed, spoke for many
in finding the matter of Arthurian material at base somewhat distaste-
ful, saying of Mallory’s *Morte d’Arthur* that “the whole pleasure of which
booke standeth in two special points, in open mans slaughter and bold
bawdrye. In which booke those be counted the noblest knightes, that do
kill most men without any quarrel, and commit foulest adoultres by
subtlest shiftes.” Yet Ascham also remained bitterly aware of the power of
such texts, and their particular appeal in certain circles: “Yet I know, when
God’s Bible was banished the court, and Morte Arthure received into the
Princes chamber.” Given that *The Complaynt* spends much of its time
in earlier chapters demonstrating extensive knowledge of, and lengthy
engagement with, biblical truths, it may well have appeared on fairly firm
footing in deriding tracts such as Henrisoun’s which briefly invoked God’s
word before moving straight to Galfriadian history.

But *The Complaynt* does not shy away itself from pointing to
prophecy, following up its punches with a note straight from the English
chronicles evidenced “in ane beuk callit polichornicon.” Just as
Middleton would call on Higden’s *Polychronicon* as a visible relic of the
past in *Hengist, King of Kent*, so the book is raised up by *The Complaynt* as
an instance of prophetic obsession. The English reliance on the past makes
a key mistake, we are told, and that is to think that its direction has only
one possible outcome. Prophecy, in particular, can be misread or made
to carry more than one meaning, yet in their approach to Scotland the
English “considyr nocht that al propheseis hes doutsum and duobil expositi-
ons.” Such mistakes, the argument goes, can all too easily come home
to roost. While prophecies can come true, the English may well come to
wish that were not the case: “as i have befor rehersit, i beleve that there
prophesie sal cum til effect, bot nocht to their intent, and that ingland
and scotland sal be ane monarche under ane prince in this generatione
[...] the quhilk prophesie sais, that ingland sal be first conquest be the
deynis, and syne be the saxons, and thirdly be the Normandis; and there
last conquessing sal be conquest be the scottis, quhome inglismen haldis
maist vile.” On this point, at least, *The Complaynt* would be proven right
in the fullness of time: many in England would come to see the accession
of the Stuarts to the throne of England as a kind of foreign conquest. In
the late 1540s, though, this would probably have felt more like bravado.
But the threat may not be entirely empty either: the authorities in England
seem to have been genuinely concerned about the capacity of prophecy to
raise discord and insurrection; as recently as 1542, certain types of pro-
phetic interpretation had been forbidden by statute. Despite assuring the
reader that the prophecies in question are vain, false, diabolical in nature,
and against the will of God, *The Complaynt* may have some weight behind it in its surety that these same prophecies have power enough to rebound upon the English, and will be “fulfillit to there auen mischeif.”

In a sense, *The Complaynt* returns here to the question of whether realms are conquered by books or by blood; the answer seems to be that it might just be both. In calling attention to the number of times the island of Britain has been successfully invaded, by Danes, Saxons, and Normans, *The Complaynt* probes a distinct weak point in narratives of the enduring impregnability of the English nation, noting that what has happened once (or in this case three times) can all too easily happen again. But in raising a history and prophecy of invasion from one of the key English chronicle sources, the text at the same time both debunks and demonstrates the power of old books in the present. Rusty rhyme is foolhardy to rely on, not just because it is false, but because it might well twist and turn out to be true. In fact, books and blood go hand in hand. What the history presented by these books has to tell us is, *The Complaynt* argues, almost the equal and opposite of the genealogical claims made in tracts such as *An Exhortacion*. Where Henrisoun regarded the British blood as indelible, resisting invasion after invasion, *The Complaynt* views one particular invasion as having destroyed the blood of the British for good. English kings, we are told, come of the “false blude that discendit” from the Saxon invaders named “sergestes and engestes” who usurped the throne of Britain. Once again, we are returned to the moment of Hengist. Here, the blood of the present-day English is contained in the ancient aggressors, not the heroic British resistance; certainly, that narrative better fits the situation on the ground in Scotland. *The Complaynt* goes further, noting that since the Saxon invasion, the English monarchy had no “ryght to the crone of ingland: ergo, thai hef na titil to the crone of scotland.” Whether Scotland was or was not anciently subject to Locrine’s southern British kingdom of Loegria is neither here nor there, because that nation no longer exists and Locrine’s line was extinguished.

On this point, once again, the text uses the books of the English against them: “as the cronikls of ingland makis manifest,” English history divulges tyrant after tyrant, and all “succedit of that fals blude.” Rattling through royal dynasties, *The Complaynt* singles out Henry I, who was “banest fra the crone,” Henry III, similarly “banest fra the crone be his second sone Richart,” John, who “slay the heretours of his predecessours, and brukit the realme twenty yeirs,” Edward II, who died “meserablye in preson,” Richard II, “cruelly slane be his auen men,” Henry VI, who “lossit his liyf be eduard the thrid of that name,” Richard III, who “sla the childir of
eduard the thrid, and sa brukit the cuntre certan tyme,” and finally Henry VII, an interloper who “be the support and supple of the kyng of France, gat the crone of ingland.”152 The list is a neat enough summation of the more telling embarrassments of English history, right up to the legitimacy of Henry Tudor (brave enough given the position of Henry’s daughter, Margaret, in Scotland’s royal line). The list is quick, stark: all English kings have succeeded from false blood, and most of them are traitors to one another. This might have been a bit too near the knuckle even for Scots readers, whose own dynastic history was not exactly free of such activity. For that matter, Mary of Guise was herself busily resisting the interference and machinations of Scotland’s lords in her infant daughter’s reign as much as she was the English; a matter which the author of The Complaynt takes a definitive side on in dedicating the text to her. But what the genealogical progression does show is the intimate ties between the significance of blood and the books in which that blood is documented.

For the author of The Complaynt, as for James Henrisoun, history is a continuum: what happens in the past lasts into the present. Their disagreement is on what that line of meaning looks like; that such a line exists, can be read, and fundamentally matters is never in dispute. With that in mind, I would like to conclude this chapter with a word on Scotia from Henrisoun’s printer, Richard Grafton, the King’s Printer at the center of the production of English propaganda through the 1540s.

Earlier in the decade, in 1543, Richard Grafton published his version of Hardyng’s chronicle, perhaps with one eye on a (literal) pretext for the invasion of Scotland. What better, when calling on chronicle to back up one’s arguments, than to have a recently printed edition to hand? But while Hardyng’s work, which replicates the Brute story, in some ways no doubt lent itself very well to the cause of supporting English overlordship of Scotland, its inclusive approach to mythical history ensured it could also be read in other ways—in fact, in just the sort of ways in which The Complaynt engages, and which we have already seen put to use in Richard Broughton’s reading of the chronicle in the 1630s.

Grafton’s Hardyng gives us the traditional story of Scota, daughter of “kyng Pharao,” noting how “Mewynus the Bryton chronicler” tells us of the landing of “Gadelus and Scota” in Britain and that “of hir name that countré there aboute / Scotlande she called that tyme with outen doubt.”153 Even displaced into the mouth of Mewynus, this is not detail which backs up the position taken on Scotia by tracts such as Henrisoun’s. Like other versions of the Scotia story we have already seen, the chronicle also repeats the story of the Stone of Scone. At Scotia’s death, as a monument from the land
she left and as gift to the land she named, “she left a precious stone / In Albany, on whiche Moses did preache.”

Here the biblical emphasis is on the connection of the stone to Moses as per Exodus (17:6) and Numbers (20:11). Yet the stone which Scota bequeaths is not just a monument of Israel or of Egypt, but of Scota herself: “And buryed there she was by hir self alone / Whiche stone was holy, as some menne then did teache / And did miracles [...] / In honour it was had, bothe of greate and small / And holden for a relique moost special.”

As a marker of Scota’s grave, the stone is a double monument, its holiness related to both Israelite prophet and Scots matriarch. The stone, the chronicle relates, was eventually taken by Edward I (“Edward with long shankes”), removed to Westminster, rededicated to “sainct Edward,” and used in English coronations. The moral supplied by the chronicle reads the endpoint of the stone’s story, its role as a centerpiece in the coronation of English monarchs, as a memorialization of Scotland’s subjection: “In remembranc of kynges of Scottes always / Subjectes should bee, to kynges of Englande ay.”

The chronicle thus seems to deliver a point squarely in favor of Henry VIII’s England, but again there seems a bit more to the episode than straightforward propaganda. Coming after the description of the stone’s holy use in Scotland, the story of Edward Longshanks having “Brought it awaye again the Scottes unthankes” makes the English look dangerously sacrilegious. Indeed, the story highlights that it is military might, rather than inherent right, which grants the English the stone; the relation of the myth might thus be said to expose the claims of the English rather than support them. Certainly, the regularly brutal actions of the English forces in Scotland during the 1540s were detrimental to the regime’s espoused causes, a fact which those Scots friendly to the English, as well as senior figures on the English side, were at pains to point out. All in all, Alec Ryrie notes, “England’s conduct of the wars belied its proclaimed higher purposes and tainted it with hypocrisy as well as cruelty.”

In that context, the medieval story of England guaranteeing its rights over Scotland by simply stealing the holiest of relics might look a little different; at least, it gave the lie to much of the rhetoric of natural union deployed in support of the campaign. Either Grafton was aware of the potential for such a reading, and printed regardless, or, like many of his countrymen, he proceeded without much regard for how violent military conduct might be viewed.

With Grafton, Henrisoun, and (if to a lesser extent) The Complaynt of Scotland, we are left with an interpretive tension: a question as to whether and to what extent such authors can have remained determinedly blind to the problems they themselves highlight. This is, in a sense, the
question at the heart of engagement with origin myth throughout the period, and it is not a straightforward one to resolve. It may be, as Ashe suggests, a product of the genre, an inclusive chronicle approach to history that produces texts which are “both certain in their dismissal and yet incapable of ignoring that which is dismissed.” But it might also be the case, as I suggested in the earlier reading of Albina, that authors make use of that structural inclusivity. And perhaps, again, ideas of union, shared bloodlines, or claims evidenced in ancient books are simply, to borrow from Richard III (ca. 1592), palpable devices: lies which nobody is so gross as to believe, yet, as Shakespeare’s scrivener warns us, “who’s so bold, but says he sees it not?” Those kinds of possibilities are bound up in the deployment of Scota, and recur, perhaps most obviously, in the final example I want to touch on here in concluding this volume: King Arthur.

NOTES

1 Harvey, Philadelphus, dedicatory epistle. Sig. A2r.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Harvey, Philadelphus, p. 1.
5 John E. Curran, “Imagining Non-History,” p. 4.
6 Harvey, Philadelphus, p. 1.
7 Harvey, Philadelphus, p. 2.
8 Ibid.
9 George Buchanan, Rerum Scoticarum Historia, book 1, para. 3. English trans. The Latin reads: “Neque enim fieri posse existimarunt ut non in magna eruditionis opinione vulgo essent qui cum tota antiquitate certamen sibi proposuisent, et quamquam de re non admodum magna lis esset, tamen quia de nomine ipso patriae aegeretur, tanquam pro aris et focis omnique totius gentis vetere gloria sibi contendendum putarunt.”
11 Ibid.
13 Buchanan, Rerum Scoticarum Historia, book 1, para. 4.
14 Clare Jackson, Restoration Scotland, pp. 46–47.
15 On Boece, Mason notes “his apparent willingness to invent sources to plug the gaps which his medieval predecessors had left unfilled. The result is a continuous history of the Scots from their mythical origins in remote prehistory through
the legendary foundation of the kingdom by Fergus MacFerchard in 330 BC to the subsequent reigns of each of his 104 successors on the Scottish throne. Much of this was, of course, fabrication.” Mason, “The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism,” p. 168.


17 Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historia*, prelim., para. 5. English trans. The Latin original runs: “Nam quum in ea adhuc sis aetate, qua ingenia iam disciplinarum capacissima sunt, cognosces profecto ex hac historia non modo quae a maioribus tuis gesta sunt, quibusque artibus imperium hoc iam supra millesimum octingentesimum annum retentum est, externis nullis unquam subditum imperii (quanquam interim et ab Romanis et ab Anglis gravissimis afficti fuimus malis, tantumque non oppressi vix caput exerere potuerimus) verum etiam collatis omnibus exemplis, praeterita cum praesentibus componoendo, quonam pacto potissimum ipse quoque regnum istud tuum quam optime administrare debas.”

18 Ibid., book 1, para. 1.


21 Boece, *Scotorum Historia*, prelim., para. 3. English trans. The Latin runs: “At si cui mirandum videtur quamobrem nusquam in tota insula apparuerint descripta illorum virorum opera, si in memoriam revocet quantam toto regno nostro stragem literarum omnium Eduardus primus Anglorum rex ediderit, quantaque amentia per sacra profanaque debacchatus sit, nihil usquam integrum relinquens, imo nihil non extremae interlocionis involvens, quum vesano furore extimare omnipotens nostrae monumenta et in Anglorum mores nos transformare in animo haberet, mirari profecto desinet, quum et sacros ritus consuetudine ecclesiarum Angliae, exustis per omnes ecclesias Scotorum libris celebrare coegerit.”


23 Arthur H. Williamson, “Scots, Indians and Empire,” p. 47. Similarly, Mason comments: “it was Boece’s racier and more satisfying version of events which was translated into Scots by John Bellenden and published in Edinburgh in the 1530s. Mair’s *History* was effectively swept into oblivion by the brash self-confidence which characterized Boece’s chronicle just as it did the Scottish court of James V.” Mason, “The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism,” p. 168.

24 John Bellenden, *Chroniklis of Scotland*, B1r.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.


31 Ruch, *Albina and Her Sisters*, p. 111. The marking out of Danaus as Egyptian in some early modern accounts may also stem from this competition. If this is the case, there is some irony in the myth of Albina rebounding on the English.


34 Bernau, “Myths of Origin,” p. 117.

35 As with the longevity of Brute and Albina, this was also partly due to the conditions of textual production in Scotland: “The market for literature *per se* was totally different from that of England. Early modern Scotland had an extraordinarily robust and conservative literary canon.” Jane Stevenson, “Reading, Writing and Gender,” p. 338. Boece, for example, was a living text that continued in circulation, and continued to be updated, well into the 1700s: “Post-1540 manuscripts may in part be explained by the fact that this text remained in high demand and was never reprinted, but also, recopying in manuscript allowed for the possibility of revision and narrative continuation up to the time of writing; thus NLS MS 2766 contains a continuation from Holinshed, and NLS MS 5288 from Lindsay of Pittscottie and several others, bringing the chronicle up to about 1637.” Sebastiaan Verweij, *The Literary Culture of Early Modern England*, p. 134.


Barnes, Foure Bookes of Offices, p. 76.

In 1598, Barnes was accused in Star Chamber of attempting to poison John Browne, a relatively minor civic official but by all accounts a thorn in the side of Ralph Eure, third Baron Eure and Lord of the middle marches, who seems to have gotten Barnes off the hook. See John D. Cox, “Barnabe Barnes,” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.


Ibid. Levin and Ward comment: “James employed the patriarchal language in common usage among the governors of early modern Europe, language that assumed a wife could no more disobey her husband than a body could disobey its head.” Levin and Ward, “Introduction,” p. 6.

Ibid., p. 5.

Quoted in Catherine Loomis, The Death of Elizabeth I, p. 2.

Quoted in John Watkins, Representing Elizabeth, p. 16.

Ibid., pp. 16–17.


Watkins comments: “James’s panegyrists […] may not have blinded anyone to his identity as a Scot whose gender, speech, personal manners, and managerial style contrasted with the queen who had ruled for almost half a century.” Ibid., p. 15.

Camden, Britannia, p. 119.

Speed, The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine, p. 131.

Ibid.

Camden, Britannia, p. 119.

Ibid.

Kidd, British Identities, p. 127.

Camden, Britannia, p. 119.

Slatyer, Palae-Albion, p. 283.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 295.

Ibid., p. 285.


Ibid., p. 287.

Ibid., p. 301.

Ibid.
On Hardyng, Bernau notes: “It is clear that Hardyng was well acquainted with Scotland, and James I is said to have offered him a bribe to surrender his papers. But most of the documents, which are still preserved in the Record Office, have been shown to be forgeries, and were probably manufactured by Hardyng himself.” Bernau, “Myths of Origin,” p. 109.

Broughton, Ecclesiastical History, chap. 3, p. 11.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. In his (probable) use of Grafton, Broughton perhaps understandably omitted the detail that Scotland’s kings had traditionally sat “breechlesse” on the stone. See Richard Grafton’s The Chronicle of John Hardyng, sig. F2r.

On this point, see Hopkins, The Cultural Uses of the Caesars, esp. chap. 5, “Cleopatra and the Myth of Scota.” The Egyptian link in particular, Hopkins argues, may have proved problematic for James in drawing attention to a Gaelic past (and hence to James as doubly a foreign ruler).

Alec Ryrie notes that “Queens regnant, and female regents, were frequently able to wield real power in early modern Europe. The difficulty lay in those sinews of monarchy, marriage and succession. The intractability of these problems for queens regnant is neatly demonstrated by the various solutions to them attempted by Mary Stewart, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth Tudor. [...] There was, in fact, no good solution to the problem of how to be a queen regnant in sixteenth-century Europe.” Ryrie, The Origins of the Scottish Reformation, p. 54.

Jane E. A. Dawson, Scotland Re-formed, p. 155. The “contest over Mary, Queen of Scots’s marriage would dominate the next decade or more.” Ryrie, The Origins of the Scottish Reformation, p. 54.


Scotland’s activities abroad included “trading across the North Sea to the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia and even Poland; sending scholars to the Netherlands and France; sealing royal marriages with Denmark and France. And it was with France above all that Scotland formed an alternative, and remarkably long-lived, ‘special relationship.’” Ryrie, The Origins of the Scottish Reformation, p. 2.

Quoted in David Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, p. 36. As Armitage notes, neither England nor Scotland was alone in laying claim to an imperial crown: “Late medieval and early modern rulers made increasingly frequent claims to independent imperium.” The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, p. 32. On the imperial position of Scotland, see Mason, “This Realm of Scotland Is an Empire? Imperial Ideas and Iconography in Early Renaissance Scotland.”

Armitage comments: “These claims may also have been related to the acquisition of the Orkney and Shetland Islands after the marriage of James III
to Margaret of Denmark in 1468, to claims to territories in France (such as Saintonge), as well as to James IV’s attempts to bring the Western Isles under the control of the crown.” Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 36. By the seventeenth century, Camden could claim with some confidence that “The Kings of Scotland, beside the ample realm of Scotland commands the 300 Western Isles, the 30. of Orkney & Schetland.” Camden, *Remaines*, pp. 3–4. That said, Camden also credits the Kings of England with more or less the same territory.

82 Indeed, as historians have noted, many of the Scots nobles initially favored English intervention in Scotland, if for their own territorial and religious reasons. For a more detailed argument, see Mason’s “The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism.”

83 Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 37. As Dawson puts it, “The English appeal was based upon a union of the two realms and Somerset’s Proclamation […] insisted co-operation was in the Scots’ best interests. In his Epistle the following year a glowing picture was painted of a joyous union, cemented by the marriage of Edward and Mary, with the two kingdoms basking in divine approval for their ‘godly’ conjunction and reformed religion.” Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed*, p. 170.

84 Armitage offers a helpful overview of the Declaration: “Before the arrival of Brutus, the author of the Declaration argued, Britain had been inhabited by a race of giants, ‘people without order or civilitie’; Brutus and his sons had brought order to the ‘rude’ inhabitants, and ensured the continuing administration of justice by the appointment of a single superior over the three kingdoms ‘of whom the sayd astates should depend.’” Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 38. Henry, however, seems to have been mainly interested in eliminating any chance of a distracting invasion from the Scots during his planned campaigns in France.

85 Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 41. Whether the Epistle was written by Somerset himself, or on his behalf, is not germane to the present argument.

86 Dawson comments: “In an important change to English priorities, Edward VI’s uncle, Protector Somerset, concentrated resources upon Scotland.” Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed*, p. 169. Somerset had led the initial invasion of Scotland while Earl of Hertford in 1544 under Henry VIII. His “commitment to the Scottish war and to the marriage was much more wholehearted than his old master’s had ever been.” Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 73.


88 Ibid.

89 Dale Hoak notes “the carefully orchestrated production of a series of tracts designed to persuade an international audience of the merits of Anglo-Scots union. In the course of this campaign, six such tracts were published in London in 1547 and 1548, all of them by the king’s printer, Richard Grafton. Several have
become familiar enough, thanks to the authors’ inventive use of a unionist rhetoric of ‘Great Britain’. But all six need to be viewed together, in chronological sequence, for what they reveal of another, hidden history—the development of Cecil’s and Smith’s conception of a British polity that was at once both empire and monarchical republic.” Hoak, “Sir William Cecil, Sir Thomas Smith,” p. 43.


91 On the political use of Latin in textual production, Ohlmeyer notes: “Latin tracts, composed in the intellectual lingua franca of early modern Europe, were specifically written for an international, scholarly audience, often with the explicit intention of defending reputations and shaping continental attitudes.” Ohlmeyer, “Literature and the New British and Irish Histories,” p. 249.


93 Dawson, Scotland Re-formed, p. 170.


95 Henrisoun, An Exhortacion, B2v.

96 Henrisoun may well have had access to the recently published Great Bible, which Grafton was involved in printing. The phrase is better known by the one that follows, and which has become proverb: that a house divided cannot stand.

97 Henrisoun’s argument must have stuck in the mind. William Lamb pointed out that if territorial occupation of one landmass alone made a kingdom, then all the countries of continental Europe ought to be one. This did not stop the supporters of James VI bringing out the same arguments half a century later, nor for that matter did it prevent the unionist arguments of the recent “better together” campaign (in relation to the Scottish independence referendum of 2014).

98 Henrisoun, An Exhortacion, B2v.

99 Ibid., B3r.

100 Discussed at the close of this volume’s introductory chapter, above.

101 Henrisoun, An Exhortacion, B4v.

102 Ibid., B5r.

103 Ibid., A2r–A2v.

104 Some have found an explicit link in the rhetoric between the two regimes, following Armitage who notes that English arguments were “revived in 1604, as proponents of Anglo-Scottish union under James VI and I recalled approvingly Somerset’s arguments in favour of a ‘perfect monarchie’ under the comon name of Albion or Brytane.” Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, p. 47.

105 Indeed, the English actions through the decade, with their reaction in Scotland to persecution of Protestants under Mary of Guise, in the end probably only pushed the Scots Kirk further; the particular brand of Protestantism favored by Knox was formed in the crucible of the 1540s. See Ryrie, The Origins of the Scottish Reformation.
106 Henrisoun, _An Exhortacion_, D6v.
107 Ibid., B5v–B6r.
108 Ibid., B7r–B7v.
109 Ibid., B7v.
110 Ibid., B8v.
111 Ibid., B8r.
112 Ibid., B8r, B8v.
113 Ibid., B8v.
114 Ibid., C1v.
115 Ashe, “Holinshed and Mythical History,” p. 158.
116 Henrisoun, _An Exhortacion_, C2r.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid., D6v–D7r.
119 Ibid., D7r.
120 Ibid., E1r–E1v.
121 Ibid., E1v.
122 Ibid., E2r.
123 Ibid., E1v.
124 Ibid., E3v–E4r.
125 Ibid., C4r.
126 Ibid., C4v.
127 Ibid., C4v–C5r.
128 Ibid., C5v.
130 Houwen comments: “The _Complaynt_ is not easy to characterise; it is a piece of political propaganda modelled on Alain Chartier’s _Quadriloque Invectif_ as well as a sermon on the desperate state of Scotland; a historical work as well as a defence of the use of the vernacular, and in the middle of it all there is a pastoral section in which the author conducts an encyclopedic tour de force in which astronomy, cosmography and meteorology are some of the broader topics discussed.” “Cacophonous Catalogues,” para. 1.
132 _The Complaynt of Scotland_, p. 68.
133 Ibid., p. 16.
134 Kidd notes the complexity in the shifting of Irish, English, and Scottish as language terms: “The Lowland vernacular was known throughout the later medieval period as _Inglis_; the first extant reference to it as _Scottis_ dates from 1494. Gaelic had been the _lingua Scotia_ or _Scotorum_. Now ‘Scots’ began to be appropriated by Lowlanders as a description of their language. There was an exchange of terminology and with it the ethnic affiliation of language. By the sixteenth century, Gaelic was increasingly described in alien terms as the Irish tongue—_lingua Hibernica_ or _Erse_.“ Kidd, _British Identities_, p. 125.
135 The Complaynt of Scotland, p. 82.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Roger Ascham, The Scholemaster, pp. 27–28. Ascham’s work was published posthumously in 1570. Not perhaps an entirely fair assessment of the subtleties of Mallory’s text, Ascham’s view did not in any case prevent the runaway success of Caxton’s printing of Mallory’s work.
144 The Complaynt of Scotland, p. 85.
145 Ibid., p. 83.
146 Ibid., p. 85.
147 Hadfield notes that “[w]hereas Wales and Ireland had been conquered and assimilated by the English crown, the English did not conquer Scotland with military force, as many English kings had attempted to do with mixed success throughout the Middle Ages. Instead, they were forced to grant the English throne to an alien ruler, establishing an importantly different power relationship between Scotland and the rest of Britain.” Hadfield, Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain, p. 2.
148 The Complaynt of Scotland, p. 85.
149 Ibid., p. 86.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid., F2v.
159 Richard III, 3.6.12.
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Chapter 4

Arthurian Afterthoughts
Princes, Kings, and the Prophetic Past

In the middle of the city of Edinburgh, an igneous outcrop from the Carboniferous age pokes its rocky head at the sky. The remains of volcanic and glacial activity millions of years in the past, the peak known as Arthur’s Seat rises a modest 250 meters or so above sea level, still quite enough to provide (weather depending) excellent views of the surrounding city and countryside. Robert Louis Stevenson’s description put it rather more magisterially, where Arthur’s Seat is “a hill for magnitude, a mountain in virtue of its bold design.” Designated a site of special scientific interest based on its geological history and natural habitats, the hill is supposed to have inspired James Hutton to produce some of the foundational work on geological time by way of the observable differences in sedimentary and igneous rock in its cliff faces. Such, at least, is the claim of the tourist-facing description within the Scottish Parliament (and from whence I was also directed to the Stevenson quote). The Parliament building, like much of Edinburgh, sits in the Seat’s shadow. But if Arthur’s Seat is a symbol of scientific investigation into geological time, it is also a reminder of the importance of historical, historiographical, and mythical time. There are obvious reasons why curators of exhibitions within the Scottish Parliament would choose to tell visitors to the capital about both Stevenson and Hutton, and why these Scots greats should be bound up with the surrounding landscape. Indeed, in something of a tour de force of architectural nationalism, the building itself memorializes the spirit which birthed it, with memorable quotes from Scots literature physically etched into the concrete of the building’s exterior.

Like other modern geopolitical endeavors, drawing a connection to Arthur’s Seat in order to sediment national authority is not a new activity. Claiming Arthur’s Seat, in both the geographic sense of controlling Scotland’s capital and the mythological sense of taking up a pan-British crown, was a popular business in the early modern period. William Camden, capitalizing on the accession of James VI to the crown of
England, included a popular (or at least what he claimed was a popular) anagram in his Remaines: “To begin with his most Excellent Majestie our dread Soveraigne, was made this declaring his undoubted rightfull claime to the Monarchy of Britain, as the successor of the valourous king Arthur. / Charles James Steuart. / CLAIMES ARTHURS SEATE. / As this also truly verified in his person.” The anagram juxtaposes James’s name with his claim on Arthur’s Seat: in landscape, in royal heredity, and in prophetic tradition, James claims Arthur. Once again, books and blood combine. King and country emerge from, and converge in, the constructed textual puzzle of the anagram; and it might be said to require such a puzzle to provide a link over the geographical, chronological, genealogical, and textual distances between the body of James, the body of the country of Scotland, and the historical fiction of a British Arthur. At a more prosaic level, it also requires a spelling of the King’s name which Camden uses only on this occasion, vacillating between the French (Stuart) and Scots (Stewart or Steward) versions. Still, what the explication of the anagram proposes is that, somehow, in an old saying and a strangely named hill can be read the regal heritage of King James.

For early modern Britain, as we have seen throughout this book, the past was palpably important to the present. The fabric of the past was also readable in the present, often all too readable. Sometimes, as with inexplicable stone circles or worm-eaten books, that fabric could be infuriatingly puzzling even as it insisted on being recalled; sometimes, as with the Stone of Scone, it could be tendentious and trenchantly nationalistic. Sometimes, too, it could be deeply tragic: even those authors with a strongly protestant world-view seem to have found the ruins of sacked religious buildings rather too much to bear. But while much has been written on the uncomfortable presence of the ruination of the past in the early modern period, such ruins also provided visible continuities. One informative example of these indelible traces is provided a fair way south of Edinburgh, by Worcester Cathedral. Here, the past remained on show. Like many other monastic buildings, much of what had been Worcester Priory was destroyed: its library was dispersed and its Benedictine order of monks removed; the shrines of Wulfstan and Oswald were despoiled, the saints’ bones covered in lead and reburied near the High Altar (whether as a mark of respect or insurance is hard to say). But the physical fabric of the building itself seems to have remained remarkably untouched. It seems probable that this survival in the face of iconoclasm was at least partly by dint of the Cathedral containing the remains of Henry VIII’s elder brother, Arthur.
Prince Arthur, Henry Tudor’s first son, had been named with an eye to Galfridian prophecy—the other eye no doubt anxiously glancing at the relatively thin thread on which hung Henry’s own dynastic claims. Arthur was betrothed in an alliance to the major western European power, Spain, and, as Richard Barber comments, all was looking well enough: “Within a few years of the completion of *Le Mort Darthur*, it seemed that a real King Arthur might soon rule in England. The accession of Henry VII [...] brought to the throne a dynasty whose promise of a better order of things combined with a vigorous nationalistic policy was symbolised in their political propaganda by the revival of the idea of the ‘return of Arthur.’”

The new dynasty inaugurated by Henry Tudor relied, Howard Dobin argues, on “the potency of the native prophetic tradition [...] to establish its legitimacy and consolidate its power.” Following his defeat of the Yorkist Richard III in the decisive military battle for the nation at Bosworth, Henry followed up with the equally important political battle. In early 1486, the year after his victory, a royal progress touring the country was conducted, celebrating at various key points of the nation, York included. At Worcester, which had recently been the site of rebellion, the nature of the elaborately ceremonial greeting Henry received was calculated to please, drawing together the threads of geography and history: “Cadwaladers Blodde lynyally descending, / Longe hath bee tow-alde of such a Prince coming, / Wherfor Frendes, if that I shall not lye, / This same is the Fulfiler of the Profecye.” As the inheritor of the blood of Cadwalader, seventh-century ruler of the kingdom of Gwynedd and, at least according to Monmouth, the last king of Britain, Henry could call on an ancient (if fictional) royal lineage. More practically, the event was a reminder of the actual military force Henry could call upon, particularly when staged in an area which had recently felt that force.

Unfortunately, ancient Welsh blood notwithstanding, the prophecy of a British rebirth proved incorrect for Henry’s son: Arthur died aged fifteen. As John Taylor succinctly put it, looking back on the reign from the time of Charles I: “And Lady Katherine did Prince Arthur wed. / But ere sixe moneths were fully gone and past, / In Ludlow Castle, Arthur breath’d his last.”

While the story is familiar, its effect should not be underestimated. In late 1509, seven years after the untimely death of the Prince of Wales, and shortly after his younger brother ascended to the throne of England as Henry VIII, another Prince Arthur was born in Britain: the son of James IV of Scotland and Margaret Tudor. Like the Tudors, the Stewarts were a dynasty with eyes on empire. The choice of name was, as Mason argues, “presumably a conscious recollection of the
new English king’s deceased elder brother, but surely also indicative of the Stewart king’s British ambitions.” The project met with a similarly tragic end when Arthur died within a year, but this did not stop James V from pursuing the same strategy later in the century, baptizing his second legitimate son Arthur in April 1541. Again, tragedy struck, and the baby died within the month. In some ways, then, the idea of Arthur was one which might be more readily connected with death than rebirth. Camden’s anagrammatic prophecy concerning James VI drew on a tradition which, in Scotland as in England and in Wales, could carry a double meaning, conjuring visions of imperial grandeur while also acting as a reminder that, sometimes, visions were only visions after all.

In Worcester Cathedral, Prince Arthur’s remains still held a certain power. The marble monument, in defiance of poets, remained perfectly able to tell a story. Unfortunately, it might not tell the right story. The chantry, his grand tomb, was never finished: work halted on the tomb at a time when Henry was betrothed to Arthur’s widow, Catherine of Aragon, and rumors were circulating about precisely how truthful Arthur had been when he claimed to have been “in the midst of Spain.” The status of Catherine’s virginity was of key importance to her betrothal to Henry, and later in Henry’s reign would become one of the key pieces of evidence on which turned the King’s great matter, the hope for an annulment of his marriage to Catherine. In all sorts of ways, Arthur would act as an embarrassing reminder of what had gone before. It seems likely that, on the whole, Henry would rather his nation forgot about Arthur, a feeling increased by the physical position of the chantry, hidden around a corner from King John’s vastly more imposing twelfth-century tomb in the middle of the chancel. Given the treatment received by other monuments connected with Henry’s ancestors and immediate relatives, one suspects that Prince Arthur’s resting place did not survive unscathed so much from familial respect as from embarrassment. If this was part of a royal policy of forgetting the recent past, there is an irony in that it ensured the maintenance of the physical monument and memory of Arthur. That a political requirement to forget could conjure the opposite is a recurring feature in the argument of this book and the mythical narratives with which it is concerned. Time after time, legendary figures rear their heads just when it seems most awkward for them to do so—and if they are used at various points through the medieval and early modern periods to shore up regimes, they also return to haunt them.

The past, after all, was prophetic. If the present could reach back into the past, the past also had a way of reaching unexpectedly into the
For later writers, the celebrations of Arthur’s marriage and the commemorations of his death were intimately linked. Francis Bacon, in *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh* (1622), notes:

> In all the Devises and Conceits of the Triumphs of this Marriage, there was a great deale of Astronomie. [...] But you may bee sure that King ARTHUR, the Britton, and the descent of the Ladie KATHERINE from the House of LANCASTER, was in no wise forgotten. But (as it should seem) it is not good to fetch Fortunes from the Starres. For this young Prince (that drew upon him at that time, not onely the Hopes and Affections of his Countrie, but the Eyes and Expectation of Forreiners) after a few Moneths, in the beginning of Aprill, deceased at Ludlow Castle, where he was sent to keepe his Resiance and Court, as Prince of Wales.¹¹

It is not good, Bacon tells us, to fetch fortunes from the stars. Cadwalader’s blood, in particular, seemed to have a way of twisting: King Arthur may have appeared over the marriage, but he pointed also to its swift conclusion. Bacon’s warning was a real one, and a point about prophecy which was made often in the period. Particularly as it pertained to royal fortunes, prophecy was both powerful and dangerous. John Dee, the mathematician, famously blended careers in antiquarian writing and scientific exploration with prognostication and communication with angels, and was employed across Europe for his perceived abilities and, at home, by luminaries such as Leicester, Walsingham, Burleigh, and Queen Elizabeth herself.¹² He was also in constant danger, and had only narrowly escaped execution under Mary I. Other dabblers in prophecy had less glittering success stories. Elizabeth Barton was hanged for predicting the death of Henry VIII, and Nicholas Hopkins executed for the even more disturbing prophecy of the King’s death without an heir; in Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*, the latter prophecy causes the rebellion and subsequent fall of the Duke of Buckingham. Robert Allen was put to death in 1551 for predicting (correctly, as it turned out) the death in youth of King Edward. From any angle, Dobin comments, “Prognostication of any sort [...] was a dangerous business when it touched upon the fate of the monarch and the succession.”¹³ It hardly took prophecy to imagine the increasingly frail dynasty of the Tudors giving way, a fact which only made such predictions more threatening.

Certainly, many in opposition to Henry used the language of prophecy against him, denouncing him as the “moldwarp.” According to the animal symbolism of Monmouth, a series of real and fantastic animals
could be applied to a succession of England’s kings: the last, the moldwarp or mole, was cursed by God and would come to a richly deserved ruin. Here, too, Worcester might conjure up some uncomfortable ghosts: King John, after all, was the original moldwarp in Monmouth’s work. The prophecy was well known: the *Mirror for Magistrates* records the application of the legend to another Henry, Henry IV, even as it also reserves parenthetical dismissal for those who make such prophecies:

> And for to set us hereon more agog,  
> A Prophet came (a vengeaunce take them al)  
> Affirminge Henry to bee Gog magog,  
> VVhom Merlin doth a Mould warp ever call,  
> Accurst of God that must bee brought in thrall  
> By a Wolfc, a Dragon, and a Lion strong,  
> VVWhich should devide, his Kingdome them among.  

Henry, far from being a scion of Brute, is instead characterized as the giant that Brute and Corineus had defeated, the monstrous Gogmagog. In the *Mirror for Magistrates* the point is made by Owen Glendower, a moment remembered in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 1* (ca. 1597) where the prophet and Glendower himself are blended into one. Though Shakespeare’s Hotspur dismisses the prophecy as typically foolish material from Glendower, locating such speech in the Welsh, he also instantiates and reminds the audience of the prophecy: “Sometimes he angers me / With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant, / Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies, / And of a dragon and a finless fish, / A clip-winged griffin and a moulten raven, / A couching lion and a ramping cat, / And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff / As puts me from my faith.”

For skimble-skamble stuff, Hotspur seems to remember the prophecy well enough, and the fact that it can put him from his faith says something of its power.

In locating the power and the threat of prophecy in Wales, Shakespeare was following tradition. George Peele’s *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First* (1593), a history play which dramatizes the power struggle between Edward I and Lluellen (or Llywelyn) ap Gruffudd, last sovereign Prince of Wales, reserves similarly dismissive treatment for the material of prophets even as it also preserves that material. In Peele’s play, the bardic Harper is a “good welsh prophet” and potentially a source of comic relief. According to the introduction given him, the Harper is “an od fellow I can tell you, / As any is in all Wales: / He can sing rime with reason, and rime without reason, / And without reason or rime.”
The Harper has plenty of prophecies in store, and is able to bring them out for his audience in quick succession: “When the weathercock of Carmathen steeple / Shall ingender yong ones in the belferie, [...] / Then shall Brute be borne a new, / And Wales record their auncient hew.” The answer to the riddle of Brute’s rebirth in this case is that the weathercock of Carmarthen is Lluellen’s father, “who by foule weather of warre, was driven to take Sanctuarie in Saint Maries at Carnaruon, where he begat yong ones on your mother in the belfry.” Lluellen is thus by the prophecy declared inheritor of Brute, but is fathered illegitimately in a bell tower. The weighty matter of myth is placed next to the bawdy and the prosaic. Lluellen is understandably upset by this, but his feelings do not deter the Harper from making a second prophecy, and a third. The Prince’s response is ultimately pragmatic, taking the Harper prisoner and making his fate contingent on his ability to positively predict Lluellen’s own: “Look what waie my fortune inclines, / That waie goes hee.” This does seem to expose something of the way that power deals with prophecy, which is to reward favorable prognostications and attempt to bury the unfavorable. It also makes clear the way in which prophecy was read; not into the future, but from past to present.

As Peele’s Prince recognizes, prophecies, soothsayers, and bards could be bad for one’s health. Voices from the past, when voiced in the present, required extremely careful supervision; such care spoke of the potentially powerful resonance which these voices could carry. In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton opens the first song with a call upon the bard as muse:

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Yee sacred Bards, that to your Harps melodious strings
Sung th’ancient Heroes deeds (the monuments of Kings)
And in your dreadfull verse ingrav’d the prophecies,
The aged worlds descents, and Genealogies;
If, as those Druides taught, which kept the British rites,
And dwelt in darksome Groves, there counsailing with sprites
(But their opinions faild, by error led awry,
As since cleere truth hath shew’d to their posteritie)
When these our soules by death our bodies doe forsake,
They instantlie againe doe other bodies take;
I could have wisht your spirits redoubled in my breast,
To give my verse applause, to times eternall rest.
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The marginal notes make clear that the bards of *Poly-Olbion* are “the old British Poets” and that the druids were “Priests amongst the ancient Britaines.” Drayton calls upon these ghosts of Britain very early in
his poem. The power of poetry is important: the bards’ song, like the powerful rhyme of a Shakespearean sonnet, is the monument of kings, and clearly not to be dismissed out of hand; the songs of the bards and the accompanying melodious strings of their harps remain from the past into the present. But their presence is also ghostly. To have the British bards power the verse of *Poly-Olbion* would be to renew their memory and continue their history. The wish to have their spirits redoubled in “my breast,” despite being displaced to the words of the Muse, is, as John Adrian recognizes, a claim for the political and historical power of Drayton’s poetry: “Drayton may well think of himself as a modern-day bard, because he too will recount, catalog, and dramatize the heroic personalities and events of Britain’s past.” While such a call offers a narrative precedence to the British poets, it is one rendered at best vague by the contained parenthetical admission that “their opinions faild, by error led awry.” What is wished for is noted as not actually true or possible; but it is named nonetheless. *Poly-Olbion* is a poem that calls on ancestors who it admits do not exist, or at least not in the normal way. History concatenates down as the poem progresses; by the time we reach the catalogue of captains that takes up song 18, the final song of the 1612 edition of *Poly-Olbion*, it is we who are the English, and the British have become the foe. Here, “Guy Beuchamp, that great Earle of Warwick,” visits destruction upon the Welsh: “Whom he, their generall plague, impetuously pursu’d, / And in the British gore his slaughtering sword imbru’d.” Like Middleton’s *Hengist*, with which we opened this book, Drayton’s poem gives full-throated voice to different ways of conceptualizing the past, even as it also demonstrates that no version of the past is entirely recoverable.

After all, it is not just English heroes who compete with the British, but English monuments also. In the third song of *Poly-Olbion*, the Saxon monument Wansdyke competes with the supposed British monument of Stonehenge. Like other early modern renditions of the story behind the famous stones of Salisbury Plain, *Poly-Olbion* presents a choice between different conceptions of history. Stonehenge and Salisbury Plain, being both ancient and renowned, simply go together: “she, of all the *Plaines of Britaine*, that doth beare / The name to be the first (renowned everie where) / Hath worthily obtaind that Stonedge there should stand: / Shee, first of *Plaines*; and that, first Wonder of the Land.” But being labeled a wonder is a double-edged sword. Wansdyke, at least, is not impressed, and delivers to Stonehenge the standard put down applicable to all monuments:
The old man taking heart, thus to that Trophy said;
Dull heape, that thus thy head above the rest doost reare,
Precisely yet not know’st who first did place thee there;
But Traytor basely turn’d to Merlin’s skill doost flie,
And with his Magiques doost thy Makers truth belie:
Conspirator with Time, now grownen so meane and poore,
Comparing these his spirits with those that went before;
Yet rather art content thy Builders praise to lose,
Then passed greatnes should thy present wants disclose.
Ill did those mightie men to trust thee with their storie,
That hast forgot their names, who rear’d thee for their glorie:
For all their wondrous cost, thou that hast serv’d them so,
What tis to trust to Tombes, by thee we easely know.27

Wansdyke’s recalling of the myth that Merlin moved the stones does not here mark the betrayal of the British, but rather the betrayal of memory. Stonehenge has not, in calling on the idea of Merlin’s skill, created a point of origin, of remembrance, but instead has succeeded only in obscuring its own origin, its “Makers truth.” Under the cover of “Magiques” the purpose of the monument has been lost. As with Samuel Daniel’s troubled conception of Stonehenge as only a “huge dumbe heape,” the dull heap of stones here cannot speak to praise its builders. The stones act, as Vine puts it, as “material reminders of man’s misplaced ambition in seeking earthly remembrance.”28 But Drayton’s topographical imagination complicates the issue: here, one monument accuses another of forgetfulness, of betraying the trust of the past to show that past to later ages. Though the history of Wansdyke was slightly better known, this is nevertheless something of a case of pots and kettles.29 The problem of Stonehenge demonstrates all too easily “what tis to trust to Tombes”; no monument can be trusted because any monument can fail in its memorial task, and, it is implied, all monuments eventually will.

But both Wansdyke and Stonehenge also vividly demonstrate that traces of the past, though broken, always remain; the problem is not that history has disappeared but that pieces of it hang around deconstructed. Monuments such as Stonehenge or Prince Arthur’s chantry provided uncomfortable reminders that the past did not always stay where it should. In the first song of Poly-Olbion, the Cornish river Camel gives voice to this tendency, noting that “Time cannot make such waste, but something wil appeare, / To shewe some little tract of delicacie [...] Some lim or modell, dragd out of the ruinous mass, / The richness will declare in glorie whilst
it was.”

In theory, the moment is hopeful: some things survive. But there is a tension in that the hope is “muttreth” by a wandering river, and one who compares such processes of survival with the waste inflicted by the passage of time upon “her British Arthurs blood.” Everything leaves traces but King Arthur: “time upon my waste committed hath such theft, / That it of Arthur heere scarce memorie hath left.”

The river tells of how the blood of Arthur, spilled by “Mordreds murtherous hand,” becomes “mingled with her flood.”

Like Warner’s Voda, British blood seeps into the land and ought to be remembered but, while Voda’s blood is imagined as providing a lasting genealogical memory, Drayton’s Arthur cannot be properly recalled. The moment is emphasized by another monument: having made her complaint, the river passes a landmark: “The Nine-ston’d Trophie thus whilst shee doth entertaine.”

This would seem to refer to the Nine Maidens stone row near Wadebridge, by which the river Camel passes. Richard Carew, on whose work Drayton drew for the Cornish sections of *Poly-Olbion*, offers a description which points again to the uncomfortable memorial processes produced by monuments: “Wade bridge delivereth you into a waste ground, where 9 long and great stones called The sisters, stand in a ranke together, and seeme to have bene so pitched, for continuing the memory of somewhat whose notice is yet envied us by time.”

The memory of somewhat: the stones invite a recall which is, like that of Arthur, frustrated; what the maidens mark is markedly missing. The problem is neatly contained in the name of the monument itself: though Drayton refers to the row of stones as the nine maidens, it was also known by the local Cornish name, the naw whoors, suggesting a rather different conception of their ancestry.

And that, really, was the choice offered by the legends considered in this book: myth could be the stuff of maidenly memory, as long as one did not look too closely at that maidenhood. Or it could be rejected in favor of what was known, as long as one was prepared to admit that what was known was often far more unpleasant. Sometimes, though, myth could fulfill both possibilities: with Brute, Albina, and Scota, each in their own ways pointed to the essential unrecoverability of the past and, at the same time, to the present purposes to which such a partly remembered past could be put. Books and blood went hand in hand, and especially so when that blood rested on fiction.

NOTES

3 Hopkins notes that “William Lambarde’s Perambulation of Kent (1576) lamented the despoliation of the religious buildings of Canterbury, while John Stow’s Survey of London (1598) had a similar emphasis.” Hopkins, Renaissance Drama on the Edge, p. 159. Ian Archer discusses the evolution in Stow from “catholic sympathies” and “a private position [...] much closer to traditional Catholicism,” to a gradual adoption of “a conformist position.” Archer, “John Stow: Citizen and Historian,” pp. 20–23.

4 The building was not so fortunate in the civil war, or indeed in the centuries that followed.


6 Howard Dobin, Merlin’s Disciples, p. 51.

7 Quoted in Ibid.

8 Taylor, All the Workes of John Taylor the Water Poet, p. 292.


10 The tomb of Henry’s paternal grandfather, the Earl of Richmond, was relocated for political effect: “the marble armorial tomb of Edmund, Earl of Richmond, father of Henry VII, was removed from Carmarthen Greyfriars after the dissolution and re-erected in front of the high altar at St David’s Cathedral. This was an extraordinary secular translation of relics that attempted to displace the cult of St David (whose shrine had been despoiled) with the cult of the Tudors.” Suggett and White, “Language, Literacy and Aspects of Identity,” p. 79.

11 Bacon, The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh, p. 205.

12 With the latter, the shadow of Arthur again was cast: “He traced Elizabeth’s royal genealogy and (like Merlin in The Faerie Queene) base[d] her title and sovereignty over various lands back to the British empire of King Arthur.” Dobin, Merlin’s Disciples, p. 3. The career of John Dee has remained fascinating for modern criticism: among many studies, see, foundationally, William Sherman’s John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance; more recently, Glyn Parry’s The Arch-Conjuror of England: John Dee.

13 Dobin, Merlin’s Disciples, p. 2.

14 William Baldwin, The Last Part of the Mirour for Magistrates, p. 22.

15 Henry IV, Part 1, 3.1.142–49.

16 Helen Moore notes that the dismissal “may have played differently to an early modern audience familiar with such prophecies, who would have felt the political frisson inherent in opacity. [...] it is possible that, far from being a dismissal of Welsh Arthurian whimsy designed to raise a knowing smile from an English audience, this speech of Hotspur’s actually reveals the naivety manifested in his failure to identify the political purposes that mythic obscurantism may serve.” Moore, “Shakespeare and Popular Romance,” p. 99.

17 Peele, The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First, C1r.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., C1v.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., C2r.

23 The harp retains an aura as an object of racially inflected memorial power: the three surviving medieval Gaelic harps, or clarsachs, are key holdings of the National Museum of Scotland and Trinity College, Dublin.


26 Ibid., p. 40.

27 Ibid., pp. 40–41.


29 Compare Vine, who reads the conflict between the stone circle and the earthwork as encompassing “competing and irreconcilable interpretations of the monument.” Vine, *In Defiance of Time*, p. 131.

30 Ibid., p. 5.

31 Ibid., p. 6.

32 Ibid., p. 5.

33 Ibid., p. 6.

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Aeneas, 33, 36, 44–45, 48, 64n56, 86, 93, 109
Albina, 7, 13, 33, 50, 61, 69–89, 92–93, 95–96, 103, 107, 109–12, 114, 125, 129, 137, 139n31, 156
Albion, 33, 70, 74, 76–78, 81, 83–84, 86, 88; son of Neptune, 92.
See also Britain
Amazons, 56, 88, 93, 99n69
anachronism, 3, 24n8
ancestry, 2–3, 18, 35, 43, 79, 81–83, 93, 100n85, 107, 110–11, 154, 156. See also blood
Anglo-Saxon(s), 2–5, 15–16, 20, 24n4, 30n70, 40–41, 46, 63n35, 86, 115–16, 130, 133–34, 154.
See also Hengist
antiquarianism, 5–6, 14–15, 18, 30n68, 30n79, 31n96, 35, 62n21, 63n41, 111, 151
Archers, Society of, 46, 64n59
archipelagic history, 10–11, 27n34
Arthur (King), 7, 20, 37, 40, 45–46, 100n87, 133, 137, 148–151, 156, 157n12, 157n16; in Faerie Queene, 19–22, 80, 83, 91
Arthur Tudor, 148–51, 155
Arthur’s Seat, Edinburgh, 147–48
Ascham, Roger, 132–133, 145n143
Aurelius Ambrosius, 15
authority, 35, 40, 42, 86, 94, 107, 123, 127, 147
Bacon, Francis, 151
Baldwin, William. See Mirror for Magistrates
Barnes, Barnabe, 113–15, 140n42
bard(s), 107, 116, 152–54
bardic patronage, 116
Barton, Elizabeth, 151
Bellenden, John, 109, 138n23
Bible, 133, 143n96; Exodus, 103, 118, 136; Genesis, 36, 75, 118; Numbers, 118, 136; Revelation, 21
Bisset, Baldred, 111
blood, 21, 61, 71, 76, 82, 93, 95–96, 96n5, 109, 115, 116, 120, 124–25, 130, 134–35, 137, 148–49, 151, 156
Boadicea. See Boudica
Boece, Hector, 107–9, 127–28, 139n35
Bolton, Edmund, 39
book(s), 22–24, 37–39, 41, 62n21, 106–8, 123–24, 128, 130, 132–35, 137, 148, 156. See also libraries
Book of Leinster, 111
border(s), 1, 112–13
Bosworth Field, battle, 149
Boudica (also Boadicea), 70, 89, 92–93, 99n83, 100n98. See also Albina; Voada
Brathwaite, Richard, 88
Brennus and Beline, 59–60
Broughton, Richard, 5, 118–20, 135, 141n73
Browne, Thomas, 91
Buchanan, George, 104–107, 112, 139n38
burial, 22–23, 57, 91, 148
Cadwalader, 149, 151
Caesar, Julius, 39, 45, 60, 86, 92–93, 100n85
Camel, River, 155–56
Carew, Richard, 16, 156
Carmarthen, 153, 157n10
cartography, 42, 64n42. See also chorography; topography
Catherine (or Katherine) of Aragon, 149–51
Catholicism, 5–6, 14, 18, 26n17, 118–19, 128, 148, 157n3
Cecil, William, 90, 122, 143n89
Christianity, 5–6, 14, 17–18, 45, 73, 89, 103, 113–14, 117–19, 123–25, 133–34, 152. See also Protestantism; Catholicism; Reformation, the
chorography, 5, 14–15
Churchill, Winston, 110–11
colonialism, 6, 10–11, 89–92, 96, 100n87, 100n92. See also imperialism
Complaynt of Scotland, The, 122, 130–36, 144n130
Cordelia, 58
Corineus, 21–22, 52, 54, 84, 98n60, 152
Cornwall, 8, 21, 52–53, 65n79, 155–56
Craig, Alexander, 16
Danaus, 73–74, 78, 84–85, 97n35, 139n31. See also Dioclesian; Albina
Daniel, Samuel, 17, 30n82, 155
Darnley, Lord (Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, Duke of Albany), 113, 117
Dec, John, 151, 157n12
Dekker, Thomas, 39
Dioclesian, 76, 78, 80, 83, 85, 87, 97n35, 125. See also Danaus; Albina
Drayton, Michael, 2, 5, 22, 49–50, 56, 65n69, 72, 85–86, 90–92, 99n72, 131, 153–56
druid(s), 43, 153–54. See also bard(s)
Edinburgh, 118, 123, 147–48
Edward I, 108, 118–19, 136, 152
Edward VI, 4, 121–22
Egyptian, 103, 110, 115, 117–20, 129, 131, 136, 139n28, 139n31, 141n74
Elizabeth I, 51, 71, 81–83, 98n52, 99n69, 114, 116–17, 132, 141n75, 151, 157n12
Edward I, 118, 123, 147–48
Edward I, 108, 118–19, 136, 152
Edward VI, 4, 121–22, 142n83, 151
Egyptian, 103, 110, 115, 117–20, 129, 131, 136, 139n28, 139n31, 141n74
Elizabeth I, 51, 71, 81–83, 98n52, 99n69, 114, 116–17, 132, 141n75, 151, 157n12
Elizabeth of York, 117
empire. See imperialism
Enderbie, Percy, 74
English Heritage (organisation), 8
Fergus MacFerquhard, 103, 112, 117, 138n15
Ferrex. See Porrex and Ferrex
Fordun, John of, 107–8
Foxe, John, 6, 15
France, 58, 70, 95, 120, 122, 135, 141n79, 142n81, 142n84
Fuimus Troes, 90
See also Scota
gender, 7, 12, 50, 53, 56, 70–71, 87–88, 99n72, 120
Glendower, Owen, 152
ghost(s), 3, 42, 56, 95–96, 152, 154–55
giant(s), 8–9, 20–22, 38, 52, 57, 69, 76–78, 80–81, 83–84, 86, 93, 95, 110, 132, 142n84, 152.
See also Gogmagog
Giant's Causeway, 8–9
Gogmagagaog (or Goëmot), 21–22, 32n104, 57, 84, 98n60, 152.
See also giant(s)
Gorboman, 60
Gorboduc, 58, 67n113
Gower, John, 3
Gwendolyn, 52–58, 94
Gwynedd, 149
Hadrian’s Wall, 8
Hakluyt, Richard, 91, 100n92
Hamilton, James, Duke of Châtellerault, 2nd Earl of Arran, 125
Hardyng, John, 75, 118–19, 135–36, 141n67
Harvey, Richard, 15, 30n71, 40–41, 78–79, 81, 104–7, 128
Hengist, 2–4, 15–16, 86, 113–15, 120, 134. See also Anglo-Saxon
Henrisoun (or Harrison), James, 123–31, 133–36
Henry IV, 152
Henry VII, 113, 117, 135, 149
Henry VIII, 121–22, 136, 142n86, 148–51, 157n10
Heywood, Thomas, 36–38, 50, 53, 72, 74–75
Higden, Ranulf, 3, 24n7, 22, 32n111, 38, 109, 113
Higgins, John, 38–39, 47, 63n22
historiography, 2–6, 9–20, 22–24, 26n28, 33, 34–44, 46, 48, 60, 63n31, 63n41, 64n42, 69–70, 72, 76–77, 79, 82, 86, 90, 96, 100n98, 104–8, 111, 121, 148
Hole, William, 85–86
Holinshed, Raphael, 4, 8, 15, 20, 25n17, 38, 60, 63n22, 77–78, 81, 84–85, 129, 139n35
Hopkins, Nicholas, 151
Horsa. See Hengist
Howard, Thomas (3rd? Duke of Norfolk), 59
Humber, River, 52
Hutton, James, 147

imperialism, 6, 20–21, 28n45, 33–34, 59, 70, 88–92, 100n87, 121–22, 141n80, 141n81, 142n89, 149–50, 157n12; and translatio imperii, 34, 42, 51, 66n113; and suzerainty, 34–5, 52, 100n87, 125–27, 131–32, 142n84, 143n90

Iona, Statutes of, 116

Ireland (and Irish), 4, 8–12, 14–15, 27n37, 28n47, 34, 66n84, 75, 103, 111–12, 115–19, 121, 131, 144n134

Jacob's Pillar, 117–19
James I of Scotland, 141n67
James III of Scotland, 121, 141n81
James IV of Scotland, 113, 142n81, 149
James V of Scotland, 107–8, 50
James VI and I, 4, 26n18, 36, 39, 84–85, 112–17, 119, 124, 139n38, 139n39, 140n44, 140n50, 141n74, 143n97, 143n104, 147–48, 150

Jardin, Roland du, 73
Jerome, Stephen, 73–74
John, King of England, 150, 152
Jonson, Ben, 39

Keating, Geoffrey, 131
Knox, John, 143n105

Lambard, William, 31n87, 40, 44, 128, 157n3
language, 3, 27n37, 71, 94–95, 112, 115–16, 123, 130–31, 143n91, 144n134; and literary criticism, 11, 28n47; power of, 83
Lear, King, 58
Leland, John, 29n65, 62n20, 108, 128

Lhuyd, Humphrey, 43, 106–107, 111–12, 114–15
libraries, 18–19, 29n65, 31n87, 80, 148. See also book(s)
Lluellen ap Gruffudd, 152–53
Locrine, 51–57, 127, 134
Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine, The, 52–53, 57
Lodge, Thomas, 65n79
Lodowick, Lloyd, 73–74
London, 4, 10, 32n104, 36, 39, 46, 75, 93, 123–24
Ludlow castle, 149, 151

Madan, 57, 127
Mair (or Major), John, 108–9, 138n23
manuscript(s), 17, 19–20, 23, 37, 71, 107, 122, 124, 139n35. See also book(s)
Margaret Tudor, 135, 149
Marlowe, Christopher, 44–45
marriage, 7, 71, 74–75, 113–15, 120, 129, 151
Mary, I, 70, 141n75, 151
Mary of Guise, 53, 130, 135, 143n105
Mary Stuart (or Stewart), Queen of Scots, 53, 70, 96n5, 113–14, 117, 120–21, 141n75, 141n76, 142n83
memory, 8, 12–13, 15, 17–24, 26n25, 29n53, 29n58, 30n68, 30n82, 31n94, 38, 40–44, 53–54, 72, 75–78, 84–85, 87, 91–92, 111, 113, 119–20, 126, 131, 136, 147, 150, 152, 154–56
Mempricius and Manlius, 57–58, 127
Meres, Francis, 51
Merlin, 15–17, 40, 82, 132, 152, 155
Middleton, Thomas, 2–4, 8, 15, 22
Milton, John, 56, 72, 87
Mirror for Magistrates, 3, 25n10, 38–39, 47, 56, 63n22, 152
monasteries, 18, 29n65, 31n87, 31n89, 88, 105, 128, 148
Monmouth, Geoffrey of, 24n7, 37, 41, 43, 48, 60, 61n2, 61n6, 61n8, 62n20, 71, 100n87, 104–5, 107, 121, 128, 133, 149, 151–52
monument(s), 8, 16–19, 21–23, 29n65, 30n68, 30n77, 32n109, 32n118, 41, 120, 135–36, 150, 153–56, 158n29. See also ruin(s)
Munday, Anthony, 3, 25n9, 72, 84–85
Mulcaster, Richard, 64n59, 114
murder, 15, 46, 52, 57–59, 61, 69, 71, 73–75, 78, 81, 85, 87, 117, 125
Nashe, Thomas, 22–23, 90, 106, 128
Nine Maidens, the, 156
Old English. See Anglo-Saxon
Order of the Garter, 36, 62n10
Ortelius, Abraham, 42–43
pageantry, 36–37, 39, 149
Palimpsest, 64n42, 70
Peele, George, 152–53
Penthesilea, 93
Picts, 4, 93–94, 115, 130
Pinkie Cleugh, battle, 122–23, 132
Polychronicon. See Higden, Ranulf
Porrex and Ferrex, 58–60
propaganda, 121–23, 131, 135–36, 144n130, 149
prophecy, 48, 56, 82, 119, 132–34, 148–53, 157n16
Protestantism, 5–6, 18, 31n87, 120, 124–25, 128, 143n105, 148. See also Reformation, the
Richard III, 134–35, 149
Robinson, Richard, 45–46
Roman(s), 6, 8, 39, 70, 89–90, 92–96, 99n85, 100n87, 107–8, 115, 127
Rome, 34, 59, 88–90, 92, 100n87, 122, 127
Romulus (and Remus), 40, 105
Rough Wooings, the, 112, 120–37
Rowley, William, 16, 90
ruin(s), 14–15, 17–19, 23–24, 68n30, 31n85, 31n91, 40, 87–88, 90, 130, 148, 152, 156. See also monument(s)
Sabrine, 52–53, 55–57
Saxon. See Anglo-Saxon
Scotland (and Scots), 4, 9–10, 12, 26n18, 27n37, 34, 43, 51, 53, 61n2, 70–71, 92, 100n87, 103–25, 127–36, 139n35, 141n67, 141n73, 141n79, 141n80, 141n81, 142n82, 142n86, 143n105, 144n134, 145n147, 147–50, 158n23; Gaelic, 11, 112, 115–16, 120, 121, 131, 141n74, 145n134, 158n23
Scythian(s), 52–54, 66n84, 88, 103, 115
Selden, John, 5, 85. See also Drayton, Michael
Severn, River, 53, 55–56
Shakespeare, William, 17, 19, 58, 90, 137, 151–52, 154
Sidney, Philip, 16, 19, 23, 106, 128
Skelton, John, 3, 25n9
Slatyer, William, 74, 116–18
Somerset, Lord Protector (Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset), 121–24, 131, 142n83, 142n85, 142n86, 143n104
Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, 121–24, 131, 142n83, 142n85, 142n86, 143n104
Scots, 7, 13, 33, 96, 103, 106–21, 127–29, 131, 135–37, 141n74, 156
Severn, River, 53, 55–56
Shakespeare, William, 17, 19, 58, 90, 137, 151–52, 154
Sidney, Philip, 16, 19, 23, 106, 128
Skelton, John, 3, 25n9
Slatyer, William, 74, 116–18
Somerset, Lord Protector (Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset), 121–24, 131, 142n83, 142n85, 142n86, 143n104
Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, 121–24, 131, 142n83, 142n85, 142n86, 143n104
Scots, 7, 13, 33, 96, 103, 106–21, 127–29, 131, 135–37, 141n74, 156
Scotland (and Scots), 4, 9–10, 12, 26n18, 27n37, 34, 43, 51, 53, 61n2, 70–71, 92, 100n87, 103–25, 127–36, 139n35, 141n67, 141n73, 141n79, 141n80, 141n81, 142n82, 142n86, 143n105, 144n134, 145n147, 147–50, 158n23; Gaelic, 11, 112, 115–16, 120, 121, 131, 141n74, 145n134, 158n23
Scythian(s), 52–54, 66n84, 88, 103, 115
Selden, John, 5, 85. See also Drayton, Michael
Severn, River, 53, 55–56
Shakespeare, William, 17, 19, 58, 90, 137, 151–52, 154
Sidney, Philip, 16, 19, 23, 106, 128
Skelton, John, 3, 25n9
Slatyer, William, 74, 116–18
Somerset, Lord Protector (Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset), 121–24, 131, 142n83, 142n85, 142n86, 143n104
Spain, 40, 70, 103, 115, 117–18, 122, 149, 150
Speed, John, 15, 38, 72, 76–78, 115, 117
Spenser, Edmund, 2, 9, 16, 19–22, 31n96, 32n109, 40–42, 50, 53–57, 60, 63n38, 66n84, 72, 79–84, 90–92, 98n46
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 147
Stonehenge, 8, 15–17, 19–21, 27n33, 30n79, 30n82, 120, 129, 154–55
Stone of Scone, 117–20, 135–36, 141n73, 148
suicide, 57, 60, 75, 95–96
Taylor, John, 5, 46–47, 49–51, 55, 56, 149
Tintagel, 8
tomb(s), 57, 88, 150, 155, 157n10.
See also monument(s); ruin(s)
topography, 14, 30n69, 86, 88, 99n69, 99n72, 155
Troy, 24, 33–36, 44–45, 64n52, 79, 82, 88, 92–93, 100n85, 100n87, 109
Tudor(s), 4, 20, 34, 36, 43, 59–60, 70, 81, 86, 117, 123, 130, 135, 149, 151
Twyne, Thomas, 43, 112

Valiant Welshman, The, 90
Vergil, 64
Vergil, Polydore, 36–37, 40, 62n9, 62n20, 89, 109, 125
Virginia, 34, 90
virginity, 56, 81–82, 114, 117, 150
Voada, 70, 92–96, 100n98, 156.
See also Albina; Boudica

Wadebridge, 156
Wales (and Welsh), 9–10, 12, 27n37, 28n47, 34, 43, 51–52, 55–56, 61n2, 90, 99n69, 105–6, 121, 125–26, 145n147, 149–54, 157n16
Wansdyke, 154–55
Warner, William, 2, 50–61, 70, 88, 92–96, 156
Wavrin, Jehan de, 60
Wedderburn, Robert, 130, 132.
See also Complaynt of Scotland, The
Weever, John, 15
Welsh. See Wales (and Welsh)
Westminster, 116, 118–19, 136
Worcester Cathedral, 148, 150, 152
womb(s), 49, 82, 98n55
York, 149