



From the Romans to the Normans on the English Renaissance Stage

Lisa Hopkins



EARLY DRAMA, ART, AND MUSIC

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Introduction

IN HIS BOOK ON *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination*, Stuart Piggott notes that John Earle's 1628 *Micro-cosmographie* represented an antiquary as one who "likes Death the better, because it gathers him to his Fathers."¹ The antiquarians of whom Piggott writes were fascinated by the past and felt personally connected to it, and so too did many others in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries whose interest was more general than scholarly. In this book I discuss a number of early modern English plays set more or less in the period of English (or occasionally Scottish, Irish or Welsh) history between the Romans and the Normans. The years between the withdrawal of the legions toward the end of the fourth century and the arrival of the Normans in 1066 saw both the legendary Arthur and the more securely historical but almost equally famous Alfred, as well as Alfred's grandson Athelstan, not so well remembered now but a significant figure in early modern England. The fifth century onward also saw successive waves of invasions by Angles, Jutes, and Danes; at the end of this period, Britain had been transformed beyond recognition, and yet a number of early modern plays which are set during this period also suggest that there was nevertheless an underlying continuity.

There was a surprising number of such plays, though not all of them are now extant, which collectively constitute what Gordon McMullan has called "a larger theatrical project to interpret Elizabethan and Jacobean Britain through the reconstruction of a range of different pasts."² In addition to those I discuss in the course of the book, we know of lost plays on Vortigern, Mulmutius Dunwallow, Arthur, Estrild, Ferrex and Porrex, Guthlac, Hardicanute, and Earl Godwin and of one by Beaumont on *Madon King of Britain* (Madon being the son of Gwendoline and Locrine). Misha Teramura notes that "we find in Philip Henslowe's *Diary* that the Admiral's Men were preparing for a production of a play called 'The Conquest of Brute' (and perhaps its sequel) through the second half of 1598";³ its subtitle of "with the first founding of the Bath" suggests that

it may also have featured King Bladud.⁴ Paul Whitfield White observes that “Among the many lost plays identified by title in Henslowe’s *Diary* are at least five that relate to King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table,”⁵ and Tom Rutter has also suggested that the lost *Warlamchester* may have been about either the martyrdom of St. Alban or the revolt of Boudica.⁶ There was a particular propensity for performing Latin plays about English history at English Catholic colleges abroad, including *Mercia, sive Pietas Coronata* at Saint-Omer and *Aluredus sive Alvredus, Fatum Vortigerni* and *Emma Angliae regina ac Mater Hardicanuti Regis* at Douai (these can be translated as *Mercia, or Piety Crowned, Alured or Alvred, Vortigern’s Doom, and Emma Queen of England and Mother of King Hardicanute*). In this book, I will consider a range of texts by a variety of authors which collectively present a picture of the period from the Roman to the Norman invasions, including Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, Jasper Fisher’s *Fuimus Troes*, Thomas Hughes’ *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, R. A.’s *The Valiant Welshman*, Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus*, Dekker, Ford and Rowley’s *The Welsh Ambassador*, Fletcher’s *Bonduca*, Richard Harvey’s *Philadelphus, or a Defence of Brutes*, Samuel Daniel’s *History of England*, John Clapham’s *History of Great Britain*, Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Lear*, Middleton’s *Hengist, King of Kent*, Richard Brome’s *The Queen’s Exchange*, Anthony Brewer’s *The Lovesick King*, William Rowley’s *A Shoemaker a Gentleman*, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton’s *Gorboduc*, William Haughton’s *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, Lodowick Carlell’s *Arviragus and Philicia*, Shirley’s *St Patrick for Ireland*, Henry Burnell’s *Landgartha*, and the anonymous *Lochrine, A Knack to Know a Knave, Fair Em, Guy of Warwick, The Birth of Merlin, No-body and Some-body* and *Edmund Ironside*. Also, although I generally exclude from consideration plays written in Latin, such as Joseph Simons’ 1624 *Mercia* for Saint-Omer,⁷ I make an exception for William Drury’s 1619 *Aluredus, sive Alvredus*, since its 1659 translation by Robert Knightley as *Alfrede, or Right Reinthron’d* is in itself part of the ongoing discourse of English and British national identities, and I look also at a number of plays which though not set in the period before the Conquest did nevertheless contribute to the ways in which the ancestors of the English and British were conceptualized, including the *The Palsgrave, or the Hector of Germany*, *Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, *Henry VIII*, *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Chettle’s *Hoffman*, and Dekker and Massinger’s *The Virgin Martyr*.

The story that plays set before the Conquest collectively tell begins with the Trojan prince Aeneas, supposedly the son of the goddess Venus. According to Virgil, Aeneas escaped from the sack of Troy carrying his elderly father on his shoulders and leading his young son Ascanius by the hand, though his wife Creusa became separated from the party and was never seen again. Aeneas had a divinely ordained destiny to make his way to Italy and there found a second Troy, but bad weather swept him onto the coast of Carthage, where Queen Dido fell in love with him and tried to persuade him to stay with her. When he eventually abandoned her, she committed suicide. Resuming his journey, Aeneas arrived safely in Italy, where he founded Rome and was eventually succeeded in its rule first by his son Ascanius and then by his grandson Silvius. Silvius's son Brutus, however, accidentally killed his father during a hunting trip and went into exile, searching for a land where he and his followers could settle. Eventually he found a country with no existing inhabitants, established himself and his followers there, and named it after himself: Britain.

In the version of events told by the influential twelfth-century writer Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the Kings of Britain*, this is where British History starts. Brutus divided the island among his three sons, Lochrine, from whom England gets its alternative name of Logres, by which it is sometimes known in Arthurian myths (this is the origin of the Welsh name for England, Lloegyr), Albanact (who gave his name to Alba, later known as Scotland), and Camber, from whom Wales derives its name in its own language, Cymru. Lochrine's only daughter Sabren or Sabrina, pursued by her jealous stepmother Gwendoline, drowned herself in the River Severn (which supposedly takes its name from her) and thus became an emblem of the divisions between the constituent parts of the island. This story is told in *Lochrine*, published in 1595 as "newly set foorth, overseene and corrected, by W. S." and apparently a revision of an earlier play called *Estrild* written by the Babington conspirator Charles Tilney, executed in 1586.

Geoffrey then proceeds to tell a series of racy, circumstantial, and totally unfounded stories about a number of very colorful figures who, he claims, ruled or inhabited Britain during the period before the Romans arrived. Chief among them are Bladud, the father of King Lear, who supposedly built the Roman baths at Bath (where a seventeenth-century statue of him can still be seen), learned to fly, and died when he crash-landed on the temple of Apollo in London; Lear himself, subject of both Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606) and the older, anonymous *King Leir*; and

his daughter Cordella, sometimes evoked as a precedent for female rule. The next prominent figure is Gorboduc, eponymous hero of a 1560s play by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, whose sons Ferrex and Porrex (also remembered in the anonymous *Ferrex and Porrex*) killed each other and so brought the direct line of Lochrine to an end. After a period of civil war, rule then passes to Molmutius Dunwallo (sometimes called Dunwallo Molmutius), son of the king of Cornwall, about whom the Admiral's Men acquired a play (now lost) in 1598.⁸ It was during the disputes between Molmutius Dunwallo's sons, Brennus and Belinus, that Elidure, the central figure of the anonymous play *No-body and Some-body* (1606), supposedly reigned three separate times; in some versions of her story Molmutius Dunwallo was also the father of St. Winifred, who is remembered in William Rowley's *A Shoemaker a Gentleman*. Leaping over a few rulers of less interest, we come next to Cymbeline, who in Shakespeare's version of his story had been reared at the court of Augustus Caesar and so brings us into the Roman period; he is succeeded in turn by his sons Guiderius and Arviragus, both characters in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1609) and also in Lodowick Carlell's *Arviragus and Philicia* (1639). A later post-Roman king, Lucius, is often cited as the first Christian king of Britain, though there seems not to have been a known early modern play about him.

In *Cymbeline*, the queen urges resistance to Roman invasion, and so too did Caradoc/Caractacus, hero of R. A.'s play *The Valiant Welshman* (1615), and Bonduca/Boudicca, the central figure of John Fletcher's *Bonduca* (acted ca. 1613 though not published until 1647). However, when the Romans did eventually leave Britain four hundred years later it opened the door to successive waves of invasion. In the story as Geoffrey tells it, first came Vortigern, a prominent figure in William Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin* (1622), and then Hengist and Horsa, the former of whom gives his name to Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent* (ca. 1615–20?). The Saxons are resisted by Arthur, some of whose story is told in Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), but eventually triumph and settle in England until they in turn are threatened by the Danes.

The fact that there was not the slightest bit of evidence for the story of Brutus and his descendants did not stop people believing it, or at least affecting to do so, so that Thomas Heywood in an *An Apology for Actors* can ask "what man haue you now of that weake capacity, that cannot discourse of any notable thing recorded euen from *William the Conquerour*, nay from the landing of *Brute*, vntill this day."⁹ Particularly notable among early modern defenses of Brutus is *Philadelphus, or a defence of Brutes* by

Richard Harvey, brother of Gabriel Harvey and notorious as the target of the biting satire of Thomas Nashe. *Philadelphus* invokes the authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth to demand of the Brutus-skeptic Scot George Buchanan “who is most credible, he or you, a Monmouth or a Scot.” Harvey deals with the problem that the Brutus story had been pronounced entirely fictitious by Henry VII’s Italian historian Polydore Vergil by declaring scornfully that “A Brutan may iustly except against the witness of an Italian,”¹⁰ though this does of course raise the problem that if Brutus was real, the British *were* Italian; however, even this can be got round, as Harvey delicately hints that it might just be the case that “the Brutans language was vsed in Italy in the dayes of Brute” (sig. B2v)—that is, perhaps the early Romans spoke Welsh, in which case we must assume that the change to Latin (and by implication to an effete Italianate identity) came later, after Brutus and his companions had left. Geoffrey certainly claimed that there was a linguistic link between Britain and early Rome, declaring that after Brutus came to Britain, “the language of the people, which had up to then been known as Trojan or Crooked Greek, was called British.”¹¹

It is a slight worry for Harvey that there is no written evidence for the story of Brutus, but he is confident that there once was, and that “If Brutes Chronicles had been preserued as well as Caesars ... then Caesar had been halfe a Brute” (sig. A4r). One simple reason for the absence of surviving records could be that “their actes were wrought in needleworke onely, and so worne out” (sig. D2v): perhaps, then, there might have been an early British equivalent of the Bayeux tapestry, showing Brutus’ accidental killing of his father Silvius, his subsequent travels and his eventual landing at Totnes, which unfortunately succumbed to moths. Or maybe it is a case of *chercher la femme*: perhaps the dons at the university which Brutus founded at Stamford in Lincolnshire neglected their chronicling duties because they “had by some Priuiledge got them wiues, and so forth: and had no leisure to do any thing but liue” (sigs. D2v–D3r).¹² (It is perhaps best not to enquire too closely who or what a “so forth” might have been.) Harvey concedes that the line of Brutus died out in England, and that Cadwallader “was the last king of the Brutans in the seate of Locrine. But, who can tell the genealogies of Camber?” (sig. L4r)—and even if no one can, “It is a dangerous position to refuse the offspring of Brute” (sig. D4r [2]). For Harvey, then, the Brutus story stands as an emblem of a securely established British national identity, guaranteed by an unbroken chain of genealogical inheritance. Other writers too use it in this way: Isabel in *Richard II* calls Richard “the model where old Troy did stand!”¹³

and in Jasper Fisher's 1633 play *Fuimus Troes*, whose title translates as "We were the Trojans," the British leader Nennius hails his fellow-warriors as "royal friends, the heirs of mighty Brute" (2.1.64).

Others, such as Camden and Samuel Daniel, were more skeptical about the Brutus story. Camden bows out of the debate with a wry "For mine own part, let Brutus be taken for the father, and founder of the British nation; I will not be of a contrarie minde,"¹⁴ and Robert Persons cheerfully dismissed the whole problem with a breezy "I for my part do feele my selfe much of the French opinion ... that so the ship be wel & happely guyded, I esteeme it not much important of what race or nation the pilote be."¹⁵ Daniel, though, declares in *The first part of the historie of England* that "though I had a desire to haue deduced this Breuarie, from the beginning of the first British Kings, as they are registred in their Catalogue, yet finding no authenical warrant how they came there, I did put off that desire"; in what looks like a coded rebuttal of the river-fixated *Poly-Olbion*, in which Britishness is a securely differentiated ethnicity, Daniel ultimately concludes that "the beginnings of all people, and states were as vncertaine as the heads of great Riuers."¹⁶ Daniel's language also echoes James's; Jonathan Baldo notes that:

Citing the examples of England, once "diuided into so many little Kingdoms," and France, similarly "composed of diuers Dutchies," James helped map a course of assimilation and erasure for the various cultures and nations of the British isles: "For euen as little brookes lose their names by their running and falling into great Riuers, and the very name and memorie of the great Riuers swallowed vp in the Ocean: so by the coniunction of diuers little Kingdomes in one, are all these priuate differences and questions swallowed vp."¹⁷

In *Poly-Olbion*, rivers—particularly the Severn—form one of the most important links to the Brutus story, and Max Adams notes that "Two of the most important royal inauguration sites in Britain, at Scone and at Kingston in Surrey, were located on tidal reaches at, respectively, the Rivers Tay and Thames."¹⁸ For both Daniel and James, though, the constant flow of rivers can be made to speak not of continuity but rather of a process of dissolving which images the past as either irretrievably lost or fundamentally uncertain.

It was also an unfortunate coincidence that the name Brutus should naturally abbreviate itself to Brute, a pun which is activated on a number of occasions with clear intent. Stephen O'Neill cites a poem called "The

Newe Metamorphosis,” attributed to Gervase Markham but actually by John Mott,¹⁹ “where the kern are compared to ‘brutish Indians’”;²⁰ Purchas asks “were not Caesars Britaines as brutish as Virginians”;²¹ and in *King Lear* Gloucester terms Edgar “Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish!”²² In Anthony Munday’s *The Triumphes of re-united Britania* the term “second Brute” is used so insistently for James that one might begin to wonder about possible irony,²³ and the same thought might occur in Peele’s *Edward I*, where Lluellen hopes that “kinde Cambria deigne me good aspect, / To make me chiefest brute of westerne Wales” (sig. C3r),²⁴ or in *Lochrine* which has Brutus’ own eldest son say “they are beasts that seeke to vsurp our land, / And like to brutish beasts they shall be seru’d.”²⁵ Even those who doubted the truth of the Brutus story could not be unaware of its influence; but they might worry about some of its potential implications.

It is also a cause of anxiety that the Brutus story depends so much on the transmission of one person’s bloodline, because in a number of plays there is a kind of “last man” motif in that there is apparently only one true Englishman (and/or true Briton) still left alive. Arvirargus in *Arvirargus and Philicia*, Hengo in *Bonduca*, Nennius in *The Valiant Welshman*, and Porrex in *Gorboduc* all stand as the last representative of their families and heritage, and *King Lear* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* also show the running out of a bloodline (it is notable that in *King Lear*, unlike in Geoffrey of Monmouth, neither Goneril nor Regan has children). Both Hengo and Nennius, who exemplifies both Britishness in its purest form and the loss of that Britishness, are also associated with Prince Henry, the eldest son of James I, whose death in 1612 was greatly mourned. Even in Geoffrey, “For eleven years Britain remained deserted by all its inhabitants, except for a few whom death had spared in certain parts of Wales.”²⁶ An authentic British identity may have been successfully transmitted, but it has been touch and go.

Geoffrey’s story effectively ends with the death of Arthur, but there were other (and more reliable) sources for later events, chiefly the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, to which the endeavors of Sir Robert Cotton had given prominence, and this was perhaps a period of even greater interest to early modern playwrights than the centuries before it; Lucy Munro argues that “For early modern writers, the Anglo-Saxon period was a locus for theories and anxieties about national, linguistic, and religious identity, and it could represent both historical continuity and fragmentation.”²⁷ The first great figure of this period is Oswald (604–42), King of Northumbria;

his story may have been partly reflected in the now lost *Play of Oswald* (1600?),²⁸ though that also seems to have something in common with *The Queen's Exchange* (1634?), Richard Brome's play about Bertha, the mythical daughter of the historical Kenwalcus, King of the West Saxons. Offa (757–96) is glanced at in one or two plays, including *The Queen's Exchange* and *A Shoo-maker a Gentleman*, but is not central to any, and another rather marginal figure, in this case more puzzlingly so, is Alfred (871–99), who is central only in *Aluredus sive Alvredus* (1619). The figure of greatest interest to early modern English drama, though, is Alfred's grandson Athelstan (924–39), who appears in the anonymous play *Guy of Warwick* (early 1590s?), Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* (1599), and Dekker, Ford and Rowley's 1621 *The Welsh Ambassador* (in which his Welsh contemporary Hywel Dda, known as a great lawgiver, is also mentioned).

Of the Danish kings, unquestionably the greatest was Canute (1016–35). He is the hero of Anthony Brewer's *The Love-sick King* (1619?), while the story of his wife Emma was told in a play performed at the English College at Douai (1620), and that of his son Hardicanute (1035–42) in a 1597 play of the same name which is now lost. Canute's English rival Edmund Ironside (1016), son of Ethelred the Unready, also gave his name to an anonymous play (late 1580s), and Ethelred himself is very briefly remembered in the rather unlikely context of Jonson's *Epicoene*, where Truewit says to Morose, "If you had lived in King Etheldred's time, sir, or Edward the Confessor's, you might perhaps have found in some cold country hamlet, then, a dull frosty wench could have been contented with one man."²⁹ Hardicanute was succeeded by Edward the Confessor (1042–66), who is mentioned in Shakespeare's 1605 play about his Scottish contemporary Macbeth (1040–57), and who was of course succeeded first (and very briefly) by Harold Godwinson, whose father Earl Godwin was the subject of a two-part play (now lost) performed by the Admiral's Men in 1598, and ultimately by William the Conqueror (1066–87), the hero of *Fair Em* (ca. 1590).

I have called this book *From the Romans to the Normans on the English Renaissance Stage*, and yet some of these stories precede the Romans. There is, however, little or no serious attempt to imagine what a Britain before the Romans might have looked like; in *King Lear*, supposedly set long before the coming of Caesar, we hear of the Roman military unit of a century, as if it were impossible for even a playwright so imaginative as Shakespeare to grasp the idea of an England not shaped and conditioned by contact with Roman culture. The closest we come to pre-

Roman Britain is in *Fuimus Troes*, where there is a chorus of five bards and a harper, and we are shown Druid rites: “[Enter] Lantonus, Hulacus [and] two druids, in long robes [with] hats like pyramids [and] branches of mistletoe” (2.3.s.d.); however, part of the point of *Fuimus Troes* is that the British share a heritage with the Romans, in that both are of Trojan descent, and the play’s Britons and Romans are presented less as opposites than as two branches of the same family between which there has been no recent contact. Rather than seeking to make precise chronological distinctions, what these plays are primarily concerned with is scrutinizing a part of the past which they concur in regarding as crucial in the formation of English ethnic and national identity, and although the earliest and latest of the texts I discuss were produced almost half a century apart, they are part of a continuing cultural conversation which, although certainly subject to inflection, changes surprisingly little in essentials. The relation between England and Scotland is a question for Jasper Fisher in 1633 as it was for Thomas Hughes and his colleagues in 1587, and throughout the period Wales is seen as special in terms of its unique connection to ideas of originary Britishness.³⁰ Paul Whitfield White notes of Middleton’s dramatic treatment of the figures of Vortiger and Roxena that “In the 1620s (the assigned date for Middleton’s *Hengist*), this story would have played well to the anti-Spanish crowds at the Globe who detested Prince Charles’s flirting with the Spanish Infanta, but it would have been no less appealing in the xenophobic, anti-Catholic fever of 1590s London”;³¹ this multivalence of topicality extends to other plays too, not least because throughout the period Rome looms hostile, alien, and yet at the same time a point of origin whose influence must be constantly negotiated. The anonymous *A Knack to Know a Knave*, first printed in 1594, features King Edgar and St. Dunstan, though it makes no claim to historical accuracy: St. Dunstan, who died in AD 988, refers to “the Uiolets in America,” not reached by Columbus until 1492, and King Edgar displays an improbable degree of classical learning, citing Cynthia, Hercules, Polyxena, Troilus and Cressida, and Alexander all in the same speech.³² Although I shall pay specific attention to some watershed moments such as the marriage of James VI and I to a Danish princess and the marriage of their daughter to a German Elector, I shall, therefore, generally be putting these texts in dialog with each other, and my focus will largely be on what they can tell us collectively rather than on seeking to tease out the views of any individual writer (even if it were possible to do that).

In examining these texts, I have aimed to consider three questions. First, what awareness did late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England have of the differing ethnic identities of the early inhabitants of Britain, as manifested both in the historical record and also in the physical landscape, in the shape of tribal boundaries of the late Roman and post-Roman periods such as those which separated the territory of the Catuvellauni from that of the Trinovantes, or, later, the boundaries of the constituent parts of the Heptarchy? Second, what elements of this awareness can be traced in the literary (particularly the dramatic) writing of the period? And third and most important, to what extent are the discourses which accrue to those ethnicities and boundaries also implicated in the formation of ideas about early modern national, cultural and political identities?

In terms of my three questions, the answer to the first is the easiest: the awareness of tribal boundaries can clearly be seen. It was well understood that the England of the past had been separated into different internal jurisdictions: Drayton in *Poly-Olbion* declares that “it appears that there were three sorts of lawes in the Saxon Heptarchy,”³³ and Samuel Daniel speaks of “the Saxons, encroching vpon each others parts, or States (which neuer held certaine boundes).”³⁴ Stuart Laycock notes that “The element Merc in Mercia refers to a border, so essentially the name Mercia means “borderland,” something of which early modern linguistic enquiry is likely to have increased awareness,³⁵ and David Hill and Margaret Worthington note the attempts of John Speed to make sense of Mercia’s frontier with Powys in particular:

When Speed was attempting to draw the map for Flintshire, the local justices would not co-operate in providing the sub-divisions of their county, the hundred boundaries, leaving the map rather devoid of features when compared to other counties. So, for the only county in the series, Speed draws an earthwork that he calls “Offa’s Ditch”. This follows no known line of any earthwork but starts more or less where Offa’s Dyke terminates after which it trends across county to end, more or less, where Wat’s Dyke ends at Basingwerk.³⁶

Speed may have been wrong in specifics, but he was clearly aware of the importance of Offa’s Dyke and of its boundary character. There is also a strong sense of the importance of internal territorial divisions in Fisher’s *Fuimus Troes*, where Nennius says of Caesar:

For had he won this coast, yet many blows
 Must pass, ere he could pass the Thames. And then,
 Ere he touch Humber, many nations must
 Be tamed. (3.2.30–34)

Later, Mandubrace declares:

By me the Trinobants submit, and Cenimagnians,
 Segontiacks, Ancalites, Bybrocks and Cassians—
 Six worthy nations do desire thy guard. (4.4.68–70)

For Fisher, groups which we might now term tribes, such as the Trinovantes and the Icenii, are separate nations. Finally, a stage direction toward the end of the play informs us that “*The four kings of Kent march over the stage*” (5.4.1 sd), suggesting that even Kent is not a single entity.³⁷

There was also a strong sense of physical demarcations between these different territories, which for Daniel are:

Intrenchments, Mounts and Borroughs raised for tombes and
 defences vpon all the wide champions [champains] and eminent hills
 of this Isle, remaying yet as the characters of the deepe scratches
 made on the whole face of our country, to shew the hard labour our
 Progenitors endured to get it for vs.³⁸

In particular, Lloyd and Jennifer Laing observe that:

The greatest single achievement of middle Saxon England was the construction of the great linear earthworks of Wat’s and Offa’s Dykes. These Mercian frontier works along the border with Wales were not the only dykes found in post-Roman Britain, but they were certainly the most ambitious. Similar territorial boundaries had been built in East Anglia (including the Devil’s Ditch on Newmarket Heath) and in the south-west (Wansdyke) in the early centuries following the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in England, but they were slight compared with the Mercian frontier works.³⁹

Wansdyke in Wiltshire especially, which modern archaeology confirms as “a huge linear defensive earthwork probably separating the territory of the Belgae from that of the Dobunni” on either side of which are traces of sharply different cultural patterns,⁴⁰ was understood as a territory demarcation. For Robert Callis, in a reading delivered in 1622, it “serves for a division of countreys,”⁴¹ for John Speed the West Saxons “assigned their limits by a great and long ditch crossing thorow the middest of these Plaines,

which for the wonder thereof is supposed by the vulgar to be the worke of the Deuill, and is called of all, Wansdike, vndoubtedly of Woden,”⁴² and Camden declares of Wansdyke “I have alwaies beene perswaded, that the Saxons made it, as a limite to divide the two Kingdomes of the Mercians, and West-Saxons asunder” and similarly sees Offa’s Dyke as dividing the Britons from the Mercians (he speaks too of dykes in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk which divided East-Angles from Mercians).⁴³ It was, then, well understood that England retained the traces of ancient physical borders which had once divided the territory of different tribes from each other; as King James asked Parliament in 1606, “Do we not yet remember, that this kingdom was divided into seven little kingdoms, besides Wales?”⁴⁴

More interesting than the simple fact of such recognition, though, is the affective tonality of the terms in which it is registered, for to what might be simple factual description of physical features, other notes accrue. For Daniel, the geographical is seen insistently if implicitly in terms of the human. Not only does he read “Intrenchments, Mounts and Borroughs” as bespeaking buried human bodies, but they are “scars” on the “face” of the country, and the idea that they “shew the hard labour our Progenitors endured to get it for vs” not only connects the inhabitants to the land but also frames that connection in terms of birth imagery: “labour,” “Progenitors,” and “get,” so often used in the period in the sense of “beget,” all point in this direction. The effect is to plant an idea of the English as almost autochthonous, so intimately connected to the land that they are virtually brought forth by it. Populations might change—in fact it was presumably pretty much inevitable that they should do so given that, as B. J. Sokol notes, it was being argued as early as 1589 that “the residence or continuance of one nation in one place is not of the law of nature which being in itt selfe immutable would then admitt no such transmigration of people and transplantation of nations as in dayly experience we see.”⁴⁵ However, as Mary Floyd-Wilson observes, geohumoral theory contended that “As an immigrant population acclimates to the nature and culture of its new environment, transplantation effects a change in people’s natural disposition and transforms their ethnicity: thus Gauls become German or, more radically, migrating Scythians turn Turk,”⁴⁶ and we shall see later that there was indeed a strongly held sense that whatever bloods and ancestries went into their making, the English were fundamentally and unalterably connected to England: as Samuel Rowlands’ long poem *The famous history of Guy Earle of Warwicke* has it, we are “worthy English, bred where wee are borne.”⁴⁷

Over the course of his construction of Guy as devout, triumphant champion of Christendom, Rowlands is apparently able to forget the tension between the English as itinerant descendants of the Trojans and the English as fundamentally constituted by the fact that we are “bred where wee are borne.” Other authors are less prepared to ignore this contradiction. For Speed, Wansdyke in particular forces us to be aware of the ways the land bears witness to multiple and potentially competing histories: coupling geography to etymology, he offers us a landscape characterized less by the human than by the divine, or at least the supernatural, for while “the vulgar” may imagine Wansdyke to have been built by the Devil, the educated can recognize its root word as “Woden.” There is, however, a provocative incompleteness about this contrast between the learned and the unlearned; although we are told that the learned recognize the derivation while the unlearned do not, we are obviously not meant to go one step further and conclude that, while the unlearned believe Wansdyke to be the work of the devil, the learned believe it to be the work of Woden. Of course they do not—they merely recognize it as the work of men who *did* believe in Woden—and yet the structure of the sentence does work to pit the Devil and Woden directly against each other as if they were two possible points of supernatural origin. In fact, Speed can be seen as in effect having his cake and eating it, dismissing but not quite disavowing the idea that the geographical markers of English ethnicity might glow with the aura of the supernatural. This is something we shall see again, particularly in relation to the Brutus story and its supposed connection to the goddess Venus, and the prophesied and destined accession of the Tudors. Ralf Hertel, suggesting that “It was a matter of urgent necessity to imagine the nation precisely because it had not yet materialized, at a time when the chasm created by the crisis of traditional forms of identity—the space national identity would eventually fill—was deepening,” argues that the *nouveau* status of the Tudors led to a “transference of venerability onto the nation”; he notes that “Joseph Llobera and others have argued that national identity replaces religious identity in the aftermath of the Reformation” and that John Aylmer, future bishop of London, was therefore emboldened to claim that God was English.⁴⁸ Whatever they may take Englishness to be, English Renaissance writers are rarely unwilling to entertain the idea that they belong to an elect and sanctified nation, with the aura of the numinous in their past and the promise of a divinely ordained destiny in their future.

What then of my second question: how and to what effect does awareness of internal territorial demarcations surface in literary texts? In many ways, it is also easy enough to trace how awareness of historical divisions was mapped onto contemporary terminology and concerns, though the ways in which it was so are complex and sometimes contradictory. Occasionally, it is a question of simple topicality, as when Daniel says of the Battle of Essendon, at which Edmund Ironside fought Canute, that “This fatall battell lost England,” but then temporarily diverts from his main thrust of lamenting an eleventh-century calamity to note that “Here among the rest was slaine, Vlkill, an Earle of Essex, of euer memorable worth.”⁴⁹ Daniel had been a protégé of a much more recent earl of Essex, Elizabeth’s favorite Robert Devereux, who had a well-established interest in questions of historiography and to whom Richard Harvey had dedicated his *Philadelphus, or a defence of Brutes*, and the implication is clearly that the earl’s execution in 1601 had been a disaster not just for himself but for the country as a whole; here, then, the past is simply being rather crudely suborned in an opportunistic attempt to wrest ancient English history into the shape of comment on modern English history. Similarly in *Edmund Ironside* it would be hard not to hear a contemporary resonance in First Pledge’s “Oh England, never trust a foreign king,”⁵⁰ an obvious warning against James, and in Edricus’ alleged resolve “to leave my native country and to exile / myself from England, sailing into *Spain*” (4.1.1326–27), which seems an odd destination for an Anglo-Saxon to choose but a very natural one for a disaffected early modern Englishman.

Past and present intersect with a more general and wide-ranging force when it comes to the charged terms “Britain” and “England.” In William Drury’s 1619 Saint-Omer play *Aluredus, sive Alvredus* the Saxon lord Athelrede (whose name significantly translates as “noble counsel”) asks “Whither tends th’expiring fate of England? / What destiny menaces the Britans?”⁵¹ as if England and Britain were one and the same, but generally the two are kept securely separate. For Drayton, Wansdyke may mark a border between the Mercians and the West Saxons, but it does rather more than that, since it was erected

to be a limit of those two ancient states, sometime diuided by Auon, which falls into Seuerna, Wansdike crossing the shire Westward ouer the plaine was first cast vp. Wodensdike, the old name is supposed from Woden; of no lesse (if not greater) esteeme to the Saxons, then Arsaces, Pelops, Cadmus and other such to their posterity; but so, that, I guesse it went but for their greatest God

Mercury Stonehenge and it not improperly contend, being seuerall workes of two seuerall nations anciently hatefull to each other; Britons and Saxons.⁵²

Like Camden, Drayton too homes in on Wansdyke, and starts off innocuously enough by situating his discussion within the safely uncontentious framework of mythology. Suddenly, though, we are pulled from the past to the present with the abrupt change of tense to “contend” and “being.” Wansdyke and Stonehenge, both still visible then (and now), thus energize the landscape around them and activate debates which may still be pertinent, forcing us to ask whether it was really only “anciently” that Britons and Saxons (read: Welsh and English) were “hatefull to each other,” or whether tensions might still survive.

For Drayton, then, Wansdyke speaks not so much of Englishness as of Welshness, and the same division between Britons and Saxons is also recalled when he has Sabrina, nymph of the Severn, declare,

Well Britans haue yee sung; you English, well repli'd:
Which to succeeding times shall memorize your stories
To either Countries praise, as both your endlesse glories.⁵³

Similarly in John Clapham's *The historie of Great Britannie* we are told how “Austen [St. Augustine] calleth a Synode to reconcile the differences between the British and English Cleargie.”⁵⁴ This time the focus is on the practices of the Celtic church rather than on national identities per se, but in early modern England religious and national identities were never very far apart, and here too we are reminded that while historical divisions between Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Danes survived in the early modern period only in place-names, far deeper fault lines still ran between this newly homogenized England and its Celtic fringe.

My third question, to what extent are the discourses which accrue to historical ethnicities and boundaries also implicated in the formation of ideas about early modern national, cultural and political identities, is inevitably the most difficult to answer, because it touches on a number of anxieties. For instance, if a distinctively British identity had been lost, might it follow that the successors of the British were by definition degenerate? I have noted elsewhere that, in the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was much used in the degeneration debate,⁵⁵ and “degenerate” and its cognates are also terms found in many plays about the pre-Norman past. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron assures Chiron and Demetrius that Bassianus is

not “so degenerate” as to stand by and see them rape Lavinia, though what Bassianus is or is not will very soon not matter, because he is about to be killed before he can leave issue.⁵⁶ In *Aluredus, sive Alvredus* Gothurnus tells the Danes “Your flight’s degenerous” (5.6.2551) and Cuthbert refers to Protestant England as being “From heav’n rebelliously degenerate” (Epilogue, 2869). In *Lochrine* we hear “Thrasimachus is not so degenerate” (sig. I2r) and in Henry Burnell’s *Landgartha* (1641) the prefatory verses by “Jo. Bermingham” call Burnell the only heir to Ben Jonson and declare other pretenders to that title “degenerate”; later the king of Sweland, Frolo, declares that he and his men “will not now degenerate first of ours.”⁵⁷ In Anthony Brewer’s *The love-sick king*, Erkinwald calls Elgina “Degenerate Princess” and tells her “I suspect thy birth: Yet well mayst thou be Sister to thy Brother, For Great Canutus blood runs low as thine, and Love-sick doateth on an English Nun.”⁵⁸ In Lodowick Carlell’s two-part play *Arviragus and Philicia*, Guimantes complains that his father must think him “so degenerate, that you beleeve I want courage, or judgment, t’reach, or execute your great designes,” and later the king himself is confident that Guimantes “can not so much degenerate from me his father,” though he regards his daughter Philicia as a “degenerat bastard” for caring what becomes of the Pictish prince Arviragus.⁵⁹ There was, then, a definite and widespread sense that British national identities had deteriorated and that a once glorious bloodline no longer ran true.

Secondly, the fact that Rome had become the city of the Vatican rather than the Capitol inevitably colored plays’ use of the language of Rome. For these plays, Rome no longer connotes simply imperial power, but also Roman Catholicism. In *Bonduca*, Caratach assures Hengo that there will be no Romans in heaven (p. 61), and Bonduca asks “If Rome be earthly, why should any knee / With bending adoration worship her?” (p. 65); both these passages are clearly inflected by thoughts of Catholicism, and the sense that we should remember what Rome became as well as what it once was is underscored when Judas (whose name obviously packs a punch of its own) says Caratach “swears he will keep his Christmas” on the rock (p. 68). In *The Valiant Welshman*, Rome is referred to as “that conquering See” (sig. A4v), clearly inviting us to understand it in terms of its modern religious identity rather than its classical one.

The accession of the Tudors also brought a renegotiation of understandings of Welshness in general and of its relation to the historical past in particular. In *The Valiant Welshman*, Caradoc, the eponymous valiant Welshman, evinces an easy familiarity with the putative Trojan past when

he speaks of a combatant in the Trojan War almost as if he had known him personally:

O my good Lord, this honourable cause
 Is able to inflame the coward brest
 Of base *Thersites*. (sig. C3v)

On the one hand, this sense that the descendants of Aeneas were still to be found in Wales seemed to bolster the sense of a link to Troy, but it also brought difficulties, for the link was specifically with the Welsh, not the English. Anthony Martin, contending that “the function of the British history was to try to give antique sanction to what had, in fact, simply been the construction of a state within the areas of the British Isles which had been colonized by the Normans,” notes that “with the signal exception of John Leland, the principal defenders of the historical veracity of the Brut against the sceptics were all Welsh,”⁶⁰ and Philip Schwyzer similarly remarks that a “problem facing English defenders of the British History was that it was not about the English.”⁶¹ Even Richard Harvey had to concede that the bloodline of Brutus had been transmitted only through Camber.

Finally, these stories undo their own truth-value. For one thing, our attention is repeatedly drawn to the sources through which events have been mediated. Chris Butler notes that *Fuimus Troes* “becomes more fascinating if its two main sources (Caesar and Geoffrey) are regarded as the real protagonist and antagonist among the *Dramatis Personae*,”⁶² as if we were watching not characters in a conventionally told story but two diametrically opposed authorities competing for control of that story. Both *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and *The Welsh Ambassador* include a character named Gildas, and that was also the name of the historian on whom Geoffrey principally relied, as he declared in the dedication:

Whenever I have chanced to think about the history of the kings of Britain, on those occasions when I have been turning over a great many such matters in my mind, it has seemed a remarkable thing to me that, apart from such mention of them as Gildas and Bede had each made in a brilliant book on the subject, I have not been able to discover anything at all on the kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ, or indeed about Arthur and all the others who followed on after the Incarnation.⁶³

Both *Fuimus Troes* and *Bonduca* have a character named Nennius, and he too was a chronicler: Geoffrey’s translator notes his reliance on Nennius’

Historia Brittonum,⁶⁴ and *Bonduca* in particular seems deliberately to draw attention to Nennius' function as a chronicler when Caratach says "O Nennius, / thou hadst a noble Uncle knew a *Romane*, / and how to speak him,"⁶⁵ so that once again the distinction between story and storyteller is strangely blurred. (*Bonduca* also includes a Swetonius, again the name of a historian, though this time a Roman one.) In the anonymous *Thorney Abbey*, which tells of the founding of the future Westminster Abbey by a rich merchant called Thorney whose daughter has been seduced by a fictional prince named Edmund, Edmund's attendant (and pander) is called Gaufreid, which obviously suggests Geoffrey, and could well imply Geoffrey of Monmouth; this would be ironically appropriate because, although the play is set at a period later than that in which Geoffrey is mainly interested, it is no less reliant on the author's imagination.⁶⁶

The Misfortunes of Arthur draws attention to questions of chronology and historicity in a different way: it deliberately blurs historical periods, as too do *Titus Andronicus*, *Fatum Vortigerni*, *A Shoo-maker a gentleman*, and *Cymbeline*; indeed Tracey Miller-Tomlinson, noting that "it is difficult to imagine a play more keenly engaged with questions of historiographic method" than *Cymbeline*, argues that the play's "conspicuously freestyle historiography foregrounds the constructedness of all historical narratives,"⁶⁷ offering self-conscious musing on the nature and purpose of historiography in ways that have something in common with the 1590s' espousal of Tacitus and the oppositional flavor which accrued to that. A number of the plays also include conscious anachronism and deliberately reference or glance at contemporary events: *The Valiant Welshman* has Romans with cannons and muskets (sig. D2r), while *The Welsh Ambassador* has a scene in which a clown seeks to be appointed chronicler and specifically says that he will not be starting with Brutus, and John Kerrigan observes that "In *King Lear*, the British-Galfridian royal house shares the action with the Saxon-named Edgar and Edmund."⁶⁸ In effect, these plays thus prompt their audiences not to believe in them, and yet at the same time they insist that the story they collectively tell is an important one which continues to matter.

One reason that these plays matter is that though each is about a specific king or queen, they are also about monarchy in general. Geoffrey declares that "When Aeneas' last day came, Ascanius was elected King";⁶⁹ since Ascanius was Aeneas' son, this flirts with both heredity and election as possible principles of succession, and a number of these plays are concerned not only with *who* reigns but *on what basis* they reign. *A Knack*

to Know a Knave contains a character called Honesty who acts as King Edgar's moral guardian, bringing the play close to the values of advice literature, and has the king disguising himself, a common feature of stories about just rule and the difference between good kings and bad. Jessica Winston argues that "*Gorboduc* addresses the nature and make up of the English political nation ... As they performed the play at the Inner Temple, members of the Inn claimed for themselves the authority to counsel the privy council and made themselves in a significant way, and even if only for the duration of the play, part of the political nation itself"; she therefore suggests that "The history of *Gorboduc* ... best begins with the tradition of inns of court Christmas revels ... By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the law schools had established a set of complex conventions around their Christmas celebrations, which involved electing a prince or lord of misrule."⁷⁰ When *Gorboduc* was performed Robert Dudley was the Lord of Misrule, and the whole point of the play was to argue that he should become a prince in real life too, since it clearly advocated his marriage to Elizabeth. These plays, therefore, comment not just on kings and queens who are long dead but loudly and urgently on the nature and prerogatives of kingship and queenship as experienced by their audiences. A number of plays about the Norman and pre-Norman past, perhaps most notably *Fair Em*, were either performed by Lord Strange's Men or had other connections to the Stanley family, whose potential claim to the throne might have prompted speculation about implicit topicality, and Jonathan Baldo notes that anything connected to the Anglo-Saxons in particular was liable to irritate King James because "His theory of the divine right of kings faced opposition from the Society of Antiquaries, whose study of Anglo-Saxon language and law tended to support the supremacy of the common law that James found so offensive. James ordered the dissolution of the Society in 1607 and blocked attempts to revive it in 1614."⁷¹ These plays are about the past, but they are also about the present and the future.

This book is divided into two parts. The first part, "Legacies," contains three chapters. The first, "Bisson Conspectuities: Language and National Identity in Shakespeare's Roman Plays," focuses on the contested issue of language. Carla Mazzio notes that "The increasingly heterogeneous linguistic textures and forms of early modern English became a site for the articulation of anxieties about local and national forms of self-representation,"⁷² and something which bedevils all Renaissance writing about origins is the fact that, even when it contests ideas of Roman origins and Roman primacy, it can do so only in languages and paradigms borrowed from the

Romans, so that any idea of non-Roman origins runs the risk of seeming absurd from the outset. In *Fuimus Troes*, Fisher cheekily has Caesar say “Nor can I write now, ‘I came over, and / I overcame’;—such foes deny such haste,”⁷³ and yet the lines are only possible because Caesar famously *did* write that, in a letter to the Senate.⁷⁴ Particularly interesting in this respect is *Bonduca*, for there plays with connections to the story of Rome are openly remembered when Petillius says Junius is “In love, indeed in love, most lamentably loving, / to the tune of Queen Dido” (p. 51) and Hengo says “I can live on anger” (p. 62), echoing Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, as if in testimony to the paradox that a play about resistance to Rome is itself always already conditioned by the cultural legacy of Romanness, which cannot be forgotten. Finally there was the question not only of what Rome had been in the classical past but of what it had since become. In *The Valiant Welshman*, Octavian, King of North Wales, draws on language directly associated with Catholic rather than Imperial Rome when he muses:

How learnedly hath thy persasiue tounge
 Discouered a new passage vnto ioy,
 In mentall reseruatiō?⁷⁵

The term “mental reservation” was unmistakably and immediately identifiable as associated with Catholics, and specifically with Jesuits, who were considered if anything even worse than ordinary Catholics, and at the same time both words are also clearly of Latin origin, doubly underscoring the Romanness of what Octavius says. Latinity is therefore a contested discourse, in ways which this chapter explores.

Perhaps the most important cultural change to occur between the Romans and the Normans was the conversion of every part of the British Isles to Christianity. In the second chapter, “Profit and Delight? Magic and the Dreams of a Nation,” I focus on a number of plays involving magic, including *Doctor Faustus*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *The Birth of Merlin*, *The Virgin Martyr*, *St Patrick for Ireland*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom* and, briefly, *The Tempest*. Collectively, I will argue, these plays offer a fantasized version of an England confident about both its past and its future, secure from both external invasion and internal disagreements about religion and proud of a firmly established classical past which authorized an expansionist agenda. Together, they take the pulse of the most urgently-felt fears and hopes of early modern England, allowing us to see both what it most dreaded and what it most wanted, and also how these related to the nation’s sense of its own pasts.

The third chapter, “A Borrowed Blood for Brute’: From Britain to England,” examines the question of hybridity in plays including *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, *Aluredus sive Alvredus*, *Fair Em*, *Hengist, King of Kent*, and *Edmund Ironside*. For Geoffrey, “Britain is inhabited by five races of people, the Norman-French, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots. Of these the Britons once occupied the land from sea to sea, before the others came.”⁷⁶ The idea of Saxon ancestry was not in simple opposition to the idea of descent from Brutus; in fact, many writers of the period found it surprisingly easy to mix and match the two. Drayton is only one of many contemporary writers who derive the name “England” from Hengist,⁷⁷ but he does not imagine that this simply equates the English with the Saxons, because for him there is in fact a strain of elemental, transhistorical Englishness which by a historical sleight-of-hand can never quite disappear, no matter how far underground it is driven or how thoroughly it is hybridized. The River Severn prophesies that:

when the Norman Line in strength shall lastlie faile
 (Fate limiting the time) th’ancient Britan race
 Shall come againe to sit vpon the soueraigne place.
 A branch sprung out of Brute, th’imperiall top shall get,
 Which grafted in the stock of great Plantaginet ...⁷⁸

That genealogy of Camber which no one could tell produces the Tudors, who claimed descent from Arthur and hence from Brutus, and British blood is thus reintroduced into the royal line at precisely the moment it appears to have disappeared.

While hybridity might have something to be said for it, however, it does complicate the presentation of any simple or monolithic narrative of national identity. Even for Drayton, there is the odd discordant note in his grand narrative of an essentially continuous and coherent national identity, as when he speaks of “the Dutch-made English.”⁷⁹ For Samuel Daniel, the problems posed by successive waves of invasion are far more significant. Daniel is confident that the English are a great people—“Nor is there any Nation, whose Ancestors haue done more worthy things, both at home and abroad; especially for matter of war. For since the Romans, no one people hath fought so many battailes prosperously.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, his denial of Brutus means that he cannot be quite sure who the English actually are: after the Romans “wee are now heere to beginne with a new Bodie of people, with a new State, and gouernment of this Land, which retained nothing of the former, nor held other memory but that, of the dissolution

thereof: where scarce a Citie, Dwelling, Riuer, Hill, or Mountayne, but changed names,” and

Britayne it self was now no more Britayne, but New Saxonie, and shortly after either of the Angles (the greatest people of the inuadors) or of Hengist, called Engist-Land, or England. This distance, made by the rage of warre, lay so wide betweene the conquering and conquered people, that nothing either of lawes, rites and customes, came to passe ouer vnto vs from the Britaynes: nor had our Ancestors any thing from them, but their countrie.⁸¹

There is an astonishing disconnect between this and Daniel’s characterization elsewhere of a markedly human geography which speaks of our connection to our progenitors. Along the faultline between the two passages we can glimpse something of what it cost him to renounce the idea of an essential continuity of Englishness, and something of the reasons for the longevity of the Brutus story.

The second part of the book, “Ancestors and Others,” focuses on gender, and particularly on the role of women in transmitters of descent. The first chapter, “Queens and the British History,” contends that the barbarian queens of early modern English plays need to be read not only in relation to *romanitas* but also in relation to two other paradigms: Christopher Marlowe’s hugely influential Tamburlaine plays, and the “British history” narratives offered in *King Lear* and its predecessor *King Leir*, which prove the site of a struggle over the meaning of kingship and queenship and their relation to British national identities. The second, “Dido in Denmark: Danes and Saxons on the Early Modern English Stage,” returns to the issue of hybridity to connect the fact of successive waves of invasion to early modern England’s alliances with Denmark and with Protestant parts of Germany, focusing particularly on Anthony Brewer’s *The Lovesick King*, Chettle’s *Hoffman*, Middleton’s *Hengist, King of Kent*, Henry Burnell’s *Landgartha*, and *Hamlet*. Dido was a resonant figure because of the famous trick she had played to increase her territory: offered as much land as could be covered by an oxhide, she had cut the hide into thin strips to enable her to form a boundary with it. This chimed with one of the most famous of Anglo-Saxon documents, the *Burghal Hidage*, which as Hill and Worthington observe “contained a calculation of how many tax units (hides) were needed to build and maintain a fortification known as a *burh*.”⁸² For Daniel, the best way to salvage his sense of a broken genealogical chain and a consequently disrupted national identity is

through a discourse of the elect nation: “as soone as the Saxons had ended their trauailes with the Britaynes, and drew to settling of a Monarchie, the Danes, as if ordain’d to reuenge their slaughters, beganne to assault them with the like afflictions.”⁸³ The Saxons, the Britons and the Danes may all be troublingly separate and indeed implacably opposed to one another, but at least we may be able to hope that the battles between them and their eventual results may have been “ordained” to occur as they do. John Clapham in *The historie of Great Britannie* also uses a language of destiny when he speaks of “the Roman Empire, vnto which at that time the soveraigntie of the whole world was, by divine providence, allotted”;⁸⁴ God has a plan for the development of nations, and even if the English are fundamentally hybrid, that must be a hybridity which enjoys His blessing. The discourse of election recuperated uncertainties about individual ancestors by drawing attention instead to the importance of the Reformation; and the Reformation originated in Germany, which now stood as a new counterweight to Rome.

The third chapter of part two, “Valiant Welshwomen: When Britain Came Back,” looks at the distinctive role of Wales, home not only of the Trojans but of the Tudors, in a number of plays including *The Valiant Welshman*, *Cymbeline*, *A Shoo-maker a Gentleman*, and *Henry VIII*. The reign of Henry VIII represents a crisis in understandings of Britishness. It is the immediately post-Polydore moment, and there were also compelling cultural reasons for a reappraisal of the usefulness of the Matter of Britain: Antonina Harbus notes that “Henry VIII sought a direct imperial connection with ancient Rome through his supposed descent from a British Constantine,”⁸⁵ while Winifred Joy Mulligan declares more bluntly that “in 1533 ... Henry VIII discarded King Arthur in favor of the British Constantine.”⁸⁶ Suggestively, this shift in allegiance precipitates an interest in what might be termed counterfactual history: *The Welsh Ambassador*, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, and to a certain extent *Titus Andronicus* can all be seen as examples of this genre, and so in a sense can R. A.’s *The Valiant Welshman* in its merging of different figures named Caratach. Both this chapter and “A Borrowed Blood for Brute” also pay attention to questions of burial and disinterment, both of which offer an important metaphor for the relationship of the past to the present. Finally, in “Athelstan, the Virgin King,” I look at three early modern plays which feature Athelstan—*The Welsh Ambassador*, the anonymous *Guy of Warwick*, and Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus*—and argue that the reason these playwrights turn to Athelstan is that they find in him a flexible, suggestive, and culturally resonant figure

who could be used to discuss a number of important issues, including succession, the status of the monarch, and the relationship of early modern English identities to the histories which had produced them.

NOTES

¹ Stuart Piggott, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 16.

² Gordon McMullan, “The colonisation of early Britain on the Jacobean stage,” in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, ed. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 119–40, p. 120. See also the very useful list of plays set in the period before the Norman Conquest provided by McMullan on pp. 138–41.

³ Misha Teramura, “Brute Parts: From Troy to Britain at the Rose, 1595–1600,” in *Lost Plays in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 127–47, p. 127.

⁴ See Todd Borlik, “Hellish Falls: Faustus’s Dismemberment, Phaeton’s Limbs and Other Renaissance Aviation Disasters—Part II,” *English Studies* 97.4 (2016), pp. 351–61, p. 353.

⁵ Paul Whitfield White, “The Admiral’s Lost Arthurian Plays,” in *Lost Plays in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 148–62, p. 148.

⁶ Tom Rutter, “Warlamchester,” *The Lost Plays Database*, <https://www.lostplays.org/index.php?title=Warlamchester>.

⁷ See William H. McCabe, S.J., *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater*, ed. Louis J. Oldani, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983), p. 142.

⁸ See the entry on *Mulmutius Dunwallow* in the Lost Plays Database (http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Mulmutius_Dunwallow).

⁹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1612), sig. F3r.

¹⁰ Richard Harvey, *Philadelphus, or a defence of Brutes* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), sigs. A3r and C3r.

¹¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 72.

¹² The story of the supposed University of Stamford was a vigorous one: *Ingredientur, Dr. Sampsonus*, a lost anonymous play of ca. 1613, appears to have concerned a group of scholars who leave Oxford to found a university at Stamford (Matthew Steggle, *Ingredientur, Dr. Sampsonus, Lost Plays Database*: http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Ingredientur_Dr_Sampsonus...). It may or may not be significant that in Lodowick Carlell’s *Arviragus and Philicia* Guimantes suggests that his servant Sinatus should escape to Stamford (sig. C5r).

¹³ William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Stanley Wells (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 5.1.11.

¹⁴ William Camden, *Britannia*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: F. Kingston, R. Young, and J. Legatt for George Latham, 1637), p. 8.

¹⁵ William Allen [Robert Persons], *A conference about the next succession to the crowne of England* (Antwerp: A. Conincx, 1595), p. 178.

¹⁶ Samuel Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1612), sigs. B1v–B2r.

¹⁷ Jonathan Baldo, “Necromancing the Past in *Henry VIII*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 34.3 (2004), pp. 359–86, pp. 361–62.

¹⁸ Max Adams, *In the Land of Giants: Journeys Through the Dark Ages* (London: Head of Zeus, 2015), p. 333.

¹⁹ Hilton Kelliher, “John Mott and *The Neue Metamorphosis*,” *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 11 (2002), pp. 109–31. I am indebted to Matt Steggle for drawing my attention to this reference.

²⁰ Stephen O’Neill, *Staging Ireland: Representations in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), p. 34.

²¹ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 20 vols. (Glasgow, 1905–7), vol. 19, p. 62.

²² William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1972), I.ii.73–74.

²³ Anthony Munday, *The Triumphes of re-UNITED Britania* (London: W. Jaggard, 1605).

²⁴ George Peele, *The famous chronicle of king Edward the first* (London: Abell Jeffes for William Barley, 1593).

²⁵ W. S., *The lamentable tragedie of Locrine* (London: Thomas Creede, 1595), sig. G2v.

²⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 282.

²⁷ Lucy Munro, “‘Nemp your sexes!’: Anachronistic Aesthetics in *Hengist, King of Kent* and the Jacobean ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Play,” *Modern Philology* 111.4 (2014), pp. 734–61, p. 735.

²⁸ See the entry on *Play of Oswald* in the Lost Plays Database.

²⁹ Ben Jonson, *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*, ed. Richard Dutton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 2.2.36–40.

³⁰ On the importance of Wales in plays about the pre-Conquest past see for instance John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 117–21.

³¹ Whitfield White, “The Admiral’s Lost Arthurian Plays,” p. 152.

³² Anonymous, *A Knack to Know a Knaue* (London: Richard Jones, 1594), sigs. C2r and F1r.

³³ Michael Drayton, *Poly-Olbion: A Chorographical description of tracts, riuers, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned isle of Great Britain* (London: John Marriott, John Grismand, and Thomas Dewe, 1622), p. 126.

³⁴ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, p. 29.

³⁵ Stuart Laycock, *Britannia the Failed State: Tribal Conflicts and the End of Roman Britain* (Stroud: The History Press, 2008), p. 228.

³⁶ David Hill and Margaret Worthington, *Offa's Dyke* (Stroud: The History Press, 2003), p. 39.

³⁷ There were also other signs of an awareness that England had once had different internal jurisdictions: Eamon Duffy notes of St. Walstan of Bawburgh that "According to his legend, Walstan was born at Blythburgh in Suffolk. He was a king's son, and his mother, Blida, herself had a minor cult in late medieval Norfolk, although nothing whatever is now known about her" (*The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992], p. 201), suggesting an awareness that there were once local kings to whose family Walstan could credibly have belonged.

³⁸ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, pp. 25–26.

³⁹ Lloyd and Jennifer Laing, *Anglo-Saxon England* [1979] (London: Grafton, 1982), p. 170.

⁴⁰ Stuart Laycock, *Warlords: The Struggle for Power in Post-Roman Britain* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp. 24 and 40.

⁴¹ Robert Callis, *The reading of that famous and learned gentleman, Robert Callis ... upon the statute of 23 H. 8, Cap. 5, of Sewers* (London: William Leak, 1647), p. 59.

⁴² John Speed, *England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland described and abridged ...* (London: George Humble, 1627), n.p. (EEBO doc image 44).

⁴³ Camden, *Britannia*, p. 241.

⁴⁴ James Shapiro, *1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 42.

⁴⁵ B. J. Sokol, *Shakespeare and Tolerance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 57.

⁴⁶ Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 52.

⁴⁷ Samuel Rowlands, *The famous history of Guy Earle of Warwicke* (London: E. Allde, 1620), sig. A4r.

⁴⁸ Ralf Hertel, *Staging England in the Elizabethan History Play: Performing National Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 21, 81, 121 and 122.

⁴⁹ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, pp. 50, 52, and 51.

⁵⁰ Eric Sams, ed., *Shakespeare's Edmund Ironside* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1986), 2.3.729. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

⁵¹ William Drury, *Aluredus, sive Alvredus* (1619), trans. Robert Knightley (as *Alfede, or Right Reinhron'd*, 1659), ed. Dana F. Sutton for the Philological Museum, 2014, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/aluredus/>, 1.i.33–34.

⁵² Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, sigs. F24r–v.

⁵³ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 76.

⁵⁴ John Clapham, *The historie of Great Britannie declaring the succeſſe of times and affaires in that iland, from the Romans firſt entrance, vntill the raigne of Egbert, the Weſt-Saxon prince; who reduced the ſeueral principalities of the Saxons and Engliſh, into a monarchie, and changed the name of Britanie into England* (London: Valentine Simmes, 1606), p. 220. Thanks to Matthew Steggle for pointing out to me that the lost *England's firſt happines, or, the Life of St Austin*, one of three plays entered on the Stationers' Register in 1640 by the printer John Nicholson, must have described the career of St. Augustine of Canterbury, and that its title indicates that it was a celebration.

⁵⁵ Lisa Hopkins, *Giants of the Past: Popular Fictions and the Idea of Evolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), chap. 1.

⁵⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Routledge, 1995), I.i.565.

⁵⁷ Henry Burnell, *Landgartha* (Dublin, 1641), sigs. A3v and B4v.

⁵⁸ Anthony Brewer, *The love-sick king, an English tragical history with the life and death of Cartesmunda, the fair nun of Winchester* (London: Robert Pollard, 1655), sig. C3r.

⁵⁹ Lodowick Carlell, *Arviragus and Philicia* (London: John Norton for John Crooke, 1639), first part, sigs. A5r, A8r and D1v.

⁶⁰ Anthony Martin, "The British Myth in Tudor Drama," in *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature*, ed. Mike Pincombe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 157–65, pp. 157 and 161.

⁶¹ Philip Schwyzer, "British History and 'The British History': The same old story?," in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David J. Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 11–23, pp. 16 and 21.

⁶² Jasper Fisher, *Fuimus Troes*, ed. Chris Butler as part of the MA "Shakespeare and Renaissance," Sheffield Hallam University, 2007, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/renplays/fuimustroes.htm>.

⁶³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 51.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 55 n. 1.

⁶⁵ John Fletcher, *Bonduca* (London: Humphrey Robinson for Humphrey Moseley, 1647), p. 47.

⁶⁶ *Thorney Abbey* is to be found in *Gratiae Theatrales, or a choice ternary of English plays* (London: R. D., 1662).

⁶⁷ Tracey Miller-Tomlinson, "Queer history in *Cymbeline*," *Shakespeare* 12.3 (2016), pp. 225–40, p. 225.

⁶⁸ Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 123.

⁶⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 54.

⁷⁰ Jessica Winston, "Expanding the Political nation: *Gorboduc* at the Inns of Court and Succession Revisited," *Early Theatre* 8.1 (2005), pp. 11–34, p. 12.

⁷¹ Baldo, "Necromancing the Past in *Henry VIII*," p. 363.

⁷² Carla Mazzio, "Staging the Vernacular: Language and Nation in Thomas

Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 38.2 (1998), pp. 207–32, p. 208.

⁷³ Fisher, *Fuimus Troes*, Introduction and 3.4.19–20.

⁷⁴ He did not, however, say it in England, but after the battle of Zela (modern Turkey) after his defeat of King Pharnaces of Pontus, as recorded by Plutarch amongst others in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. Thomas North (London: Thomas Vautrollier and John Wight, 1579), p. 764. I am indebted to Domenico Lovascio for pointing this out to me.

⁷⁵ R. A., Gent., *The Valiant Welshman, or the true chronicle history of the life and valiant deedes of Caradoc the Great, King of Cambria, now called Wales, as it hath beene sundry times acted by the Prince of Wales his seruants* (London: George Purslowe for Robert Lownes, 1615), sigs. B4r and C2r.

⁷⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 54.

⁷⁷ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 22.

⁷⁸ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 76.

⁷⁹ Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, p. 81.

⁸⁰ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, sig. A2r.

⁸¹ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, p. 28.

⁸² Hill and Worthington, *Offa's Dyke*, p. 116.

⁸³ Daniel, *The first part of the historie of England*, p. 33.

⁸⁴ Clapham, *The historie of Great Britannie*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Antonina Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. 120.

⁸⁶ Winifred Joy Mulligan, "The British Constantine: An English historical myth," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Drama* 8 (1978), pp. 257–79, p. 269.