

English Foundation Myths as Political Empowerment

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Abstract

When Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote the *History of the Kings of Britain* in Latin around 1135-8, he claimed that he was translating an earlier source in the “British Language” and presenting a “truthful account” of British History. Geoffrey’s claims around this book gave his writing more authority, and, while this particular book has never been uncovered, he was drawing on other sources, such as Gildas, Bede and Nennius. In particular, Geoffrey elaborated a legend from Nennius that described how the first settlers of Britain were descended from Æneas and other survivors from the Trojan War. Thus, Geoffrey’s purpose was to provide a plausible ancestry for the current kings of England—Norman who had invaded only seventy years before—and to establish the nation's authority on the world stage.

Keywords: Geoffrey of Monmouth; *History of the Kings of Britain*; English foundation mythology; Trojans; Æneas; Brutus; Corineus; Nennius; Gildas; Albion; Goemagot

Introduction

Geoffrey of Monmouth, a twelfth-century monk and teacher, is perhaps best known for being one of the earliest authors of a coherent written narrative of King Arthur and for his work on the prophecies of Merlin. His principal and innovative work, the *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*), presents an overview of the lives and deeds of 99 British monarchs, covering nearly 2000 years, beginning with the first settlers of the land, until the death of the last British king in 689 AD.

In this paper, I shall be looking at the first section of Geoffrey's *Historia*, and in particular considering how Brutus, descendant of Æneas of Troy the hero of Virgil's *Æneid*, is said to have established Britain, and how this narrative may have acted as a politically cohesive force for Geoffrey's audience. This paper is in two parts: the first will contextualize some of Geoffrey's influences and his political intent with a particular comparison to the mythology concerning the origins of Western Europe; the second looks at the first chapter of his *History of the Kings of Britain* to see how Geoffrey develops the story and what conclusions we might draw from his additional material.

Geoffrey: his life and works

We can piece together a few details about Geoffrey's life from various documentary sources. He calls himself "Galfridus Monemutensis"—Geoffrey of Monmouth—and we can surmise that he was born around 1100 in Monmouth, a Welsh border market town. Neil Wright suggests that he was a Normanised Celt, perhaps of Breton descent—after all, many Bretons settled in the Welsh borders after the Norman Conquest (Geoffrey 1985 x). Geoffrey is named as witness in a number of documents from between 1129–1151; these documents link him with Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford and Provost of the College of St George: we will discuss Walter's influence on Geoffrey below. Geoffrey may also have been a teacher there and secular canon, as he twice refers to himself as *magister*. He eventually became Bishop Elect of St Asaph in North Wales in 1151, but two Welsh Chroniclers explain that he was unable to take this

position because of the Welsh rebellion in Powys led by Madog ap Maredudd and his sons against central Norman rule (Aurell 3; Barron 12; Reeve vii). Again, according to the Welsh Chronicles, Geoffrey died in 1153 (Jankulak 11).

As suggested above, Geoffrey is most particularly known for his Latin text, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which was probably written between 1135 and 1138. Many people first come to the *Historia* because it is perhaps the first text to devote more than a few lines to the Arthurian legend and is the genesis of the legend that we know now. In particular Geoffrey brought some traditional mythological strands of the Welsh Myrddin (Merlin) popularizing him for his audience, creating the name Merlinus, as the Welsh name may have presented translation problems in Anglo-Norman. Geoffrey's text, *Prophetiae Merlini (The Prophecies of Merlin)*, written between 1148–1151, although circulated separately, was also incorporated as part of the *Historia*.

In writing the *Historia*, Geoffrey asserts that he is presenting a “truthful account” of British history (280). His purpose was to provide a cohesive lineage from the first settlers in Britain until the death of the last British king Cadwallader, which is dated 20 April 689. Lewis Thorpe argues that the text might have the “same relationship to the early British inhabitants of our own island as to the seventeen historical books in the Old Testament, from Genesis to Esther, to the early history of the Israelites in Palestine” (10). Indeed, Geoffrey attempts to give further authority to his work by correlating the events that he discusses with those of the Bible, for example, “At that time, the prophet Samuel was ruling in Judea,” or, “At that time Saul was ruling in Judea, and Euristeus in Sparta” (34).

Geoffrey's writings were taken to be factual for many centuries (Morris 427). It is recorded that Henry of Huntingdon was excited by the *Historia* when it was presented to him by Robert of Torigni at the Benedictine Abbey at Bec in Normandy in January 1139 (Henry was the chronicler who first recorded Cnut observing the sea). He saw it as a seminal piece of writing that filled the gap in his own knowledge about the history of Britain before Caesar. Geoffrey's writing subsequently influenced Wace's *Brut*, and, in the

sixteenth century, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Holinshed himself was the source for some of Shakespeare's plays including *Cymbeline* and *King Lear*.

Geoffrey's sources: the "Ancient book"

In the *Historia*, Geoffrey claims on three occasions that he was translating into Latin directly from "a very old book in the British tongue," which was given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, with the intent that Geoffrey should translate it into Latin (4, 248, 280). Geoffrey claims that he used this book as the foundation for his *Historia*. Indeed, in his conclusion, he commends William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon to write the history of the *Saxon* kings, but concludes: "I forbid them to write about the kings of the Britons since they do not possess the book in British which Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought *ex Britannia*, and whose truthful account of their history I have here been at pains in honor of those British rulers to translate into Latin" (280). The words that Geoffrey uses cause some difficulties: we do not know whether the "British tongue" that Geoffrey describes is Welsh or Breton; however, it is likely that *ex Britannia* may refer to a book that came from Brittany. Given the dedications to the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, that is Robert of Gloucester, Waleran de Meulan (Earl of Worcester) and King Stephen, it is plausible that Geoffrey was writing for them (Aurell 4).

Such a book that Geoffrey claims as his source has never been discovered, but, of course, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. That said, appealing to another text is a common rhetorical device used to appeal to an authority, although Guy Halsall observes that despite Geoffrey's references to this ancient book, he does not cite any specific passages from it (Halsall 142). On the other hand, Martin Aurell notes that in Geoffrey's *Historia* "five of the seven quotations" from Gildas's *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (*On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*, which was completed round 540) "are fraudulent" and that Geoffrey also "adapts, modifies and contradicts Bede at will, even though the manuscripts of Bede were widely disseminated and his work was well known among learned

people” (11). At the end of the first book, for example, Geoffrey refers to an argument between Lud, who gave his name to London, and his brother, Nennius, and explains that this argument “has been discussed at length by the historian Gildas [so], I have chosen to omit it” (30). Yet no such argument exists in Gildas. Thus, Geoffrey uses Gildas and Bede to give authority to elements of his work that are fabrications (Aurell 11; Gildas 19).

Gildas and Nennius

Gildas was the source for both the Venerable Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) which was completed around 731; he was also the source used by Nennius—or at least the work attributed to Nennius—*Historia Brittonum* (*History of the British*), written around 830. These works provide the foundation for some of the material that Geoffrey presents, and often expands. Nennius’s *Historia* was described by Gerhard Herm as “unrestrainedly inventive” but it should neither be trusted nor dismissed out-of-hand (275). The beginning of Geoffrey’s *Historia* begins in the same way as Gildas’s *De Excidio*, a description of what the island of Britain is like (and we might compare this with the similar descriptions in both Gildas and Nennius):

Britain, the best of islands, lies in the western ocean between France and Ireland; eight hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide, it supplies all human needs with its boundless productivity [...]. It is watered by lakes and streams full of fish, and [...] it stretches out, like three arms, three noble rivers, the Thames, the Severn and the Humber, on which foreign goods can be brought in by boat from every land. It was once graced by 28 cities [...]. It is finally inhabited by five peoples, the Normans, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots: of these the Britons once occupied it from shore to shore before the others, until their pride brought divine retribution down upon them and they gave way to the Picts and the Saxons. (6)

Here then, the description of the Britons’ pride serves to justify the subsequent invasions of Britain, ending, of course, with the Norman invasion just seventy years before Geoffrey was writing. Wright observes that this is just the first of Geoffrey’s “extended borrowings” (*Historia* 5). Geoffrey contextualizes his *Historia* referring to the works of both Gildas and Bede, but laments that in these “fine

works” he “found nothing concerning the kings who lived here before Christ’s Incarnation and nothing about Arthur and the many others who succeeded after him, even though their deeds were worthy of eternal praise and are proclaimed by many people as if they had entertainingly and memorably been written down” (4). Geoffrey is hinting at an oral tradition circulating about some of these legends. These oral legends are presented in embryonic form in Nennius: Geoffrey legitimizes them by adding more detail. For example, Nennius includes a legend of the child, Ambrosius, discerning the problems of the foundations of a Welsh king’s stronghold and prophesying that the Welsh “will arise and will valiantly throw the English people across the sea” (31). In Geoffrey, this legend is attributed to Merlin (138–41). Is it possible that Nennius is therefore the “ancient book in the British language” that Geoffrey mentions? This is unlikely, largely because Nennius’s *Historia* was written in Latin, and not in the “British language” and would have been widely circulated, rather than being a vague text owned by Walter.

Nennius is important because he wrote a secular rather than an ecclesiastical history: Gildas, for example, had presented a condensed account of the history of Britain from the Roman conquest and the Saxon invaders, but his principal purpose was to write a sermon which set out to denounce the wickedness of his age (particularly the condemnation of the sins of five kings) as well as condemning the British clergy. Also, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* presents a form of history, but this is used as a vehicle to show the growth of the Church in England. Nennius, on the other hand, gave secular authority to his work by including British, Saxon and Welsh genealogy, as well as placing the origin of Britain within the secular context of the Graeco-Roman as well as the Judaic past, while dispensing with the Biblical residue of Gildas’s *History*.

Political Environment

At the time that Geoffrey was writing, around 1135, King Stephen had just taken the English throne in place of the Empress Matilda. The Normans had been on the English throne for less than seventy years. It is possible that Geoffrey felt the need to legitimize his nation’s claim to

the English throne and the noble lineage. He also wanted to suggest that the British nation was a legitimate player on the world stage, and he attempted to achieve this by highlighting the story found in Nennius that the first settlers in Britain were descended from Æneas of Troy. This ancestry was recognized by classical writers such as Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the fourth century AD, who noted that “[a]fter the destruction of Troy a few of those who fled from the Greeks and were scattered everywhere occupied those regions [that is, Western Europe]” (Rolfe 179). Clearly, Geoffrey was drawing on a common literary trope about the heritage of Western Europe.

Æneas’s Ancestry

When Geoffrey included the foundation legends in his *Historia*, he was repeating a legend that he found in Nennius’s work. Describing British and Irish origins, Nennius describes how Britain was inhabited by the great-grandson of Æneas, who had fled Troy and settled in Italy. Nennius provides a genealogy, beginning with Æneas and his son, Ascanius. Æneas married Lavinia (and she has a heritage that takes her back to the god Saturn). What about this version: Æneas then marries “a wife” who bears him Silvius; Silvius’s wife whose child, it is prophesied to “be the child of death, for he would kill his father and his mother and be hateful to all men.” This child is called Britto: his mother dies in childbirth and he accidentally shoots his father with an arrow. He is subsequently exiled from Italy and then from Greece. He travels to Gaul where he founds the city of Tours and later “he came to this island, which is named Britannia from his name, and filled it with his race, and dwelt there. From that day, Britain has been inhabited until the present day” (Nennius 19). It is this tradition upon which Geoffrey draws and which he expands.

Nennius also discusses a second legendary strand. He traces the ancestry of “Brutus the Hateful” back *before* Æneas, ultimately to the race of Ham, son of Noah “the accursed son who saw his father Noah (after Noah got drunk and naked) and mocked him”. This is unusual, as it is commonly Japheth, the eldest son of Noah, who is credited as being the father of the tribes that populated the Indo-European nations

to the north and west of the world. Consequently, through Nennius it is possible to follow the ancestral lineage of the British people right back to the dawn of time, linking the nation with the Old Testament, rather than the classical gods. This serves to sanction the classical heritage by placing it in a Judeo-Christian context. That said, Nennius admits of the earlier genealogy that it “is not written in any book of Britain, but was in the writing of the writer’s mind” (19), and it is not included in Geoffrey.

Roman Traditions

The concept of tracing a nation’s lineage back to the Trojans was well-rehearsed in Europe: the account of the Romans’ Trojan ancestry is found in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a claim also supported by Livy—indeed, Geoffrey acknowledges this tradition at the beginning of Book four of the *Historia* where he has Julius Caesar describe how “We Romans and Britons share a common ancestry, being both descended from the Trojans,” although Julius Caesar then observes that the British people “are no longer our equals and have no idea of soldiering, since they live at the edge of the world amid the ocean” (Geoffrey 68). However, Cassibellaunus, ruler of the Britons, rebukes Caesar observing that “since Briton and Roman share the same blood-line from Æneas, a shining chain of common ancestry [...] ought to bind us in lasting friendship” (68). This then is the message that Geoffrey is trying to convey: equality with the other European nation states. His intent was to remove England’s reputation as a nation that was easily invaded, demonstrating that the British heritage was as sophisticated as the Roman and Norman past. Bernard Guenée observes that “a nation that claimed Trojan origin [...] would not yield an inch to another nation, however glorious, on this issue” (59–60).

French and Other Traditions

The French had established their own tradition, linked with the survivors of the Trojan wars. This is to be found in the *Chronicle of Frédégaire*, which was written in the mid seventh century, although Seznec argues that while this legend was the invention of Merovingian scholars, it was taken seriously as genealogy (18).

Admittedly, Frédégaire's version gives conflicting accounts: on the one hand the story speaks of Priam, King of Troy and the first king of the Franks, whose son, Friga (brother of Æneas) leads some of the Trojans past the Danube and to the ocean. Frédégaire notes that some stayed in Macedonia, others stayed at the ocean, where they were ruled by Torcoth. But, from there, some followed Francio to the Rhine, where they became known as the Franks. Frédégaire explains how, once the Franks had reached the Rhine, "they started to build a city called Troy, but this was never completed" (Wallace-Hadrill 82). However, this might have been a response to Gregory of Tours's observation that "when the Franks crossed the Rhine, they passed through Thuringia" and here Thuringia becomes identified as Troy (81). It is also likely that Frédégaire, like Geoffrey, was repeating some of the oral traditions that were circulating at the time.¹ On the other hand, as Susan Reynolds observes, the initial mythology of the first settlers in what is now Germany was not related to Troy: instead they claimed descent from the armies of Alexander the Great. By the thirteenth century, Alexander von Roes, the Canon of Cologne, asserted that all Germans were descended from Trojans and the French were "a rather inferior offshoot" (Reynolds 376-77). Thus, when Geoffrey was writing, the Germans had not connected their lineage to Troy, while the Franks' version of the story does not yet have the classical wanderings and encounters that Geoffrey includes in his *Historia*.

Howard Bloch argues that the *History of the Kings of Britain* "can only be understood within a nationalist context, since there is little doubt that it was intended to serve the ideological interests of the Angevin monarchy, as against the kings of France" (82). While many regions were named after the Trojan survivors, Brutus is the

¹ Another version of the legend which is included in the *Liber Historiæ Francorum*, describes how, after the fall of Troy, Priam and Antenor led twelve thousand men to the Maeotic swamps close to the Black Sea where they built a city called Sicambria. At the same time the emperor Valentinian offered remission of tribute to any tribe who could drive the Alans from the swamps. This, the Trojans did and they were then called the Franci, which the author thought was Attic for "fierce." In addition to the traditions of the noble lineage of the Franks, there is also a tradition that that Merovech—who gave his name to the Merovingian dynasty—was actually conceived because of an encounter between his mother and a quinosaur, a sea monster, which suggested that his ancestry was bestial, or at least supernatural.

only character who had an entire nation named after him. This demonstrates that the Norman monarchy is represented in the English and Briton chronicles as having its legitimacy established through their ancestry and links with Troy. The Angles and the Saxons didn't need to do this. They had their own lineage that took them back to their gods. Æneas still had a mythical status and yet was still sufficiently close to be a plausible ancestor. And at the same time, the descendant line from Lavinia shows that the heritage of Brutus was established well before Romulus and Remus founded Rome. Geoffrey sought to write about a time that was considered as existing outside the civilised order of his own society, something that was pre-medieval and barbaric, something filled with superstition and fear, a time that could be tempered by the arrival of the noble pagans.

Æneas's Descendants; Brutus and Exile

Geoffrey was happy to take Nennius's general idea of a heritage from the Trojans, but he fleshed out Brutus's encounters *en route*. These would prove Brutus's valour and place him as an equal to Æneas through his exile and subsequent travels. Tucked away in Nennius's genealogical list is a mention that Æneas "defeated Turnus" (19): perhaps this is another allusion to an oral tradition. We are then told that Brutus was "driven from Greece, because of the killing of Turnus, whom Æneas had killed." Thus, because of the sins of his ancestor, Brutus finds no place to settle.

Conversely, Geoffrey tells us that having been exiled from Italy, Brutus settles in Greece, which is ruled by their King Pandrasus. Here Brutus discovers descendants of Helenus, son of Priam, King of Troy. Geoffrey records that "after the fall of Troy, Achilles's son Pyrrhus had taken away Helenus and many others in chains and ordered that they be held in captivity in revenge for his father's death" (8). Brutus settles amongst them, and as his fame in "soldierly prowess" increases, he is approached by numerous Trojans who ask that he lead them away from "their bondage to the Greeks." Brutus then leads the Trojans in an attack against the Greeks, delivering a "crushing defeat" which leads to the capture of their king, Pandrasus. As tribute, Pandrasus provides "gold and silver, ships, corn, wine, and

oil” as well as offering Brutus the hand of his daughter. Thus Brutus leads the descendants of Troy away from the Greeks, in a manner that parallels Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery.

The defeat of the Greeks at the hands of the Trojans led by Brutus serves to counter the defeat of the Trojans at Troy. Through Brutus, Geoffrey demonstrates that the Trojans are a force to be reckoned with.

The Temple of Diana

From there, the Trojans travel to the island of “Leogetia.” Neither this location, nor this encounter, appears in Nennius’s discussion, and while it parallels Æneas’s visit to Delos and the Temple of Apollo (Virgil §59, 62), it is Geoffrey who has woven the two stories together. Scholars have debated over the location of this island. Among them, Morgan argues that Leogetia was the land of Melita, which was then called Legetta (29). Conversely, Hans Keller argues that it is probably based on Leucate, on the Mediterranean coast of France. Keller observes that it is “found later in the same book” of the *Æneid* as Æneas’s visit to Delos, where he is directed to settle in Italy (694). The land where Brutus arrives has been uninhabited since it was laid waste by pirates, but the Trojans soon discover a deserted city in which there is a temple dedicated to Diana. Brutus performs a ritual requesting that she “prophecy a sure home where I can worship you forever” (Geoffrey 20). After performing an appropriate and complex ritual, Brutus falls asleep and receives Diana’s prophecy in a similar manner to the way that Æneas received the prophecy from Apollo, which directs him towards Britain. Specifically, Diana’s prophecy explains that from Brutus’s descendants “will arise kings, who will be masters of the whole world.” Thus British domination has been divinely foretold.

The Journey

In addition to the information presented by Nennius, Geoffrey includes details of long Æneas-like wanderings as Brutus leaves Leogetia. These are details that are taken from Nennius a few sections after the description of Brutus, but which Nennius attributes not to Brutus, but

instead to a “Scythian of Noble birth,” who was expelled from Egypt and who travelled through the Mediterranean and eventually to Dalrieta in Ireland (21).² Thus Geoffrey draws on a tradition and mixes with it elements of the Æneas legend—something which provided a noble sense of ancestry and heritage. Particular elements from *The Æneid* include the journey, the sirens, and, one might consider, Brutus’s sojourn and visit to the Temple of Diana at “Leogetia.” At the “shores of the Tyrrhenian sea,” Brutus discovers another of his compatriots called Corineus of whom it is said that “if he met a giant, Corineus could overcome him at once, as if he were fighting a child” (Geoffrey 20). Corineus and his people agree to travel with Brutus, through Aquitaine and from there to Albion.

Arrival in Albion

Geoffrey provides a specific location for Brutus’s arrival, the small market town of Totnes, which sits on the river Dart in South Devon. According to local legend, Brutus named the land, saying: “Here I stand and here I rest. And this town shall be called Totnes”.³ In this location a marker was placed: a granite stone that is to this day called the Brutus stone. While Celtic historians date Brutus’s arrival at 1185 BC, in fact, this part of the legend may not have been included until the end of the seventeenth century; it is first recorded in John Prince’s *Worthies of Devon* written in 1697 (Gordon 92; Brown 68-69). However, the Brutus stone is some considerable distance up Fore Street, the street that leads down to the river, and is more likely to

² This connection is missed by Flinders Petrie in his paper presented to the British Academy on 7 November 1917, where he claims that this was part of a much older oral tradition: these locations “cannot have been stated by any seaman after 700 AD, as the Arab Conquest wiped out the old names and old trade” (251–78).

³ This is the how the rhyme is remembered now; however, John Prince’s *Worthies of Devon* describes how “Havillan, an ancient Cornish poet, following the authority of the British history, thus sang long since [...]

From hence great Brute with his Achates steered;
Full fraught with Gallick spoils their ships appeared.
The gods did guide his sail and course,
The winds were at command;
And Totnes was the happy shore
Where first he came on land.” (710)

have been a boundary marker. Geoffrey also explains that they drove the indigenous giant population to mountain caves: they “began to till the fields and built homes so that in a short time, the country appeared to have been occupied for many years” and thus he gives his name to the land. Abbé Paul-Yves Pezron argues that the word *stan*, or *tan*, signifies in Celtic a region, hence, “*Brut-tannia*” Brutus’s Land (Morgan 24; Borlase 5). The land where they arrive does indeed prove to be fertile, but, despite Diana’s prophecy, the Trojans discover it to be inhabited by giants.

The Giants

In Geoffrey’s account, the giants are given no voice. The Trojans begin a programme of displacing the indigenous community, forcing the giants into Cornwall. However, after they are initially routed, the giants are able to regroup and attack the Trojans while they are celebrating a day dedicated to the gods. Twenty giants are led by a “particularly repulsive” twelve-foot tall giant named Goemagog (a variant form of Gogmagog); together they kill a number of Trojans. Geoffrey describes how Corineus “experienced great pleasure” from wrestling with the giants, so, when the Trojans slay the attacking giants, Goemagog is spared because Brutus “wanted to see a wrestling match between the giant and Corineus” (28). A vivid description of the wrestling match follows, although this is nothing more than a display of strength by the invading Trojans. It culminates with Corineus heaving Goemagog onto his shoulders, running with him to the “nearby coast” and hurling him into the sea where “the giant fell onto a sharp reef of rocks, where he was dashed into a thousand fragments.” The fact that Totnes is nine miles from the sea, and *Saltus Goemagog*, “Goemagog’s Leap,” is—or rather was—in Plymouth some 24 miles away, is simply evidence that Geoffrey had little understanding of Devonian geography and was not describing the superhuman feats performed by Corineus. That said, an image of Goemagog and Corineus was cut into the turf at *Saltus Goemagog* at Plymouth (perhaps in the tradition of the Cerne Abbas Giant or the Long Man of Wilmington); it was destroyed in 1671 with the building of the citadel on Plymouth Hoe.

As a reward for Corineus's action, Brutus grants him the overlordship of the southernmost English country, to which, Geoffrey records, he gave his name: Cornwall. In fact, when the Saxons invaded, they gave the name *wealas* [foreigners] to the indigenous population that was forced to the west of the island. The southern countries of England were known as the "horn," or "cornu", and those who settled there were thus known as the "Cornu-wealas." (Locally, it is suggested that this etymology is drawn from a hypothesized Iron Age Celtic tribe called the *Cornovii*). And likewise, the term "farangi," the Persian root word from which the name "Frank" is taken, is also translated as "foreigner."

There are several subtexts regarding the depiction of the giants: Geoffrey draws on a few authorities, to further enhance the reputation of the giants; no longer could they be portrayed as simply annoying, clumsy and stupid—this is the representation in the Cornish legend of Jack the giant killer and Cormoran, for example (Spooner 22). However, in Geoffrey's version of the story, the fact that the giants interrupt the Trojans' worship establishes them as immoral rather than simply annoying. Then there is the name of the giant: Goemagog. Throughout the Bible, the names Gog and Magog are used. In particular, in the Book of Revelation, Satan rallies Gog and Magog for a final battle with Christ (Revelation 20:7-10).⁴ However, according to Peter Roberts, the earliest editor of the Welsh *Brut Tysilio*, the original giant was called Cawr-Madog: "the giant warrior of Madog" (Spence 142). As far as Geoffrey was concerned, his inclusion of the giants becomes symbolic of Armageddon, and by combining the two giants into one colossal creature, he is doubling the Apocalyptic impact of the conflict.

Ultimately, the message is that noble paganism trumped the barbaric giants who were the indigenous population. The giants were given an Apocalyptic status, which justified their extermination from Albion's shores.

⁴ As Gog and Magog are associated with the Apocalypse of Revelation, they appear in the Greek *Romance of Alexander* where, according to legend, Alexander the Great discovered the armies of Gog and Magog in the Caucasus Mountains, and forged gates to keep the uncivilised races of the north away from the civilised races of the south. These Gates will open at the end of time and Gog and Magog will fulfil the prophecy to destroy the world.

There is another legend, based on Geoffrey, but written almost two centuries afterwards. The story concerns the 33 daughters of Dioclesian, the king of Assyria. Led by Albina, they plot to murder their husbands and when the plot is discovered they are exiled. Arriving at a land which Albina names Albion after herself, the sisters mate with demons and the giants are the result of that liaison. Centuries later, the Trojans arrive and consequently it is their moral duty to cleanse the land of these foul abominations. However, it is Brutus, rather than Corineus, who battles the giants and who spares Goemagot; he spares the giant as “there was much in him to marvel about” (Breton l. 524) and listens to the story of his origins. An eighteenth-century legend posits that, after the battle, Goemagot is led in chains to the city of London, where he becomes one of the guardians of the city and is immortalized in the Guildhall. For centuries two statues have stood in the Guildhall, initially called Gogmagog the Albion and Corineus the Trojan. (The site of the Guildhall is reportedly the location of Brutus’s palace). One incarnation of these statues was destroyed in the Great Fire of London (1666), another just a few decades later, devastated by rats and damp, and a third was destroyed during the London Blitz in 1940. By this time the statues had become known as Gog and Magog, so the single amalgamation into one name had become separated once again. The current statues were re-instated in the Guildhall in 1953.

Establishing New Troy and the Temple of Diana in London

Brutus established *Caer Troiau* in the third year of his reign—afterwards called *Caer Lludd*, and now London. Here Brutus established the Temple of Diana in London. Mythologically, the name of London may have come from *Caer Lludd* (translated as *Lud-din*, Lud’s city) or *Luandun* (City of the Moon), or *Llan Dian* (Temple of Diana); etymologically, it is plausible that London takes its name from Llundin, Parliament Hill, a prehistoric mound, from which it is said that St. Paul the Apostle preached, hence St. Paul was made Patron Saint of the city (Crossley 505). During the reign of Edward I, thousands of Oxen heads were excavated from a place near St Paul’s

Cathedral, called Diana's chamber. It is suggested that these were sacrifices at Diana's temple (Fuller 2-3). Likewise, it is claimed that when the present St. Paul's Cathedral was built in 1675, Sir Christopher Wren discovered the remains of the temple to Diana in the foundations of the previous cathedral. According to Morgan, "[i]n the court of the temple of Diana he placed a sacred altar stone which had formed the pedestal of the Palladium of the Mother City of Troy. On it the British kings were sworn to observe the usages of Britain. It is now known as 'London Stone'" (Morgan 35).⁵ The legend is that as long as London Stone remained, New Troy (or London) would continue to increase in wealth and power. Thus, the temple of Diana is linked with the focus of Christian worship in London. According to legend, the altar stone to Diana, London Stone, is one of the sacred elements that protect the city from coming to harm. However, John Clark argues that a link to Diana "cannot be traced back before 1220," and that any link with Diana is conjecture inspired by Geoffrey's *Historia* (4, 9).

Brutus's Death

It is said that, after his death, Brutus was interred in the side of the White Mount, also known as the Bryn Gwyn. Again, the reference to this was of political significance when Geoffrey was writing. The White Mount is a prehistoric burial monument with a mythological connection to Julius Caesar, and is a sacred site. It is said to be the place where Bran the Blessed's head was interred facing towards France to insure that Britain was never invaded: Bran is a king of England according to Welsh mythology and is identified with Brennius in Geoffrey's *Historia* (Spence 187-88). The vestiges of the

⁵ It is more likely that London Stone was the *millarium*, the central milestone from which the Romans measured their distances in Britannia. When the stone was moved from an "inconvenient" place on Cannon Street to a niche at St. Swithen's Church, there was some annoyance to those who believed that the stone had marked the exact centre of the city (Bell 82-88). London Stone was imbedded in another stone on the south side of St. Saviour's Church Cannon Street; however, this was demolished in 1962, and since then it has been housed in an aperture in the wall of number 111 Cannon Street. John Stowe's account in 1598 does not give the dimensions of the stone, but around 20 years earlier, a Frenchman, M. Grenade, recorded it as being three feet high, two feet wide, and one foot thick. L. Grenade's manuscript account of *Les Singularitez de Londres* of 1578 is quoted in Groos (174).

Bran legend still linger: ravens, the symbols of Bran, are constantly present at the Tower of London. It is said that if the ravens ever leave the Tower, the kingdom will fall. It is therefore unsurprising that given the political significance of this location, William the Conqueror ordered the construction of the White Tower there in 1078, effectively sitting at the nerve center of Pagan England's power and being the burial sites of the founder and the protector of Britain (Gordon 101). And even today, the ravens are monitored by the Master Raven Keeper at the Tower of London.

Geoffrey's Purpose

Geoffrey's *History* gives a direct heritage from Æneas down to Cadwallader, the last Briton king. In turn, Æneas's own ancestors can be traced to Japheth, son of Noah and therefore back to Creation itself. But Geoffrey's concern is only with a comparatively narrow timeframe. As Lesley Johnson argues, the *Historia* "trace[s] the fluctuating fortunes of the British, the eventual demise of Britain, and the establishment of England—a political formation which is not the same, in its geographical or ethnic constitution, as that of Britain" (129). For Geoffrey, the *Historia* provided a coherent and cohesive lineage for the people of Britain; as Howard Bloch observes: "The history of the noble family is [...] the history of the land" (74). Geoffrey regarded the Normans as the natural imperial successors to the rules from the Trojans, the Romans and the Saxons, and consequently, the Normans would bring stability to the land. While politically, the Normans were able to establish their rule in a relatively short time, the Welsh kingdoms took considerably longer to bring into line. However, Geoffrey counters this by incorporating some of the Welsh legends into his historical framework as well as unifying the separate kingdoms of Britain by recounting that they were each ruled by one of Brutus's sons: Loocrinus, ruler of Loegria; Kamber, who gave his name to Kambria—Wales; and Albanactus, cognate with Albany, Scotland. They are eponyms of the island's constituent regions. However, this element of unification backfired when, in 1301, Edward I of England wrote to the Pope, claiming the

overlordship of Scotland and cited the Brutus legend as his authority (Stones and Simpson *ii* 299-300). It remained for the Scottish lawyers to dismiss this claim of descent from Brutus and Albanactus, and to establish their own mythology: it was the *Picts* who were descended from Albanactus, whereas the *Scots* were instead descended from the *Scoti*, taking their name from an Egyptian princess named *Scota*, who had conquered the *Picts* and founded a new tribe when she sailed to Ireland (Broun 120).

By having Diana direct the travelers to Albion, Brutus's journey is divinely sanctioned. In addition, Brutus has to undertake a purgatorial-style journey and overcome many obstacles and adversities—overcoming a tyrannical king, getting past the sirens and defeating the giants (in the tradition of both Odysseus and Æneas overcoming the Cyclops). In addition, he leads the descendants of the Trojans to a “Promised Land” in the tradition of Moses (although, unlike Moses, Brutus is able to remain there). Together, these incidents place his achievements on the same level as the other classical heroes. Arguably, Geoffrey hoped his *Historia* would heighten respect for the British nation.

J. S. P. Tatlock argues that Geoffrey's motive was racial patriotism, presenting “a splendid picture of events in the island for many centuries back [which] would also gratify its actual rulers, since patriotism attached to the land as well as the race” (427). The legends were developed to give a mythological status to the earliest British settlers. Æneas was held in mythical status and yet was still sufficiently close to be a plausible ancestor: there are only two generations that separate Æneas and Brutus, whereas there are *fourteen* generations that separate Æneas from Romulus, who, with Remus, founded Rome. The Roman claim in Æneas is further diluted as Romulus is descended through the line of Lavinia, Æneas's second wife. Therefore, Britain has a closer tie to Æneas than some other cities and, by this reasoning, Britain was well-established long before Rome. Widely disseminated, Geoffrey's writing was a major contributory factor to Britain's authority within Europe. It served to out-flank Frankish and Roman origins, and to place the nation squarely on the world stage.

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