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Welsh Manipulations of the Matter of Britain

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Welsh Manipulations of the Matter of Britain

Welsh Manipulations of the Matter of Britain

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

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ABSTRACT

“Welsh Manipulations of the Matter of Britain” examines the textual relationships between Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae* and the Welsh *Brut y Brenhinedd* in the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript. This thesis initially provides an overview of the existing scholarship surrounding the Welsh translations of Geoffrey’s *Historia* with a specific focus on the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*. The textual examination of the two histories begins with an extended commentary on the general textual variations between the two texts before concentrating on the specific changes that were made in the Cotton Cleopatra to reflect the adapter’s pro-Welsh nationalistic and political biases. The general alterations allow the Cotton Cleopatra adapter to express his Welsh sympathies rather subtly but these biases become more readily apparent with the examination of the changes made to the narratives of the early Trojans, the martial prowess of the Trojans and their British descendants, and the decline and eventual subjugation of Britain. The political contexts of the separate texts are also examined in terms of how the separate narratives were shaped by contemporary events. Ultimately, this thesis shows how the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is essentially a propaganda piece was modified by its translator to reflect and inflame the pro-Welsh nationalistic sentiments that developed shortly after the Edwardian conquest of Wales.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. BEHOLD, THE <i>BRUTS</i>	1
EARLY ATTEMPTS TO CLASSIFY THE COTTON CLEOPATRA	8
RECENT VIEWS.....	13
COMPLICATIONS CREATED BY CLASSIFICATIONS.....	18
ISSUES OF PROVENANCE.....	19
CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	21
II. VARIANT HISTORIES.....	23
GENERAL DEVIATIONS.....	27
GLOSSING GEOFFREY.....	31
ADAPTIVE ADDITIONS.....	40
III. MANIPULATING THE MATTER OF BRITAIN.....	47
THE TROJAN PAST.....	47
MARTIAL PROWESS.....	51
DECLINE AND SUBJUGATION.....	57
IV. POST-CONQUEST COMPOSITIONS.....	63
HISTORICAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE <i>HISTORIA</i>	63
HISTORICAL & POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE COTTON CLEOPATRA <i>BRUT</i>	71
WORKS CITED.....	76

Behold the *Bruts*

The significance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia regum Britanniae* cannot be overstated: there are over two hundred extant manuscript copies dating from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries alone.¹ Geoffrey's text chronicles the history of British kings from the mythical foundation of Britain under the Trojan Brutus through the Anglo-Saxon invasions, which Geoffrey places in the seventh century. The popularity of the text, to a degree, can be ascribed to its contents, which ultimately gave rise to the narratives of the mythical founding and national legends of the Matter of Britain, many of the romantic narrative adaptations of King Arthur, and even William Shakespeare's *King Lear*.² Geoffrey's narrative had an extensive following in Britain and northern France and was quickly translated by Wace in 1155 and to an extent by Chrétien de Troyes who might have been using source materials similar to Geoffrey, but not the *Historia* itself in the late 1170's. The subsequent popularity of these literary revisions helped to increase the widespread appeal of the *Historia*. Shortly after its composition, the Latin *Historia* was translated into Welsh as the *Brut y Brenhinedd* (History of the Kings) for more personal and political reasons. Brynley F. Roberts remarks that the Welsh widely accepted "Geoffrey's history as the basis and proof of their national pride and superiority" and the Welsh translations of this history served as extensions of this national pride and superiority by allowing the Welsh to preserve, and in some cases revise, their own perceived

¹ *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. Michael A. Faletra (Peterborough: Broadview, 2008), 8-9; Michael D. Reeve and Neil Wright, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of the De gestis Britonum*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), vii; Brynley F. Roberts, *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version* (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1984), ix-x.

² The Matter of Britain refers to a collection of texts from the Middle Ages that generally refers to the corpus of Arthurian literature, but also encompasses the mythical founding of Britain and legend of King Lear, and other mythological or pseudo-historical texts that contribute to the medieval notion of Britain as a nation state.

history in their own language.³ In fact, the *Brut y Brenhinedd* bestowed upon the Welsh the capability to “look back on the same past and, ignoring some unhappy episodes, draw from it their inspiration for the future, recalling their true claim to sovereignty.”⁴

This thesis studies the alterations between Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra recension of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* and the motivating politics behind both texts.⁵ The initial examination of the Latin version of the *Historia regum Britanniae* and the Welsh translation in the Cotton Cleopatra reveal certain aspects that merit a more extensive analysis which form the subsequent chapters of this thesis. In addition to noting the general differences that exist between two texts—such as the Cotton Cleopatra’s inclusion of a parallel Biblical timeline in an attempt to create a larger degree of legitimacy—I will examine passages that have either been incorporated into and/or have been excluded from Geoffrey’s Latin. I will argue that the reasons for the presence or omission of these passages can be explained by the larger political backdrop surrounding the Cotton Cleopatra’s composition. This thesis ultimately argues that the Cotton Cleopatra is a pro-Welsh piece of propaganda that glorifies the British past and accentuates the ethnic virtues of the original Britons while inflaming the cultural prophecies foretelling the Welsh reclamation of Britain. Moreover, the legacy of Geoffrey’s *Historia* was shaped by political situations that surround the later adaptations and was also used by the English to justify

³ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 62.

⁴ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 55.

⁵ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. John Jay Parry (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1937, hereafter cited as *Cotton Cleopatra*). British Library MS Cotton Cleopatra B.v is divided into three sections: *Brut y Brenhinedd* and *Brenhinedd y Saesson* (Welsh translations of The History of the Kings of Britain and The Kings of the Saxons), *Leges Howellli Boni* (a book of laws), and a fragmented *Ystoria Dared* (translation of *De excidio Troiae* which is a medieval Trojan pseudohistory commonly attributed to Darius Phrygius). For a more detailed description of the manuscript and its contents see Acton Griscom, “The “Book of Basingwerk” and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.,” *Y Cymmrodor* 36 (1926), 1; *Cotton Cleopatra*, xii-xiii.

their colonial ambitions.⁶ The same can be said about the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* but from the perspective of those who are oppressed. One of the primary reasons the Cotton Cleopatra is so unusual is that it was composed shortly after Wales was officially conquered by Edward I in 1282/3.⁷

One of the more debatable aspects of the *Brut* found within the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript that needs more attention is the actual date and location of its composition and how these temporal and spatial locations influence the text as a whole and contribute to many of its textual variations and pro-Welsh sympathies. Daniel Huws has noted that the Cotton Cleopatra was originally transcribed in the Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis, which is only a few miles east of Glyndyfrdwy. This happens to be the area where Owain Glyn Dŵr was named Prince of

⁶ For further details surrounding the English use of the *Historia regum Britanniae* as a political tool see Katherine H. Terrell, “Subversive Histories: Strategies of Identity in Scottish Historiography” in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffery Jerome Cohen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 153-172 which details how Geoffrey’s text was used by Edward I to justify his attempted conquest of the Scots to unify the island of Britain under English rule.

⁷ There is a continuing debate regarding the manuscript’s date of composition: it has been placed in the later part of the thirteenth century by William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston, 1868), 15; and the fifteenth century by Edward Owen *Catalogue of the Manuscripts Relating to Wales* (London: Society of Cymmrodorion 1900), 35; and Charlotte Ward, “Arthur in the Welsh Bruts,” *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, (1989): 384; however, the prevailing consensus dates the manuscript to the fourteenth century. Parry, who has provided the only English translation of the manuscript, initially posited this date in “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” *Speculum* 5, no. 4 (1930): 427, and this date has been supported by others like Edmund Reiss, “The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” *Welsh History Review* 4, no. 2 (1968): 111. A more precise dating of the manuscript within the fourteenth century has been made by Daniel Huws; Given that the section of the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript containing the *Brut y Brenhinedd* is written in the same hands as NLW Peniarth 20, which was written about 1330, it is logical to conclude that the Cotton Cleopatra was written around the same period. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press and The National Library of Wales, 2000; reprint 2002), 53, 47.

Wales before launching a Welsh rebellion against the English in September of 1400.⁸ This area, approximately twenty-five miles southwest of Chester, England, and its significance according to R. R. Davies is that it

lay beyond the normal ambit of any English Lord or official. [It was] an enclave of native Welsh rule which, through sufferance or oversight, had not been enveloped into the English governmental and judicial framework which had been so firmly wrapped around most of north Wales after Edward's Conquest of the area between 1277 and 1283.⁹

The existence of a haven such as this allowed the Cotton Cleopatra adapter a greater degree of freedom to create a rebellious text that blatantly modifies Geoffrey's original text by reshaping recorded history to reflect his own political biases.

The general lack of textual studies of the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* has resulted in very little commentary on the text's significant literary value. The study of this text also provides additional insights into Welsh and Anglo-Norman literary interactions by illustrating how Geoffrey's accepted history was rewritten to reflect the increasing Welsh national sentiments created by political tensions with the English. Furthermore, the study of the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* reveals how earlier oral traditions of the Welsh were later preserved in writing. Looking at what legends are included in this text also reveals what types of stories were deemed important enough to transcribe for others to read.

The inclusion of the *Cyfranc Lludd ac Llefelys* story is an example of such a tale which recounts the events of the British king Ludd consulting his brother Llefelys who is king of France on how to remove three supernatural oppressions of Britain: a race a people who can hear anything the wind carries; a dragon whose cry causes women to miscarry; and the overnight disappearance of a year's worth of provisions. The narrative ends with Ludd's removal of these

⁸ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 53; R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

⁹ Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, 1.

oppressions which includes burying two warring dragons “in the strongest and most secure place in the island” where they sleep until they are disinterred by Vortigern.¹⁰ While many who know the traditional legends of Merlin will be familiar with the allegorical story of the red and white dragons that prevent Vortigern from building his castle, they are, however, probably unfamiliar with how the dragons came to be buried underneath the castle’s foundation in the first place. The exploits of Lludd help to explain this burial and completes the legend of the red dragon that still serves as the national symbol for Wales. The presence of the *Cyfranc Lludd ac Llefelys* within the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is also significant in that it is one of the narrative passages that it is commonly used to determine manuscript provenance and families within the Welsh *Bruts*. Moreover, the *Cyfranc Lludd ac Llefelys* within the Cotton Cleopatra also exemplifies how this particular *Brut* glosses over the material from its Welsh and Latin primogenitors.

While the Welsh term “*Brut*” has come to be a collective term meaning “history” or “chronicle” the Welsh *Bruts* or *Brutiau* can also refer to two separate, yet connected, bodies of work: the *Brut y Brenhinedd* or the *History of the Kings* and the *Brut y Tywysogion* or the *Chronicle of the Princes* which takes up the historical narrative where Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the *Brut y Brenhinedd* end, and continues to chronicle the events of the Welsh Princes to about 1282.¹¹ The popularity of Welsh Histories or *Brutiau* was so great that they became “the most frequently copied texts in Welsh manuscript literature” along with Welsh laws.¹² There are approximately sixty manuscripts that contain Welsh renderings of the original Latin that were

¹⁰ “*yny lle cadarnaf ardiogelaf or ynys.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 69.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the use of the term “*Brutiau*” in this thesis will refer to the manuscript corpus of the *Brut y Brenhinedd*.

¹² Brynley F. Roberts, “Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*,” in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 111.

composed between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries and at least twenty of these manuscripts containing the *Brut y Brenhinedd* date from approximately 1250 through 1500.¹³

Despite the substantial manuscript corpus, many of the *Brutiau* have not been studied in any noticeable depth. The majority of the studies of the *Brutiau* were conducted for cataloguing purposes or to determine if the content in question was a variant version of Geoffrey's original source material.¹⁴ Later studies of the manuscripts believed to contain versions of Geoffrey's source material, namely the *Brut Tysilio*, would proceed to reveal that these *Bruts* were only truncated adaptations of the *Historia* that were compiled at the start of the sixteenth century at the earliest.¹⁵ A study examining the relationship between two or more manuscripts containing a variant of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* in their entirety has yet to be conducted, and the same is true for comparing any variant version of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* to the *Historia*.

The lack of attention notwithstanding, the cursory studies of the *Brutiau* have revealed that the fourteenth-century Cotton Cleopatra manuscript contains the greatest degree of variation not only from Geoffrey's Latin, but also from the other *Brutiau*. The only exception to this observation is the Black Book of Basingwerk which belongs to the same manuscript family as the Cotton Cleopatra and both manuscripts are believed to have been derived from the same source material which can explain their joint deviation from the norm.¹⁶ However, it is not

¹³ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. I Version*, xxiv; Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 58-63.

¹⁴ For a more comprehensive review of the scholarship surrounding the study of the Welsh Bruts' see Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 98-105; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. I Version*, xxiv-xxxi; Brynley F. Roberts, "The Red Book of Hergest Version of *Brut y Brenhinedd*," *Studia Celtica* 12/13, (1977/8): 147-157.

¹⁵ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 99; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. I Version*, xxix. For further commentary on the studies surrounding the *Brut Tysilio* see Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 99-100n.10.

¹⁶ Acton Griscom, "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," *Y Cymmrodor* 35 (1925), 68. Even though it does contain some a large degree of similarity to the Cotton

enough to note that the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* has the greatest degree of variation based on the examination of a few, selective passages. As the only Welsh *Brut* to have been translated into English (thus rendering it more accessible for Anglophone scholarship), it needs to be understood that the Cotton Cleopatra is not a typical version of the *Brutiau*. The only way to establish that the Cotton Cleopatra is a freer, more politically motivated adaptation is to compare the manuscript, in its entirety, to the *Historia* and to note what variations exist, the historical and political motivation for these changes, especially in light of the Edwardian conquest of 1282/3, and how these changes alter the text as a whole.

Given the proximity of the composition of the Cotton Cleopatra and the Edwardian conquest, a detailed examination of the Cotton Cleopatra and the *Historia* has the potential to provide new political insights. This examination yields a better understanding of Geoffrey's political leanings, at least as they are expressed in his *Historia*, and the post-conquest relationship between Wales and England regarding how the Welsh viewed their oppressors. Additionally, the comparison of these texts will also demonstrate how narrative history can be reshaped by later adaptors to meet certain agendas, whether that is to warn of the dangers of civil disunity as is the case with Geoffrey, or to glorify the past while inciting rebellion like the Cotton Cleopatra adaptor.

Cleopatra, the National Library of Wales MS 7006 D (Llyfr Du Basing / Black Book of Basingwerk) also exhibits numerous variations that suggest that both texts were created independently from one another. For further comparative commentary on the relationship between the Cotton Cleopatra and the Book of Basingwerk see Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," (1925); Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," (1926); Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*,"; *Cotton Cleopatra*, xvi.

EARLY ATTEMPTS TO CLASSIFY THE COTTON CLEOPATRA

Collectively, the *Brutiau* are a very understudied body of literature and this critical void becomes increasingly clear when the actual scholarship surrounding it is examined. What scholarship does exist often takes the form of superficial studies and cursory classifications. The majority of the existing scholarship surrounding the Cotton Cleopatra and the *Brutiau* as a whole has been devoted to the search for Geoffrey's original source material or his *liber vetustissimus* (very ancient book) which he claims to have put into Latin.¹⁷ Antiquarians believed that this very ancient book would be found to exist among the *Brutiau*, if it was to exist at all, and as Roberts has stated, "the examination of these texts was carried out not so much in a spirit of impartial inquiry as in an effort to provide conclusive proof of an emotionally held view of British history."¹⁸ The quest for Geoffrey's *liber vetustissimus* also classified *Brut* manuscripts into separate groups or manuscript families based on textual and orthographic similarities, manuscripts believed to have been derived from the same sources, and date of composition. This type of classification has yielded some commentary on the distinction between members of each manuscript group, but these distinctions are largely based on an analysis of the inclusion or exclusion of certain elements such as prophecies given by Merlin or the Eagle that foretell the future of the Britons.

The first publication of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* occurred in the *Cambrian Register* of 1795 and 1796 where fragments of Cotton Cleopatra were printed with a parallel English translation as an example of a Welsh translation of Geoffrey's *Historia*.¹⁹ The fragmented passages include the division of the Britain to Brutus' three sons: Locrinus, Albanactus, and Camber, the Prophecy of

¹⁷ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 98.

¹⁸ Roberts, "The Red Book of Hergest Version of *Brut y Brenhinedd*," 147.

¹⁹ William O. Pughe, ed. *The Cambrian Register*, Volume I, (London: 1795), 26-48; William O. Pughe, ed. *Cambrian Register*, Volume II, (London: 1796), 25-52.

the Eagle, and the story of King Llyr.²⁰ *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* of 1801 presented full medieval Welsh translations of the *Brutiau* for the first time.²¹ William F. Skene's *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* marked the first attempt to classify the Welsh *Brutiau*.²² Skene notes that there are three different textual groups that compose the Welsh chronicles of the *Brutiau*: the first group is comprised of first text printed in *The Myvyrian Archaiology (Brut Tysilio)*, two late manuscript copies from Jesus College, the *Downing* manuscript, and the Book of Basingwerk; the second group solely consists of the Cotton Cleopatra; and the third group contains *Bruts* from The Red Book of Hergest, the Hengwrt manuscript, and the second text of *The Myvyrian Archaiology (Brut Geoffrey ap Arthur)*.²³ Skene proceeds to describe how the manuscript composition of the *Brutiau* is usually preceded by the Welsh history of Troy (*Dares Phrygius*) and followed by the *Brut y Saeson*, or the history of the Saxons.²⁴ The Cotton Cleopatra's composition is also dated to the thirteenth century by Skene.

The first extended classification of the *Brutiau* that is also based on modern editorial practices occurs in John Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans' *The Text of the Bruts from the Red Book of Hergest*.²⁵ In the Preface, Evans announces his intention "to examine and classify all the existing Welsh manuscripts of Geoffrey's Brut," but he was unable to study several of the manuscripts that were then privately owned.²⁶ The manuscripts that Evans was able to analyze are briefly described and classified into three groups based on the manuscript's inclusion of the

²⁰ Pughe, *Cambrian Register* II, 25-52.

²¹ *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, ed. Owen Jones, Edward Williams, and W. O. Pughe (London, 1801).

²² Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, 14-16.

²³ Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, 16.

²⁴ Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, 16. Skene does acknowledge that in the *Red Book of Hergest* the *Brut* is concluded by the *History of the Princes*, or *Brut y Tywysogion*.

²⁵ *The Text of the Bruts From the Red Book of Hergest*, ed. John Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890) v-xix.

²⁶ *The Text of the Bruts From the Red Book of Hergest*, ix.

prophecies of Merlin and exclusion of Llevelys narrative; the existence of Llevelys' story and the absence of Merlin's prophecies; a combination of both components with the occasional inclusion of additional material such as the Prophecy of the Eagle.²⁷ The Cotton Cleopatra is simply described by Evans as being composed in the fifteenth century and contains the Llevelys narrative and the prophecies of Merlin and the Eagle.²⁸ Despite Evans' earnest attempt to describe and classify the extant *Brutiau*, his results are ultimately undermined by the inclusion of just thirty manuscripts, only six of which had actually been read through.²⁹

In "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," John J. Parry acknowledges the contributions to the classification and description of the Welsh *Bruts* made by Evans and expands on his earlier work. Parry concurs with Evans' belief that "the Welsh texts differ so widely that we seem to be justified in speaking of a number of different versions."³⁰ Parry expands Evans' catalogue by discussing the three types of manuscript variations extending beyond orthographic discrepancies which Parry places into separate categories. The three groups are characterized by the inclusion of certain omissions found in other versions and the Latin, additions that are not present in other versions, and the presentation of the same material with different diction.³¹ Parry devotes the rest of his findings to the analysis of the textual relationships between the texts "which apparently do not remain constant—cannot be adequately illustrated except by a complete collation of all the manuscripts, but some idea of the nature of

²⁷ *The Text of the Bruts From the Red Book of Hergest*, xii-xiii. The Llevelys narrative is also commonly known as the story of Lludd and Llefelys.

²⁸ *The Text of the Bruts From the Red Book of Hergest*, xvi-xvii.

²⁹ *The Text of the Bruts From the Red Book of Hergest*, xii.

³⁰ Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 424.

³¹ Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 425.

the problems involved may be gained from examination of a single paragraph from eleven MSS.”³²

Regarding the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript, Parry attributes the date of composition to the fourteenth century and remarks that the Cotton Cleopatra and the Book of Basingwerk *Bruts* “are in close, but not always verbal, agreement with each other but differ widely from all the earlier versions. They contain an attempt at a chronology and conferrable other material not in Geoffrey.”³³ Parry also posits the notion that the noticeable variations within the texts can be attributed to the general assumption that “in many cases, perhaps in most, the text was not preserved in writing but was committed to memory and was written down only when some one desired a copy.”³⁴ This conclusion is built on Parry’s belief that “Welsh story-tellers seem to have looked upon the words of a prose passage as comparatively unimportant and to have memorized the thought rather than the exact phraseology.”³⁵ Parry’s conclusion is also informed by T. Gwynn Jones’ opinion that “the prose portion of the narrative may have differed to some extent from time to time, even as related by the same person, thus never attaining an absolutely fixed form” which is “apparently what happened to the *Historia* as soon as it was translated into Welsh.”³⁶

In the split publication “The ‘Book of Basingwerk’ and MS. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.” Acton Griscom provides one of the earliest extensive commentaries on the Cotton Cleopatra. Grisom aims to correct certain errors concerning the Cotton Cleopatra and the Book of Basingwerk that have been generated by inadequate descriptions that have subsequently created

³² Parry, “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 426.

³³ Parry, “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 429.

³⁴ Parry, “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 429.

³⁵ Parry, “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 429.

³⁶ Parry, “The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 429.

some degree of confusion.³⁷ After discussing the problems surrounding the theories of Geoffrey's translation of the text given to him by Walter, the Archdeacon of Oxford, and the translations of Geoffrey's work by later Welsh scribes, Griscom proceeds to "place on record how inadequately both the manuscripts under consideration have been described, and then to attempt a brief analysis of them *de novo*."³⁸ Griscom expands on the classifications made by earlier studies of the *Brutiau* by noting that the similarities between the Book of Basingwerk and the Cotton Cleopatra are the result of the Cotton Cleopatra's existence as a cognate text. The distinctive differences between the two texts suggests that they are "probably derived from a common original (or body of materials) now lost."³⁹

The bulk of the Griscom's 1925 work is devoted to describing and discussing the Book of Basingwerk. Griscom's discussion of the Cotton Cleopatra resumes with the 1926 publication. In the second part of his piece, Griscom proceeds to describe the manuscript, critique previous opinions that have been written about the manuscript by other scholars, and discusses the Cotton Cleopatra's probable relationship to the Book of Basingwerk through the analysis of several passages. Griscom reaches the conclusion that "the Cottonian MS is assumed to be the one from which Gutyn Owain transcribed his "Book of Basingwerk", and since the latter ends in 1461, it is supposed that the Cotton MS., at the time when Gutyn Owain wrote, was complete, ended in that year, and therefore is a MS of that date."⁴⁰ These studies and attempts to classify the *Brutiau* are not without their merits despite their limitations. While largely incomplete, these studies have successfully mapped out the provenance of many of the manuscripts and the larger manuscript

³⁷ Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," *Y Cymmrodor* 35, 50.

³⁸ Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," *Y Cymmrodor* 35, 67-68.

³⁹ Griscom, "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," *Y Cymmrodor* 35, 68.

⁴⁰ Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," *Y Cymmrodor* 36, 25.

families and have supported the initial belief that Geoffrey's *liber vetustissimus* is either no longer extant or it has yet to be found. However, this notion is widely seen as hokum, given that this *liber vetustissimus* was a literary construct that allowed Geoffrey's narrative history to maintain a certain degree of perceived legitimacy by claiming that it came from an earlier work.⁴¹ Geoffrey's fabricated sourcebook also granted him certain leeway in expressing his own biases by allowing him to deflect any potential criticism away from himself and onto the *liber vetustissimus*.

RECENT VIEWS

Very little critical work on the *Brutiau* has been completed since the early part of the twentieth century. What little work that has been done tends to pick up where the early studies left off. Edmund Reiss' "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*" is one of the more recent studies that provides a more comprehensive examination of the *Brutiau*. Reiss mentions that while many important Welsh versions of Geoffrey's text come from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the earliest can be dated to the early thirteenth century. As a part of his review of scholarship, Reiss remarks that "only a few of the manuscripts have been studied in detail; and as a whole they have hitherto received no more than fragmentary and superficial examination."⁴² The variant texts are noted to contain one of three names that describe the texts as a whole: *Brut y Brenhinedd* is a general term for all of the Welsh chronicles that contain an account of the ancient kings of Britain; the *Brut Gruffydd ab Arthur* is supposed to be a literal

⁴¹ For further commentary on Geoffrey's actual source material see Faletra, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 14-21; Griscom "The "Book of Basingwerk" and Ms. Cotton Cleopatra B. V.," (1925), 49; Karen Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010; reprint 2011), 13-21; Thomas Jones, "Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh," *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968): 16; Roberts, "Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*," 97-113; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, xv-xx.

⁴² Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 98.

rendition of Geoffrey's Latin; *Brut Tysilio* refers to texts whose authorship has mistakenly been attributed to the seventh-century Saint Tysilio and were originally believed to represent Geoffrey's original source material.⁴³

While in agreement with Parry, among others, Reiss is of the opinion that a complete collation of all of the manuscripts is needed to adequately explore the relationships between the different Welsh texts. However, Reiss interjects that "before such a collation can be attempted, the texts could be arranged in some sort of working order," which is the task that he undertakes by studying ten selected passages from the beginning, middle, and end of the *Historia* and classifies these manuscripts on the basis of the congruity of details, wording, and syntax.⁴⁴ In total, seventy-six manuscripts are placed into six distinctive groups that are representative of a major Welsh translation or adaptation of Geoffrey's *Historia*.⁴⁵ The Cotton Cleopatra and the Book of Basingwerk compose their own group with respective dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁴⁶ Reiss produces his findings in the form of an *Appendix* that reveals that the Cotton Cleopatra contains references and material that are not found in other versions and excludes other details that the other manuscripts contain thus giving it the greatest amount of variation from the other manuscripts.⁴⁷

Aside from Reiss' fairly extensive study of the *Brutiau*, the vast majority of modern scholarship on the subject is indebted to Brynley F. Roberts. Roberts' earliest and possibly most well known work is his partial edition of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* from the Llanstephan 1 manuscript. The "Introduction" and "Appendix" of this edition are of notable critical value. The

⁴³ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 98-99.

⁴⁴ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 106.

⁴⁵ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 106.

⁴⁶ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 111.

⁴⁷ Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 114-27.

“Introduction” is broken into several parts that discuss the *Historia regum Britanniae* and the *Britiau*. Roberts also provides more general information regarding the Llanstephan version of the *Brut* and other information that is more pertinent to his edition than the larger critical discussion of the Latin and Welsh versions of the *Historia*.⁴⁸ In discussing the *Historia*, Roberts covers what little is known of Geoffrey’s life and leans towards the premise that Geoffrey had Breton connections which is drawn from Geoffrey’s tendency to place the Bretons in a more favorable light than the Britons themselves. To this end, Roberts goes so far as to conclude that “even Arthur, the finest leader of all, owes more to Brittany than to the Britons” which may have been a political move, but it could also have been influenced by a sense of racial pride.⁴⁹ Roberts continues to provide overviews of Geoffrey’s literary endeavors while supplying a more detailed focus on the likely sources of the *Historia*. The commentary of the *Historia* concludes with a short discussion of a few of the political motives behind Geoffrey’s narrative history that partially explain his pro-Breton and anti-Welsh stance.

In the “Welsh Versions of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*” section, Roberts presents a general, albeit extensive, overview of the earlier attempts to classify the existing *Brutiau* corpus before presenting the findings of his own study. Roberts independently arrived at a conclusion similar to that of Parry where six different manuscript versions or traditions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* exist: Dingestow; Peniarth 44; Llanstephan 1; Peniarth 21; Cotton Cleopatra; Brut Tysilio.⁵⁰ These manuscript traditions are discussed in terms of other notable manuscripts that

⁴⁸ The introductory sections that are not discussed cover the Llanstephan version of the *Brut*, several manuscripts that are relevant to the Llanstephan version, orthography, grammar and syntax. *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, xxxi-lx.

⁴⁹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, x.

⁵⁰ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, xxviii-xxx.

exist within each categorical version, dates of compilation, and general details of each manuscript narrative.

Robert's "Appendix" is primarily concerned with discussing the role of the *Historia regum Britanniae* in Wales from its historical importance to the Welsh and Normans of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to the historians of the eighteenth. In his commentary of the *Historia*'s role before the Early Modern Period, Roberts concentrates on the historical and cultural significance of the *Historia* to the Welsh and the Normans especially in regards to prophecies and politics. According to Roberts, the profound and long-lasting effect of the *Historia* can be attributed to the notion that it "gave the mould to men's thoughts of their past" and more specifically, "gave to the people of Britain the history they lacked and to Europe the first coherent picture of Arthur."⁵¹ Geoffrey's narrative presented to both Norman and Welsh "a picture of the past splendours, of a far-flung empire and an honorable origin" that appealed to the Normans who

could step into a borrowed past, theirs by conquest, and succeed to the glories of the people whose land they inhabited and ruled: Welshmen could look back on the same past and, ignoring some unhappy episodes, draw from it their inspiration for the future, recalling their true claim to sovereignty and the prophecy to their last king which told of their ultimate triumph and the vanquishing of the White Dragon by the Red.⁵²

From here, Roberts shifts the nature of his commentary away from the *Historia* to some its source material to begin his discussion of Welsh prophetic material which was incorporated into poetry that was used for political purposes.

Roberts' overview of prophetic poetry foretelling the Welsh overthrow of foreign oppressors covers the existence of poetry, like the *Armes Prydein Vawr*, that predates Geoffrey to poems extending into the fifteenth century. In earlier periods this type of poetry frequently

⁵¹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 55.

⁵² *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 55.

referred to a “deliverer (*y mab darogan*) who will lead his countrymen [in overtaking control of the island of Britain]: he is Arthur, or, more often, Cadwaladr, Cynan, or Owain.”⁵³ Political tensions, such as the Welsh resentment of the English penal code, and the failed Welsh rebellions by Owain Lawgoch (*Yvain de Galles*) in 1372 and by Owain Glyn Dŵr in 1400, resulted in an increase of politically prophetic poetry.⁵⁴ During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this type of poetry was “an important element in the Welsh national consciousness as the poets sought the promised ‘Messiah’ and saw him in many a possible leader.”⁵⁵ In many ways Henry Tudor fulfilled this promise in that “his return was prophesied, expected, prepared for. The victory of Bosworth Field was the culmination of all the vaticinary poems of the past, for here, visibly, a Welshman bearing the Red Dragon wore ‘the crown of London.’”⁵⁶ Roberts arrives at the conclusion that these “poems are political propaganda which has a direct relationship with contemporary events and struggles. They not only help to sustain hope, they are a stimulus and an incitement, giving concrete expression to national aspirations.”⁵⁷ This very conclusion can also be made about the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*. Not only can it be seen as a piece of political propaganda to reinforce the illustrious history of the Welsh, but it can also be used to sustain hope, stimulate rebellion and express national ideals in a similar way as its contemporary poetic counterparts.

Charlotte Ward’s “Arthur in the Welsh Bruts” shifts away from a categorical study to more of a literary analysis that focuses on the portrayal of King Arthur in the *Brutiau*. Ward notes that “some of the courtly trappings so characteristic of Wace’s French do creep into the

⁵³ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 55. *y mab darogan* translates to “son of prophecy or destiny.”

⁵⁴ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 56.

⁵⁵ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 56.

⁵⁶ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 59.

⁵⁷ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 56.

Welsh tradition at last, for instance in the fifteenth-century Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*.”⁵⁸ While discussing the French influences within the *Brutiau*, Ward concentrates her argument on the notion that King Arthur’s portrayal in the Welsh *Bruts*, including the Cotton Cleopatra, is a reflection of Welsh ideals, as opposed to the more courtly depictions of French romance. Ward ultimately concludes that the study of Arthur in Welsh narratives “presents a very different conception from his image in other vernacular languages, as well as being different from the Latin texts” in that Arthur is conceptually closer to the older heroic models than the younger courtly model typical of English and French romance, despite the fact that the Welsh *Bruts* contain stylistic elements from romance.⁵⁹ As it currently stands, very little is known about the Welsh translations of Geoffrey’s *Historia* other than the fact that these adaptations exist, categorically belong to a few manuscript families, and remain largely faithful to the *Historia* with the exception of the Cotton Cleopatra.

COMPLICATIONS CREATED BY CLASSIFICATIONS

Perhaps one of the more useful aspects of the earlier attempts to classify the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is the revelation of how little is actually known about the manuscripts and the *Brutiau* as a whole. The micro-studies that examine a handful of passages are also useful in providing a template on how the relationships between different *Bruts* can be conducted on a larger scale. However, little to no attention is actually paid as to why the differences that are present actually exist. Parry and Reiss are correct in that a complete collation of all of the manuscripts is needed to adequately illustrate the relationships between the different texts, but before this collation occurs, it might be useful to examine the relationship between the *Brutiau*, or a specific *Brut*, and the *Historia* first. This methodology would allow the *Historia* to be used

⁵⁸ Ward, “Arthur in the Welsh Bruts,” 386.

⁵⁹ Ward, “Arthur in the Welsh Bruts,” 289.

as the control for future studies that examine manuscripts in their entireties. Ultimately, two obvious avenues of future scholarship of the *Brutiau* corpus exist: studies (which build off of the revised template provided by Reiss) that examine a larger number of different passages in all of the extant manuscripts or that examine a fewer number of manuscripts in their entirety.

ISSUES OF PROVENANCE

One of the more complicated challenges of this particular study lies with the representative texts used for comparative analysis. While the extensive edition by Michael D. Reeve and the translation by Neil Wright has become the standard critical edition and translation of Geoffrey's Latin narrative, it is not without a few specific complications and limitations.⁶⁰ The greatest of these limitations is understandable from a sheer practical standpoint: Reeve's work is a collation of seventeen separate manuscripts, only eleven of which were collated in their entirety.⁶¹ Reeve provides extensive notes regarding what manuscripts are used in certain sections of the collated narrative, their relationship(s) and the variations amongst the individual manuscripts in question. However, Reeve's description of the actual manuscripts he uses and the survey of the manuscript tradition as a whole are somewhat brief and primarily focuses on providing a "brief indication of how the rest [of the manuscripts] behave."⁶² As a result, Julia C. Crick's *Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* becomes rather valuable in regards to understanding the larger relationships between the manuscripts of Reeve's collation.⁶³

⁶⁰ *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of the De gestis Britonum*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009) Hereafter cited as *Historia*.

⁶¹ *Historia*, xi. The manuscripts used by Reeve and their location within his edition can be found on page xii of his "Introduction" and the explanation of his "Apparatus" is on page li.

⁶² *Historia*, xxxi.

⁶³ Julia C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, 3. A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989).

Despite the relatively limited amount of information surrounding the composition of the Cotton Cleopatra, its provenance is a little easier to navigate. In the “Introduction” to his edition, Parry voices the belief that the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is adapted from two earlier sources: the Llanstephan-Havod version and Peniarth 21.⁶⁴ Parry’s notion is based on textual similarities in that the Llanstephan-Havod version and the Cotton Cleopatra both include the Lludd and Llefelys narrative amongst others. The textual and narrative relationships between the Peniarth and Cotton Cleopatra are explored in Parry’s “Appendix A” where certain passages are printed in full where “anyone who is familiar with the usual variation in Welsh texts will recognize many parallels.”⁶⁵ The passages of “Appendix A” detail certain events from the life of King Arthur from his first foreign campaign to his death.

In my study I have chosen not to include the *Bruts* in the Peniarth 21 and Llanstephan 1 for three main reasons: The Llanstephan 1 *Brut* is damaged and is largely incomplete. Both *Bruts* in the Llanstephan 1 and Peniarth 21 manuscripts are rather faithful recensions of Geoffrey’s Latin, and I am more concerned with how and why the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* deviates from the Latin. And perhaps more regrettably, I simply do not have access to the other manuscripts at this stage of my research.

⁶⁴ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xv. The Llanstephan-Havod version refers to the separate manuscripts of the National Library of Wales MS Llanstephan 1 and the Cardiff Central Library MS 1.363 (Havod 2) *Brut* manuscripts which Parry considers to have been faithfully copied from the former to the degree that he “believe[s] we are justified in relying upon the Havod manuscripts to fill the gaps in the other.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, x-xi. Roberts has also acknowledged the similarities of these manuscripts but “prefer[s] to regard them as independent but faithful copies of the same original.” *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, xxxvii. National Library of Wales MS Peniarth 21. Huws’ dating of the three manuscripts is as follows: Llanstephan 1-Mid 13th Century, Havod 2-14th Century, Peniarth 21-late 13th early 14th Century. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 58-59.

⁶⁵ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xv.

The vast majority of the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is clean and readable. However, there are certain areas where the manuscript is damaged or unclear. In these areas Parry has included the corresponding text from the Book of Basingwerk into the translation with italics to distinguish these alterations. Parry also includes a number of footnotes throughout the entirety of his edition, noting variations between the Cotton Cleopatra and the Book of Basingwerk that are deemed important. Several editorial changes to the manuscript were made to produce Parry's edition but these changes were made the text more accessible to the reader. These changes include the expansion of abbreviations, altering the spacing between words, and the parenthetical inclusion of marginalia.⁶⁶

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Variant Histories: The general differences that exist between the two texts and the possible reasons for these variations will be discussed before focusing on larger specific deviations. For example the Cotton Cleopatra includes a parallel Biblical timeline of events in an attempt to create a larger degree of legitimacy. I will also examine passages that have either been included or excluded from the Latin and how these admissions and omissions shape the narratives as a whole.

Manipulating the Matter of Britain: This chapter will begin to discuss specific passages that highlight the political motives and biases of the authors, starting with the inclusion of the Trojan history and how the Trojans and their British descendants, who serve as the literary proxies for the Welsh, are depicted. These passages will consist of accounts of the martial prowess of the Trojans and early Britons before examining how and why the Britons repeatedly come under foreign oppression, and eventually relinquish control of their isle to the Saxons.

⁶⁶ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xvii.

Post Conquest Compositions: This chapter establishes the political context of Geoffrey's *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*. I will provide details of the probable events that surrounded each composition and discuss how the political aftermaths of the Norman and Edwardian conquests shaped the respective narratives of the *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra. The likely reasons for the *Historia*'s composition will be noted as will the motives for the modifications made to the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*, seeing as Geoffrey was writing to the conquerors while his counterpart was addressing the conquered.

Variant Histories

With very few exceptions, the scholastic commentary on the major differences between Geoffrey's *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* are somewhat generalized and are not examined at length.⁶⁷ My intention here is to expand from these earlier observations by providing a more extensive examination on the primary differences between the two texts in question. A larger focus will also be placed on why these changes were made and how they affect the narrative as a whole. The Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* contains the typical variations in orthography that one would expect to see in a manuscript that was compiled several decades after its exemplars. However, the textual variations between the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* and its counterparts are severe enough that Parry noted that the Cotton Cleopatra "might almost be considered as presenting a new work in the same sense that the poems of Wace and Layamon do."⁶⁸ Parry has categorized the non-orthographical variations of the *Brutiau* into three groups: the omission of material ranging from a single word to entire passages; the inclusion of material that may or may not exist in other manuscripts belonging to the Welsh or Latin traditions; and restating the same material using completely different words.⁶⁹ This last occurrence is the most common form of variation.⁷⁰ Reiss' study of selected passages from the Welsh *Brut* and the Latin *Historia* confirm Parry's categories while providing specific examples that illustrate how the

⁶⁷ For cursory examinations of the differences between the *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* see *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv-xv; Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 429; Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 114-27. For more detailed examinations on these differences see Brynley F. Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein" (paper presented at the first symposium held by the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth, Wales, June 15-16, 2011; and Smith, Joshua Byron, "Literary Encounters in the Anglo-Welsh Borderlands, 1138--1400" (PhD dissertation Northwestern University, 2011), 60; 72, ProQuest (Dissertation number: 3456703) 59-63, 72-80.

⁶⁸ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xi.

⁶⁹ Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 425.

⁷⁰ Parry, "The Welsh Texts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 425.

Cotton Cleopatra deviates from its counterparts. Reiss' study presents the passages in question from the ten manuscripts he is using—thus allowing readers to examine the passages for themselves. Unfortunately, for each passage Reiss only offers a few sentences of commentary, which rarely goes beyond general observations that provide little to no insight for the reason(s) behind the variations.⁷¹ The closest Reiss comes to explaining one of the textual differences comes with the speculation that the reason why the Cotton Cleopatra refers to Britain as “Albion” in one of the earlier passages is due to the possibility that it is “related to the *Variant Latin version*.”⁷²

In his “Introduction,” Parry briefly notes two specific examples that make the Cotton Cleopatra stand out from other *Bruts*: the presence of the dedicatory chapter to Robert, Earl of Gloucester and the inclusion of the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Prophecy of Merlin.⁷³ While Parry does provide some additional commentary on these features, he does not present any explanations as to why these alterations exist in the manuscript beyond an attempt to demonstrate his notion that “the text of this *Cotton Cleopatra* version is a composite of various elements not elsewhere found together.”⁷⁴ Even though the Cotton Cleopatra marks the first occurrence of a dedicatory chapter appearing in Welsh for the first time, it was also present in some earlier versions, in Wales albeit written in Latin.⁷⁵ Parry argues that the Prophecies of the Eagle and of Merlin were derived from a different source than the rest of the narrative text based on stylistic changes and orthography.⁷⁶ Additionally, Parry fleetingly mentions several items that are unique to the Cotton Cleopatra: the “elaborately worked out chronology,” the chronicle of major events

⁷¹ Reiss, “The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 114-27.

⁷² Reiss, “The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*,” 115.

⁷³ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv-xv.

⁷⁴ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv.

⁷⁵ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv.

⁷⁶ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv.

that occurred during Cymbeline's reign, and the passing references to Saint Bride and Theophilus the Scholar.⁷⁷

Roberts' "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," while still a work in progress, that is a transcription of a presentation given at a symposium in its current form, presents the most extensive commentary on the textual variations between the Cotton-Basingwerk recension of the *Brut* and Geoffrey's *Historia*. Roberts refers to the Cotton-Basingwerk version as "*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*" (Histories of the Kings of the Island of Britain) since this variation actually contains a title within the manuscript unlike many of the other Welsh texts. As a result, Roberts maintains that it is appropriate to refer to this version via the aforementioned title. I will follow Roberts' model of using "*Ystoriaeu*" only in reference to the joint Cotton Cleopatra-Book of Basingwerk manuscript version. According to Roberts, the *Ystoriaeu* "is a condensed translation of Geoffrey's *Historia* which nevertheless contains a number of elements additional to the vulgate text."⁷⁸ Roberts initially supports this claim by pointing out the fact that the *Ystoriaeu* closely follows the narrative of the *Historia* while referring to the same individuals, albeit through the use of either traditional or adopted Welsh versions of personal names e.g. "Gorthern" for "Vortigern" and "Bedwyr" for "Bedivere."⁷⁹ The *Ystoriaeu* generally truncates the *Historia*'s narrative by altering letters and speeches to reportage and dialogue via a reduction in content or by complete omission. Moreover, the majority of Geoffrey's authorial commentary is removed.⁸⁰ However, some letters and speeches are translated more fully than others, and the

⁷⁷ *Cotton Cleopatra*, xiv-xv.

⁷⁸ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 2.

⁷⁹ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 2. For a more detailed commentary on the use of Welsh names in the *Brutiau* see Brynley F. Roberts, "The Treatment of Personal Names in the Early Welsh Versions of *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1973): 274-90.

⁸⁰ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 2.

same holds true for some of Geoffrey's authorial comments. Roberts notes that the authorial comments, speeches, and letters that are more fully reproduced in the *Ystoriaeu* are those that contain or reflect Geoffrey's "themes of British history as divine retribution and social degeneration."⁸¹ Furthermore the *Ystoriaeu* also minimizes the details of battles, military strategies, and personal conflicts. These omissions, and contractions produce what Roberts refers to as a "free-flowing narration" that is written in "a more informal narrative style" despite the *Ystoriaeu*'s inclusion of Welsh material not found in Geoffrey's Latin.⁸²

Roberts explains that information has been added to the *Ystoriaeu* narrative for the purpose of "enhanc[ing] the quality of the account or serv[ing] to ground events more securely by giving naturalistic explanations or reasons for actions or events. The translator sometimes attempts to combine the *Historia* narrative with elements from Welsh traditions, written sources or less specific ones, relating, so he believed, to the same person, episode or period."⁸³ The story of Lludd and Llefelys, the figure of Coel's daughter Elen, the death of Maelgwn Gwynedd, and the massacre of the monks of Bangor are mentioned by Roberts as examples of the inclusion of Welsh traditions into the *Ystoriaeu*. Roberts also remarks that the *Ystoriaeu* adapter includes material not found in Geoffrey's Latin that does not come from Welsh sources such as the

mission of St. Augustine to the English—the incendiary birds of Cirencester, the fish-tailed men of Dorchester and the well at 'Cernel' in Kent, the explanation of the country names Wessex, Essex, and Sussex as being memorial of the night of the long knives, the effect of the speech announcing the departure of the Romans, all of which can be paralleled in Wace (rather than Laymon) but the correspondence is never close enough to be regarded as a translation but rather as a recollection; *Ystoriaeu* does not follow the sequence of events in Wace exactly.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 2.

⁸² Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 3.

⁸³ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 3.

⁸⁴ Roberts, "Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein," 4.

Additionally, Roberts mentions that the *Ystoriaeu* adapter “reveals his chronicler’s background” through dating “regnal years as X years after the Flood, he inserts a chronology of central events in the life of Christ and he also has other synchronisms not found in Geoffrey.”⁸⁵

The observations and conclusions that Roberts has made about the variations between the *Ystoriaeu* and the *Historia* are supported by my independent examination of the relationship between Geoffrey’s Latin and the *Brut y Brenhinedd* in the Cotton Cleopatra manuscript. In its current form, “*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*” does not contain vary many direct textual examples to illustrate Roberts’ points and the ones that are included are somewhat brief. However, Roberts supplies an extensive list of the passages that he is making reference to: “some letters and speeches are translated more fully, e.g. §§ 55 (p.72, unlike Caesar’s speech that precedes Caswallon’s letter), 118 (pp.138-9), 125 (p. 142), 133 (pp. 148-9) etc...”⁸⁶ Again, given that the “*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*” is still a work in progress and the nature of its current form, it is more than understandable why Roberts presents the material in the manner that he does.

GENERAL DEVIATIONS

As others have already noted, the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* distinguishes itself from other *Bruts* and the *Historia* by truncating information conveyed in letters, speeches, and authorial asides, in addition to glossing over certain details, adding new material from various sources, and establishing an elaborate timeline.⁸⁷ For the sake of efficiency I will only present representative examples of the general type of alterations made by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter to provide a

⁸⁵ Roberts, “*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*,” 4.

⁸⁶ Roberts, “*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*,” 2.

⁸⁷ Roberts, “*Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein*”; Smith, “Literary Encounters in the Anglo-Welsh Borderlands, 1138—1400,” 60, 72. *Cotton Cleopatra*, xi.

feel for the ‘free flowing and informal narrative style’ as described by Roberts.⁸⁸ Geoffrey’s fondness for elaborate speeches and letters is almost rivaled by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter’s affinity for abridging them. One of the more notable speeches in Geoffrey’s Latin is made by Julius Caesar when he sets his sights on the island of Britain from across the channel:

By Hercules, we Romans and the Britons share a common ancestry, being both descended from the Trojans. After the sack of Troy our first ancestor was Aeneas, theirs Brutus, whose father was Silvius, son of Aeneas’s son Ascanius. But, unless I am mistaken, they are no longer our equals and have no idea of soldiering, since they live at the edge of the world amid the ocean. We shall easily force them to pay tribute to us and obey Roman authority forever. However, as they have not yet been approached or affected by the Roman people, we must first instruct them to pay taxes and like other nations submit to the senate, lest we offend the ancient dignity of our ancestor Priam by shedding the blood of our cousins.⁸⁹

By contrast, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter truncates Caesar’s speech by having Caesar state that

This is from the line of us men of Rome, for Aeneas first came to Rome from Troy, and he and his descendants have ruled in Italy from that day to this; and grandson to this Aeneas was Brutus, the man who first conquered that island. And I think it will not be difficult for us to subdue that island to the Roman senate, for they are in the ocean and know nothing of fighting or bearing arms.⁹⁰

However, the details regarding Caesar’s intentions of instructing the Britons in the ways of being a Roman protectorate presented in the Latin are reproduced in the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* as reportage. In the Cotton Cleopatra Roman messengers are dispatched to Cassibellaunus asking for tribute and submission to the Senate out of goodwill and kinship.⁹¹ The Cotton Cleopatra adapter also takes the liberty of altering the implied risk of forced subjugation through military conquest in the *Historia* to an implicit threat in keeping with his penchant for adjusting details to

⁸⁸ Roberts, “Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein,” 3.

⁸⁹ *Historia*, 54, p. 68.

⁹⁰ “llyna oc an kenedil ny gwyr ruvein. canys y ruvein y doeth eneas yn gyntaf o droya. ac awledychavd yr eidal. ef ay etiued yr hynny hyt hediw. ac wyr y eneas oed brutus y gur a oresgynnavt yr ynys honno gyntaf. a theb yw gennyfi na byd annavt yny darystwng yr ynys honno y sened ruvein. canys yny mor ymaent heb wybot ryuelu na dwyn arueu ymlad.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 71.

⁹¹ *Cotton Cleopatra*, 71.

suit his own political agenda: the British should willingly submit “through their good will and for their kinship, so that he [Caesar] should not spend effort on it with his army and be forced to shed the blood of the nobles of the Isle of Britain and compel them by the force of arms.”⁹²

The overtly formal letters within the *Historia* are treated in a similar manner in the Cotton Cleopatra. Certain details are removed and others are rewritten to place the Britons in a better light. One of the best examples of the information within a letter being omitted has been noted by Roberts who points out that the details of the quarrel between Hirlas and Kuelyn (King Caswallaun’s nephew and the nephew of Avarwy the Prince of London, respectively) are omitted completely in Avarwy’s letter requesting help from Julius Caesar.⁹³ The Cotton Cleopatra adapter merely remarks that Avarwy “gave in the letter the gist of the quarrel as it all took place,” whereas Geoffrey has a full account of the dispute that arose from Hirlas striking at Kuelyn after being bested in a wrestling match which ultimately resulted in Hirlas’ death.⁹⁴ The actual details provided in the respective texts also follows the formula of the Cotton Cleopatra adapter glossing over details for the sake of brevity and to put his own spin on events to reflect his own agenda. According to the *Historia*, Hirelglas (Hirlas) and Cuelinus (Kuelyn) could not reach an agreement as to who had won a wrestling match and “after an exchange of insults, Cuelinus snatched up a sword and cut off the head of the king’s nephew.”⁹⁵ It is also worth mentioning that Androgeus (Avarwy) alters the altercation to his own benefit in his appeal to Caesar. Androgeus not only claimed that his nephew won the contest but also reported that Cuelinus swung a sword at an unarmed Hirelglas which created a struggle for the sword that

⁹² “*drwy ev bod ac ev kerennyd. rac y lauriav ef ay lu. a goruot arnav ellwng gwaet bonhedigion o ynys brydein. ac ev kymell o nerth aruev.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 71.

⁹³ Roberts, “Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein,” 2.

⁹⁴ “*ac ef a rodet yny llythyr ystyr ydaruot ual y buassei oll.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 76; *Historia*, 61, p. 76.

⁹⁵ *Historia*, 61, p. 74.

ultimately ended with Cuelinus fatally falling on the blade during the struggle.⁹⁶ In contrast, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter tersely states that there was “a quarrel between them while tilting, and in this quarrel Kuelyn killed Hirlas.”⁹⁷ The dissimilar portrayal of Avarwy in both texts is a reflection of the respective author’s larger agenda. Geoffrey vilifies Androgeus to a greater extent to highlight the untrustworthiness of Britons and to accentuate their innate tendency for engaging in civil strife. However, Avarwy’s self-serving actions are deemphasized in the Cotton Cleopatra in an attempt to deflect the severity of Geoffrey’s assertions. This ambition is also served by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter obfuscating the actual events surrounding Hirlas’ death to increase the possibility of Hirlas’ death being accidental.

Based on the authorial asides within the *Historia*, Geoffrey seems to be fond of the sound of his own voice—something the Cotton Cleopatra adapter has little issue muting. Several of Geoffrey’s authorial comments are excluded in their entirety. At one point, Geoffrey takes it upon himself to openly state that he has refrained from including the history of Brennius seeing as it was already recorded in Roman histories. These accounts are ultimately omitted by Geoffrey “to avoid making this work too long and also losing the thread by repeating what has been dealt with by others.”⁹⁸ In another situation, Geoffrey realizes that he has strayed too far from his commentary on the history of the kings of Britain, and takes the time to seemingly chastise himself by stating “but enough of the Picts, since it is not my intention to write either their history or that of the Scots, who are descended from them and the Irish” before returning to the history of Marius.⁹⁹ In both of the aforementioned circumstances, the Cotton Cleopatra

⁹⁶ *Historia*, 61, p. 76.

⁹⁷ “*daruot ryngthunt yn gareu palet. ac yny daruot hwnnw y lladaud kuelyn. hirlas.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 75.

⁹⁸ *Historia*, 44, p. 58.

⁹⁹ *Historia*, 70, p. 86.

adapter includes the pertinent information while excluding Geoffrey's superfluous asides and continues along with the narrative: "And he [Bran] subdued them [the Romans] with unheard of cruelty, as the history of the men of Rome after that shows. And Beli came to the Isle of Britain...they went into Ireland and took the Irish women as wives. And from them are descended the Scots from that day to this. And after Merrick had established the island in peace..."¹⁰⁰ By diminishing Geoffrey's personal presence within the narrative, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter is still able to use Geoffrey as the scapegoat in that Geoffrey as the original author is to blame for any critical backlash that the narrative might receive. Furthermore, the omission of Geoffrey and his asides allows the Cotton Cleopatra translator to give voice to his own agenda while asserting his own narrative style.

GLOSSING GEOFFREY

In addition to removing many of Geoffrey's authorial deviations, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter frequently removes descriptive information from military strategy and the ensuing battles, along with other narrative details that are either deemed unnecessary or unbecoming. During one of the engagements between Modred and Arthur, Geoffrey provides great detail of the actual conflict and the strategy used by Arthur to drive his nephew's forces from the field, most of which are excluded in the Cotton Cleopatra. In both accounts, Modred amasses some eighty thousand troops and attempts to repel Arthur's return to Britain. Heavy casualties are noted in both narratives. The *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra single out King Auguelus of Scotland (Arawn) and Gawain (Gwalchmei) from the fallen combatants and provide Auguelus with a successor but the accounts conflict as to who the successor is and the detail describing

¹⁰⁰ "ac ynteu ay darystyngawd wynt o angklywedic crulonder megis ymeneic ystoria gwyr ruvein gwedy hynny. Ac y doeth beli hyt yn ynys brydein...aethant hyt yn ywerdon achymryt y gwydellesseu yn wraget ydunt. ac or rey hynny yd hiliws yr yscottieit yr hynny hyt hediw. A gwedy darvot y veuryc llvnnnyethu yr ynys honn drwy dagneved." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 52, 86.

him. According to Geoffrey, “Augustus was succeeded by Hiwonus, son of his brother Urianus, who later distinguished himself through his many brave deeds in these battles” but the Cotton Cleopatra adapter merely notes that “in the place of Arawn, Urien Kynvarch’s son was made king.”¹⁰¹ The removal of such extraneous information allows the focus to remain on the principal subjects to a greater degree thus highlighting the deeds of British heroes and not their Scottish cousins.

The actual battle is given little attention in both texts but the *Historia* augments this episode by including the strategy implemented by Arthur. The Cotton Cleopatra states that “and many on both sides were slain...and with great effort and the loss of many of his men, Arthur came to land in spite of Modred” which follows the *Historia*, which reads “in the ensuing fighting [Modred’s forces] inflicted severe losses on the troops as they came ashore...When [Arthur’s army] had at last got ashore with immense difficulty, they traded blows and put Modred and his army to flight.”¹⁰² The reason for Arthur’s success is not mentioned in the Cotton Cleopatra, but it is implied that Arthur’s victory can be attributed to the martial superiority of his troops over the barbarian coalition under Modred. This implication is conveyed when the Cotton Cleopatra adapter states that once Arthur made landfall, “straightaway he put to flight Modred and his army, and scattered his men and killed them until night came.”¹⁰³ Geoffrey arrives at a similar conclusion, but he is more implicit in actually stating that “thanks to their [the Britons] experience in years of warfare, they had wisely drawn up their battle-line with infantry and cavalry interspersed, so that when the infantry columns advanced to attack or defend, the

¹⁰¹ *Historia*, 177, p. 250; “Ac yn lle arawn y rodet vrien vab kynvarch yn vrenhin” Cotton Cleopatra, 191.

¹⁰² “Ac yna y llas llawer o bop tu...Athrwy llauur mawr a cholli llawer o wyr ydoeth arthur yr tir o anvod medrawt” Cotton Cleopatra, 191; *Historia*, 177, p. 250.

¹⁰³ “yn diannot kymell Medrawt ay lu ar fo a gwasgaru y wyr ac ev llad yny doeth y nos.” Cotton Cleopatra, 191.

mounted men immediately charged from the flank and made every effort to break the enemy; thus they forced them to flee.”¹⁰⁴ The reduction of battlefield details by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter can be attributed to a number of factors. Stylistically speaking, these omissions fit with the general trend of condensing material throughout the entire text. Another possibility can be attributed to the Cotton Cleopatra adapter’s social position. As a member of a Cistercian monastery, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter might not have been familiar with these combative nuances as a part of his ecclesiastical training and chose to exclude them out of military ignorance.

The Cotton Cleopatra adapter also modifies one seemingly minor detail of this battle that not only has larger ramifications, but can also be seen as correcting Geoffrey’s narrative. The actual location of Arthur’s amphibious assault is vastly different in each account. The *Historia* places the landing at Richborough while the Cotton Cleopatra translator identifies the landing over one hundred miles away at Southampton.¹⁰⁵ The significance of the deviation is a matter of logistics. Once Modred has been routed, he retreats to Winchester and fortifies the city in preparation for Arthur’s arrival. Arthur takes three days to bury his dead and presumably martial his forces and supplies before marching on Winchester. Each text suggests that Arthur traverses the distance in a single day. Geoffrey describes Arthur as burying his dead and “then on the third day marched to Winchester and laid siege to the wretch who was taking refuge there” while the Cotton Cleopatra adapter clearly states that “and at the end of the third day, after he had had his men buried, Arthur came to Winchester.”¹⁰⁶ An undertaking such as this is only possible under the conditions set forth by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter. The city of Winchester is approximately

¹⁰⁴ *Historia*, 177, p. 250.

¹⁰⁵ *Historia*, 177, p. 250; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ *Historia*, 177, p. 250; “*Ac ymphen ytrydyd dyd gwedy daruot idaw peri cladu y wyr y doeth arthur hyt ynghaer wynt.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 191.

twelve miles north of Southampton and thus within the range of a day's march.¹⁰⁷ If Geoffrey's location is to be accepted, it would have taken Arthur approximately eleven days to traverse the 140 or so miles between Richborough and Winchester.¹⁰⁸ The relocation of Arthur's return to Southampton in the Cotton Cleopatra can be seen as a correction of the *Historia* which allows the Cotton Cleopatra to be seen as the 'better' text which presents a more accurate account of British history.

Events within the actual battles, especially between individual combatants are also given less detail in the Cotton Cleopatra. When Aurelius Ambrosius is leading the Britons against Hengest and his Saxons, Eldol, the duke of Gloucester, reaches Hengest and engages him in single combat. The account in the *Historia* records the event in great detail that is reminiscent of individual combat within epics:

As the various formations swayed back and forth, the pair encountered each other by chance and began to exchange blows. As the swords of those unmatched champions clashed, their blows scattered sparks like lightening from thunderclaps. For a long time it was unclear whose strength was greater; sometimes Hengest yielded to Eldol, sometimes Eldol to Hengest. In the midst of this struggle, Gorlois duke of Cornwall arrived with his troops, attacking the enemy battalions. When Eldol caught sight of him, he took heart and, seizing Hengest with all his might by the nasal of his helmet, dragged him into the ranks of his fellow-Britons.¹⁰⁹

In typical fashion, the Cotton Cleopatra presents this episode with far less detail and the details that are present are altered in some situations:

And Eidol, Earl of Gloucester, was looking for Hengest, to contest with him. And at length the two met and dealt each other fierce blows, until the fire from their arms was seen like flashing lightening before thunder. And as they were thus, behold Gorlois the earl and his arm coming toward them and straightaway they scattered the Saxons. Then

¹⁰⁷ Donald W. Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 16.

¹⁰⁸ Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, 15-6, 154.

¹⁰⁹ *Historia*, 124, p. 166.

Eidol in that boldness took Hengest by the crest of his helmet and dragged him into the midst of his own army.¹¹⁰

It should also be noted that the narrative alterations between individual combatants is only minimized to varying degrees in the Cotton Cleopatra and not omitted completely. These minimal changes can be seen as more stylistically driven as opposed to being motivated by more nationalistic or political reasons. However, there are some occurrences where the details of individual combat are changed for more ideological motives. The details of Arthur's fight with the giant of St. Michael's are modified by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter to make Arthur appear more courageous and pious than in Geoffrey's account. In the Cotton Cleopatra the giant "rushed at Arthur and struck him on the shield" after he sees Arthur, but in the *Historia* Arthur is as the aggressor in that he "unsheathed his sword and, raising his shield, hurried as fast as he could to prevent the giant reaching his club."¹¹¹ This slight deviation presents Arthur as the victim acting out of self-defense as opposed to the instigator engaging in premeditated giganticide.

During this conflict, the giant grapples with Arthur and in the *Historia*, Arthur "quickly escaped and swiftly struck the monster with his sword, now from one side, now from the other, never resting until he had mortally wounded him by driving the whole blade into his head where the skull protected is brain" after summoning his courage.¹¹² Arthur's victory in the *Historia*, while impressive in its own rights, does not paint as flattering a picture as Arthur's exploits do in the Cotton Cleopatra: "and then he, calling to mind Mary, slipped away from the giant quickly,

¹¹⁰ "Ac idoed eidol iarll caer loew yn ymgeissiw a hengist y ymgyhwrdd ac ef. Ac nny diwet yd ymgaffant yll deu; ac ymfust yn greulon a orugant nny welit ytan oc ev harveu megis melll lleuchadenawl ymlaen taran. Ac val y bydynt uelly; yn ychaf gorleis iarll ay vydin yn dyuot attadunt. ac yn diannot gwasgaru y saesson. Sef aoruc eidol yna o hyder hynny; kymryt hengist erbyn baryfle y benfestin ay dwyn hyt ympheruet y vydin ehvn." Cotton Cleopatra, 141.

¹¹¹ "Achyrcu arthur a oruc ay daraw ar y darean." Cotton Cleopatra, 179.

¹¹² *Historia*, 165, p. 226.

violently, terribly strongly, and he fought with the giant nimbly, firmly, quickly, swiftly, until he reached his brains with his sword.”¹¹³

The reference to Arthur drawing upon the Virgin Mary for courage in the Cotton Cleopatra serves as another instance where the Cotton Cleopatra will infuse certain elements into the narrative that are largely absent from the *Historia*. In this circumstance, these elements happen to be religious in nature. The lack of religious elements within Geoffrey’s narrative can be attributed to J. P. S Tatlock’s notion that Geoffrey is generally disinterested in marvels given that “he was writing for the rationalistic rather than credulous.”¹¹⁴

One of the Cotton Cleopatra adapter’s more blatant examples of adding religious aspects to the narrative is found with Coel’s daughter Helena. According to Geoffrey’s narrative, Helena is married to Constantius who comes to rule Britain after Coel’s death and nothing more is said of her other than describing her beauty and virtues. Both texts agree that Helena is a peerless beauty, but the *Historia* provides a more complete description of her by noting that she “was [also] considered to have no equal in playing musical instruments and in the liberal arts.”¹¹⁵ Geoffrey proceeds to explain that these attributes were a result of the fact that Coel “had taken pains to educate her in such a way that she could rule the country more easily when he did” seeing as she was Coel’s sole heir.¹¹⁶ Even though the Cotton Cleopatra does not extol on Helena’s merits, it expands her role within British and pseudo-religious history. In the Cotton Cleopatra Helena makes a

¹¹³ “Ac yna yn gyflymdrut greulongryf gan goffau Meir ymlithraw aoruc ygan y cawr; ac yn chwimwth fyrf ebrwidlym ymguraw ar cawr aoruc. nny ymgavas y gledyf ay emehennyd.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 179.

¹¹⁴ J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae and its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950; reprint, 1974), 277.

¹¹⁵ *Historia*, 78, p. 96.

¹¹⁶ *Historia*, 78, p. 96.

pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and she conquered that country. And for that reason she was called thenceforward Helen of the Hosts. And by her skill in magic and her learning she got the tree of the cross on which Jesus Christ suffered. And it had been hidden under the earth from the time when Christ suffered—that was three hundred years and more. It was then 323 of Christ’s age.¹¹⁷

According to Roberts, Helen’s revision within the Cotton Cleopatra is the result of the adapter’s desire to “conform to the preferred Welsh tradition.”¹¹⁸

The inclusions of religious elements are also incorporated into the legends of Merlin. Both texts agree that Merlin is the progeny of a union between a nun and an incubus, but the Cotton Cleopatra gives the origin of an incubus a “different, and more theological, origin than the classical one given by Geoffrey.”¹¹⁹ In the *Historia*, one of Vortigern’s magicians remarks that “as Apuleius records in *De deo Socratis*, between the moon and the earth there live spirits whom we call incubi. They are part human, part angel, and take on human form at will and sleep with women.”¹²⁰ Incubi are given a Biblically inspired origin in the Cotton Cleopatra which writes that

Formerly, when Lucifer fell from the tenth circle of heaven and many angels with him, in the fashion they were when God bade them remain they have remained, from that day to this. And many of them are able to take upon themselves the likeness of a human body, and appear in the form of a woman and receive embraces from a man, and at another time appear in the form of a man and have intercourse with a woman in her sleep, and from this embrace she may become pregnant.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ “*phe[re]rindavt ytu gwlat gaerussalem. ac y goresgynnavd hi y wlat honno. Ac or achos hynny y gelwyd hi o hynny allan yn elen luhydawc. Ac oy rinwedawl ethrylith ay dysc y cavas hi pren y groc yr hwn ydiodefawd iessu grist arney. Ac a uassei yngkud adan y daear yr pan diodefawd crist. sef oed hynny try chant mlyned. a mwy. Sef oed o oet rist. ccc.xxij. yna.*” Cotton Cleopatra, 95.

¹¹⁸ Roberts, “Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein,” 3.

¹¹⁹ Roberts, “Ystoriaeu Brenhinedd Ynys Brydein,” 3.

¹²⁰ *Historia*, 107, p. 138.

¹²¹ “*Gynt pan ssyrthiawd lucifer or decuet rad or nef. a llawer o engylion y git ac ef; yny mod yr ottoedynt pan erchis yr arglwyd ydunt drigaw. Ymaent yn trigaw yr hynny hyt hediw. Ac ymae llawer onadunt yn gallu kymryt drech corff dyn amdanaw ac ymrithiaw yn rith gwreic; ac yn derbynyeit kyt gan wr. ac eilweith ymrithiaw yn rith gwr. achydiaw a gwreic drwy ev hwnn. ac or kyt hwnnw; ef aallei y keffit beichiogi.*” Cotton Cleopatra, 122.

Ostensibly, the more theological account of the creation of incubi does little to further the Cotton Cleopatra adapter's nationalistic and political ambitions but these objectives are advanced by altering the nature of the relationship between Merlin's parents. Merlin's mother is described in both accounts as being the daughter of the king of Demetia who became a nun in Saint Peter's church. In the *Historia* she is depicted as forming a relationship of sorts with the incubus. She recounts the incubus as resembling a handsome young man who appeared to her very often and would hold her tightly in his arms while kissing her and would suddenly disappear from her sight after remaining with her for a time. In other occasions, he would talk to her without appearing. He would visit with her in this way for a long time and often would make love to her in the form of a man before leaving her with child.¹²² The Cotton Cleopatra completely omits this demonic courtship and Merlin's mother merely states that "one night as I was sleeping among my sisters, I saw in my sleep a young man having intercourse with me, and when I awoke I saw nothing. Nevertheless when the time came I grew heavy and when it pleased God the boy you see there was born."¹²³ Merlin's prominent standing within Welsh traditions is only enhanced by the Cotton Cleopatra's account. It is one thing to be the son of a nun who non-consensually became with child that was born when it pleased God, and quite another to be the son of a nun who openly consorted with otherworldly creatures.

The Cotton Cleopatra also has a tendency to gloss over general details throughout the entire narrative. Some of the details that are omitted in the Cotton Cleopatra are details that the adaptor is likely to believe that his audience already knows. One of these occurrences happens

¹²² *Historia*, 107, p. 138.

¹²³ "ac val yr ottoedwn nosweith yn kysgu yrwng vy chwioryd. Mi awelwn drwy vy hvnn gwas ieuwanc yn kydiaw a mi. aphan deffroeis ny welwnn dim. ac yr hynny; pan doeth yr amser trymhau o honofi; A phan uu da gan duw y ganet ymab aweldi yna." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 121-2.

when Geoffrey is describing the division of the Island of Britain amongst Brutus' three sons. Geoffrey explains that "Kamber received the region across the river Severn, now known as Wales, which for a long time was named Kambria after him, and for this reason the inhabitants still call themselves Cymry in British."¹²⁴ The Cotton Cleopatra adaptor excises much of the additional information, possibly as a result of audience familiarity, and merely states that "and to Camber came [the part] on the other side of the Severn, and he called his part Cambria from his own name."¹²⁵ Glossing over specific details for political and nationalistic reasons also occurs within the Cotton Cleopatra which is evidenced in the account of the Roman conquest of Britain under Severus. According to the Cotton Cleopatra, the Roman Senate sent two legions to Britain "and after they had come to the island they conquered the greater part of the Britons; and another part of them fled through Deira and Bernicia, with Sulien as their prince."¹²⁶ The British subjugation under Severus contains some additional details, most of which are unflattering to British nationalism, in the *Historia*. Severus is still sent to Britain with two legions as per senatorial command, but once Severus lands, "he fought with the Britons, conquering some, and continually subjecting those he could not overcome to such terrible assaults that he drove them through Deira and into Scotland."¹²⁷ The alteration of certain details in this episode allows the Cotton Cleopatra adaptor to reemphasize British nationalism in his account. Although the Britons have largely been subjugated, a portion of them are still free, albeit in Scottish exile, with a prince at their head who will eventually liberate the island from foreign oppression.

¹²⁴ *Historia*, 23, p. 30.

¹²⁵ "ac y Camber ydoeth or tu arall y hafren. ac ydodes ynteu ar y ran kymre oy henw ehvn." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 24.

¹²⁶ "Agwedy ev dyuot yr ynys. wynt a oresgynnassant y ran mwyaf or bryttanyeit. Aran arall onadunt a foassant dros deivyr abryneich A sulien yn dywyssavc arnadunt." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 88.

¹²⁷ *Historia*, 74, p. 90.

ADAPTIVE ADDITIONS

Despite the fact that the Cotton Cleopatra adapter has a penchant for glossing over details for stylistic and revisionary purposes, he also incorporates material from additional Welsh and non-Welsh sources. The most apparent inclusion of material not found in the Latin is the Prophecy of the Eagle, which Geoffrey excludes on the premise that “if [he] thought that its prophecies were true, [he] would not hesitate to set them down here with the rest.”¹²⁸ The Prophecy of the Eagle is included in the Cotton Cleopatra’s narrative at the same point where Geoffrey makes his aside. The prophecy describes the events that will occur in the Isle of Britain in apocalyptic terms. It begins, “as the white expels the red dragon, so shall the dark overthrow the white. A wonderful dragon, the worst, shall fly and with a breath of flaming fire from his jaws shall burn the whole island by its licking” and proceeds to list events coded in animalistic terminology: for example “then shall come a bat with poisonous appearance, and with its sight it shall terrify faith and religion. Thence shall come a lion that shall draw nigh to the gleaming bat, and under its rule the stiffness of truth shall be corrupted.”¹²⁹ The prophecy continues along in this fashion for some length before concluding, at which point, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter continues along with the narrative. This inclusion of this prophecy can be seen as part of a larger tripartite prophecy, along with those given by Merlin and in the *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* that are concerned with the fate of Britain as represented by the red dragon.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *Historia*, 29, p. 36.

¹²⁹ “*Megis ygwrthlat y wen. y dreic coch; velly ybwrw y dywyll ywen. Dreic aruthyr waethaf a ehetta ac ochwythat y geneu o flamawl dan alysc yr holl ynys gan y llynu.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 30; “*O dyna ydaa ystlwm gwenwynic y olwc ac ar y edrychiat ydechryn fyd achreuyd. O dena ydaa llew a nessao yr ystlwm lluchyadenawc. ac a dan ylywodraeth y llygryr ssycher gwirioned.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 30.

¹³⁰ *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* narrative appears in two separate contexts: the tales of the Mabinogion in the White Book of Rhydderch (NLW Peniarth MSS. 4 and 5) and the Red Book of Hergest (Jesus College, Oxford MS. cxi) and as a insertion into the *Brutiau* with the earliest

The other obvious addition to Geoffrey's narrative is the *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* episode. This inclusion is a little curious in that it also demonstrates the Cotton Cleopatra adapter's affinity for revision and abridgement to an extent. From the start of the story, the Cotton Cleopatra alters the narrative in what can be considered as merely as an act of simplification. The *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* initially attributes only three sons to Beli the Great: Llud, Chaswallawn, and Nynhyaw with the fourth (Llefelys) appearing "in respect to a storyteller".¹³¹ The Cotton Cleopatra amends this inconsistency by claiming that Beli "had four sons, namely, Lud, and Levelis, and Caswallaun, and Nennius."¹³² When Lludd is carrying out his brother's instructions on how to rid Britain from the oppression of the dragon, the *Cyfranc* explicitly explains the events as they had already been described in Llefelys' directions: "And thus was Llud, he saw the dragons fighting. And after tiring and growing weary, they descended on the top of the sheet pulling it with them to the bottom of the vat. And after finishing drinking the mead they slept. And in their sleep Llud folded the sheet around them and concealed them in a stone chest in the safest place obtained in Snowdonia."¹³³ The Cotton Cleopatra removes some of the particulars concerning the dragons and embellishes a few other details in noting that Lud

occurrence in the Llanstephan 1 manuscript. *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, ed. Brynley F. Roberts (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975), xi. The *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* appears in all subsequent versions of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* except the Dingestow and the Peniarth 44 manuscripts. *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, xi.

¹³¹ *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, 1. The version within Roberts' edition is primarily derived, whenever possible, from the version from J. Gwenogvryn Evans' *The White Book Mabinogion* and then from John Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans' *The Text of the Mabinogion from the Red Book of Hergest*, *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, xl. "A herwyd y kyuarwydyt." *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, 1.

¹³² "y bu pedwar meis idaw nyd amgen. llud. a llyuelis. a chaswallaun. a Nynnyaw" *Cotton Cleopatra*, 64.

¹³³ "Ac ual yd oed uelly, ef a welas y dreigeu yn ymlad. A gwedy blinaw onadunt a diffygyaw, wynt a disgynnassant ar warthaf y llenn a'e thynnu ganthunt hyt yg gwaelawt y gwrwyn. A gwedy daruot ud/dunt yuet y med, kyscu a orugant ac yn eu kwsc Llud a blygwys a llenn yn eu kylch ac yn y lle diogelaf a gauas yn Eryri y mywn kist vaen a'e kudywys." *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, 5.

“saw everything as it had been told to him. And after he had seen the dragons fall into the cauldron and go to sleep, he approached them and folded the covering securely about them; and in the strongest and most secure place in the island he had them buried, in the depths of the earth in a stone tomb in Snowdon.”¹³⁴

Additions to the narrative are also incorporated into the Cotton Cleopatra by the adapter that helps to facilitate his personal ambitions. To bolster the British claim to Trojan nobility, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter expands the commentary of Aeneas’ lineage to fully illustrate the royal bloodlines that are excluded in the *Historia*. Geoffrey opens his history by writing “After the Trojan war Aeneas fled the devastated city with his son Ascanius and sailed to Italy. He was received with honour by King Latinus,”¹³⁵ The opening remains largely the same in the Cotton Cleopatra but the adaptor quickly makes alterations that also serve to present the Trojan nation in a better light than Geoffrey does: “Aeneas Whiteshield, after the fight of Troy and the destruction of the city came thence over the sea to Italy, he and Ascanius his son who was born of Creusa, daughter of Priam King of Troy...The number who came with him were eighty thousand and eighty between men and women, and old and young.”¹³⁶ These additions not only establish a direct bloodline from Britain’s first royal dynasty to the king of Troy, but also show that even though Troy was sacked, the Trojans are still very much alive. The survival of so many Trojans is important in that it shows their resiliency and sets up the need for a new Trojan homeland and the ensuing diaspora.

¹³⁴ “Ac yn wir ef awelas pob peth val y dywetpwynt urthau. A gwedy gwelet y dreigau yn ssyrthiaw yny gerwyn achysgu. dynessau aoruc attadunt. aphlygu y llenn yn ev kylch yn diogel. Ac yny lle cadarnaf ardiogelaf or ynys. peri ev cladu yn dyfynder y dayar mevn kist vayn. Yn erryri.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 68-69.

¹³⁵ *Historia*, 6, p. 6.

¹³⁶ “Eneas ysgwydwynt gwedy ymlat troea a distriw yr gaer ef adoeth odena hyt vor tu ar eidial ef ac ascanius y vab er hwn a enessyt o creusa verch priaf vrenhyn tro...Sef riuedi a doeth gyd ac ef wyth mil a phedwar vgein rwng gwyr a gwraged a hen a ieuweing.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 6.

Other authorial embellishments are made throughout the Cotton Cleopatra, but not all of these additions can be seen as favorable to national sentiments. In one particular instance, the atrocities committed during Caduallo's decimation of the Saxons are actually expanded by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter. In the *Historia*, Caduallo sets to "persecuting the Saxons so relentlessly that he spared neither women nor children; indeed he wanted to wipe out the whole English race from British soil, and subjected every one of them he could find to unheard-of tortures."¹³⁷ These "unheard-of tortures" are actually voiced by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter who admits that Cadwallon "tried to exterminate the Saxons by cruelty: that is, he killed them and burned them, and he loosened the unborn children of the pregnant Saxon women from their bellies to the ground with swords and knives, and thus he tried to drive them out of the Isle of Britain."¹³⁸ Caduallo's brutality can not only be seen as an example of how far the Britons have fallen from grace and the decline of kingly rule after Arthur but also as an illustration of just how much the Saxons are truly hated by the Britons.

In an attempt to legitimize their respective works, Geoffrey and the Cotton Cleopatra adapter incorporate a chronological record of events into their histories. According to Thomas Jones, Geoffrey's chronological references to events of the Jewish people and the Classical world are used in an attempt to "place his British history within the wider framework of world history accepted in his day."¹³⁹ The necessity of creating a place within the accepted historical framework was also grasped by the Welsh who were using the *Historia* for "the cultivation of

¹³⁷ *Historia*, 198, p. 272.

¹³⁸ "keissiaev aoruc dilehu y saesson drwy greulonder. Nyt amgen noc ev llad ac ev llosgi; a gellwg beichiogieu y saesnesseu oc ev crotheu yr llaur achledyfeu ac achyllill. ac velly y keisswys ef ev dehol wynt o ynys brydein." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 210.

¹³⁹ Jones, "Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh," 17.

their own historical mythology” as a means to establish and preserve their national identity.¹⁴⁰

The *Brut y Brenhinedd* was a means for the Welsh to establish their own history which was paramount given that “a people without a history was a contradiction in terms; only an unbroken history, preferably from Noah’s or even Adam’s day, could eventually demonstrate that a people was a people because it had always been a people.”¹⁴¹ This principal of legitimacy can be used to explain the Cotton Cleopatra adapter’s eccentric historical narrative that not only mirrors Geoffrey’s to a large extent, but also dates events according to the Biblical flood. An example of such can be seen in the first chronological marker in both texts. Geoffrey elects to use a parallel timeline that incorporates Biblical, Classical, and historical events to mark the founding of Brutus’ city that would become known as London. At the time of the city’s establishment “the priest Eli was ruling in Judea and the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines, the sons of Hector were ruling at Troy after the descendants of Antenor were exiles. In Italy there ruled the third of the Latins, Silvius Aeneas, the son of Aeneas and the uncle of Brutus.”¹⁴² The timeline in the Cotton Cleopatra simply observes that “it was twelve hundred years after the water of the flood that Brutus first came to this island.”¹⁴³ Even though the temporal marker in the Cotton Cleopatra does not have the historical prestige of its counterpart, it allows the Britons to definitively measure how long the Trojans and their British descendants hold their new island home, which is something that Geoffrey timeline fails to do. Marking events after the flood also serves as a point of reference that will allow the adapter to more or less accurately date the chronological events provided by Geoffrey.

¹⁴⁰ R. R. Davies, “Presidential Address: The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400 Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 7 (1997): 23.

¹⁴¹ Davies, “The Peoples of Britain and Ireland,” 20.

¹⁴² *Historia*, 22, 30.

¹⁴³ “*Sef oed hynny. deu cant mlyned a mil. gwedy dwfyr diliw y doyth brutus kyntaf yr ynys hon.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 22.

Shortly after noting when Brutus lands in Britain, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter follows the Galfridian chronological model with the added post-flood date. When Gwendolen passes reign of the kingdom to Madoc (Brutus' grandson), "Daniel the prophet ruled in the land of Judaea, and Silvius Aeneas in Italy, and Homer was reciting his poetry...And this Madoc reigned in peace and quiet for twenty-six years, and then he died. That was 1274 years after the flood."¹⁴⁴ Geoffrey records the same event with some differences: "at that time the prophet Samuel was ruling in Judea, Silvius Aeneas was still alive and Homer was a famous writer and poet."¹⁴⁵ Shortly thereafter, both authors synchronize their chronologies with dating the reign of Ebraucus (Evroc) with the concurrent rule of David in Judea, Silvius in Italy, and Gad, Nathan and Asaph making prophecies in Israel.¹⁴⁶ However this unity is short-lived in that conflicting accounts of the duration of certain reigns are posited in both texts: for example, King Leir rules for sixty years in the *Historia* and only for twenty five in the Cotton Cleopatra, or Dunuallo's (Dyvywal) which Geoffrey attests as being forty years as opposed to the Cotton Cleopatra adapter's twenty seven.¹⁴⁷ Geoffrey and the Cotton Cleopatra adapter continually unify their respective chronologies only to break them again but the major events such as Arthur's death, which is placed at 542 A.D., are in unison. The Cotton Cleopatra adapter breaks away from using the flood as a temporal marker once the birth of Christ has been recorded, and from that point on, years are predominately measured in "Christ's age" with one major exception. The arrival of Hengest and Horsa is so important to the Cotton Cleopatra adapter that the event is recorded in

¹⁴⁴ "Ac yn yr amser hwnnw yd oyd daniel prophwit yn gwledychu yn wlat iudea. A Siluius eneas yn yr eidal. ac omir yn traethu oy vardoniaethev...Ar Madawc hwnnw awledychawt y hedwch dagnauedus chwech blyned arugeint ac yna ybu varw. sef oed hynny o vlwydynet gwedy dilw. M.cc.lxxiiij." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 26-7.

¹⁴⁵ *Historia*, 26, p. 34.

¹⁴⁶ *Historia*, 27, p. 34; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 27-28.

¹⁴⁷ *Historia*, 31, p. 36; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 34; *Historia*, 34, p. 48; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 45.

both formats: “That was four thousand three hundred and sixty-one years after the beginning of the world. Christ’s age was then 454.”¹⁴⁸

These stylistic elements employed by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter make the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* a unique text in its own rights and are also used to further the adapter’s ambitions. The truncation of certain passages allows the adapter to gloss over certain unsavory details and/or allows a specific spin to be put on events. Moreover, the addition of other passages allows certain nationalistic elements to be augmented and developed to take on a larger thematic presence. The added sense of legitimacy brought about by the extended chronology gives the Cotton Cleopatra adapter a degree of security that enables him to make large scale revisions to other narrative aspects of his history that embody his nationalistic sentiments.

¹⁴⁸ “*Sef oed hynny gwedy dechreu byt. pedeir Mil. athrychant. ac vn vlwydyn a thrugeint. Sef oed oet crist yna. C.C.C.C.l.iii.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 111.

Manipulating the Matter of Britain

The general deviations within the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut*, while largely stylistic, help to shape this text in such a way that allows it to be examined on its own merits and as a part of the larger *Brutiau* corpus. However, these alterations, while helpful, do not allow the adapter to fully revise the *Historia* into a historically veiled piece of propaganda that advances Welsh nationality, independence, and identity. To achieve this level of revisionist history, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter blatantly rewrites certain passages to adhere to his political and national ideals. This chapter examines specific passages that demonstrate this type of active revision that adheres to the Cotton Cleopatra adapter's personal political and nationalistic ideals. To rewrite the *Historia* in accordance with these ideals, the Cotton Cleopatra translator focuses on manipulating certain aspects of the earliest Trojan narratives, the martial prowess of the Britons and their Trojan ancestors, and the eventual decline and subjugation of the Britons.

THE TROJAN PAST

Claiming a direct line of descent from the Trojans was commonplace during the medieval period as was the projection of a medieval present onto a Trojan past.¹⁴⁹ Geoffrey and the Cotton Cleopatra translator take part of this literary and historiographical tradition, but for different reasons. The Cotton Cleopatra adapter uses a Trojan lineage to give the Britons an added sense of legitimacy and place of prominence within the world. Geoffrey, on the other hand, relies on a Trojan heritage to subvert the prestige of The Matter of Rome while warning the Norman elite of the dangers of civil war and disunity.¹⁵⁰ The depiction of the Welsh in both texts begins with the

¹⁴⁹ For further commentary on the national use of the Trojan myth in the middle ages see Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Medieval Cultures, 2003), ix-xxiv.

¹⁵⁰ For extended commentary on Geoffrey's opposition to Roman historiography see Caroline D. Eckhardt "The Presence of Rome in the Middle English Chronicles of the Fourteenth Century,"

account Brutus' birth and eventual exile and recalls how the Trojans, who really serve as a proxy for their Welsh descendants, freed themselves from Greek oppression before founding and populating the isle of Britain. Brutus as Britain's eponymous founder is one of the most significant British kings whose actions not only shape his legacy, but that of his people. In the Cotton Cleopatra and in the *Historia*, Brutus' conception comes with a prophecy that portends that Brutus will kill both of his parents.

The prophecy comes true and Brutus' mother dies in child birth and his father is killed in a hunting accident. Brutus is eventually sentenced to exile for his unintentional act of patricide, but the circumstances surrounding Silvius' death vary in the two accounts to a large enough degree that one can honestly be called an accident and the other could be construed as an assassination with a plausible excuse. Geoffrey's account casts a shadow of conspiratorial doubt on Silvius' death in that Brutus "inadvertently shot and killed him with an arrow; for, while the beaters were driving stags toward them, Brutus aimed an arrow at them, but struck his father in the chest."¹⁵¹ The Cotton Cleopatra adds details to this event that remove any doubt that Silvius' death was in fact nothing more than an accident: "they were hunting in the forest and the boy under one tree and his father under another tree, the deer came between them and the boy shot one of the deer with an arrow. And the arrow glanced from the back of one of the stags so that it lodged under his father's breast."¹⁵² Silvius' death, while unfortunate, was necessary in that it was the factor that caused Brutus to go into exile where he would find his fellow Trojans and

The Journal of English and Germanic Philology 90. No. 2 (1991): 194-99 and Kellie Robertson "Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Insular Historiography," *Arthuriana* 8, no.4 Theoretical Approaches to Geoffrey of Monmouth (1998): 42-47.

¹⁵¹ *Historia*, 7, p. 8.

¹⁵² "yttoedynt yn hely mewn forest. ar mab adan brenn. ay dad a dan brenn arall. ef adoeth yr hydgant ryngthunt yll deu. ac y byriawd y mab vn or hydgant a saeth. ac y neidiawt y saeth iargeuyn vn or keiriw yny vu adan vron y dad." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 9.

liberate them en route to founding Britain in the same way that Troy needed to burn so that Aeneas and his line could go on to establish Rome. The Cotton Cleopatra translator's clarification of events removes all possible guilt from Brutus' exile thus preserving the legacy of Britain's first king in a purer form than Geoffrey does.

In both narratives, Brutus lands in Gaul and engages in a conflict with the local Picts (Poitevins) after liberating the Trojans from their Greek oppressors. Geoffrey uses this encounter to perpetuate the misguided allegation that the Trojans, who are the earliest Britons, fight dishonorably just like contemporaries viewed the Welsh. After putting the Picts to flight, Brutus rejoices in his victory by distributing the spoils of the battle to all of his companions. Brutus then "reordered their ranks and marched through the country with the aim of ravaging it completely and loading all its wealth on his ships. He lit fires to burn down all the cities, carrying off their hidden treasures, and laid waste the fields, slaughtering townsfolk and country-dwellers alike in an effort to wipe out those unhappy people to the last man."¹⁵³ This account of the Trojans pillaging and plundering the Picts establishes a historical precedent that reinforces the cultural perception that is voiced by Gerald of Wales who remarks that "it is the habit of the Welsh to steal anything they can lay their hands on and to live on plunder, theft and robbery."¹⁵⁴ The Cotton Cleopatra translator openly refutes this perception by explaining that the Trojans did not behave like uncivilized barbarians fighting an unjust war. Instead of following the Galfridian example of "set[ting] off to meet the opposing army with a force made up of all the able-bodied men,"¹⁵⁵ the Trojans only go to war after refusing Goffar (the king of the Picts') demand that Brutus surrender himself and all of his men to imprisonment under the threat of violence for

¹⁵³ *Historia*, 19, p. 24.

¹⁵⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 257.

¹⁵⁵ *Historia*, 18, p. 22.

coming into Goffar's kingdom without permission, hunting in his forests and killing his men, albeit in an act self defense.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the ancestors of the British are justified in their actions of only going to war to defend their king and people.

In Geoffrey's account, by refusing Goffar's demands under the advisement of his council, Brutus ensures that the Trojan participation in ensuing conflict with the Picts is justified. This justification is made by formally announcing that the Trojans will forcibly resist Goffar's desire to avenge his messenger and by realizing the impossibility of achieving peace through diplomacy.¹⁵⁷ The Cotton Cleopatra translator continues to refute Geoffrey by advocating the justice of this conflict: he writes that after routing the Pictish army, Brutus makes a tactical retreat to a more defensible position and constructs a castle to guard against enemy attacks.¹⁵⁸ Had Brutus attacked the peasantry in the same barbaric manner as depicted in the *Historia*, he would have invalidated the justice of his campaign by failing to spare "those who were not cruel or savage in warfare once victory had been secured" especially if they were noncombatants.¹⁵⁹ Attacking and pillaging the peasants would not only abrogate the justice of Brutus' military actions but it would also give credence to the misguided belief that the Britons were an

¹⁵⁶ *Cotton Cleopatra*, 19.

¹⁵⁷ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Duties*, Edited by M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 15-16; M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, *On Duties*, p. 15n.1. Geoffrey of Monmouth demonstrates his familiarity with the works of Cicero by having Arthur's cousin, King Hoel of Armorica, declare that Arthur's speech announcing his intentions to defy the wishes of Rome was "expressed with Ciceronian clarity." Eckhardt has noted that "Hoel's statement, which attributes Ciceronian eloquence to Arthur, itself carries Ciceronian associations. In the second sentence, for example, in addition to the naming of Cicero (Tully), Hoel uses the Ciceronian device of the tricolon, or series of three parallel phrases ("constantis uiri affectum, sapientis animi effectum, optima consilii profectum") in "The Presence of Rome in the Middle English Chronicles of the Fourteenth Century," 198-99.

¹⁵⁸ *Cotton Cleopatra*, 20.

¹⁵⁹ Cicero, *On Duties*, 15

uncivilized people who “live by plunder and are rarely satisfied.”¹⁶⁰ Both Geoffrey and the Cotton Cleopatra translator reshape the actions of the Trojans who become the earliest Britons to reflect their respective political biases for their Welsh contemporaries. Geoffrey’s illustration is a reflection of the Norman perception of the Welsh as being duplicitous people whose actions merit imperial conquests to bring Norman civility to the barbaric Welsh. The Cotton Cleopatra adapter reshapes the past to refute Geoffrey’s Norman estimation while creating a history that the Welsh could reflect on with pride and as a source of inspiration for opposing oppression.

MARTIAL PROWESS

The Cotton Cleopatra adapter also responds to English colonialism on a large scale by documenting the military accomplishments of the ancient Britons in such a way that actually diminishes the imperial exploits of the Roman Empire. According to Geoffrey’s *Historia*, the guerrilla tactics favored by the Welsh can be traced back to the Trojans who used an unconventional style of combat during their rebellion under Brutus to great effect. Brutus and his Trojans successfully spring an ambush along the banks of the River Akalon, and by launching a nighttime attack on the Greek encampment, the Trojans are able to capture King Pandrasus.¹⁶¹ The Trojans continue to employ similar strategies to defeat Goffar the Pict. The Britons inherited this predisposition for implementing the tactic of ambush from their Trojan forefathers, which is evidenced by the Britons’ frequent use of surprise attacks to secure victory over the Romans under Petreius and Lucius Hiberius.¹⁶² The Cotton Cleopatra adaptor acknowledges that the Trojans resorted to using a night-raid against the Greeks and defeated Goffar’s Picts and the Romans commanded by Petreius by using ambushes and feigned retreats. Throughout his

¹⁶⁰ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, 262.

¹⁶¹ *Historia*, 9, p. 10.

¹⁶² *Historia*, 20, p. 26; 166, p. 228-32.

narrative the Cotton Cleopatra adapter places an emphasis on the military success of the Trojans against organized armies that utilize conventional tactics, like the Romans and their English counterparts. This emphasis, combined with the focus on how the Trojans came to achieve victory, not only glorifies the British past, but also provides examples of different methods that the Welsh could employ to successfully rebel against English oppression. Despite their penchant for guerilla warfare, the Britons and Trojans before them were not completely dependent upon these types of unconventional tactics for military success.¹⁶³

The Cotton Cleopatra and the *Historia* both maintain that the British are more than capable of obtaining victory through the use of formations and engaging in prolonged, open combat, thus dispelling the notion voiced by Gerald of Wales that the Welsh “cannot meet the enemy on equal terms, or fight violently for very-long, or strive hand-to-hand for victory.”¹⁶⁴ In both narratives, the mid-seventh century British king Cadwallon is able to capture Peanda, Prince of the Saxons, and kill all of Peanda’s men by “divid[ing] his men into four divisions and then they attacked and fought mightily.”¹⁶⁵ Additionally, “when evening drew near, Uther [Pendragon] prevailed and won, whereas Gillomanus [the king of Ireland] and Pascentius [the son of Vortigern] were killed” in spite of the fact that “as [the Britons and the Saxons and Irish barbarians] came in sight of one another, both sides drew up their lines and closed to engage.”¹⁶⁶ Although they are able to enjoy military success through engaging in more conventional warfare, the British tendency to implement tactics such as feigned retreats and ambushes to their tactical

¹⁶³ Cotton Cleopatra, 13-14; 180-82.

¹⁶⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, 260.

¹⁶⁵ Cotton Cleopatra, 213; “Ac yna bydinaw y wyr yn bedeir bydin; ac yna ymgyrchu aorugant ac ymlad yn gadarn.” Cotton Cleopatra, 209-10.

¹⁶⁶ *Historia*, 134, p. 180.

advantage contributes to the cultural perception that the British are weak and fight in a cowardly manner.

The characterization advanced by one of Geoffrey's contemporaries that the Welsh rely on ambushes and night-raids for their military success as opposed to engaging in open combat in fixed formations is seen to be an ethnic tendency that has been passed down to the Welsh from their Trojan ancestors regardless of the justness of their cause.¹⁶⁷ Julius Caesar initially voices the assumed weakness of the Britons that is reflected in the *Historia* and the *Cotton Cleopatra* by stating his belief that the Britons "are no longer [the Romans'] equal and" they will be easy to overcome since "they are in the ocean and know nothing of fighting or bearing arms."¹⁶⁸ Even though the British prove that they are not easily conquered miscreants who are ignorant in the ways of war by repelling the initial Roman assault and handing Caesar several defeats, Caesar does manage to exact a yearly tribute from the Isle of Britain.¹⁶⁹ Geoffrey places an emphasis on the military decline of the British inhabitants of Briton by pointing out that the "unbearable oppression" of the invading barbarians ravaging the isle forced the Britons to send messengers to Rome, tearfully begging for military assistance.¹⁷⁰ The British are so desperate that they "request with tearful entreaties an armed force to avenge them and pledg[ed] their submission for ever, if the foe could be warded off."¹⁷¹ This plea was successful in moving the Romans to dispatch a legion to Britain. Once in Britain, the Romans overthrew a great host of Irish, Scots, Norsemen, and Danes, and "cut them down in great numbers, drove them all out of the country and freed the

¹⁶⁷ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, 260.

¹⁶⁸ *Historia*, 54, p. 68; "canys yny mor ymaent heb wybot ryuelu na dwyn arueu ymlad." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 71.

¹⁶⁹ *Cotton Cleopatra*, 78; *Historia*, 63, p. 80; Caesar, 263.

¹⁷⁰ *Historia*, 89, p. 110. For a more detailed analysis of the significance of this episode see Smith, "Literary Encounters in the Anglo-Welsh Borderlands, 1138-1400," 72-75.

¹⁷¹ *Historia*, 89, p. 110.

oppressed population from their terrible depredations.”¹⁷² The Cotton Cleopatra translator also acknowledges the need for Roman assistance to resist the invading barbarians. However, the Britons do not offer to forfeit their freedom, nor are they completely helpless in their effort to repel the invaders: “the Britons joined them [the Romans], and attacked their enemies manfully, and fought with them, bravely, strongly, and fiercely, and killed multitudes of them and drove the rest in flight to their ships and forced them out to sea.”¹⁷³

Incidentally, the stereotypical characterization that the British are weak and fight in a cowardly manner is supported by some historical accounts. The Welsh predisposition for guerrilla tactics is actually documented in Julius Caesar’s *The Gallic Wars*.¹⁷⁴ Caesar remarked during his second invasion of Britain that the Britons repeatedly feigned retreat to incite the Romans to break rank in pursuit only to be killed. This tactic was so successful that Caesar admitted that “it was clear that in all such fighting our infantry, by reason of their heavy armament, since they could neither pursue a retiring enemy nor venture far from the standards, were but poorly fitted for an enemy of this kind.”¹⁷⁵ The Britons present additional challenges by never fighting in close formations. Instead, they preferred to form small parties that would

¹⁷² *Historia*, 89, p. 110.

¹⁷³ “ymgynullaw aoruc y bryttanyeit attadunt. achyrchu ev gelynnion yn wrhawl aorugant. ac ymlad ac wynt yn wychyr calet creulon. allad lluosogrwyd onadunt. agyrru ylleill ar ffo yw llongheu. ac ev kymhell yr mor wynt.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 103-4.

¹⁷⁴ *The Gallic War* is the written memoirs of Julius Caesar that were originally composed between 58-50 BCE which detail the Roman conquest of Gaul under Caesar. Caesar also discusses two invasions of Britain in 55 and 54 BCE. Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1917, Reprint 2000) vii-xxii. Homer Nearing Jr. has noted that “in view of the absence in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* of parallels to the passages in Caesar which are favorable to the British, as well as such misunderstandings as the *litis Rutenorum*, it is hardly likely that Geoffrey was familiar with *The Gallic War*” in “The Legend of Julius Caesar’s British Conquest,” *PMLA* 64. no. 4 (1949): 902. However, the material that Geoffrey did not fabricate was based on the writings of Bede, Henry of Huntingdon, and the *Historia Britonum*, all of which use Orosius, who follows Caesars accounts with a few changes, as a direct source. Nearing Jr. “Legend of Julius Caesar’s British Conquest,” 893-4.

¹⁷⁵ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 255.

engage at wide intervals, only to be relieved by another party composed of “fresh, unspent warriors [that] took the place of the battle-weary.”¹⁷⁶ Caesar’s account provides a historical precedence that not only demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy against a fully armored, regimented army, but also alludes to the British predilection of using cunning over brute force to subdue their enemies.

As with the rest of the narrative, the Cotton Cleopatra adaptor changes the circumstances of some of the military engagements to highlight the martial prowess of the Britons and/or to present them in better light thus furthering the propaganda and national sympathies of his history. These combative changes initially occur under Brutus’ command of the Trojans. After the Greek king Pandrasus reads the Trojan letter voicing their desire for freedom, he amasses an army to prevent the Trojans from fleeing from captivity. According to the *Historia*, Brutus hears of Pandrasus’ approach and planned to ambush the Greeks:

Thus the attack was launched and the Trojans charged in, making a bold effort to cut down the enemy. The Greeks were immediately thunderstruck, fled in all directions and, led by their king, rushed to cross the river Akalon, which flowed nearby; but as they crossed, they were at the mercy of its swirling waters.¹⁷⁷

The Cotton Cleopatra adaptor reverses the conditions in an attempt to show the Trojans not only as the ones acting in self-defense, but also as the smarter force who obtains victory through exploiting a tactical blunder made by the enemy and brute force. When the Greeks overtake the Trojans alongside the river, the Greeks “rushed into the river because of their anger and their vehemence. And after Brutus saw that they had got through the river, because of the notion that he could withstand them he fell among them, and his army with him, like an insatiable lion

¹⁷⁶ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 255.

¹⁷⁷ *Historia*, 9, p. 10.

among a lot of sheep.”¹⁷⁸ However, the actions of the Trojans in the Cotton Cleopatra are not entirely honorable in that they killed the Greeks without mercy but Geoffrey demonizes the Trojans by adding that while cutting down the Greeks, the Trojans “cut down some in the water and some on the river-bank, and rejoicing to see them die in either fashion.”¹⁷⁹ It is one thing to kill an enemy without mercy and quite another to take pleasure in it.

In another episode, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter completely alters the events of recorded history to serve his own agenda. Shortly after Aurelius Ambrosius’ death the Saxons under Octa and Eosa renege on their promise to Aurelius and expand their borders and eventually come to lay siege to York. According to Geoffrey’s account, Uther arrives with his army to break the siege and “the Saxons fought bravely, resisting the British assaults and driving them back. Victorious, they pursued the British all day until they fled to mount Damen.”¹⁸⁰ This engagement is recorded differently by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter who states that “Uther and his army came up, and then they fought fiercely and put the Saxons to flight; and the Britons followed them while day lasted, until they came to the place that is called Mount Damen.”¹⁸¹ It should be noted that this marks the only occurrence where defeat is turned into victory by the Cotton Cleopatra adapter who is more inclined to demonstrate the military prowess of the Britons by making smaller changes that either present the Britons in a better light through exploiting tactical errors, or to emphasize British courage, bravery, and valor.

¹⁷⁸ “*kyrchu yr auon a orugant herwyd eu llit ac eu hangerd. A gwedy gwelet o brutus wynt gwedy eu dyuot drwot yr amkan y gallei ef ymerbynneit ac wynt. krychu a oruc yn eu plith ay lu gyt ac ef megis llew diwal ymplith llawer odeueit.*” Cotton Cleopatra, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Cotton Cleopatra, 12; *Historia*, 9, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ *Historia*, 136, p. 180.

¹⁸¹ “*y doeth vthyr ay lu. Ac yno ymlat yngreulon aorugant. agyrru y ssaesson ar ffo. ac ev hymilit or bryttannyeit tra uu dyd nny doethant yr lle ygelwir mynyd damen*” Cotton Cleopatra, 150.

DECLINE AND SUBJUGATION

Like their Trojan ancestors, as is the case with most empires, the Britons were fated to fall under the subjugation of another rival empire while maintaining the hope of returning to glory in the future. The Cotton Cleopatra translator and Geoffrey depict the fall of Britain in dissenting ways that reflect their respective political biases. According to Geoffrey, the Britons not only offer to submit to subjugation under Rome, but they also present the British crown of Constantine and Maximianus to Aldroenus, the King of Brittany, in exchange for help after the Romans “renounce[d] the isle of Britain and its tribute thenceforth.”¹⁸² In his refusal of the crown, Aldroenus echoed the words of his Trojan forefathers who chose “to live like animals on uncooked flesh and plants and to maintain their lives in freedom” rather “than to enjoy every delicacy, while still enduring the yoke of slavery” by stating that he would “prefer a poorer life in freedom elsewhere to the possession of Britain’s riches under the yoke of servitude.”¹⁸³ The Trojan refusal to endure servitude is passed down to their British descendants so forcefully that the British admitted to Caesar over twelve hundred years after their liberation from the Greeks that they are “so used to freedom that [they] have no idea what it is to serve a master.”¹⁸⁴ The Cotton Cleopatra translator extends the notion that the Britons are “so accustomed to freedom that they [do] not know how to submit to servitude” to the extent that the Britons would even go as so far as to actually hate the gods, should they even think about taking away their freedom.¹⁸⁵ Geoffrey’s contemporary and frequent denouncer, Gerald of Wales, provides a historical basis

¹⁸² *Historia*, 92, p. 116; “*ymwrthot ac ynys (brydein) ac ay thernget o hynny allan.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 104.

¹⁸³ “*gan dewissaw ymborth ual aniuailiet ar gic amrwt allyssieuoed achynnal eu buched gan ryddit*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 11; *Historia*, 8, p. 8; *Historia*, 92, p. 116.

¹⁸⁴ *Cotton Cleopatra*, 23; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 22, 79; *Historia*, 55, p. 68.

¹⁸⁵ “*canys kymeint y gordyfnassam ny ryddit ac nawdam vfydhau y geithiwet*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 72.

for the Cotton Cleopatra translator's portrayal of the Britons by remarking that the Welsh "are passionately devoted to their freedom and to the defense of their country."¹⁸⁶

Geoffrey demonstrates that this noble refusal to submit to subjugation has faded in time, which helps to establish the notion that the Britons can subserviently accept the rule of others under the right circumstances. While Geoffrey's offer of eternal servitude to Rome and the extension of the British crown to King Aldroenus of Brittany can be seen as betrayals to the ethnic desire for freedom, the severity of these transgressions is minimized by the fact that the "Romans and the Britons share a common ancestry."¹⁸⁷ King Aldur of Brittany is also British himself, being "the fourth king after Conan Meriadoc" who had first come to Brittany with Prince Maxen.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, those who beg the Romans and the Bretons for help are not true Britons whose nobility prevents them from bending the knee since "Maximianus stripped [their] island of all its knights and settled them in [the] kingdom [Aldroenus] holds."¹⁸⁹ This settlement ultimately deprived Britain of all of its nobles, thus leaving "the island empty except for foreigners and servants and feeble men who know nothing."¹⁹⁰ The perceived repugnance of these base Britons requesting help to rid them of oppression is also diminished by its historical precedents. The Britons' seeking aid from those who are deemed to be of a distant kinship is akin

¹⁸⁶ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales* 233.

¹⁸⁷ *Historia*, 54, p. 68;

¹⁸⁸ "pedweryd brenhyn oed hwnnw gwedy kynan meiriadauc" *Cotton Cleopatra*, 105. It should also be noted that King Aldroenus and King Aldur are the same person and the Latin names of *The Historia* are replaced by their Welsh equivalents or approximations in the *Cotton Cleopatra*. For further discussion of the use of different names in the Brutiau see Roberts, "The Treatment of Personal Names in the Early Welsh Version of *Historia Regum Britanniae*," 274-90.

¹⁸⁹ *Historia*, 92, p. 116.

¹⁹⁰ "ac adaw yr ynyn yn wac. onyt o alltudyon. agweindogion. a dynnyon diwala heb wybot dim." *Cotton Cleopatra*, 105.

to the Trojans “flocking to Brutus” “[because of] their descent from the same nation” and “asking that he be their leader and free them from their bondage to the Greeks.”¹⁹¹

Geoffrey integrates examples of both the Trojans and the Britons into his narrative that illustrate the political model which helped legitimize the Norman conquest of Britain: the Trojans crowning Brutus and the Britons’ making Constantine king after both men delivered their kin from oppression. Starting with Constantine, the Britons were heavily dependent upon their Breton cousins to achieve their imperial ambitions. These are the same Bretons who are “descended from the nobles who conquered Amorica for Maximianus and Conanus Meriadocus,” and who assisted Arthur to such a degree that Arthur is more indebted to Brittany than he is Britain.¹⁹² At the height of the British Empire under Arthur, all of Gaul had been forced to submit and the Earldom of “Estrusia, now called Normandy” was given to Bedivere before the earldom eventually passed to William of Normandy. William, like Brutus and Constantine before him, assumed the British crown after defeating those who were oppressing the Britons despite a lack of a familial relationship with those whom he came to rule.¹⁹³

While the eventual downfall of the Britons is accepted in both the *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra, it is attributed to different causes. According to Geoffrey’s account, God sends famine and plague to the Britons as punishment for their wicked deeds and moral depravity which forces them to flee from their homeland. Additionally, “a civil strife arose among the British... [who] fell prey to disunity and laid waste their rich land in contemptible strife.”¹⁹⁴ The British “[having] been so weakened by plague, famine and their habitual strife” become

¹⁹¹ *Historia*, 7, p. 8; “dyuot a orugant attaw ac ymgystlwn ac ef eu hanuot or vn genedyl.” Cotton Cleopatra, 10; *Historia*, 7, p. 8.

¹⁹² *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. I Version*, ix-x.

¹⁹³ *Historia*, 155, p. 208; Cotton Cleopatra, 167.

¹⁹⁴ *Historia*, 202-3, p. 276.

vulnerable to the point that “they could not ward off their foes. As their culture ebbs, they are no longer called Britons, but Welsh.”¹⁹⁵ This decline is so severe that Geoffrey notes that “the Welsh, unworthy successors to the noble Britons, never recovered mastery over the whole island, but squabbl[ed] pettily amongst themselves and sometimes with the Saxons, kept constantly massacring the foreigners or each other.”¹⁹⁶

Similarly, the Cotton Cleopatra translator also remarks that the Britons are “driv[en] out of [their] rightful possession” by God as punishment for the multitude of their unrepentant sins by means of plague and famine which causes a mass exodus that only leaves “those who were able to go to the desolate woods and feed upon wild game...and those [who] had been driven to Camber’s part of the Island. And they were not called Britons but Cambrians.”¹⁹⁷ The choice to use the term “Cambrians” by the Cotton Cleopatra translator is an expression of the refusal to identify the remaining Britons as “Welsh,” a term derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for “foreigner” or “slave.”¹⁹⁸ The decision to use the term “Cambrian” as opposed to “Welsh” is politically motivated. By referring to the remaining Britons as “Cambrians” the Cotton Cleopatra adapter chooses to allude to the lineage of his countrymen as the descendants of Kamber, the son of Brutus, and thus the glory of the British past, rather than accepting their current position under

¹⁹⁵ *Historia*, 207, p. 280.

¹⁹⁶ *Historia*, 207, p. 280.

¹⁹⁷ “*an dehol ny oc an gwir dylyet*”; “*namyn a allws kyrchu y diffeith coedyd y ymborth ar gic hely...ar rei hynny ar daroed ev dehol y ran kamber or ynys. ac ny elwyt wynt yn vryttannyeit yna: namyn yn gymre.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 215; 215-17.

¹⁹⁸ See Huw Pryce, “British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales” in *The English Historical Review* 116 (2001): 775-801, for a more comprehensive explanation and the use of the term “Welsh”.

English authority as the “Welsh.” Despite their pride, these Cambrians have accepted the fact that they “lost their position, and they had to suffer the Saxons to be rulers over them.”¹⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the Cambrians still wait for the day foretold by the prophecies of Merlin Ambrose, the eagle, and the hymns of the Sibyl, when the Britons will reclaim “their old status and the possession of all the Isle of Britain.”²⁰⁰ The fate resigned to the Britons in the *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra reflects the political views of the respective authors in that Geoffrey had “little regard for the Welsh” and attempted to represent the glory of the Bretons and by extension the Normans, whereas the Cotton Cleopatra serves as exemplar of how the “Welshmen could look back on the same past and, ignoring some unhappy episodes, draw from it their inspiration for the future, recalling their true claim to sovereignty.”²⁰¹

The Cotton Cleopatra translator blatantly neglects to address the infighting that contributes to the British fall from grace. At first glance the British campaigns against Rome led by Maxen and Arthur are fought against a rival empire but the shared lineage between the Britons and the Romans alters the classification of these conflicts from general war to a civil war.²⁰² As the mutual descendants of the Trojans all conflicts between the Britons and the Romans can be seen as internal strife. The mutual successes Maxen and Arthur enjoy are not only short lived, but they are also conducive to the decay of the respective empires that they have built. Both continental campaigns create power vacuums that leave the Isle of Britain vulnerable: Maxen’s conquest eventually leads the Britons to suffer under Gratian, and the Norwegians, Danes, Scots and Picts after Maxen’s murder. Arthur’s continental invasion gives Mordred the

¹⁹⁹ “*ac o hynny allann y colles y kymry ev breint. ac y bu dir ydunt godef saesson yn bennaf arnadunt*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 217.

²⁰⁰ “*ev hen deilyngdaut a medyant cwbyl o ynys vrydein.*” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 216.

²⁰¹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, xxiii; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 55.

²⁰² *Cotton Cleopatra*, 100-103; 172-190.

opportunity to usurp the throne while inviting the Saxons to reclaim the lands extended to the Saxons by Vortigern, which they keep until the Norman invasion.²⁰³

The changes made within a few narrative strands of the *Historia* allow the Cotton Cleopatra adapter to present his own version of the history of the kings of Britain in such a way that adhered to his own nationalistic and political sympathies without gaining any unwanted English attention. The act of making these alterations, while still following the larger thematic and narrative structure allows the Cotton Cleopatra to create his own Trojan horse. Instead of a hollow, wooden horse, it is a history and the Greek soldiers waiting for the right moment to strike at their enemies have been replaced by nationalistic sentiments that serve to inspire rebellion. By reshaping certain events within the early Trojan narrative, the earliest Britons, and thus the Welsh, are given a stronger historical foundation to build their legacy from. Manipulating the martial prowess of the Trojans and the Britons not only serves to inspire similar acts of valor, but also present certain tactics that can be employed to obtain victory and the reclamation of the Isle of Britain. The admission of how Britain came to know her oppression acts as a reminder of the price of hubris and other religious transgressions while still providing hope that they can one day find God's forgiveness and reclaim their national sovereignty over the entire island.

²⁰³ Cotton *Cleopatra*, 103; 190-91.

Post-Conquest Compositions

Geoffrey's *Historia* and the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* are historical narratives that reflect their contemporary politics. Furthermore, both texts can be seen as post-conquest compositions. Geoffrey navigates the aftermath of the Norman conquest of 1066 and the subsequent Norman expansion into Wales, whereas the Cotton Cleopatra adapter contends with the Edwardian conquest of 1282/3 that marked the complete loss of Welsh sovereignty. Despite the fact that both authors are dealing with the repercussions of conquest, they are on opposite sides of the conflict. Geoffrey panders to the new ruling class, while the Cotton Cleopatra adapter caters to the subjugated Welsh. As a result of these political alignments, the respective narratives are imbued with the biases of their authors and their audience. Ostensibly, the *Historia* is fundamentally pro-Breton, and pro-Norman by extension, and can even be seen to be pro-Briton in some cases, but Geoffrey's true political loyalties are to himself. Meanwhile, the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* is unequivocally pro-Welsh to a nearly fanatical degree which is most clearly seen in the episodes chronicling the conflicts with Rome. This chapter will examine the events surrounding these compositions and how the Norman and Edwardian conquests ultimately shaped the respective narratives.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE *HISTORIA*

The complexity of the *Historia* is a reflection of Geoffrey's many racial and political allegiances. To this end, John Gillingham remarks that Geoffrey's *Historia* "is particularly susceptible of myriad interpretations since it is shot through and through with ambiguity."²⁰⁴ Textual evidence exists within the *Historia* that demonstrates a degree of allegiance to the native

²⁰⁴ John Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*," in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 19.

Britons, Bretons, and the Norman elite which has subsequently caused an ongoing scholastic debate over Geoffrey's true political sympathies. Geoffrey's *Historia* was composed in the late 1130's amidst the internal strife between Matilda and Stephen for the English throne following the death of Henry I in 1135. Geoffrey's personal political leanings at this time are hard to discern given that he dedicated his works to members on both sides of this dispute.²⁰⁵ It can be argued that Geoffrey was more closely aligned to Matilda's claim by extension of the fact that his chief patron was Robert, Earl of Gloucester, was one of Matilda's primary supporters.²⁰⁶ However, it is more likely that Geoffrey was just catering to the Norman elite as a whole and more specifically to his valued connections with the "ruling race, caste and family."²⁰⁷ To this end, Michael Faletra remarks that Geoffrey "narrates the past of the isle of Britain in a way that ultimately legitimates Norman sovereignty" and "finally supports the Normans in their tenure of an *imperium* over all Britain."²⁰⁸

Despite the popularity of his works in the middle ages, not much is actually known about Geoffrey but the prevailing consensus is that he was born to a Breton family that had settled in Monmouth following the Norman Conquest.²⁰⁹ This presumed parentage has been attributed to the contribution of the predominantly pro-Breton components of the *Historia* by several

²⁰⁵ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 443-5; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, x.

²⁰⁶ Faletra, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 14; Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 8; David Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge University Press, 1990; reprint 1994), 46; R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987; reprint 2006) 46.

²⁰⁷ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 426.

²⁰⁸ Michael A. Faletra, "Narrating the Matter of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Norman Colonization of Wales," *The Chaucer Review* 35. No. 1 (2000): 61.

²⁰⁹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, ix-x; Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 443; Faletra, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 10; Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 11.

scholars.²¹⁰ Roberts even goes as far as to claim that “even Arthur, the finest leader of all, owes more to Brittany than to the Britons.”²¹¹ Interestingly, the historical origin of the Bretons comes from the best men and women that Britain could offer at the time of Maximianus’ imperial campaign and conquest of Rome. During this campaign, Maximianus makes two separate edicts of population which effectively relocate Briton power to the continental settlement of Brittany. This American settlement initially consists of a hundred thousand commoners accompanied by a military escort of thirty thousand knights.²¹² The depopulation of the Briton elite is completed when Maximianus in an attempt “to avoid intermarriage with the French,” calls for eleven thousand women of nobility and sixty thousand girls of common birth to be sent to Brittany where they will be married to the Briton soldiers already there.²¹³ The founding of this settlement ultimately marks the fall of British power and the eventual rise of the Breton prominence within the *Historia*.²¹⁴

With the relocation of their military and social elite it is little wonder that Britons who remain on the isle of Britain would turn to Brittany for help.²¹⁵ Tatlock observes that “when the Briton stock divides, the author’s sympathies forsake the island and go to Armorica” which is evidenced by the increasing reliance on Breton help to liberate Britain from oppression and the praise given to the Breton contingent within the British armies.²¹⁶ During the battle on the Maisbeli plain between the Saxons under Hengest and the British army commanded by Aurelius, Hengest promises victory to his soldiers since Aurelius only has, at most, ten thousand Breton

²¹⁰ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 397; *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, x; Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 11.

²¹¹ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, x.

²¹² *Historia*, 86, p. 106.

²¹³ *Historia*, 87, p. 108; *Historia*, 88, p. 108.

²¹⁴ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 397; Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 74.

²¹⁵ Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 74,

²¹⁶ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 397.

soldiers compared to the two hundred thousand Saxons with Hengest.²¹⁷ Hengest makes this assurance under the pretense of having vastly superior numbers by discounting the Briton soldiers “since he had overcome them in battle so often.”²¹⁸ As it turns out, Hengest has every right to fear the Breton soldiers since “in the end the Saxons would have prevailed, but for the intervention of the Breton cavalry.”²¹⁹ Britain’s greatest reliance on Breton assistance for salvation can ultimately be seen in the line of British kings from Aurelius Ambrosius to Uther Pendragon to Arthur himself, all of whom are direct descendants from the Breton royal line that reclaimed Britain under Constantinus.

The *Historia*’s favorable portrayal of the Bretons can also serve as an example of Geoffrey catering to the Norman elite. The Bretons can be seen as stand-ins for the Normans who would also cross the channel to liberate the native Britons from the oppression of the Anglo-Saxons while assuming governmental authority of the island in exchange for their assistance. Faletra has even observed that “even if one maintains that Geoffrey of Monmouth harbors certain pro-Breton tendencies, such biases need not conflict with is much more fundamentally pro-Norman stance”²²⁰ Additionally, as Tatlock points out, further evidence for Geoffrey pro-Norman leanings can be derived from the prominence of the Norman and French leaders within Arthur’s Army.²²¹ Geoffrey seems to go out of his way to lament over the death of these leaders while giving praise to their deeds: “Retiring as best he could with few survivors, Kaius retreated to Arthur’s golden dragon with Beduerus’ body. How the Normans groaned at seeing the torn and mangled corpse of their duke! How the men of Anjou grieved as they tended the many

²¹⁷ *Historia*, 121, p. 164.

²¹⁸ *Historia*, 121, p. 164.

²¹⁹ *Historia*, 123, p. 166.

²²⁰ Faletra, “Narrating the Matter of Britain,” 74.

²²¹ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 399.

wounds of their count Kaius!”²²² Furthermore, the actual composition of the *Historia* itself can be seen as catering to the Norman ruling class given that the Normans took an active interest in the traditions of the realms that they either tried to conquer and the ones that they actually did.²²³

Geoffrey’s perceived loyalty to the Britons, and their Welsh stand-ins, is made somewhat obvious by the narrative as a whole which chronicles the history and the kings of the Britons. To this end, Tatlock notes that, “in the earlier part of the *Historia* the whole Briton race is very favorably treated.”²²⁴ Moreover, the pro-Briton stance is directly included in the dedicatory chapter when Geoffrey states that the deeds of Briton kings “were worthy of eternal praise and are proclaimed by many people.”²²⁵ Throughout his narrative, Geoffrey incorporates other details that suggest a potential loyalty to the Britons such as the reference to Molmutine laws passed by Dunuallo Molmutinus “which are still renowned even today among the English.”²²⁶ The magnitude of Geoffrey’s pro-British sentiments is best understood in the passages that detail the conflicts between Britain and Rome.

The shared Trojan descent through Aeneas automatically creates a conflict between Britain and Rome, which according to Kellie Robertson, also “stems from the fact that each believes that it occupies the same historical position.”²²⁷ Geoffrey establishes the notion of impending conflict between Rome and Britain rather early in the narrative when Brutus receives his vision from the goddess Diana. In this vision Diana not only tells Brutus where to establish his kingdom and to settle his people but also remarks that “from [Brutus’] descendants will arise kings, who will be masters of the whole world” which just so happens to include the other

²²² *Historia*, 171, p. 242.

²²³ Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 11-2.

²²⁴ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 396.

²²⁵ *Historia*, 1, p. 4.

²²⁶ *Historia*, 34, p. 46.

²²⁷ Robertson “Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Insular Historiography,” 47.

Trojans in what would become Rome.²²⁸ Caroline D. Eckhardt also observes that, in general, “the relationship between the Britons and the Romans is one of intermittent hostility, in which now one side wins, now the other” throughout Geoffrey’s narrative.²²⁹

Nevertheless, Geoffrey seizes the opportunity to display Britain’s superiority over Rome which extends to demonstrate the perceived superiority of what would be the Matter of Britain over the Matter of Rome whenever possible. Therefore, it is only fitting that the first open conflict between Britain and Rome results in a string of British victories that concludes with the Briton sacking of Rome and Brennius subjecting the Romans.²³⁰ The British conquest of Rome eventually repeats under, Constantine, Maximianus and seems to be an inevitable conclusion before Arthur returns to Britain after hearing of Modred’s betrayal. When Britain is actually subjugated by Rome, it is not the result of a clear military victory, but of a mutually beneficial agreement to end hostilities: Claudius “offered Arviragus a truce and the promise of his daughter’s hand if he were prepared merely to recognize Rome’s authority of the kingdom of Britain. Hostilities were suspended and Arviragus’ elders persuaded him to comply with Claudius’ promises.”²³¹ However, it should also be noted that Geoffrey makes it clear that it was the Romans who offered a truce, and they only did so after Claudius was “intimidated by the king’s boldness and the bravery of the Britons” and that Claudius “preferred to overcome them by wise judgment rather than to hazard a battle.”²³² Perhaps the best example of Geoffrey’s pro-British/anti-Roman stance occurs during the conflict between Cassibellaunus and Androgeus. Shortly before Androgeus runs to Julius Caesar for aid, Geoffrey seemingly gloats in noting:

²²⁸ *Historia*, 16, p. 20.

²²⁹ Eckhardt “The Presence of Rome in the Middle English Chronicles of the Fourteenth Century,” 195.

²³⁰ *Historia*, 42-44, p. 56-58.

²³¹ *Historia*, 67, p. 82.

²³² *Historia*, 67, p. 82.

how admirable were the Britons of that age, who twice put to flight the conqueror of the whole world! Even after being routed, they faced a man the whole world could not resist, and were ready to lay down their lives for the liberty of their country. It was in praise of them that the poet Lucan described how Caesar “in terror turned his back upon the Britons he attacked.”²³³

Ultimately, the relationship between the Britain and Rome can be seen as an extension of the inherent warning against civil strife. To this end, Eckhardt points out that neither the Romans nor the Britons can be seen as the moral or military superior to the other especially since the leaders of both realms are prone to the same virtues of generosity and civilization and the vices of overreaching, violence, and hubris.²³⁴

Geoffrey’s attitude regarding the Welsh based on the *Historia* is also somewhat debatable. Besides the critical lament of the Britons who remain on the island under the rule of the encroaching Saxons, it is easy to fixate on Geoffrey’s removal of the title of “Briton” in favor of “Welsh” as evidence of Geoffrey’s negative position regarding the remaining Britons. Tatlock alludes to the significance of this action by noting that the name of Briton was still used in Geoffrey’s time “even by English writers, and was preferred by such patriots as Gerald de Barri (*Giraldus Cambrensis* or commonly called ‘Gerald of Wales’).”²³⁵ However, Huw Pryce remarks that “in the twelfth century, Welsh writers in Latin increasingly identified themselves in terms originally coined by the English, terms that remain current in English usage today: ‘Welsh’ and ‘Wales’.”²³⁶ Before remarking on how the *Historia* demonstrates the potential benefits of cultural contact along the Anglo-Norman Wales borderlands, R. R. Davies maintains that

²³³ *Historia*, 62, p. 78.

²³⁴ Eckhardt, “The Presence of Rome in the Middle English Chronicles of the Fourteenth Century,” 195.

²³⁵ Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 400n.18.

²³⁶ Pryce, “British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales,” 776.

“Geoffrey’s *History* shows scant sympathy for the Welsh.”²³⁷ However, Gillingham notes that “essentially the theory that Geoffrey was anti-Welsh is based on his criticism of the Welsh of his own day, and on grounds such as these we might well argue that the sympathies of Wulfstan, the author of the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* were not English, or that Gildas’s sympathies weren’t British.”²³⁸ Furthermore, Jankulak makes the argument that Geoffrey can be seen as sympathetic to the Welsh cause and can even be considered as a Welsh writer based on the fact that “he was not simply a copier of the Welsh material, but as an interpreter within the spirit of the Welsh tradition.”²³⁹ Jankulak also mentions that it is arguable claim that the inclusion of Welsh material, or material that would only be intelligible to those familiar with the Welsh language and literary tradition, suggests that Geoffrey might have been writing specifically for a Welsh audience, but not exclusively.²⁴⁰ Regardless of Geoffrey’s perceived stance regarding the Welsh at the conclusion of his narrative, Geoffrey can be seen to be pro-Welsh by the extension of being pro-Briton given that the Welsh are the descendants thereof and the praise given to their ancestors also honors them.

The exact nature of Geoffrey’s political leanings based on his *Historia* are incredibly convoluted which is more likely to be by design rather than by accident. If anything, Geoffrey is unequivocally pro-Geoffrey. As a result, his text, as a whole, cannot be determined to be pro-Welsh, Briton, Breton, or even Norman at the sake of being anti-Norman, Breton, Briton, or Welsh. The *Historia* supports and undermines each of these factions at one point or another in varying degrees as it suits Geoffrey’s personal ambitions. In many ways, the *Historia* is a

²³⁷ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 106.

²³⁸ Gillingham, “The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*,” 24.

²³⁹ Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* 4.

²⁴⁰ Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 4.

reflection of Geoffrey himself. Given his likely Breton descent, it is only fitting for him to honor his ancestors by giving them a not inconsiderable amount of prestige. His upbringing in Wales can account for his decision to honor his country by remarking on the former glory of the Welsh predecessors, and even fabricating their adoptive history. Geoffrey's position within the Norman court contributed to the assurance that his history would not only be pleasing to his Norman patrons, but also to the rest of the ruling class. This notion of writing a British history that was agreeable to Norman sentiments is especially prominent given that Robert, Earl of Gloucester enlisted the support of the Welsh during the anarchy and as Norman allies, it was important for the Welsh to have an honorable and civilized past.²⁴¹ However, it is the Britons and their Welsh descendants who profited the most from Geoffrey's efforts which afforded them a legendary history and place in the world that rivaled that of Rome. Moreover, it is possible that one of Geoffrey's motivations in writing the *Historia* might have been to increase the Norman respect for the Welsh by creating such a history.²⁴²

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE COTTON CLEOPATRA *BRUT*

The Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* was composed against the political backdrop of the Edwardian Conquest of Wales which signaled the complete loss of Welsh independence in the isle of Britain. This conquest was devastating to the Welsh and "left a deep legacy of despair and bitterness... [and] as the completeness of their defeat dawned on them, some Welshmen turned more than ever to the prophecies of Merlin as a source of consolation and hope."²⁴³ These prophetic sentiments along with the ideas of hope and expectation of deliverance created a strong undercurrent of post-conquest Welsh history and even helped to inspire the Glyn Dŵr rebellion

²⁴¹ Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*," 36-37.

²⁴² Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 428

²⁴³ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 379.

in 1400.²⁴⁴ The fourteenth century saw an increase in Welsh political prophetic literature in response to the growing resentment of the English penal code. The Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* can be seen to be part of this prophetic literary tradition seeing as the Cotton Cleopatra rewrites the history of Briton kings in such a way that not only inspired nationalistic sentiments but also encouraged rebellion to ensure a Welsh reclamation of national sovereignty and thus a fulfillment of earlier prophecies.²⁴⁵ It should also be noted that the *Brutiau* written before Edward's campaign are very similar to the original Latin with exception of including or excluding certain passages containing prophetic material prophecies or the story of Lludd and Llefelys.²⁴⁶

The political allegiance of the Cotton Cleopatra is just as unequivocal as the *Historia* is ambiguous. The Cotton Cleopatra is explicitly pro-Welsh to a near fanatical degree, which embodies the Welsh acceptance of "Geoffrey's history as the basis and proof of their national pride and superiority," and ultimately shows the Britons to be an honorable race.²⁴⁷ Traces of Geoffrey's fluid political alliances are still present within the Cotton Cleopatra, but these are modified to ensure that the Britons are presented more favorably than they are in the *Historia*. Like the *Historia*, the Cotton Cleopatra utilizes the episodes detailing conflicts with the Roman Empire to enhance the general notion of British supremacy.

The Cotton Cleopatra alters the conditions and details surrounding the Roman conquest of Britain under Claudius in such a way that not only glorifies the Britons but also makes the Romans, or at least Claudius, appear cowardly. Peace between the Romans and Britons is

²⁴⁴ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 449.

²⁴⁵ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 56.

²⁴⁶ For further commentary on the differences between the contents of the *Cotton Cleopatra* and other Welsh *Bruts* see Reiss, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*," 98-105

²⁴⁷ *Brut y Brenhinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, 62.

established by fear in the Cotton Cleopatra as opposed to being the result of a stratagem and the advice of a council of elders. As is the case in the *Histora*, the Britons leave the defenses of Winchester to offer the Romans open combat to break the Roman siege. The *Historia* does not present a flattering portrayal of Claudius: he offers peace rather than risking battle after being “intimidated by the king’s boldness and the bravery of the Britons” and essentially bribes Arviragus with the promise of his daughter’s hand if Arviragus will submit to Roman authority. The depiction of Claudius in the Cotton Cleopatra is even more unbecoming since it is the “eagerness and the cruelty of the Britions” that force Claudius to seek peace, which is made immediately. Claudius even appears to be so fearful of the Britons that he gives his daughter away “to confirm the peace.”²⁴⁸ Furthermore, the terms of this accord are not mentioned at all, nor is there any indication that this peace is contingent on the British submission to Roman authority.

The Cotton Cleopatra adapter also incorporates accounts that exemplify Britain’s moral and martial superiority over Rome into his narrative. The military might of the Britons is clearly illustrated when the Britons are able to drive Julius Caesar into the sea. Geoffrey’s narrative also has the Romans retreating to their ships but only “after most of the day had passed” and “victory went with God’s help to the Britons whilst Caesar and the shattered Romans retreated to their camp and ships.”²⁴⁹ The Cotton Cleopatra removes all traces of victory being the result of divine influence and attributes the British victory to sheer military strength while enhancing the margin of victory: “And then the greater part of the Romans were killed, so that one could walk on the corpses thirty measures of land without treading on the ground. And Julius Caesar fled in

²⁴⁸ “awyd y bryttannyeit ac ev creulonder,” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 84; “y gadarnhau y dangneved,” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 84.

²⁴⁹ *Historia*, 56, p. 70.

disgrace to his ships, and he barely escaped to the sea.”²⁵⁰ Britain is also seen to be Rome’s moral superior thanks to an inclusion into the chronology that demonstrates Roman vice and decadence. The Cotton Cleopatra adapter temporally marks the peace made between Arviragus and Vespasian by noting that “and at that time Nero was emperor in Rome and under him Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome and after that he caused Rome to be burned, out of desire to see a great fire, and from that day to this much of it is deserted and will never be inhabited....That was 70 of Christ’s age.”²⁵¹ The enhancement of British prestige in these passages reduces the ambiguity between the might of Rome and Britain found in Geoffrey’s text. This clarification ultimately allows the Cotton Cleopatra adapter to further his notions of national superiority while suggesting that if the ancient Britons had the strength to resist the might of Rome and to drive out the likes of Julius Caesar from their island, surely the contemporary Welsh can unite and drive out the Normans.

The Cotton Cleopatra adapter makes similar alterations to the narrative to continue his enhancement of Briton supremacy by diminishing the role of the Bretons. According to the Cotton Cleopatra, Aurelius is able to defeat Hengest without the Bretons playing as significant of a role in the battle. As is the case in the *Historia*, Aurelius distributes his Breton troops amongst the Britons and forces the Saxon host to retreat to Conisbrough where they regroup and continue the battle.²⁵² However, the Cotton Cleopatra acknowledges that “at length the army of the men of Brittany came at the Saxons and pierced them and scattered them, through the teaching of their

²⁵⁰ “Ac yna y llas gwyr Ruuein canmwiaf. val y gellit kerdet ar y calaned heb ssenghi ar y daear deng hyt tir arugeint. Ac y foas vlkessa(r) yw longheu yn waradwydus ac obreid y dienghis ef yr mor,” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 73.

²⁵¹ “Ac yn yr amser hwnnw yd oed Nero yn amheraudy yn ruveyn. adan yr hwn y diodefau pedyr a phaul merthyroliaeth yn ruveyn. a hwnnw gvedy hynny aberys lloggi ruveyn. o chwant welet tan mawr. Ac yr hynny hyt hedyw y mae llawer yn diffeyth o honey. ac ny byd kyuanedd byth...Sef oed hynny. lxx o oed crist.” *Cotton Cleopatra*, 85.

²⁵² *Historia*, 123, p. 166; *Cotton Cleopatra*, 141.

leading men,” which, while important, does not directly deliver victory to Aurelius.²⁵³ Instead, the Briton victory can be attributed to the arrival of Gorlois whose army scatters the Saxons and allows Eidol, earl of Gloucester, to capture Hengest.²⁵⁴ This type of diminished prominence is also seen in the treatment of Bedivere’s death. Bedivere falls in battle against the Romans, but the Cotton Cleopatra adapter does not stop his narrative to lament over this death.²⁵⁵ Granted, this omission is characteristic of the general glossing over of Geoffrey’s asides, but its removal also diminishes Bedivere’s significance to the narrative and the prestige of the Bretons along with it. Rather than languishing over Bedivere’s death, the Cotton Cleopatra adapter simply notes that “they went with the body of Bedivere to Normandy, the city he had made there himself, and he was buried with honor in a burial ground which was on the south side of the city.”²⁵⁶ The Cotton Cleopatra adapter is not primarily concerned with removing the significance of the Roman, or Breton presence from his history, merely reworking or diminishing them to ensure that the Britons are unequivocally superior to their counterparts.

The alterations made to the Cotton Cleopatra *Brut* not only reveal the political sympathies of its compiler, but also demonstrate just how far he was willing to revise the perceived historical record to advance his nationalist sentiments. In many ways the Cotton Cleopatra is not just a piece of pro-Welsh propaganda that glorifies the British past while accentuating the ethnic virtues of the original Britons, it is also a reminder of cultural prophecies that foretell of a *Mab Darogan* or ‘son of prophecy’ who will rise to liberate the Welsh and aid their reclamation of the Isle of Britain and their national sovereignty.

²⁵³ “*ac or diwed y doeth bydin gwyr llydaw yr saesson ac ev tyllu ac ev gwasgaru. drwi dysc y gwyr pennaf onadunt.*” Cotton Cleopatra, 141.

²⁵⁴ Cotton Cleopatra, 141.

²⁵⁵ Cotton Cleopatra, 189-90.

²⁵⁶ “*y duchbwyt a chorf betwyr hyt yn Normandi ydinas awnathoed ehvn yno. ac mevn mynwent a oed or parth deheu yr dinas y claadpwyt ef yn enrydedus.*” Cotton Cleopatra, 189-90.

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