The Latin Reception of the *De gestis Britonum*

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Gerald of Wales famously skewered the veracity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history in his story of Meilyr, an illiterate man who could spot falsehood, thanks to devils dancing on the offending tongues or pages. Meilyr's tormentors could be driven away by the Gospel of John, but when a copy of the *De gestis Britonum* was placed on his lap, the devils returned in ever greater numbers. Gerald's anecdote, written in his *Itinerary Through Wales* in the 1190s, is a witness to the incredible popularity of the *DGB* less than 50 years after Geoffrey's death, and that popularity would only grow, as the story was taken up in the vernacular translations discussed in Chapter Eight. Gerald's skepticism is of a piece with the reactions from other Latin authors dealt with in Chapter Six, but as the present chapter will show, the rise of Arthurian literature as a vernacular phenomenon, and the dismissal of Geoffrey's work (and Arthur's historicity) by some Anglo-Latin historians, give a potentially misleading impression about the importance that the *DGB* continued to have in the Latin tradition, well into the early modern period. First, while the centrality of the Arthuriad to the *DGB* cannot be overstated, Geoffrey is also responsible for promulgating several other highly popular and influential myths, of interest to both Latinate and vernacular readers in the Middle Ages and beyond; that is, Geoffrey's importance reaches beyond the Arthurian tradition. And second, while some Latin writers may have reacted negatively to Geoffrey's work, others set about commenting on it, supplementing it, and even writing their own Latin Arthurian narratives. This chapter will explore the many ways that the Latin tradition, both medieval and early modern, interacted with Geoffrey's myth-making through commentary, continuation, and outright creation.

1 Commentary

There are well over 200 surviving manuscripts of the *DGB*, ranging from small and modest, to large and elaborate.¹ In addition to the early manuscript

¹ The bulk of the manuscripts are described in Crick, SC. There have been more manuscripts discovered since; see J. Crick, "Two Newly Located Manuscripts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's

tradition discussed in Chapter Five, there are many late medieval manuscripts that provide valuable evidence of how Geoffrey's work was being read, well into the 15th century. Some of the manuscripts, both early and late, have marginal notations added by contemporary and later readers, and in these clusters of annotation, we can see which of Geoffrey's stories were marked for attention. Attention can mean several things, of course. Many of the annotations discussed below are single words, and might serve as quick locators for particular parts of the text. Point of production glosses of this type can be understood as anticipating a particular readerly interest, even pre-constructing that interest. Later glosses show interest in action, as readers mark up a text according to their own focus, either creating an apparatus or supplementing an original one which in the end failed to anticipate their needs. There are also longer annotations, including original rubrics and later explanatory or responsive notes.² In all these kinds of activity, we can see traces of the reception of Geoffrey's text.

There is certainly interest, both anticipated and actual, in the Arthurian portion of the history. For example, even lightly-annotated manuscripts will often have a note on Arthur's conception and his death. Some of these notes were made at the time of production, as an integral part of the design. In London, British Library, Additional 15732, fol. 78r, for example, *De morte arturi*, "On the death of Arthur", appears in the margin next to the account of Arthur's death, in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript. This manuscript also has a manicule (the pointing hand that medieval and early modern readers often used to emphasize important passages) next to the story of Arthur's conception. Manicules can be difficult to date, but the manuscript in any case indicates that someone thought it important to pick out the beginning and the end of Arthur's story.

Arthur's weapons also attract annotation. London, British Library, Arundel 237 (Figure 7.1), a 13th-century manuscript, has notes beside the references to Arthur's shield and sword in the arming description, and also draws attention, on the same folio, to how many men he killed in a single day. This is a fairly heavily annotated manuscript, but Arthur's weapons may also be picked out in much more lightly-annotated copies. London, British Library, Arundel 319 (Figure 7.2), for example, has few glosses, but one is the marginal *Pridwen* (that is, the name of Arthur's shield) on fol. 89r, in the original scribe's hand, in red, next to the weapon description. This is a careful, clearly-planned original note, but more casual, after-the-fact additions in manuscripts show a similar

Historia regum Britanniae, *AL* 13 (1995), 151–56, and J. Tahkokallio, "Update to the List of Manuscripts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*", *AL* 32 (2015), 187–203.

2 Julia Crick offers an overview of the rubrics in Crick, *DR*, pp. 121–42.

FIGURE 7.1 London, British Library, Arundel 237, fol. 47v

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FIGURE 7.2 London, British Library, Arundel 319, fol. 89r

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interest, one that is shared by medieval and early modern commentators alike. London, Lambeth Palace, 503 has a medieval *Nota* mark, a manicule, and, in an early modern hand, the gloss *Arthuri clipeus*, “Arthur’s shield” (fol. 78v), next to the description of Pridwen. London, Lambeth Palace, 454, a modest manuscript, has a doodle of a sword on fol. 94r, next to Arthur’s accession, along with underlining of the names Aurelius, Uther, Colgrin, and Arthur himself.

Drawings, like annotations, point us toward areas of readerly interest. London, British Library, Harley 4003 has a drawing of a castle, and the annotation *nota Tyndagel*, “take note of Tintagel”, next to the story of Arthur’s conception (fol. 120r). The same manuscript features a strange face and the label *Gogmagog* next to the story of Corineus and Gogmagog (fol. 86v), a reminder that readers turned to the *DGB* for more than the *Arthuriad* (Figure 7.3). The Gogmagog story was particularly popular; while in Harley 4003, the drawing and label are medieval, early modern annotators frequently comment on this section as well. London, British Library, Royal 13 A. iii has several 16th-century notes to this section, drawing attention both to the battle and to the derivation of Cornwall (fol. 13v). That etymological emphasis is typical in much of the early modern commentary on the *DGB*, and may account for some of the changes in frequency as well.

In some manuscripts, annotation or underlining picks up in the Arthurian section and then drops off, suggesting the pull of that part of the text. But in others, annotation patterns suggest something quite different. In London, British Library, Cotton Nero D. viii, for example, someone has underlined names and places almost constantly, right up until the Arthurian section. The underliner returns briefly for a few folios after Arthur’s death, and then disappears entirely. This kind of variable attention is not uncommon in the manuscript tradition. Some readers perk up in the Roman section and lose interest thereafter. Others carefully annotate only the early, place-name etymologies in the opening chapters of the *DGB*. Many of these non-Arthurian reading patterns are associated particularly with early modern readers. London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. xxiii is a 13th-century manuscript that is heavily annotated in an early modern hand through Book VI. Thereafter, notes fall off precipitously, though the occasional later note in the same hand shows that the annotator was still reading. Some of this annotator’s notes simply repeat names and places found in the text, as if the purpose were to make it easy to find certain passages. Others have a scholarly character, referring, for example, to other historical texts.

The etymological-geographical passages so popular with early modern readers, discussed further below, are less frequent in the *Arthuriad*, which might be one reason for the drop-off in annotation described thus far. Another reason might be growing concern over the historicity of Arthur, though more than one early modern antiquarian defended that historicity vehemently when Polydore Vergil questioned it.³ Certainly other figures, who seem clearly legendary to us

3 For a discussion, see J.P. Carley, “Polydore Vergil and John Leland on King Arthur: The Battle of the Books”, *Arthurian Interpretations* 15:2 (1984), 86–100 (repr. in E.D. Kennedy (ed.), *King Arthur: A Casebook*, New York, 1996, pp. 185–204).

FIGURE 7.3 London, British Library, Harley 4003, fol. 86v
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today, attracted the interest of later readers. For example, the Cotton Vespasian A. xxiii reader devotes particular attention to Brutus. As the chapter after this one notes, vernacular adaptations of the *DGB* were often called *Bruts*, from the Brutus foundation myth. This was one of the most persistent and influential of Geoffrey's narratives in the Latin tradition as well. Both medieval and early modern annotators show considerable interest in the Brutus story, and in particular, in the account of his founding of Troia Nova, later known as London. Both the foundation passage and the later account of Lud's additions

to the city can be the subject of notes by both medieval and early modern commentators.⁴ Readers can also indicate (varying) interest through graphical means, as examples above of manicules, underlining, and marginal drawings indicate. And while manuscripts of the *DGB* are not normally illustrated, there is one manuscript that features elaborate marginal drawings of many of the cities mentioned. The drawings in Royal 13 A. iii date from the early 14th century, but these have also in some cases been annotated by an early modern reader. On fol. 14r, for example, which features an illustration of London in the bottom margin (labeled in both medieval and early modern hands), a marginal note records, in Latin in an early modern hand, that Nova Troia, also known as Troinovant, was built by Brutus, and later, called Kaerlud by Lud (Figure 7.4).

The interest of early modern readers in the place-names of the *DGB* aligns with the rise, in the same period, of chorography, the genre of geographical and historical description brought to its peak by William Camden in his *Britannia* (1586). One of the annotators of Lambeth 503 is William Lambarde (1536–1601), an antiquarian whose *Perambulation of Kent* is an early example of county history and a precursor to the work of Camden and other early modern chorographers. Lambarde picks out the place-names in the *DGB*, both before and after the Arthuriad. In the Arthurian portion of the text, he makes few notes, and these align with his general interest. For example, where a later medieval reader scrawls the note *Arturus letaliter vulneratus est*, “Arthur has been fatally wounded” (fol. 99r), next to Arthur’s death, Lambarde writes, immediately below, *Aualonia insula*, “the island of Avalon”, seeing the death through the lens of place (Figure 7.5). This focus on geography and etymology applies outside the Arthurian portion of the text as well. While we cannot know whether Lambarde drew the small picture of Stonehenge in the margin of fol. 69v of Lambeth 503, he did label it as *forma stonage*, “the shape of Stonehenge”, noting as well that the passage describes the virtues of the stones. He manages, in this way, to note the fantastical elements of Geoffrey’s story while also adhering to his interest in geographical description. Similarly, earlier in the manuscript, Lambarde’s note to the story of Corineus and Gogmagog is again geographical, as he picks out Geoffrey’s explanation for the place-name *Saltus goemagog*, “Gogmagog’s Leap” (fol. 11r).

It might be the case that readers concentrate on such things as the etymologies beneath existing British places because the persistence of the place itself

4 I discuss the reception of this passage in “Palimpsests of Place and Time in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britannie*”, in G. Dinkova-Bruun and T. Major (eds.), *Teaching and Learning in Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Gernot R. Wieland*, Turnhout, 2017, pp. 43–59.

FIGURE 7.4 London, British Library, Royal 13 A. iii, fol. 14r

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FIGURE 7.5 London, Lambeth Palace Library, 503, fol. 99r
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adds a certain plausibility to its foundation narrative, however fanciful. And Geoffrey's focus on etymology in the opening chapters in fact bolsters his larger foundation myth. Brutus's story is in this sense simply an extended explanation for the island's name; the name, in its turn, confirms the foundation story. As did Arthur, Brutus presented a problem to historically-minded readers. On the one hand, the story was very attractive, as its persistence suggests.⁵ The Brutus story offered a connection to the classical past. As Chapter Two notes, the *DGB* is presented as a continuation of *The Fall of Troy*, an account of the fall of Troy attributed to Dares Phrygius. While the historically-documented Roman wars also allowed a backward look to the classical world, that was far more fraught, as the Roman story was one of conquest (it is no accident that Geoffrey provided several instances in which British kings conquered Rome, offsetting this inconvenient fact). The Brutus foundation myth might have its roots in the fall of Troy, but that fall was itself the beginning of other stories of imperial achievement, from Aeneas's foundation of Rome to Brutus's own settlement of Britain. On the other hand, its historicity was challenged, often through reference to its failure to appear in other historical sources.

Still, the manuscript tradition underlines the degree to which the *DGB* was understood in terms of the Trojan context by many Latinate readers. Several Trojan texts, including the *The Fall of Troy* attributed to Dares Phrygius and Guido delle Colonne's *History of the Destruction of Troy*, are found in manuscripts that also include Geoffrey's *DGB*.⁶ Usually, the Trojan material will immediately precede *DGB*, effectively acting as an introduction. An example is Cardiff, Central Library, 2.611, a manuscript of the 13th or 14th century that opens with *The Fall of Troy*, followed by a genealogy of the Trojans and a prefatory poem to the *DGB*, before *DGB* itself begins. The co-occurrence of texts with the *DGB* is in fact a source of considerable information about the reception of Geoffrey's work. In addition to appearing with Trojan material, the *DGB* is often found in manuscripts containing the works of other Latin historians, including Bede, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Ranulph Higden, and

5 As late as the first Modern English translation of the *DGB* in 1718, translator Aaron Thompson was defending the credibility of the myth, though certainly by this time, his was most definitively an outlier opinion in England. I discuss the persistence of the Brutus myth in "Remembering Brutus: Aaron Thompson's *British History* of 1718", *AL* 30 (2013), 141–69.

6 Crick, *DR*, pp. 19–77, lists associated contents. The list is not complete, given recent discoveries of more manuscripts than Crick knew at the time, but it still offers a very useful overview of the texts that most often travel along with the *DGB*. For Dares Phrygius, Crick lists 27 manuscripts that also contain the *DGB*, and for Guido delle Colonne, she lists five. She also notes that four manuscripts of the *DGB* include Trojan genealogies; see pp. 37–38, 47, and 43, respectively.

Martinus Polonus. Some of the compilers of these manuscripts copied these texts together at point of production; in Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514, for example, the same hand copies *The Fall of Troy* and the *DGB*, one after another. Similarly, the *Historia Brittonum*, whose contents run parallel to some of the material in the *DGB*, precedes it in London, British Library, Additional 11702, and follows it in Cotton Nero D. viii. In both manuscripts the texts are copied in the same hand.⁷ In other cases, later owners, either later in the Middle Ages or in the early modern period, have chosen to bind the *DGB* with other works. For instance, Cambridge, University Library, Ff.1.25 is a composite manuscript created by Matthew Parker (1504–75), archbishop of Canterbury, before he donated it to the University Library in 1574. It combines a medieval copy of William of Malmesbury's *History of the English Bishops* with 16th-century transcriptions of more of William's work; a 13th-century manuscript containing two Latin Crusades chronicles; and another 16th-century transcription, this one of the *DGB*.

In Matthew Parker's arrangement, Geoffrey's is one among several histories. The Crusades material suggests another popular emphasis in manuscripts containing the *DGB*, and that is material associated with places imagined to be exotic. Other Crusades texts found in manuscripts of the *DGB* include the pseudo-Turpin chronicles and Jacques de Vitry's *Oriental History* (*Historia orientalis*, or the *Historia hierosolimitana abbreviata*).⁸ One of the most popular companions to the *DGB*, the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, might at first glance seem to align with the exotic elements found in the Crusades material: the *Letter* purports to be a letter from Alexander the Great to Aristotle, his tutor, recounting Alexander's adventures in India and the many marvels he encountered there. At the same time, the emphasis in the *DGB* on the deeds (and eventual deaths) of kings, particularly great ones like Brutus or Arthur, suggests a second thematic fit, the interest in the rise and fall of great rulers that would eventually give rise to the *On the Fates of Famous Men* tradition and to associated motifs such as the Nine Worthies, two of whom, of course, were Arthur and Alexander. Alexander material linked to manuscripts of the *DGB* also includes the *Deeds of Alexander* and Alexander's epitaph.⁹ Some Latin historians criticized Geoffrey for suggesting Arthur was an equivalent to Alexander, but the Latin manuscript tradition routinely pairs the two rulers.

7 Crick, *DR*, p. 51, lists seven co-occurrences. The two texts are not always in direct sequence.

8 Crick, *DR*, pp. 54–55, lists four manuscripts containing the *Historia hierosolimitana abbreviata* or *Historia Orientalis*, and ten with texts from the Pseudo-Turpin tradition, *ibid.*, pp. 52–54.

9 Crick, *DR*, pp. 23–29, lists all the Alexander texts.

FIGURE 7.6 London, British Library, Royal 13 D. v, fol. 24v

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The *PM*, which had a manuscript tradition of its own (see Chapter Four), also often stands apart from the rest of the *DGB* in the manuscripts in which it is integral, partly because of variability in design (the degree to which the section is or is not highlighted by display capitals, rubrics, and so on), and partly because of the varying traces of readerly reaction. Sometimes, the prophecies

are carefully and extensively annotated. Prophecy was of considerable interest to Latinate medieval readers, and its biblical roots gave it significant status. The *PM*, which attracted the praise of 12th-century readers like Orderic Vitalis and Abbot Suger of St Denis, rapidly became the subject of several Latin commentaries, and even inspired imitation like that of John of Cornwall.¹⁰ Some manuscripts clearly show considerable readerly interest in this part of the *DGB*. Several different hands, of different periods, have made notes in the *PM* section of Arundel 237, a manuscript which also has a marginal note on Merlin's interpretation of the star forecasting Arthur's reign (fol. 42v). In another manuscript, London, British Library, Royal 13 D. v, there is a doodle of the star in the margin at this point (fol. 24v) (Figure 7.6). In other manuscripts, the annotating hand or hands pause during the *PM* and resume only once the narrative portion of the text does; an example of this practice is Cotton Nero D. viii whose underlining reader, as noted above, seems less interested in the *Arthuriad* than in other parts of the text. This reader leaves the prophecies almost completely unmarked, and with no underlining at all. London, College of Arms, Arundel 1 is a historical miscellany that includes a copy of the *DGB* that has been extensively annotated by John Dee (1527–1608), one of Elizabeth I's advisors and a noted mathematician and student of the occult. His notes include plot summary and source references, and show an interest in Geoffrey's synchronisms and etymologies. However, after providing a heading to the *PM* section, Dee stops annotating at all, picking up only when the narrative resumes, and continuing with his previous interests; he writes a long note, for example, on Stonehenge. Were the readers who suspended operations during the *PM* bewildered or disgusted by it? Were they simply not interested? (Dee also shows no interest in Arthur, as it happens). It is not possible to derive motives from the absence of commentary. What we do know is that while for some readers, Merlin was part of the outrageous falsehoods that led Meilyr's demons to settle on Geoffrey's pages, for others, the *PM* were among the most important parts of the *DGB*.

2 Continuation

Medieval history writing was in many ways an accretive and collaborative enterprise. Chronicle histories, for example, were often extended by their later

10 John of Cornwall's poem survives in only one manuscript, which is not a copy of the *DGB*. It clearly drew on Geoffrey's work but most of it, as Michael Curley has shown, cannot be directly traced to the *DGB*; see "A New Edition of John of Cornwall's *Prophetia Merlini*", *Speculum* 57:2 (1982), 217–49.

owners beyond the period covered by their original authors. Indeed, authors can be difficult to determine, precisely because so many texts were created as compilations, even pastiches, of other histories. Geoffrey is very insistent as to his own authorship, naming himself in two prefaces and making attempts to protect his content through his claim that only he possesses the very ancient book in the British tongue which he claims to be translating.¹¹ At the same time, his final colophon, leaving the deeds of those who came after the period he covers to other contemporary historians, also invites the participation of others in extending and promulgating the history he has begun.¹² While continuations of histories are often fairly staid affairs – an added list of kings, or a genealogy, are common features – two Latin texts offer more elaborate narrative extensions of Geoffrey's world.

As we have already seen, the story of Corineus and Gogmagog was popular with later readers of the *DGB*. It is not surprising, then, that some people asked what must have seemed an obvious question: where did the giants that the Trojans encountered in Britain come from? One answer was provided by *The Origin of Giants* (*De origine gigantum*). This is a 14th-century Latin version of an Anglo-Norman poem that tells the story of Albina, eldest of 30 daughters of a Greek king, who leads her sisters in a plot to murder their husbands.¹³ When one of the sisters reveals the plan (in another Anglo-Norman version, they actually succeed), the plotters are set adrift and land on an island which they name Albion, after Albina. The island is deserted; incubi visit it and copulate with the women, and a race of giants is born as a result. Versions of the Albina story often appear as prologues to Anglo-Norman, Latin, and Middle English *Bruts*.¹⁴

Ruth Evans has pointed out that the use of third-person prose narrative for the tale, when the original was in verse with a first-person narrator, gives the text a truthful cast, suggesting the world of chronicle history rather than romance.¹⁵ Furthermore, Latin itself performs this particular alchemy. James Carley and

11 *DGB*, Prologus 3.9–12, 19; Prophetiae 110.21; xi.208.604–07.

12 *DGB*, xi.208.601–03, invites Caradog of Llancarfan, William of Malmesbury, and Henry of Huntingdon to continue the narrative of the Welsh and Saxon kings from the point where Geoffrey leaves off.

13 The Anglo-Norman original, *Des grantz geanz*, survives in two versions, one a shorter adaptation of the other. In their edition of *The Origin of Giants*, J.P. Carley and J. Crick write that the Latin translation derives from this abbreviated version; see “Constructing Albion's Past: An Annotated Edition of *De Origine Gigantum*”, *AL* 13 (1995), 41–114, at p. 51.

14 For a discussion that focuses on the Middle English version of the story, see A. Bernau, “Beginning with Albina: Remembering the Nation”, *Exemplaria* 21:3 (2009), 247–73.

15 R. Evans, “Gigantic Origins: An Annotated Translation of *De Origine Gigantum*”, *AL* 16 (1998), 197–211, at p. 201.

Julia Crick point out that it was rare to translate from French into Latin, and that such translation “represented an elevation of the text”.¹⁶ That this elevation could be problematic is reflected by one of Geoffrey’s harshest critics, William of Newburgh. He was particularly incensed that Geoffrey dressed up his fictions in Latin, the language of truth, writing that Geoffrey cloaked the “figments of the Britons” with “the honorable name of history by presenting them with the ornaments of the Latin tongue”.¹⁷ Casting the Albina story into the language and form of history, then, performs a significant reorientation of the text, making it acceptable for Latin readers. The manuscript history of *The Origin of Giants* suggests that the transmutation was successful. The text appears before the *DGB* in some manuscripts, and after it in others. Unrelated Latin versions of the story of Albina and her sisters also appear alongside the *DGB* in the manuscript tradition, one in two copies, and the other in four.¹⁸

Indeed, *The Origin of Giants* (and its Anglo-Norman source) pays attention to things that are not normally the purview of romance. It spends some of its short length detailing how Albina and her sisters found and prepared food on the island. The sisters first forage for fruits, and then turn to catching game (and not in the aristocratic form of the hunt as practiced in romance texts):

Now indeed, because nutritious food was entirely lacking to them, nor did they have the capacity to capture wild animals and birds, through cunning invention they made twigs into snares, by means of which they could, by turns, seize and hold the wild beasts. They also fashioned cunning little devices from twigs to capture birds. And so, they disemboweled their captured game and, having coaxed fire from flint, cooked them in their hides and roasted the birds on the coals.¹⁹

16 Carley and Crick, “Constructing Albion’s Past”, p. 51.

17 William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs* Proemium §3, ed. and trans. P.G. Walsh and M.J. Kennedy, *William of Newburgh: The History of English Affairs, Book I (Edited with Translation and Commentary)*, Warminster, 1988, p. 28: “fabulas de Arturo ex priscis Britonum figmentis sumptas et ex proprio auctas per superductum Latini sermonis colorem honesto historiae nomine palliavit.” My translation. I discuss the role of Latin in Arthurian history in “‘Hic est Artur’: Reading Latin and Reading Arthur”, in A. Lupack (ed.), *New Directions in Arthurian Studies*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 49–67.

18 Carley and Crick, “Constructing Albion’s Past”, p. 50.

19 Carley and Crick, “Constructing Albion’s Past”, pp. 107–09: “Iam uero quia cibus eis deerat nutritiuus nec habebant ingenia ad capiendas feras et aues excogitacione subtili fecerunt tendiculas uirgeas, quibus inuicem connodatis feras caperent et tenerent. Sed et ingenio la componebant ex uirgis pro auibus capiendis. Captam igitur uenacionem excoriarunt et extracto igne de silice coxerunt in coreiis et aues ad prunas torrebant.” My translation.

The brief scene is similar to the interest in the forest life of Meriadoc and his protectors in *The Story of Meriadoc* (*Historia Meriadoci*), discussed below. The coexistence of incubi, monstrous progeny, and mundane details like snare-making and rabbit-skinning is not unique to the Latin translation – the French verse features similar details – but the shift to Latin prose underlines the prosaic nature of the description, and may contribute to the larger project of giving the foundation narrative what Anke Bernau, discussing the Albina tradition more generally, calls “plausibility”; that is, the story has familiar and acceptable outlines and, I would add, form.²⁰ Thus *The Origin of Giants* can function as a lead-in to the *DGB*, in the same way that the Trojan material discussed above often does.

These are different kinds of foundation narratives, however. Bernau points out the contrast between the female founders (Albina and her sisters) and the male (Brutus and the Trojans), noting that the men build cities, while the women seem to lead a hunter-gatherer existence.²¹ Moreover, the women in *The Origin of Giants* are characterized by their appetites, quite literally; it is after they have gorged on the beasts they catch and kill that they become lustful. The combination of gluttony, lust, and women is a common trope in medieval anti-feminist literature, and while Geoffrey’s *DGB* has plenty of examples of bad male behavior, his founder, Brutus, is exemplary, characterized by both wisdom and strength. The pairing of *The Origin of Giants* with the *DGB* might seem, then, to frame Geoffrey’s text as a proper and corrective foundation narrative, as the Trojans cleanse the island of the monstrous race borne of female iniquity. The contrast is not a particularly Galfridian one, however. Geoffrey’s queens, like his kings, act sometimes out of baser instincts, but many of them are also exemplary rulers, as Chapter Twelve in this collection notes.²² Geoffrey left the pre-history of Albion unwritten; he might or might not have approved of the way the Albina narrative filled in that gap.

The Origin of Giants is clearly taken up by some readers as an appropriate prologue to the *DGB*. Another Latin text, *The True History of the Death of Arthur* (*Vera historia de morte Arthuri*), seems to function as an epilogue, though to the Arthuriad rather than to the *DGB* as a whole. This 12th-century Latin prose narrative tells its audience what happens after Arthur is wounded at

20 Bernau, “Beginning with Albina”, pp. 256–57; Bernau is drawing here on Mary Carruthers’ work on medieval memory in *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge, 1990.

21 Bernau, “Beginning with Albina”, p. 271.

22 In addition to her contribution to this volume, Fiona Tolhurst has discussed Geoffrey’s queens at length in *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship*, New York, 2013.

Camlan.²³ Geoffrey simply says that Arthur was taken to Avalon and that the crown passed to Constantinus. The long Arthurian pause in the relentless succession of kings that characterizes much of the *DGB* ends, and the text hurtles toward the final dominion of the Saxons. Arthur's death can seem particularly abrupt in the *DGB* precisely because we have spent so much time reading about him. *The True History* provides a much more colorful conclusion to the great king's life, showing us Arthur's fatal wounding by a mysterious youth wielding an elm spear dipped in adder's venom; Arthur's appropriately Christian death on a hair-shirt, after confession in the presence of the bishops of Bangor and Glamorgan; and a magical storm during his funeral rites, following which his body disappears, leaving his tomb behind, thus potentially preparing the ground for the messianic hope of Arthur's return, as no one knows where the king's body lies.²⁴ Yet as in the Albina story, the apparently fantastical coexists with the ordinary. There is no suggestion, for example, that Avalon is to be a place of miraculous restoration. Arthur seeks it out "because of the amenities of that delightful place (and for the sake of peace and for the easing of the pain of his wounds)", but "when he had come there, the doctors busied themselves with all the skill of their art over his wounds, but the king experienced no efficacious cure from their efforts."²⁵ Avalon is simply a pleasant place, home to skilled but clearly human doctors.

In two manuscripts containing the *DGB*, *The True History* is integrated with Geoffrey's own text. It is placed between chapters in Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 982, and, in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 6401D, inserted after Arthur's death with an introductory note offering the account as that of "Geoffrey Arthur" himself.²⁶ This (partial) version of the text is presented throughout as if being quoted from Geoffrey's work. It is particularly notable that in this unusual manuscript, the *DGB* ends at this point, with Arthur's death and the appended material. Most undamaged manuscripts of the *DGB*,

23 For an edition, see *Vera Historia de Morte Arthuri*, ed. M. Lapidge, "An Edition of the *Vera Historia de Morte Arthuri*", *AL* 1 (1981), 79–93. The manuscripts are described in R. Barber, "The Manuscripts of the *Vera Historia de Morte Arthuri*", *AL* 6 (1986), 163–64, and in M. Lapidge, "Additional Manuscript Evidence for the *Vera Historia de Morte Arthuri*", *AL* 2 (1982), 163–68.

24 Lapidge, "An Edition of the *Vera Historia*", p. 90: "At deinde, cum caligo subducitur et serenitas restituitur, corporis regii nullas repperunt reliquias", "And finally, when the mist is gone and calm restored, they find no part of the royal body."

25 Lapidge, "An Edition of the *Vera Historia*", p. 86: "propter loci amenitatem perendinari proposuerat (et quietis gracia causaque uulnerum suorum mitigandi dolorem). Ad quam ubi peruentus est, medici pro sue artis industria pro regis sunt solliciti uulneribus; sed rex eorum sollicitudinibus nullam salubrem persensit efficaciam." My translation.

26 "Nunc uero ad Gualfredum Arturum reuertar stilo non mutato", fol. 74v.

of course, end where Geoffrey normally does,²⁷ but here too, we find later Latin writers (or compilers) effectively supplementing Geoffrey's history. Sometimes this supplementation is achieved simply by the addition of chronicle histories that extend Geoffrey's narrative beyond the period of the Saxon dominion. In addition to the works of the historians mentioned above, other texts used for this purpose include histories of the Normans and genealogies and lists of English kings up to the date of the manuscript's creation or emendation. In these manuscripts, the *DGB* is the prologue to more recent histories. In other manuscripts, a popular group of non-narrative additions takes the *DGB* in quite a different direction.

At the end of the *DGB*, attempting to interpret the angelic voice heard by Cadualadrus, Alanus gathers prophetic books, including those attributed to the Eagle of Shaftesbury, the Sibyl, and Merlin. As noted above and in Chapter Four, the *PM* had their own separate manuscript tradition, and often attracted annotation and commentary. In addition, other Latin prophetic texts, including the Sibylline prophecies and several versions of the Prophecy of the Eagle, can be found in manuscripts of the *DGB*. It is striking that Geoffrey refused to provide the Eagle's prophecy himself. He first mentions it at the end of his account of the building of Kaerguint (Winchester) by Rud Hudibras, but denies its credibility: "The Eagle spoke there while the wall was being built, whose words, if I judged them to be true, I would confidently set down with the rest."²⁸ Given what Geoffrey was willing to set down in Merlin's case, it seems reasonable to wonder if he is having a bit of fun with his audience here. If so, not everyone got the joke. The Welsh translation of the *DGB*, *Brut y Brenhinedd* ("History of the Kings"), inserts a set of prophecies at this point, translated from a Latin text of Merlinian prophecies,²⁹ and in over a dozen manuscripts of the *DGB*, a Latin Eagle prophecy appears. In several, it follows directly after the text.³⁰ Whether or not Geoffrey intended a sly joke in providing Merlin's prophecies but not the Eagle's, some later Latin readers were confronted with copies of the *DGB* whose design implied that the Eagle of Shaftesbury was, like Merlin, integral to the text – and, perhaps, equally reliable, whatever that might mean.

27 Though not always: BL Add. 11702 ends with the brief chapter that immediately follows Arthur's death, two-thirds of the way down the final page of the manuscript.

28 *DGB*, ii.29.120–22: "Ibi tunc aquila locuta est dum murus aedificaretur; cuius sermones si ueros esse arbitrarer sicut cetera memoriae dare non diffugerem." My translation.

29 See A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066–1422*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 47.

30 Crick lists the manuscripts in Crick, *DR*, pp. 65–66.

3 Creation

Both *The Origin of Giants* and *The True History* display some markers of history, and some of romance, underlining the fuzziness of the fact/fiction divide we are accustomed to making today. They could easily be considered in the final section of this essay, as they are clearly narratives with romance elements – creative works, to use anachronistic modern terms, though the creativity in *The Origin of Giants* is partly the Norman poet's, and not the Latin translator's. But they are also, as the manuscript tradition suggests, sometimes presented as expansions of Geoffrey's project, filling in the gaps he left. Similarly, while someone created the various Latin prophecies that often appear in conjunction with the *DGB* in the manuscript tradition, what is most striking is what I think of as creation by accretion; that is, all these texts are part of the packaging and categorizing of the *DGB*, as well as moves to supplement what later readers felt to be missing. The texts dealt with here, while they show Galfridian influence, are truly free-standing. Two of them, *The Story of Meriadoc* (*Historia Meriadoci*) and *The Rise of Gawain* (*De ortu Waluuanii*), are generally agreed to be by the same author, though disagreement as to their dating persists.³¹ The third, *Arthur and Gorlagon*, is an engagement with anti-feminist tradition by means of a werewolf story in an Arthurian frame.³² None had anything like the circulation or influence of the *DGB*. *The Rise of Gawain* and *Arthur and Gorlagon* (*Narratio de Arthuro Rege Britanniae et Rege Gorlagon lycanthropo*) each survive in single manuscripts only, and *The Story of Meriadoc* in two

31 The most recent editor of both texts, Mildred Leake Day, used details of armor, clothing, weaponry, and English law to argue for a 12th-century date for both works, and tentatively attributed them to Robert of Torigni, abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel, who showed Henry of Huntingdon a copy of the *DGB*, occasioning the latter's famous letter to Warin (see Robert of Torigny, *Chronicle*, ed. R. Howlett, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol. IV, London, 1889, p. 65, where Henry's letter uses the word *stupens*, "astonished, stupefied", to record his reaction upon reading Geoffrey's text). Day reviews and updates her arguments in *Latin Arthurian Literature*, Cambridge, 2005, which collects her earlier editions and translations, along with editions and translations of *Arthur and Gorlagon* and of the Arthurian portion of Etienne de Rouen's *Draco Normannicus*. There are also arguments for a 13th-century date (A. Galyon, "De Ortu Waluuanii and the Theory of Illumination", *Neophilologus* 62:3 (1978), 335–41; H. Nicholson, "Following the Path of the Lionheart: The *De Ortu Waluuanii* and the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Ricardi*", *Medium Aevum* 69:1 (2000), 21–33; and D. Porter, "The *Historia Meriadoci* and Magna Carta", *Neophilologus* 76:1 (1992), 136–46); and a 14th-century one (P. Larkin, who argues for Ranulph Higden as the author in "A Suggested Author for *De ortu Waluuanii* and *Historia Meriadoci*: Ranulph Higden", *JEGP* 103:2 (2004), 215–31).

32 See L. Brady, "Antifeminist Tradition in *Arthur and Gorlagon* and the Quest to Understand Women", *Notes and Queries* 59:2 (2012), 163–66, and "Feminine Desire and Conditional Misogyny in *Arthur and Gorlagon*", *Arthuriana* 24:3 (2014), 23–44.

(coming directly before *The Rise of Gawain* in one of these).³³ A.G. Rigg has suggested that the surprising paucity of Latin Galfridian romance might relate to an unwillingness to pair Latin with such subject matter; he writes that “the Latin language ... may have raised cultural expectations above the level of pure entertainment.”³⁴ These three texts are all certainly entertaining, but they also wear their Latinity quite clearly.

The Story of Meriadoc and *The Rise of Gawain* both contain direct reflection on the process of composition. The opening of *The Story of Meriadoc* is reminiscent of Geoffrey’s own remarks in his preface about praising deserving heroes while avoiding flowery language:

I have thought it fitting to write down a story worthy of remembrance, whose text is decorated with records of such great prowess and attractiveness that, were I to run through each episode in turn, I would turn the sweetness of honey into disgust. Therefore, considering the benefit to my readers, I have set out to restrict it with a concise style, knowing that a brief oration with meaning is more worthy than a prolix, meaningless narration.³⁵

The conclusion of *The Rise of Gawain*, on the other hand, suggests that the author’s (Latin) style is worthier than the simple fare on offer from other story-tellers:

Whoever wants to know what other virtuous exploits Gawain performs should ask them by request or payment from one who knows. Knowing that as it is more dangerous to take part in a battle than to report one, so is it more difficult to write down a history with eloquent style than to tell it in the words of common speech.³⁶

33 *Arthur and Gorlagon* appears in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 149. The manuscript also includes *The Story of Meriadoc*. The second copy of *The Story of Meriadoc* is London, British Library, Cotton Faustina B. vi, where it is followed by the sole copy of *The Rise of Gawain*. The next text includes extracts from the *DGB*, ending with the introduction to the *PM* section.

34 Rigg, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 48.

35 *The Story of Meriadoc, King of Cambria*, ed. M.L. Day, New York, 1988, p. 2: “Memoratu dignam dignum duxi exarare historiam, cuius textus tantarum probitatum tantique leporis decoratur titulis, ut, si singula seriatim percurrem, favi dulcorem in fastidium verterem. Legencium igitur consulens utilitati illam compendioso perstringere stilo statui, sciens quod maioris sit precii brevis cum sensu oratio quam multiflua racione vanans locutio.” My translation.

36 *The Rise of Gawain, Nephew of Arthur*, ed. M.L. Day, New York, 1984, p. 122: “Cetera que virtutum Waluuanii secuntur insignia qui scire desiderat a sciente prece vel precio exigit.

Of course, the references to plain language in the prologue to *The Story of Meriadoc* are a typical example of the modesty topos, something Geoffrey himself enjoyed playing with (his vocabulary in both examples of the topos from the *DGB* is in fact remarkably varied, given his claims to rhetorical inadequacy). The details of both romances seem designed similarly to straddle two worlds, offering plot elements and descriptions that manifest the interests and themes of Anglo-Latin historical writing alongside motifs and plot trajectories of a romance character.

Both *The Rise of Gawain* and *The Story of Meriadoc* have protagonists whose adventures suggest the Fair Unknown motif.³⁷ In *The Rise of Gawain*, Gawain is born as the illegitimate son of Arthur's sister Anna, who sends the infant away in the care of a group of merchants, to whom she also gives money and signs of Gawain's parentage. The merchants leave their boat and the child unattended, and the infant and treasure are taken by a poor man, Viamandus, who eventually makes his way with the child to Rome. After a series of adventures, including a trip to Arthur's court, Gawain proves his abilities, and his heritage is revealed to him by his uncle as the court welcomes its newest knight. In *The Story of Meriadoc*, Meriadoc and his sister are protected by faithful retainers from their murderous uncle, who has killed their royal father Caradoc of Cambria and seized the throne for himself. The servants raise the children in the forest until a series of mishaps separates them. Meriadoc experiences many adventures, some of them at Arthur's court, where he journeys in search of aid to defeat his uncle and regain the throne.

Despite the familiar plot arc, both of these Fair Unknown narratives have decidedly atypical features. In *The Rise of Gawain*, while Gawain's story begins and ends at the Arthurian court, his formative years are Roman. Geoffrey systematically subordinates the Romans to the Britons in the *DGB*. He minimizes the invasions; credits Britons rather than Romans for such innovations as roads and baths; creates marital linkages between the Romans and the Britons; and, of course, gives us an Arthur who conquers Rome.³⁸ The author of *The Rise of Gawain* takes a different approach in stressing his protagonist's Roman roots,

Sciens quod sicut discriminosius est bellum inire quam bellum referre, sic operosius sit composito eloquencie stilo historiam exarare quam vulgari propalare sermone." My translation.

37 Fair Unknown stories typically feature a young man who through his adventures discovers or proves his aristocratic origins, and in some cases reclaims a position or title that is rightfully his. For an overview of the motif in medieval romance, see J. Weldon, "Fair Unknown", in S. Echard and R. Rouse (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, 4 vols., Chichester, 2017, vol. 2, pp. 783–87.

38 I discuss Geoffrey's treatment of Rome in "Whyche thyng semeth not to agree with other histories ...": Rome in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his Early Modern Readers", *AL* 26 (2009), 109–29. It is possible that the story told in *The Rise of Gawain* might have been

but the effect – the integration of Roman and Briton, in a manner that suggests the recognizable excellence of the British protagonist – is the same. After Viamandus's death, Gawain becomes the protégé of the Emperor, and earns his nickname, the Knight of the Surcoat, from his admirers during his success at the *equirris*, the Roman military games. When he sails off with the goal of relieving the Christians in the Holy Land, he does so on a Roman fleet, in the company of a centurion who directs many of the battles. When on the way to Jerusalem Gawain is victorious over King Milocrates, described as *inimicus Romani populi*, "enemy of the people of Rome", the centurion enacts justice that is couched in Roman terms: "the leaders and magistrates, because they had aligned themselves with the enemy of the Roman people, were sawn into pieces."³⁹ In addition, the romance features many set-piece battles with careful descriptions of tactics, reminiscent of the attention Geoffrey pays to the deployment of troops in the Roman section of his history, in the account of Arthur's defeat of Lucius, and indeed throughout the *DGB*.

The lengthy digression on the manufacture of Greek fire, a real medieval weapon that Gawain and the centurion face in a naval battle with pirates, adds another unexpected element. While its details are clearly fantastical, it is not the fantasy of romance that is at play here, but rather, that of the *mirabilia* and travel narratives that, as noted above, sometimes accompany the *DGB* in the manuscripts. The ingredients of Greek fire are said to include poisonous toads, water snakes, a three-headed, fire-breathing asp, the gall bladder and testicles of a shape-shifting wolf, and a miraculous gemstone "brought forth from the ends of the earth."⁴⁰ Both the Roman coloring and the marvels and monsters of the Greek fire digression display the kind of reading and intellectual milieu which gave rise to the *DGB* and the kind of reception discussed above.

In *The Story of Meriadoc*, too, the romance and folkloric elements are accompanied by touches that suggest the world of Latin learning. At the beginning of the romance, Meriadoc's uncle, Griffin, is persuaded by evil counselors to murder his brother Caradoc. The counselors give a lengthy speech, carefully structured to manipulate Griffin into agreeing to the murder, alternating between praising him and asking questions designed to heighten his resentment and anger. The trope of the wicked counselors is a popular one in Latin court

suggested by a brief reference in the *DGB* to Gawain's having been placed in the service of Pope Sulpicius (*DGB*, ix.154.241–43).

39 *The Rise of Gawain*, ed. Day, p. 58: "principes et magistratus quod cum hoste Romani populi consensissent serratis carpentis transegit." My translation.

40 *The Rise of Gawain*, ed. Day, p. 70: "ligurius orbe in extremo repertus". My translation.

satire and princely advice literature popular throughout the Middle Ages.⁴¹ The *DGB* is similarly full of scenes of counsel, and good kings are often revealed through their discernment and their willingness to listen to good advice. In *The Story of Meriadoc*, the interest in how kings behave suggested by the scene with the wicked counselors surfaces again when Meriadoc, having defeated his uncle with Arthur's help, chooses to continue his adventuring rather than immediately become king himself. Instead, he returns to Arthur's court where, in true romance fashion – (the author invokes the familiar motif of marvels occurring in Arthur's presence) – a mysterious Black Knight appears, claiming his rights, against Arthur, over the Black Forest. While the claim will eventually be settled by combat (with the Black Knight successively defeating 37 of Arthur's knights in single combat, until at last Meriadoc defeats him), both before and after this romance set-piece, the text concentrates on the legal details of the dispute, and on how those details reflect on Arthur's own rule. Witnesses testify that Arthur's father stocked the forest with black boars, thus proving his ownership. The Black Knight points out that his name is the Black Knight of the Black Forest, and that he is in himself black, both facts witnessing his ancestral rights. The lords of the court are called upon to settle the dispute, and it is at that point that the knight requests combat instead, because, he says, he cannot believe in the impartiality of the court. When Meriadoc has defeated the Black Knight, he then, surprisingly, rebukes Arthur for harming so many of his knights, and uses the verb *calumpnio* to characterize the claim Arthur pursued. The term is a legal one that can mean either simply to pursue a claim, or to make a false claim.⁴² The concentration on the judicial details around the duel, along with a contemporary context that included frequent disputes between the crown and landowners around forest jurisdiction, suggests that the more pejorative sense could be at play here.

Like *The Rise of Gawain*, *The Story of Meriadoc* is stuffed full of marvels; indeed, it is the more extravagantly “romantic” of the two. The incident of the Black Knight of the Black Forest is followed by the arrival of two more knights, the Red Knight of the Red Forest, and the White Knight of the White Forest, who with the Black Knight become Meriadoc's companions through the rest of the story. The adventures encountered are a mixture of military campaigns against an Emperor whom Meriadoc first served and was then betrayed by, and mysterious encounters in strange castles in forests. The forest is the archetypal romance setting, and the forests in *The Story of Meriadoc* are stocked as

41 I discuss this context in *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 36), Cambridge, 1998.

42 *DMLBS*, s.v. *calumniare*, def. 1. “to accuse falsely, traduce”.

expected with mysterious weather, a marvelous structure inhabited by a beautiful woman who claims to know all about Meriadoc (the goddess Fortuna, perhaps?), and an ominously-described castle which no one who enters may depart from without dishonor.⁴³ The forest at the beginning of the narrative, too, begins as a typical romance setting as Ivor and Morwen rescue the children from their would-be executioners, leading to a forest childhood for Meriadoc reminiscent of stories like Perceval/Peredur's. But here, too, another mode interacts with the apparatus of romance, as the narrative voice pauses to answer a question it would not normally occur to a romance audience to ask: "But perhaps it will be asked how they cooked their meat to eat, since they lacked both fire and vessels in which it could be boiled."⁴⁴ What follows is an elaborate description of how the fugitives used methods also used by forest outlaws, and so as with the disputes at Arthur's court, the romance locale becomes a site where the resources and interests of both vernacular and Latin worlds interact.

The final text to be dealt with in this chapter is perhaps the one that least clearly belongs in a discussion of Geoffrey's influence on the Latin tradition. There are clear echoes of the *DGB* in *The Rise of Gawain* and *The Story of Meriadoc*. Those romances also display an explicit and implicit reflection on what it means to write hybrid historical-fantastical narrative in the language of truth, that accords well with Geoffrey's own project. *Arthur and Gorlagon*, on the other hand, presents itself, at first, as a straightforward vernacular romance that just happens to be written in Latin. It opens with Arthur keeping the Pentecost feast at Caerleon. Guinevere, chastising him for kissing her exuberantly in public, tells him he does not truly understand women. Arthur vows never to eat again until he has learned what women truly think, and sets off on a quest to find his answer. Two kings, Gargol and Torleil, convince him to feast with them, despite his vow, only to confess on the morrow that they cannot answer his question. When he reaches the court of the third king, Gorlagon, Arthur has the sense to stay on his horse and refuse food until he has his answer. Gorlagon obliges with a story of a king whose unfaithful wife turns him into a wolf. The wolf eventually becomes the companion of another king, who himself turns out to have an unfaithful wife. When the wolf discovers the affair between the queen and the king's steward, he attacks the steward, and the queen, in retaliation, hides her infant child and claims that the wolf has eaten it. The wolf, however, succeeds, through its oddly human behavior, in

43 *Story of Meriadoc*, ed. Day, p. 130: "castellum ... neminem umquam illud intrasse qui sine dedecore exierit." My translation.

44 *Story of Meriadoc*, ed. Day, p. 40: "Set hic fortassis queritur quomodo sibi carnes ad esum paraverint, dum et ignis et vasa quibus elixari possent defuerint." My translation.

revealing the whole truth to the king, who executes the steward and his queen, and then helps the wolf, whom he is now convinced is a man, to regain his human shape and punish the deceitful wife who wrought the change in the first place. Gorlagon then reveals that he himself was the wolf, and Arthur gets off his horse, eats, and, as the text ends, “wondering greatly at the things he had heard, made his nine days’ journey home”.⁴⁵

Unlike the two romances just discussed, there is no explicit reflection on writing practice in *Arthur and Gorlagon*. The plot has many obviously Welsh elements, so many, indeed, that its first editor, G.L. Kittredge, believed it to be a Latin translation of a Welsh original. It bears obvious similarities to later vernacular texts about the quest to understand women, such as *The Wife of Bath’s Tale* or the story of Gawain and Ragnell. It is now generally understood as a Welsh Latin production, probably of the 12th century. Even the brief plot summary just provided makes clear that it is essentially an anti-feminist text in Arthurian dress, but the degree to which it engages carefully and specifically with the Latin anti-feminist tradition has only been recently recognized. Lindy Brady demonstrates “direct verbal parallels between the text of *Arthur and Gorlagon* and ‘proverbial’ antifeminist statements [in Latin] ... which were widely repeated throughout medieval works”.⁴⁶ In a longer analysis that argues the text’s main focus is not on feminine desire *tout court*, but rather on the improper, public display of that desire, she draws attention to the punishments that the guilty queens receive for their crimes, contrasting them to normal treatment in the English legal context of the period.⁴⁷ Indeed, there is a level of gleeful violence throughout that seems intent on grounding the fantasy in repeated bloodshed. The wolf-king – the innocent victim at the start of the narrative – seeking revenge on his wife, tears apart her two children by her lover and disembowels her two brothers. In retaliation, his own pups, conceived with a female wolf, are hanged. His grief at the loss leads him to a career of indiscriminate slaughter of both livestock and human beings, which ceases only when he meets the second king. When the affair between that king’s queen and his steward are revealed, the steward is flayed alive and hanged, while the queen is torn apart by horses and burned. And at the end of the romance, the first wicked queen is revealed to be the woman sitting at Gorlagon’s table with a bloodied head that she kisses repeatedly – a

45 *Arthur and Gorlagon*, ed. G.L. Kittredge, *Arthur and Gorlagon: Versions of the Werewolf’s Tale*, New York, 1966, p. 162 (repr. from *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 8 (1903), 149–275): “super hijs que audiuerat valde miratus, domum itinere diuerum nouem redijt.” My translation.

46 Brady, “Antifeminist Tradition”, p. 163.

47 Brady, “Feminine Desire”, pp. 32–34.

punishment that Brady reads as aligned with the text's concern about public and private sexuality.⁴⁸ An over-arching emphasis on action and retribution, some of it at the hands (or paws) of a fantastic creature and some of it explicitly couched in terms of royal, legal jurisdiction, presents us again with a blend of modes, some drawing on vernacular, and some on Latin textual worlds.

Geoffrey's *DGB* prompted a wide variety of responses in his Latinate readers. Some medieval and early modern annotators seem to have treated it as a source book, whether for historical information, interesting stories, or some combination of the two. Geoffrey's explicitly "British" brief, to tell the story of the kings of the Britons from before the Christian era through to the Saxon domination, had a clear appeal to later periods that were working through what British history might mean, as the annotations drawing attention to figures like Brutus, or Leir, or Arthur, suggest. The proliferation of prequels, insertions, and sequels steadily drew the *DGB* into an ever-growing web of associations, and suggest that the text retained its historical vitality long after its appearance in the 12th century. Whether through added regnal lists, explications of Merlin's prophecies to fit the events of the Wars of the Roses, or other kinds of interpolations and expansions, not to mention the frequent excerpting of Geoffrey's work in other Latin British histories, the *DGB* was kept alive for historical purposes well into the early modern period.

At the same time, those concerns or motifs found in texts like *The Origin of Giants* or *The True History of the Death of Arthur* that appear, through a retrospective critical gaze at least, to point toward romance, also remain firmly embedded in a Latin textual world. *The Story of Meriadoc* and *The Rise of Gawain* casually mix classical references with recognizable folk motifs, drawn perhaps from Welsh tradition, and in this practice their author mirrors Geoffrey's own approach. The anonymous author's explicit reflections on the writing practice shows us another British-Latin writer thinking through what it means to write *this* way, in *this* language. While the end of *The Rise of Gawain* draws an apparently negative comparison between the eloquent pen of the historian and the vulgar oral displays of paid storytellers, both his works find ample room for motifs and incidents that would be entirely at home in the vernacular, whether oral or written. And while the author of *Arthur and Gorlagon* does not directly reflect on either Geoffrey's work or his own process, his practice too reminds us that the *DGB* was not the only Latin text to combine the resources and interests of Latinate and vernacular culture. It was undoubtedly, however, the most popular, and was eagerly taken up itself in the vernacular context, as the next chapter illustrates.

48 Brady, "Feminine Desire", p. 37.