BRITAIN’S TROJAN ORIGINS: ANATOMY OF A CRITICAL NARRATIVE

by

PETER LÁTKA

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Department of English
University of Toronto

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Peter Látka

Department of English

University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

Following the publication of Thomas Kendrick’s *British Antiquity* (1950), understanding of the Brutus myth’s lifecycle has been conventionalized as a critical narrative structured according to four narrative pillars. While different details appear in various authors’ accounts, four features of the conventional narrative are nearly always mentioned. First, the legend of Britain’s Trojan origins has its popular origins with Monmouth’s *Historia* (c.1180) and, while there are a few contemporary detractors, the legend circulates unchallenged until the appearance of mid-fifteenth-century humanists. Second, in 1485, with the accession of the Welsh Henry Tudor, the popularity of the legend experiences a resurgence that is termed the “Tudor Cult” or “Tudor Myth.” Third, the Italian historian Polydore Vergil questions the veracity of the legend in his *Anglica Historia* (1534). Given Polydore’s status as a foreigner, however, his arguments do not gain traction with the English. Finally, it is only with the Camden-led antiquarian approach consolidated in his *Britannia* (1586, 1607) that the death-knell sounds for the Brutus myth.

Kendrick’s narrative about the antiquarian camp’s victory over the Brutus myth remains an entrenched feature of twenty-first-century scholarship. And yet, this universally
accepted critical model is built upon *a priori* argumentation, artificial frameworks, conjecture that moves from single examples to general conclusions, chronological leaps with the use of evidence that spans decades (even centuries), and, in a few instances, the misrepresentation of evidence. Significantly, this paradigm, these antiquarian values, shapes the narrative on which literary critics rely for an understanding of this long-standing cultural symbol.

This study employs a metacritical approach to challenge current understanding of early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins. The critical case studies examined in this study are drawn from today’s anomalous critical tradition. Today’s unusual situation necessitates this study’s somewhat unorthodox, metacritical approach. Critical interventions that respond to literary interpretations of individual works such as *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584), *The Faerie Queene* (1590), and *Polyolbion* (1612), or groups of works within specific genres (e.g., New Troy references in civic pageants and Jacobean stage plays), engage in a critical exchange that is, from the outset, governed by a misrepresentative contextual framework.
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For Sir Thomas Kendrick, in memoriam.
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................. IV

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................ 1

CHAPTER I: BRITAIN’S TROJAN ORIGINS
BRITISH ANTIQUITY’S CRITICAL LEGACY ................................................................. 21
KENDRICK’S CONVENIENTLY POTTED VERSION ......................................................... 47
“THE BRITISH HISTORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES” ..................................................... 27

CHAPTER II: “THE BATTLE OVER THE BRITISH HISTORY”
POLYDORÉ’S “SINGLE THING” AND HAY’S “SIMPLE EXPLANATION” ........... 58
“A REPUTATION MANUFACTURED BY HIS ENEMIES” ........................................ 67
CRITICAL TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS: FEIBEL’S GLITCH ......................... 75
“NOW I PROPOSE TO DISCUSS THE NATURE OF ITS MEN” ......................... 85
“ACCURACY AND INDEPENDENT READING OF THE SOURCES” .............. 93

CHAPTER III: “THE TUDOR CULT OF THE BRITISH HISTORY”
ELIZABETHAN TUDOR CULT AND TROJAN ORIGINS ...................................... 95
THE FAERIE QUEENE, CRITICAL DEBATES AND THE TUDOR CULT ......... 104
“POET HISTORICALL” .............................................................................................................. 111
GEORGE PEELE’S A FAREWELL ......................................................................................... 118

CHAPTER IV: “THE ECLIPSE OF THE BRITISH HISTORY”
“A QUIRK IN THE HISTORY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY” ......................................... 132
“SELDEN WAGGED A PEDANTICALLY REPROVING FINGER” ......................... 138
“READY-MADE ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION” .............................................. 142
“THE ANSWER IS THAT IT WASN’T” ....................................................................... 147
“THE MOST ANCIENT AND THE VERY FIRST INHABITANTS OF THIS ILE” .... 150
“NO AUTHOR I HAVE YET MET WITH” ................................................................. 153
“THEIR ‘TRUTHS’ WERE NOT QUITE THE SAME THING AS OURS” ............ 154

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................................... 159
INTRODUCTION: BRITAIN’S TROJAN ORIGINS

– a belief of this kind cannot reasonably be dismissed like a bad answer in the class of history. However absurd it may have been, it has claims on the historian because it was officially believed. The legend, as it happened, took richer forms in this country than in any other beyond Italy. Our pageantry of kings is a luxury of the island. But hardly a nation can be named in Europe which did not at some time aspire to this fraternity, and forge a Trojan passport. (Gordon 35-36)¹

Not since ninety years ago when George Gordon unsuccessfully advocated for a reconsideration of critical attitudes and approaches to the treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins has there been interest in reexamining critical assumptions about the relationships between, and the historical reception of, the massive body of medieval and early modern artefacts associated with Britain’s foundation myth. For more than six decades, Sir Thomas Kendrick’s arguments about the sixteenth-century reception of the Brutus myth have enjoyed the unqualified endorsement of historians and literary scholars alike. When context necessitates that authors today attend to the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins, or some of the other lesser-known subjects that are commonly grouped together using the term British History (e.g., Brennus, Cadwallader, Vortigen),² conventional critical practice is to rely upon


² The British History, also known as the Matter of Britain, refers to the complete account of the British
what can be described as a generally agreed upon critical narrative that has its popular origins in Kendrick’s *British Antiquity* (1950). This sixty-year-long, uninterrupted, critical transmission process has legitimized Kendrick’s positions such that his attitude and arguments exist today as critical dogma.

Kendrick describes *Antiquity’s* argument as “concerned with sixteenth century England, and the transition from medieval to modern antiquarian thought” (vii). Aspects of his broader subject, as distinguished from this study’s concern with the single and relatively minor subject of Britain’s Trojan origins, have been extensively reexamined over the past decade, and continue to be of considerable interest for scholars such as Andrew Hadfield, Brian Cummings, Daniel R. Woolf, James Simpson, Margreta de Grazia, and Paulina Kewes. Toward different ends, these authors are deconstructing the paradigms that governed critical approaches during the second half of the twentieth century. In questioning long-held beliefs about a late sixteenth-century “historical revolution”; by reexamining assumptions about the differences between medieval and early modern modes of thinking; and by challenging the synchronic structures that established what are increasingly considered artificial divides (periodization), these scholars are opening up meaningful new perspectives through which to reconsider existing interpretations and arguments. And yet, despite this remarkable shift in our disciplinary paradigm, the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins remains unexamined, and Kendrick’s narrative – an exemplary model of old historicism – continues to serve as a universally accepted authoritative source. The

_kings between Brutus the Trojan and Cadwallader that was introduced in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Histori regum Brittanica (c. 1180). The legend of Arthur is included in this group; however, Arthur’s legends continue to be investigated as part of a field of study that has achieved a relatively independent status from related legends that are no longer well known._
intellectual stasis associated with Trojan origins stands in sharp contrast with active scholarly inquiries into other elements of early modern historiography, and, to a lesser extent, the British History. 3

There is no book-length study of Britain’s Trojan origins, and the absence of any scholarly publications that question or reconsider Kendrick’s arguments attests to a lack of interest in Britain’s foundation myth. This is to say that Kendrick’s arguments have likely achieved their current status as critical dogma, in part, through a lack of critical interest, or, perhaps, through the necessity of convenience. Given his unique relationship to many of the relevant artefacts as Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum, Kendrick was particularly well positioned to undertake what can be described as an epic act of humanist bravado. Nonetheless, as chapter one demonstrates, the burden of evidence proved to be insurmountable, and ultimately limited Kendrick’s ability to maintain an antiquarian commitment to the accurate representation of facts.

The British History’s burden of evidence provides one way of understanding why this narrative remains unchallenged. Investigating early modern Englanders’ engagements with the Brutus myth requires some familiarity with five centuries’ of pan-generic artefacts that include almanacs, dramatic works, fine art, genealogies, geological landmarks, historiographies, letters, non-fictional prose, parliamentary speeches, pedigree rolls, poetry,

3 Several of these other subfields have developed in new and interesting directions over the past five decades. In addition to the work of the scholars already mentioned, Brutus’s descendant King Arthur has been exceptionally well explored in the works (to name just a few) of Geoffrey Ashe, Laurie Finke, N.J. Higham, and Christopher Dean. Because of Shakespeare adaptations, Lear and Cymbeline live on in stage productions, classrooms, and scholarly debates. Unlike these related areas in which dynamic investigations are ongoing, the subtopic of Britain’s Trojan origins remains entrenched in a fixed antiquarian paradigm.
state papers, stone monuments, and tapestries. Negotiating this massive, multidisciplinary collection of artefacts is a daunting task, and it is understandable that there has been little interest in unraveling a convincing argument that compresses this eclectic mix of primary evidence into a functionally necessary narrative employed by historians and literary critics.

Philip Schwyzer provides another way of understanding why today’s Trojan origins-related critical tradition exists in a state of cross-disciplinary critical solidarity bound by a form of investigative inertia. In describing his understanding of the gap between what he classifies as the “new British history” and the “old British history,” Schwyzer explains that the “new” represents the works of “modern archipelagic historians” who “have not displayed much interest in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his early modern adherents” (“British History” 11-12). By contrast, Schwyzer associates the “old British History” with scholars who “have tended to highlight only its most notoriously fanciful (or fraudulent) features” such as “the settlement of Britain by the Trojan Brutus” (“British History” 11).

Schwyzer’s mediation of “[t]he long-delayed encounter between the two British histories” (“British History” 12) introduces a productive comparison that helps readers appreciate why the “new British history” has ignored the “old British history”:

After all, what sort of kinship could the old British history possibly claim with the new? At best, it might be recognized as a buffoonish, mendacious, and embarrassing uncle (Geoffrey of Monmouth playing Toby Belch to John Morril’s Olivia). (“British History” 12)
While this tongue-in-cheek simile adds a light-hearted touch to his treatment of this tetchy topic, Schwyzer’s familial analogy provides a perspicacious assessment of the peculiarly personal relationship between twentieth-century scholars and this “embarrassing uncle.” Schwyzer’s observation that “new” approaches tend to ignore the “old” offers insights into how today’s anomalous critical tradition emerged while confirming Gordon’s concerns about this subject’s critical reception: “However absurd it may have been, it has claims on the historian because it was officially believed” (Gordon 35).

Writing ninety years ago, Gordon observed a disjunction between the attitudes of his contemporaries and evidence for early modern engagements with the foundation myth. Not since Gordon expressed his concerns about the ways that critical attitudes misrepresent this topic has there been a sustained effort to question whether it should in fact be the case that this “embarrassing uncle” has no further “claims on the historian.”

Kendrick’s narrative spared two generations of scholars the awkward task of attending to the many unanswered and seemingly unanswerable questions associated with this unseemly disciplinary ancestor who straddles the divide between antiquarians’ historical truths and the stuff of poetic fancy. While snubbing Brutus based upon the unchallenged argument of a single author accommodated twentieth-century approaches, critical directions of the past two decades seem increasingly aligned with a long-overdue intervention that will attend to this anomalous critical tradition.

The implications of a sustained, collaborative reexamination of current critical perceptions about the early modern reception of Britain’s Trojan origins can only be guessed at today. Andrew Hadfield describes his sense of the outcomes for such an intervention:

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4 Recognizing that Gordon’s contemporaries dismissed the subject suggests that Kendrick’s attitude was the governing critical response for at least two decades before Antiquity was published.
Just as the grand narrative of the rise and rise of early modern science is threatened by the realization that superstition and faith in alchemy were actually enhanced by the birth of scientific experimentation, so might the more local story of the rise of modern English history be undermined by the rebirth of interest in the problematic cluster of legends that constitute the “matter of Britain” and the Arthurian legends. (26)

Hadfield’s “local story” refers to the popular theory of a sixteenth-century “historiographical revolution,” and “problematic cluster of legends” aptly characterizes the dozens of interdependent narratives that constitute “the ‘matter of Britain.’”

For Hadfield, today’s anomalous critical tradition can be understood as a function of the dearth of scholarship related to the British History. His observation that the popular narrative about “the local story” might “be undermined by the rebirth of interest in the problematic cluster of legends” suggests that the theory of a Renaissance “historiographical revolution” functions as an untested, a priori argument. For scholars who study the history of historiography, it seems that Hadfield’s views are increasingly the critical norm.

Arguably, Woolf’s oeuvre represents the popular origins of this twenty-first-century

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In his note to this remark (41, n.7), Hadfield introduces what may be described as something of a knee-jerk critical response when he directs readers to Kendrick’s British Antiquity on “the problematic cluster of legends that constitute the ‘matter of Britain’ and the Arthurian legends” (26). Mentioning this citation is relevant because it supports this study’s observation that Antiquity is the only near-comprehensive and authoritative study on the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins; however, this is a particularly curious case because Hadfield’s essay is, ultimately, an effort to deconstruct the critical framework that gives shape to Kendrick’s narrative about the British History. A sustained discussion of this critical disjunction follows in chapter one.
movement. Building on his impressive research in this field, two recently published collections of essays represent the range and diversity of approaches circulating today. Kewes, editor of *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (2006),

introduces this collection by locating its contents within the critical tradition in the following way:

> Now that the myth of the historical revolution has been largely laid to rest and that both historians and literary scholars have become increasingly willing to recognize, and delve into, the myriad motives – not all of them political – behind historical writings, the time seems right to ask how the past was exploited to meet the concerns of the present in early modern England. (2)

Unlike the early modern focus of the essays in Kewes’s collection, the essays in Cumming’s and Simpson’s *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (2010) are mainly concerned with addressing the medieval/early modern divide, and their “book fights hard against the stereotypes that might encourage any such iconographic division between medieval and Renaissance modes of thinking” (2). More broadly, the spirit of the essays in this collection is guided by what the Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature series explains as its aim:

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6 Some of the essays included in Kewes’s *Uses of History* (2006) that are particularly relevant to this critique of Kendrick’s narrative include Woolf’s “From Hystories to the Historical,” Blair Worden’s “Historians and Poets,” David Womersley’s “Against the Teleology of Time,” and Ian Archer’s “Discourses of History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart London.”
...to provoke rather than reassure, to challenge rather than codify.

Instead of summarizing existing knowledge, scholars working in the field aim at opening fresh discussion; instead of emphasizing settled consensus, they direct their readers to areas of enlivened and unresolvable debate. (rear book jacket)

And yet, within the context of what might be described as a twenty-first-century historiographical revolution, understanding of early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins remains largely unchanged since *Antiquity* was published in 1950. Many of the same authors who are transforming the paradigms that shape our sense of the past continue to rely upon Kendrick’s critical narrative while directing readers to *Antiquity* when the subject of foundation myths surfaces. This study attempts to realign critical perceptions of the early modern reception of Britain’s Trojan origins so as to modernize understanding of this subtopic in accordance with advancements in the broader field of the history of English historiography.

The popular origin of the notion of a Renaissance “historical revolution” is commonly associated with a work published twelve years after *Antiquity.* The general thesis in F. Smith Fussner’s study, *The Historical Revolution* (1962), is “that a historiographical revolution occurred between about 1580 and 1640 in England and that it helped to create

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For the purposes of this discussion I draw on Fussner’s *Historical Revolution* as a representative example of the critical approaches that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. For a more comprehensive understanding (and critique) of this approach see David Womersley’s “Against the Teleology of Technique” (2006). In his essay Womersley groups Fussner together with F. J. Levy, A.B. Ferguson, and Herschel Baker, and describes them as “revisionists” who pushed back against earlier theories by “discover[ing] the birth of modern historical attitudes in the sixteenth century” (91).
those historical attitudes and questionings that we recognize as our own” (xxii). For Fussner, sixteenth-century humanist historiographers adopted “new techniques, attitudes and facilities for research” (xv) that made them “the first who broke with the theological world history of the medieval chroniclers” (9) and, “slowly, yet inevitably, the doctrine of providence receded, and historiography was secularized” (25). While some challenges to Fussner’s thesis appeared as early as 1977, this theory of a “historical revolution” governed critical approaches during the second half of the twentieth century.

Fussner’s significance to this study’s critique of Kendrick’s four-stage critical narrative relates to the way that the theory of the “historical revolution” mirrors Kendrick’s overarching argument in Antiquity, which is “concerned with sixteenth century England, and the transition from medieval to modern antiquarian thought” (vii). In fact, it appears that Fussner’s influential argument is partly dependent on Antiquity’s critical narrative:

Sir Thomas Kendrick’s fascinating study of British Antiquity makes it clear that the uses of the past, as well as the forgeries of Annius, and the medievalism of antiquaries helped to sustain mistaken theories of remote history in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. (Fussner 16)

8 In Idea of History (1990), Daniel Woolf writes: “Although Fussner’s book remains useful, few scholars would now agree that there was anything revolutionary about the developments in English historical writing…” (x-xi). For more about “attacks on the ‘historical revolution’ thesis” (268, n.6) Woolf directs readers to Levine’s Humanism and History and Joseph H. Preston’s “Was there an Historical Revolution?”.

9 In Uses of History (2006), editor Kewes writes that “the notion of the ‘historical revolution’ dominat[ed] late-twentieth-century scholarship” (1). She directs readers to Eduard Fueter’s Geschichte der neueren historiographie (Munich and Berlin, 1936) as one of the earliest sources for the notion of a “historical revolution.” Kewes also directs readers to Levy’s “Elizabethan Revolution” and Tudor Historical Thought.
In his footnote to this remark Fussner directs readers to the “especially interesting” ideas found on page seventy-seven in *Antiquity* where Kendrick explains that:

…the critical machinery of a new scholarship did not speedily result in an easy triumph of the Renaissance mind, but was one that had to be sustained for over a century against a formidable deadweight of contrary opinion…. (Kendrick, qtd in Fussner 16)

For Fussner, the value of Kendrick’s central thesis is grounded in an emphasis on the “medievalism of antiquaries” as the obstacle to “the triumph of the Renaissance mind.”

This study argues that much of what the critical tradition has preserved from *Antiquity* represents a critical narrative that misrepresents, among other issues, Elizabethan engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins. Insofar as Kendrick’s *Antiquity* continues to influence contemporary scholarship, there is a need to acknowledge, and revise, these misunderstandings. What follows is not an argument for some new critical narrative through which to understand Britain’s Trojan origins. The complexity of this subject, entrenched in a sixty-year tradition, requires a long-term, multidisciplinary, and collaborative approach unconstrained by habits of “grand narrative” thought. Piecing together the historical development of the British History is an investigation into the evolution of the British historical imaginary and British identity over more than five centuries. Unlike Kendrick’s approach to the topic, which privileges the voices of the

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10 Published nearly twenty years after *Antiquity*, Peter Burke’s *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (1969) is another important work recognized as popularizing the idea that “[m]edieval man lacked a sense of the past being different in quality from the present” (2).
winners of the sixteenth-century Battle of the Books, an understanding of this subject requires objective assessment of evidence from both sides of the debate. Such an approach is better represented by George Gordon’s curiosity, as opposed to Kendrick’s conclusiveness.

Despite its lack of popularity as an independent subject, the Brutus myth is not a topic that critics can avoid. Scholars whose research interests relate to archipelagic studies, the Arthurian tradition, the early modern reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia (and the British History), early modern historiography (or, more specifically, the approaches of historiographers such as John Leland or William Camden, and individual works such as Holinshed’s Chronicles), historical verse and epics (e.g., William Warner’s Albion’s England, or Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene), or stage plays (e.g., Norton and Sackville’s Gorboduc, George Peele’s The Arraignment of Paris, or, even, Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida), must necessarily contend with the misrepresented matter of Britain’s Trojan origins.

OVERVIEW: THE CRITICAL NARRATIVE’S FOUR PILLARS

Following Antiquity’s publication in 1950, the lifecycle for the British History has been conventionalized as a four-stage critical narrative structured according to what can be described as four narrative pillars. While there are different details that appear in various authors’ accounts, the following four components are the conventional structuring elements for the narrative and are nearly always mentioned. First, the legend has its popular origins with Monmouth’s Historia regum Britannia (c.1180) and, while there are a few contemporary detractors, the legend circulates unchallenged until the appearance of mid-fifteenth-century humanists. Second, in 1485, with the accession of the Welsh Henry Tudor, the popularity of
the legend experiences a resurgence that is termed the “Tudor Cult” or “Tudor Myth.” Third, the Italian historian Polydore Vergil questions the veracity of the legend in his Anglica Historia (1534). Given Polydore’s status as a foreigner, however, his arguments do not gain traction with the English. Finally, it is only with the Camden-led antiquarian approach consolidated in his Britannia (1586, 1607) that the death-knell sounds for the Brutus myth.11

Kendrick’s grand narrative about England’s foundation myth represents, in contemporary critical terms, an outmoded theoretical approach. The progressive chronological march of Antiquity’s chapter titles – “The British History in the Middle Ages,” “The Tudor Cult of the British History,” “The Battle Over the British History,” “The Eclipse of the British History” – reflects the way in which Kendrick’s narrative unfolds according to a belief in the idea of a sixteenth-century humanist “historical revolution” characterized by a move from credulous and emotional medieval chroniclers to objective and reason-based modern antiquaries.

Employing a metacritical approach, this study challenges current understanding of early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins. With one modification to the order in which these subjects are conventionally introduced, the following chapters respond to each of the four pillars that structure today’s critical narrative. The order in which I examine the “The Tudor Cult of the British History” and “The Battle Over the British History” (with

11 This narrative arc seems to have been influenced by the epic romance tradition. As Kendrick tells the story, the unmistakable spirit that animates it is that of a heroic narrative in which a people are held captive by imaginative fancy, personified in the British History, for nearly three hundred years. With the rise of humanism, challengers emerge. And while the heroic Polydore Vergil’s attempts to defeat the British History and release the islanders from its hold upon their critical reasoning faculties initiate the process, he is a flawed hero – he is Italian – and it is the sober-minded Englishman William Camden, the embodiment of reason and cool thinking, who successfully slays the British History and emancipates the island.
a focus on Polydore’s response to the foundation myth) is inverted given that chapter three’s focus on the Tudor cult is narrowed to the Elizabethan era of the Tudor dynasty: 1558–1603. Thus, chronologically, it makes sense first to address Polydore’s response to the foundation myth in his *Anglica Historia* (1534) before examining what, more specifically, can be termed the Elizabethan Tudor cult. While chapters two, three and four attend to pillars three, two and four, respectively, my examination of the critical narrative’s first pillar, “The British History in the Middle Ages,” is limited to chapter one’s final subsection.¹²

In addition to arguing that Kendrick’s emphasis on the transition from medieval credulity to modern, reason-based habits of thought is based upon the outmoded theory for a Renaissance historiographical revolution, chapter one demonstrates that today’s entrenched narrative about the Brutus myth’s early modern reception depends upon critical biases, inaccuracies, and even legend-like accretions of fact and fiction advanced through several generations of publications. Chapter one traces the genealogy of Kendrick’s influence through six decades of scholarship written by prominent historians such as Antonia Gransden, Joseph Levine, Fritz J. Levy, May McKisack, Graham Parry, and Daniel R. Woolf – all of whom identify Kendrick as the chief authority for “the triumph of Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the ultimate decline of its reputation in the sixteenth century” (Gransden 202, n.150).

Chapter one maps today’s unusual critical situation in which Kendrick’s argument circulates as the unchallenged authoritative source for an understanding of early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins. This demonstration of *Antiquity’s* enduring

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¹² While the material in chapter one’s final subsection raises important questions about the shift in historiographical treatments of Britain’s foundation myth between the Middle Ages and the early modern era, the scope of this subject does not allow for a comprehensive treatment right now.
influence is followed by a narratological and tropological analysis that shows how Kendrick’s argument relies upon a framing device that establishes a seemingly irreconcilable divide between early modern believers and non-believers based upon an artificially constructed either-or paradigm. Kendrick’s approach characterizes early modern opponents to the Brutus myth (non-believers) as “cool-thinking,” reason-based men, while supporters of Trojan origins (believers) are, in the main, unreliable emotional fanatics, and “tender-skinned patriots” (114).

Chapter one demonstrates that today’s understanding of early modern engagements with Trojan origins is designed according to an us-them divide that is structured upon quintessentially English character traits and the anachronistic projection of a mid-twentieth-century paradigm onto sixteenth-century evidence. It is remarkable that Kendrick’s narrative about the victory of the antiquarian camp – “sober-minded,” “intelligent” men familiar with Continental practices – remains as an entrenched feature of twenty-first-century scholarship. More remarkably still, this universally accepted critical model is built upon artificial frameworks (emotion versus reason; intelligent versus unintelligent authors; Continental versus British historiographical methodologies); conjecture that moves from single examples to general conclusions; chronological leaps with the use of evidence that spans decades (even centuries); and, in a few instances, the misrepresentation of evidence. This paradigm, these antiquarian values, shape today’s critical attitudes and approaches to Britain’s Trojan origins. Significantly, the critical narrative on which literary critics rely for an understanding of this long-standing cultural symbol privileges, and even honours, the voices of Kendrick’s “sober-minded gentlemen” (114).

Chapter two examines the critical narrative’s third pillar – “The Battle Over the British History” initiated by Polydore Vergil’s perceived response to Trojan origins in his
Anglica Historia (1534) – and argues that there is an unacknowledged disjunction in contemporary critical representations of Polydore’s response to Britain's foundation myth. While Polydore’s contributions to reframing early modern reception of the Galfridian legends are an important feature of his legacy, two markedly different interpretive models for understanding Polydore’s response to the Brutus myth circulate within today’s critical discourse. These two approaches differ markedly in their characterizations of Polydore’s response to Britain’s foundation myth. While a small group of critics characterize Polydore’s response as “ambivalent” and inconclusive, the more conventional and widespread critical model attributes conclusiveness to Polydore’s “rejection” of the foundation myth.

The qualitative differences distinguishing the approaches of these two critical models represent an unexamined interpretative inconsistency. Chapter two re-examines critical assumptions about Polydore’s reception of Britain’s foundation myth by analysing unacknowledged discrepancies between Tudor authors’ angry responses to Polydore’s treatment of the Brutus myth, Polydore’s treatment of Trojan origins in Anglica’s Book One, and Deny Hay’s authoritative explanation for the relationship between Polydore and his Tudor detractors. Given Anglica’s unquestionably minor status as an occasional point of reference for today’s literary scholars, there may be some need to emphasize that this reassessment of Polydore’s position matters because an appreciation for the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins as a whole depends upon an understanding of the critical narrative’s parts. The critical tradition’s treatment of Polydore is yet one more contributing factor to the misrepresentative critical narrative that governs today’s perceptions of the reception of Britain’s Trojan origins.

Chapter three addresses the critical narrative’s second pillar – “The Tudor Cult of the British History” – by testing the relevance and applicability of the notion of an
Elizabethan Tudor cult in criticism concerned with works written by Edmund Spenser and George Peele. Revisiting the extra-literary substance behind the popular notion of a Tudor cult is necessary because Elizabeth Tudor’s Trojan ancestry remains a central concern for today’s interpretations of Trojan origins-related works of literature written by late-sixteenth-century authors. This issue is examined through an analysis of the ways that the theory of the Tudor cult shapes a long-standing critical debate about Spenser’s engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins in *The Faerie Queene*. While not all critics share Kendrick’s view that “Spenser did not believe in the British history” (128), interpretive arguments about *The Faerie Queene*’s treatment of the Brutus myth have long been based upon an either-or dialectical model split between positions arguing that Spenser either believed or disbelieved in the Brutus myth. Acknowledging the unsubstantiated nature of the critical context from which these debates emerge affirms this study’s central argument about the need for a new critical paradigm that will rehabilitate interpretations of Trojan origins-based references in early modern works of imaginative literature.

The second half of chapter three introduces readers to a work that will likely be unfamiliar to most, George Peele’s *A Farewell* (1589). An analysis of this pamphlet, along with several other Trojan origins-related works written by Peele, sheds new light on Elizabethan engagements with the Brutus myth through a consideration of the subject’s function as a literary convention. This approach differs from current critical practices that tend to concentrate on the topic’s substance as a socio-political touchstone central to early modern debates about English national identity and monarchical legitimacy. The observations that develop from this examination of Peele’s works advance chapter three’s

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13 While Kendrick uses the term “Tudor cult,” *Antiquity’s* third chapter is titled “The Tudor Cult of the British History,” others such as John Steadman use the term “Tudor myth” (Steadman 547).
argument that more attention needs to be directed toward understanding Trojan origins-related references as literary conventions.

This study’s final chapter attends to the critical narrative’s fourth pillar by arguing that today’s understanding of the final stage of the British History’s lifecycle, “The Eclipse of the British History” at the turn of the century, privileges the positions of early modern disbelievers whose works are identified as “acceptable historiographies” authored by “new people” with “new antiquarian interests” (Kendrick 114). As literary studies of The Arraignment of Paris (1584) and The Faerie Queene (1590) begin with the shared assumption that Elizabeth I was personally invested in the foundation myth, studies of early-Stuart works such as Michael Drayton’s Polyolbion (1612) begin with the shared belief that there was a turn-of-the-century eclipse. As critical debates move between perceptions of Spenser’s position as being either for or against the legitimacy of the foundation myth, critical approaches to Polyolbion’s treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins often develop from assumptions about the degree to which Drayton and John Selden did or did not believe in the Brutus myth.

The implications that emerge from an appreciation of the eclipse narrative’s influence on representations of Drayton’s and Selden’s relationship are foregrounded in the ways that initial perceptions of the relational dynamic between Drayton, Selden, and Britain’s foundation myth are framed. This relationship is structured according to a genre-based hierarchy wherein the views of the historian Selden serve as an authoritative check for Drayton’s poetically inspired musings. Emphasizing a hierarchical distinction between historian and poet supports an associated interpretive strategy that is regularly employed to reconcile the existence of various post-eclipse publications by explaining that these “quirks” are contained within what is termed the “poets’ domain.”
As with the inconsistencies that emerge from an acknowledgement of the bifurcated critical representations of Polydore Vergil’s and Edmund Spenser’s reception of the Brutus myth, chapter four considers how William Camden’s response to Britain’s foundation myth, a central feature of the popular narrative’s final pillar, produces similar interpretive discrepancies. Recent representations of Camden’s positions are divided between critical approaches that portray his response as “cautious” and/or “ambivalent,” and others that represent Camden’s approach as a determined “rejection” of Monmouth’s foundation myth. As with chapter two’s analysis of critical characterizations of Polydore’s response, chapter four demonstrates that representations of Camden’s treatment of the Brutus myth depend upon a series of unverified beliefs that circulate unquestioned. This study’s final chapter argues that this misrepresentative practice results from the eclipse narrative’s unchecked and ubiquitous influence.

Several case studies are included in chapter four to demonstrate how the eclipse narrative functions as an obstacle in recent interpretive efforts. John Curran’s investigation into seventeenth-century Catholic and Protestant polemical literature, Andrew Escobedo’s consideration of monarchical pageants and masques, Tristan Marshall’s study of Jacobean stage plays, and Philip Robinson’s examination of London’s Lord Mayor’s Shows share a need to negotiate the critical paradox that results from an unavoidable, yet seemingly irreconcilable disjunction between the eclipse narrative and anomalous evidence. The interpretive challenges confronted by Curran, Escobedo, Marshall, and Robinson are just a few examples that demonstrate why this paradox, an entrenched feature of today’s critical discourse, is long overdue for an intervention.

It seems possible that much of today’s confusion about early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins result from the different interpretive practices of twentieth-
century historians and literary critics. In this minor subject area, historians’ interpretations tend to countermand rhetorical intricacies in favor of achieving unambiguous conclusions. Such practices seem more concerned with critical convenience than with meaningfully engaging the rhetorical complexities woven into early modern responses to these legendary materials. This study argues that today’s critics, both historians and literary scholars, perpetuate Kendrick’s mid-twentieth-century antiquarian values by relying upon and recirculating Antiquity’s untested critical model.

It is necessary at this stage first to understand the problem that functions as an unacknowledged obstacle in today’s critical discourse. New interpretations of Galfridian references in works such as The Arraignment of Paris, The Faerie Queene, and Polyolbion are impeded by the need to assimilate primary evidence with a priori arguments and theories for a Renaissance historiographical revolution, a Tudor cult of the British History, Polydore Vergil’s “rejection” of Britain’s foundation myth, and a Camden-led, turn-of-the-century eclipse of the Galfridian tradition. Today’s narrative for the Brutus myth’s lifecycle is written by the disciplinary descendants of those who won the sixteenth-century Battle of the Books, and literary interpretations continue to develop within a discourse governed by a genre-based hierarchy that privileges the voices of historians over poets. This critical paradigm frames interpretations of imaginative literature according to expectations, standards, and values determined by antiquaries, and when these “quirks” cannot be ignored or easily reconciled, they are treated “like a bad answer in the class of history” (Gordon 35).

This study’s desired outcome is to engage the interest of others working in this interdisciplinary field so that we can undertake a collaborative effort to rehabilitate current misperceptions, and eventually provide scholars and students with a more representative
understanding of early modern encounters with Britain’s Trojan origins. Concerns introduced by a wide range of historians and literary critics foreground the ways that current interpretations and arguments are informed by what remains a misrepresentative critical narrative. The critical case studies examined in the following chapters are examples drawn from today’s anomalous critical tradition. This unusual situation necessitates this study’s somewhat unorthodox, metacritical approach. Critical interventions that respond to literary interpretations of individual works, or groups of works within a specific genre, engage in a critical exchange that is, from the outset, governed by a misrepresentative contextual framework.
In the 1580s the British antiquary was changing into a new kind of person with much more important things to do than bother with unverifiable legends. (Kendrick 114)

Not unexpectedly, the paradigm that shapes Sir Thomas Kendrick’s approach to the subject of British Trojan origins reflects the values and modes of inquiry associated with his discipline: antiquarianism. His arguments are a contribution to, and continuation of, the more than 400-year-old antiquarian tradition that is commonly viewed as originating in the late-sixteenth century with William Camden. As explained in British Antiquity (1950), which traces the genealogy of the antiquarian tradition back to its earliest beginnings, it may have been as early as 1580 that the first Society of Antiquaries was formed in London (Kendrick 114). While this initial association had an intermittent formal existence over the following century, it was on 5th December 1707 that the Society of Antiquaries of London began an uninterrupted stretch of operations to become one of the oldest learned societies in England today.

In 2007, the Society of Antiquaries of London commemorated its 300th anniversary with an exhibition and an accompanying publication: Making History: 300 Years of Antiquaries in Britain: 1707 – 2007. I mention this event in part to emphasize that British antiquarianism, with its roots in the sixteenth century, continues as an ongoing tradition of which Kendrick, as Keeper of British Antiquities in the British Museum, was an active and valued member. His relationship to his discipline not only contributed to the way that he perceived the subject, but, because of Antiquity’s widespread influence, has also shaped the way two
generations of interdisciplinary scholars understand Elizabethan engagements with Britain's Trojan origins.

Graham Parry offers a current perspective on antiquarian perceptions of Britain's Trojan origins:

Myths and legends are hard to dislodge, particularly when they are flattering to national identity. Trojan origins and legends...had a remarkably long currency, and got in the way of objective enquiry. (3)

Parry’s remarks are a continuation of the ethos encountered in Kendrick’s approach, which governs the more widespread reception of Trojan origins today. Kendrick’s antiquarian paradigm introduces a critical narrative in which a four-hundred-year-long defect in English historiographical practices came to a close with Camden and the rise of antiquarianism at the start of the seventeenth century; “objective enquiry” finally dislodged imaginative fancy, and an era of reason- and evidence-based writing of British history began. Parry’s remarks reflect continuity in this antiquarian tradition that, even in its earliest days, consisted

[not of] a company of tender-skinned patriots puffing themselves up with pride in Brutus and King Arthur, but a group of sober-minded gentlemen interested in what has been called the “practical” past. (Kendrick 114)
This paradigm, these antiquarian values, shape today’s critical attitudes and approaches to the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins. The critical narrative on which literary critics rely for an understanding of this long-standing cultural symbol privileges, and even honours, the voices of Kendrick’s “sober-minded gentlemen.”

Kendrick’s *Antiquity* has framed the critical discourse for the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins. *Antiquity* is the closest thing we have to a book-length study of the Brutus myth, even though its argument is about the much broader subject of the rise of antiquarianism during the sixteenth century and the associated abandonment of belief in the British History. As this chapter demonstrates, much of what has been preserved from *Antiquity* in the critical tradition misrepresents the Elizabethan reception of Trojan origins. One of the outcomes of Kendrick’s one-sided representation of the topic is that, since 1950, it has remained in a static state. Insofar as Kendrick’s influence continues to inform scholarship, there is a need to re-examine his argument and reframe critical representations of early modern engagements with Britain’s Trojan origins.

Kendrick describes chapters one and two of *Antiquity* as a “preliminary section” that introduces the medieval background for the British History and thereby establishes the context for the next six chapters’ focus on the “transition from medieval to modern antiquarian thought” in England during the sixteenth century (vii). Chapter one provides an impressive and densely detailed survey of the origins and transmission of the British History during the Middle Ages, and chapter two narrows this broad focus through an examination of the biographies and works of two fifteenth-century antiquaries: John Rous (1411-91) and William of Worcester (1415-82). While it is important to understand the way Kendrick structures his book in order to appreciate how his argument relies upon a critical narrative shaped by a notion of progressive historical development, this discussion of his influence on
the critical tradition begins by considering an example from chapter two of *Antiquity* because Kendrick’s introduction to Rous and Worcester provides an early indication of his attitude towards the British History while serving as an apt parallel from which to consider the critical reception and circulation of Kendrick’s arguments over the past sixty years. Chapter two begins with the following statement:

> The British History with its natural accretions and supplementary materials was in truth a formidable deadweight of antiquarian opinion. Even honest and conscientious chroniclers struggling with their Chapter I, found it easier to accept the whole rigmarole and hand on a conveniently potted version of it than attempt to probe this amorphous coagulation of vanities and fairy-tales in the hope of isolating one or two morsels of credible fact. (18)

Stylistically, this excerpt foregrounds two prominent features found throughout *Antiquity*: the use of subjective diction ("deadweight," "honest and conscientious chroniclers," "rigmarole," "vanities and fairy-tales"); and the ease with which Kendrick inhabits the minds of his medieval and early modern subjects and gives them voice on issues for which there is no evidence. In this example, Kendrick’s insights bridge the evidence gap and inform readers that medieval chroniclers simply “found it easier to accept the whole rigmarole.” The underlying implication is that these chroniclers *probably* did not believe in the “vanities and fairy-tales.”
Before proceeding to examine more fully the implications of Kendrick’s style and use of conjecture in developing his arguments, there is a second, somewhat less explicit, issue raised in this excerpt that deserves attention. There is an uncanny parallel in the way in which this description of Rous’s and Worcester’s reception of the British History anticipates the afterlife of Kendrick’s own work within the critical tradition of the past half-century. While there is no evidence to support the underlying assertion that these “honest and conscientious” medieval chroniclers did not believe in the British History but were simply too lazy to challenge established tradition, there is considerable evidence for the ways in which “a conveniently potted version” of the rise and fall of the British History has circulated in scholarship for the past sixty years based on Kendrick’s unchallenged “version.”

Antiquity shapes understanding of the lifecycle of the British History and the associated topic of Britain’s Trojan origins. While Antiquity’s eight chapters may be, as Arnaldo Momigliano explains in an early review, “impossible to summarize” (185), its lasting influence appears to derive from Kendrick’s ability to consolidate an unprecedented amount of primary evidence and structure it into a convincing narrative that tells the story of the British History’s triumph and decline. A short list of influential historians and literary scholars who direct their readers to Kendrick’s monograph as the seminal account for this subject includes Sydney Anglo, Douglas Bush, Fritz J. Levy, Arthur Ferguson, Antonia Gransden, Joseph Levine, Graham Parry, Heather James, Daniel Woolf, David Galbraith, Bart van Es, Philip Schwyzer, Robin Headlam Wells and Andrew Escobedo. This who’s who of medieval and early modern historians and literary scholars all agree, in relatively similar terms, that Kendrick is the authority on “the triumph of Geoffrey’s Historia and the ultimate decline of its reputation in the sixteenth century” (Gransden 202, n.150).
A brief survey of the matter that these scholars identify as the source of *Antiquity*’s authority will help demonstrate Kendrick’s influence on the critical tradition and, more importantly for this chapter, on today’s understanding of Trojan origins. The following examples have been chosen because most of these authors are scholars who require little introduction as they have published authoritative studies in their respective fields of specialization. With the single exception of Sydney Anglo’s article “The ‘British History’ in Early Tudor Propaganda” (1961-62), which attempts to qualify Kendrick’s argument about the degree to which there was an early “Tudor cult” of the British History,¹ there has been no effort to question, correct, or revise the critical narrative and approach to the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins consolidated in Kendrick’s work.²

Setting aside Anglo’s qualification of Kendrick’s argument – this issue is examined in chapter three – scholars have mostly been comfortable directing readers to *Antiquity* as the seminal account of England’s foundation myths. In a short section titled “New Troy” in Douglas Bush’s still unsurpassed survey of classical influences on English poetry, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (1963), Bush acknowledges the disassociation between the Brutus myth and classical influences before providing a five-paragraph summary of Britain’s Trojan origins to which he adds: “The standard full account is Sir T. D.

¹ Chapter three of *Antiquity* is titled “The Tudor Cult of the British History”; and it should be noted that Anglo directs readers to Kendrick for the reception of Monmouth’s work: “On the history of the reception of Geoffrey’s work see T.D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity*” (Anglo 18, n.1).

² As discussed in the Introduction, the key elements of Kendrick’s model include the following four narrative pillars: (i) Monmouth popularizes the legend, which circulates widely and goes unchallenged for two centuries; (ii) the Tudors revitalize the legends for political ends (“Tudor Cult” or “Tudor Myth”); (iii) Polydore Vergil introduces a challenge to the legend in his *Anglica* (1534) and creates a stir; and, finally, (iv) William Camden’s *Brittania* (1586) brings about the eclipse of the British History.
Kendrick’s *British Antiquity*” (37, n.24). A few years later, Fritz J. Levy writes in *Tudor Historical Thought* (1967, rep. 2004) that “everyone is acquainted with the odd argument known as the Tudor Battle of the Books” from the works of Greenlaw, Millican, and Kendrick. Levy then goes on to identify *Antiquity* as the source to consult for “the whole matter of the British History, including the arguments used for and against” (67, n.53).

Arthur Ferguson’s *Clio Unbound* (1979), a work regularly cited as a significant source for understanding early modern historiographical practices, explains that “[t]he story of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s mischievous legacy to the Tudor historians is too well known to require retelling at this point” (105), and Ferguson directs readers to “[s]ee especially Kendrick” (105, n.85). Already quoted above, it is worth mentioning again that, in her influential *Historical Writing in England* (1983, rep. 1996), Antonia Gransden identifies Kendrick’s *Antiquity* as the source “[f]or the triumph of Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the ultimate decline of its reputation in the sixteenth century” (202, n.150). And, in *Humanism and History* (1987), Joseph Levine explains, “there is no need here to trace the way the legendary history was attacked and defended throughout the sixteenth century until the new method triumphed and the time-honored tales were declared a fiction” (49); to this Levine adds a note explaining that “[t]he best account remains T.D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity*” (49, n.128).

When Graham Parry discusses how “England was bedeviled by the business of the British History” (26), in his *The Trophies of Time* (1995), his footnote reads: “A compendious account of the British History may be found in Kendrick, *British Antiquity*” (26, n.6). In *Shakespeare’s Troy* (1997), Heather James acknowledges both Levy’s *Tudor Historical Thought* and Ferguson’s *Clio Unbound* (both of which are indebted to Kendrick on this matter) as contributing to her thinking about Trojan origins; however, her primary debt belongs to Kendrick: “My summary of the Troy legend’s ideological significance to Tudor and

Bush, Levy, Levine, Ferguson, Gransden, Parry, James, and Woolf have each contributed meaningful insights to our understanding of early modern historiographical practices. The works of these well-respected scholars have advanced our appreciation for the complexities found in the multilayered relationships between history and literature. And yet, on this matter – for the “standard full account” of “Monmouth’s mischievous legacy”; for an overview of “the arguments used for and against” and “the way the legendary history was attacked and defended”; for an understanding of “the triumph of Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the ultimate decline”; for an overview of the subject’s “ideological significance to Tudor and Reformation factions” – these authors agree that the “best account,” the “best discussion of the legends,” the “[b]est survey of the myths of foundation,” is Kendrick’s *British Antiquity*.

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³ Woolf’s emphasis on Kendrick’s authority in these relatively early examples from Woolf’s lengthy list of publications is tempered in later publications. For example, in *Social Circulation of the Past* (2003), Woolf writes: “on the treatment of these legends by antiquaries see T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (1950)” (327, n.90).
Antiquity introduces the most comprehensive collection of British History-related primary evidence consolidated in a single study. This work is highly readable given Kendrick’s intimacy with the artefacts, passion for the subject, intensity in arguing his positions, and knack for introducing early modern historiographers with a flesh-and-bone quality by writing about them as if they were familiar colleagues. It may be the burden of evidence (much of it is seemingly irreconcilable) that requires Kendrick to present arguments that lack objectivity, misinterpret evidence, and make strong claims based on conjecture grounded in nothing more than his own authoritative opinion. On their own, many of these issues warrant some revision of the arguments introduced in Antiquity; however, this study is not an intervention that is concerned with Kendrick’s primary focus, which he describes as being “concerned with sixteenth century England, and the transition from medieval to modern antiquarian thought” (vii).

Rather, this is a study dedicated to Brutus of Troy and the legend of Britain’s Trojan origins, a subject for which there is no comprehensive, book-length study. The misrepresentation of this relatively narrow subtopic of the British History, within the broader study of sixteenth-century antiquarian developments, is my subject. Given that primary evidence related to this topic straddles the divide between history and fiction, and

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4 One early reviewer describes Antiquity as written with an “authority and charm” that make for “delightful reading from cover to cover” (Momigliano 185). Another reviewer describes it as a “curiously discursive but most readable book” (A.G. 355). In his review, Stuart Piggott describes Antiquity as written with “scholarship and humor…this latter quality in his writing gives the book a rare quality” (576).

5 Occasionally, Kendrick makes surprising claims that read like off-the-cuff remarks. It is possible to understand how those familiar with early modern plays such as Gorboduc, Locrine, King Lear, and Cymbeline may find that the following, somewhat reductive, claim deserves some reconsideration: “The dramatist, however, used the stories from the British History without any personal comment on their antiquarian validity” (39).
thereby provides rich and complex insights to the imaginative life of early modern English men and women, it is particularly surprising that literary scholars and cultural theorists have allowed their understanding of the Brutus myth to rely upon the antiquarian framework consolidated in Kendrick’s *Antiquity*. The intellectual stasis associated with Trojan origins stands in sharp contrast with active scholarly inquiries focused on other elements of the British History.

Several of these other subfields have developed in new and interesting directions over the past five decades. For example, Brutus’s descendant King Arthur has been exceptionally well developed in the works (to name just a few) of Geoffrey Ashe, Laurie Finke, N.J. Higham, and Christopher Dean. Because of Shakespeare adaptations, *Lear* and *Cymbeline* live on in classrooms, scholarly debates, and stage productions. Moreover, the rise of antiquarianism and the changes in historiographical practices from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century have been well served by several waves of scholarship that include the works of Ferguson, Hadfield, Kewes, Levine, Levy, and Woolf. Unlike these related areas in which dynamic investigations are ongoing, the subtopic of Britain’s Trojan origins remains entrenched in a fixed antiquarian paradigm.

Granted, the subject has not entirely disappeared, as is the case with many of the other legendary kings introduced in Monmouth’s *Historia regum Brittania*, instead, a more accurate description is that the Brutus myth exists in a state of investigative inertia. The nuances, complexities, and associated opportunities for explorations of the Elizabethan historical imaginary through the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins have been overlooked since the publication of *Antiquity*. Scholarly willingness to defer to Kendrick on the matter of “Monmouth’s mischievous legacy,” or what Levine refers to as that “odd subject,” requires considerable reconsideration.
One of the many reasons why this specific element of the British History deserves attention relates to Brutus’s position as the first in the British History’s genealogy of monarchs. As a result, he makes an ideal target for those determined to dislodge Monmouth’s influence. While it is very likely that Arthur has always served as a more potent cultural symbol, it is not the case that today’s dismissive and even disparaging attitudes towards Brutus and the subject of Trojan origins are representative of Elizabethan-era approaches. As point-man, Brutus has regularly featured as the initial target of those who argue against the veracity and validity of the British History; and, like many antiquarian men of fact and reason, Kendrick demonstrates a particularly strong intolerance for the especially quirky subject of Britain’s Trojan origins. This bias would not be especially relevant for literary scholars if Kendrick’s arguments were contained within the circumscribed field of antiquarianism; however, his influence and his attitude serve as an authoritative anchor for a much wider readership, and his example continues to inform critical approaches for interpretations of such canonical works as Edmund Spenser’s Faerie Queene, William Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida and Michael Drayton’s Polyolbion.

Above all else, Kendrick’s Antiquity distinguishes itself as a seminal work about the British History by way of the unprecedented quantity of primary evidence it includes. This results in a palpable tension between his antiquarian commitment to presenting all the evidence and his determination to advance an argument. The burden of evidence complicates Kendrick’s approach in that he is often unable to make the evidence accommodate his argument. In response to this dilemma, he ultimately wrestles his argument out from under the weight of
opposing evidence using strategies that include artificial frameworks (emotion versus reason; intelligent versus unintelligent; Continental versus British), conjecture that moves from single examples to general conclusions, chronological leaps with the use of evidence that spans decades (even centuries), and, in a few instances, misrepresentation of the evidence.

Given that this overwhelming amount of primary evidence is introduced with an authorial voice that asserts mastery over the mass of archival materials, it is no surprise that *Antiquity* has earned the confidence of so many esteemed readers over the decades. Kendrick has a readable style that employs the voice of a mildly irascible antiquarian with a confident wit and little tolerance for fools. His ability to establish this familiar persona on the page — a type of much loved (and feared) mid-twentieth-century scholar in the Anglo tradition — calls attention to how elements of style have contributed to *Antiquity*'s lasting success. On closer consideration, Kendrick’s style reveals quite a bit about his antiquarian bias.

In an effort to reinforce the authority of the “sober-minded” non-believers’ camp, Kendrick expends considerable energy demonstrating that prominent sixteenth-century personalities who were not antiquarians agreed with his position. This proof requires considerable effort because, in the main, Kendrick achieves it in the absence of evidence to support his claims. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, from *Antiquity*'s earliest pages, Kendrick adopts a style that fuses his voice with those of his historical subjects, a strategy through which his ideas and attitudes towards Trojan origins become theirs:

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*Kendrick’s colourful style contributes to the successful transmission of his ideas. Critics regularly repeat some of the more over-the-top claims found in *Antiquity*. For example, Anglo quotes Kendrick when he explains “the British History became a ‘formidable deadweight of antiquarian opinion’” (1961, 19). In *Clio Unbound*, Ferguson writes: “The controversy nevertheless lasted for years; and to the end of the century patriotic Englishmen continued, as T. D. Kendrick put it, with ‘muddle-headed deliberateness’ to add ‘to the fantastic British History still more fantastic guesswork’” (106).*
A medieval chronicler with the challenging powers of an Abelard or a John of Salisbury might have thought it worth while to break through the crust of traditional racial nonsense so solemnly and so oft repeated in the opening pages of every chronicle that began with a “first inhabitants” chapter…. (2)

This excerpt is from chapter one of Antiquity, where readers are provided with a survey of the origins and transmission of the British History during the Middle Ages. Given the scarcity of extant artefacts from the period, and considering that the medieval context for the British History is only prefatory material for Kendrick’s sixteenth-century subject, readers likely do not pause too long to wonder how Kendrick knows what Abelard and Salisbury “might have thought” about this “traditional racial nonsense.” The significance of this early example is that it introduces a rhetorical strategy that Kendrick employs quite liberally in chapter three – “The Tudor Cult of the British History” – in which he establishes the foundations for his eventual move towards the important conclusion in chapter seven: “The Eclipse of the British History.”

As the following examples demonstrate, in the absence of evidence Kendrick relies on conjecture to establish claims that show support for his “cool thinking” bias. Kendrick supports his critical narrative by extrapolating from evidence found in individual authors’ works to introduce broad assertions about communities that include mid-fifteenth-century “English humanists,” sixteenth-century “opinion at court,” and prominent persons such as Sir Thomas More and Sir Philip Sidney. The resulting impression is that Kendrick’s arguments represent the governing attitudes of prominent sixteenth-century authors. Recruiting these familiar names is an especially necessary tactic given Kendrick’s efforts to
frame Elizabethan reception of Britain’s Trojan origins according to an us-them divide. (The emphasis in the following excerpts is my own.)

We can feel fairly certain that when Abbot John Whethamstede of St. Albans, writing in his Granarium somewhere about 1435 gave four reasons for not believing in Brutus, he was probably expressing the opinion of all members of the small group of English humanists to which he belonged. (34)

[George Lily] made it quite clear that the story of Brutus was nonsense and must be omitted, and in so doing, of course, he reveals the probable views on this subject of the humanists of the earlier generations, such as Colet, and his own father, and Sir Thomas More. (41)

It is probable that educated opinion at court, if it had been forced to declare itself, would have supported Lily and Lanquet rather than a passionately over-loyal antiquary like Leland. (42)

Those who have considered the antiquarian thought of the period in its larger aspect will know that it was not very surprising that in 1574 the twenty-year old Sir Philip Sidney, newly down from Oxford, where some of his elders were still talking about Brutus’s Greeks at Crickdale, should have laughed over the British pretensions in Humphrey Lhuyd’s Breviary of Britaine. (44)
In these examples, Kendrick reconfigures a historical topic to accommodate his position through assertive conjecture and creative logic. Reinforcing the us-them divide, he ensures that his arguments align with all the right historical persons by telling us what they “might have,” “probably did,” or “should have” thought.

Kendrick’s approach collapses the historical divide between his subjects and himself. At times, his treatment of early modern historiographers possesses the infinitely readable quality of a senior faculty member gossiping about his colleagues. While this stylistic issue is not apparent throughout *Antiquity*, it is particularly evident in chapter three, where Kendrick establishes his arguments about “The Tudor Cult of the British History.” Here, he characterizes the “affection for the British History” as:

Founded either on popular emotion or on a fanatical patriotism, and they are expressed largely in verse or in the most violently worded passages of the emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries such as Leland. They have little to do with cool thinking, and they certainly do not reflect the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of the day. (40-41)

While this is not the best example of Kendrick’s use of what I describe as a gossipy tone in the treatment of his historical subjects (more representative examples follow), this excerpt draws attention to another key feature in Kendrick’s argumentation: his use of a framing device that relies upon an either-or paradigm emphasizing the divide between believers and non-believers. This framing device characterizes opponents to the Brutus myth (non-believers) as “cool-thinking,” reason-based men, and supporters of Trojan origins (believers).
as, in the main, unreliable emotional fanatics and “tender-skinned patriots.” This framing device relies on an approach that draws on three qualities that were once closely identified with English identity. The division between men of reason and men controlled by emotions is reinforced with a second division that characterizes non-believers as intelligent men, and, while it remains inexplicit, the implication is that believers were unintelligent men. The third means by which Kendrick reinforces this us-them divide is through negative comparison with Continental practices.

Kendrick’s *Antiquity* exhibits a curious tension between content and form. He advances arguments that privilege the cool-thinking, objective, and sensible critical approaches displayed in the works of early modern non-believers, while employing an emotionally charged, occasionally angry, and regularly hyperbolic style. Kendrick’s characterizations of the non-believers and their works – “the wise John Rastell” (41); George Lily, who was “completely unaffected by the sentimental patriotism that coloured Leland’s antiquarian life” (41); John Major, who “sought to smash down the entire top-heavy structure of British and Scottish fabulous history” (78) with the “brilliant, sensible, and honourable beginning” (79) to his *Historia Majoris Britanniae*, “the great scholar” George Buchanan, who showed “how obviously ridiculous these stories were” (84-85); and “the sensible courtier-poet and historian” Samuel Daniel, who “refused to take the British History seriously” (110) – demonstrate relative stylistic restraint when compared with his treatment of believers.

As he moves to conclude chapter five – “The Medieval Tradition” – Kendrick’s closing remarks draw attention to the “unashamed display of medieval antiquarian argument
that was allowed to thrive until at least 1620” (77). Anticipating the direction for his argument in *Antiquity*s final three chapters, Kendrick concludes his thoughts on the residue of the medieval tradition with the following analogy:

… the time has now come to refresh ourselves with the wholesome tonic of some wiser and cleansing thought on the subject of the time-honored legends about Trojans in Britain and the great King Arthur. (77)

Here, Kendrick reveals the visceral resonance he experiences in response to works governed by reason as compared to those that are distracted by emotion. And while there are a few exceptions in which the writings of Trojan origins supporters do not unsettle Kendrick’s bodily state – for example, John Price demonstrated “becoming restraint” (87) in “the calm, well-ordered pages of his *Historiae Britannicae Defensio*” in which he “indulged in no violence of expression” (88); also, “that fine man, Hector Boece” (65), “was just and kindly in his treatment of the Trojan Brutus, in whom he firmly believed” (67) – in the main, believers are censured based on their lack of fortitude and incapacity for self-regulation. For Kendrick, “popular emotion,” “fanatical patriotism,” “violently worded passages of the emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries” (40) represent obstacles to “the wholesome tonic of some wiser and cleansing thought.”

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7 Throughout *Antiquity*, Kendrick’s chronological anchor for what he describes as the “eclipse of the British history” shifts between a few different dates. For example, in chapter seven he explains that “our Trojan ancestors in Britain had only a precarious footing in the land after the reign of Elizabeth” (Kendrick 132).
These “emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries” include such persons as Arthur Kelton, whose “passionate sympathy with the cause of the British History” (40) undermines the credibility of his *Chronycle with a genealogie*; John Bale, who was “blinded by religious prejudice” and who introduced his subject material in “his accustomed coarse-mouthed manner” (69); and Thomas Caius, a Fellow of All Souls, and one of the “reactionary scholars” who “jealously preserved and defended” the “formidable deadweight of contrary opinion” (77). Early modern historiographers who argued against Polydore Vergil’s “objective sense and critical ability” (Kendrick 83) include John Leland, who “was the victim of that kind of patriotic fervor that permits no tampering with national faith in a dearly cherished national myth” (63) and whose “angry pamphlet of nine or ten pages called *Codrus, sive Laus et Defensio Gallofridi Arturii Monumentensis contra Polydorum Vergilium*” (85-86) represents “the undercurrent of downright anger that disturb so many of the British outpourings on the subject of the Italian’s offence” (86). While chapter four of *Antiquity – John Leland* – is dedicated to Leland, who is set up as a straw-man representative of medieval habits of thought in the Renaissance, the relatively long list of detractors to Polydore’s assertions are described collectively as being “ready to storm at the mere mention of the attack on King Arthur and the British History” (Kendrick 87). 8

When Kendrick speculates that “educated opinion at court” would probably have sided with the non-believers “if it had been forced to declare itself” (42), readers are not provided with an explanation of how he means “educated opinion.” Given that many

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8 Kendrick’s influence in distinguishing between sceptical non-believers and emotionally misguided believers has found its way into the critical tradition. One example is offered by Heather James, who reasons that “Perhaps to forestall the abuse that skeptics learned to expect from zealous patriots, historians and poets responded to the legend with varying degrees of enthusiasm” (88, my emphasis).
supporters of Trojan origins studied, taught and served as Fellows at Oxford and Cambridge, this usage cannot be meant in a literal sense. While Kendrick does not make the link explicit, it is quite possible that his use of “educated opinion” is influenced by Camden, who, in his preface to the 1607 first folio edition of Britannia, writes that, by the early seventeenth century, Geoffrey’s history was “yet of little authority amongst men of learning” (xx). Encouraging this hunch, Kendrick’s description of the 1586 edition of Britannia associates “this modest little octavo volume” with “intelligent readers” who were “prepared to admit that Polydore Vergil had, after all, been right” (108). Unlike later, much expanded editions of Britannia in which Camden is more explicit about his objections to Monmouth’s legacy, the 1586 edition does not expressly challenge or dismiss the British History. Consequently, Kendrick appears to be intimating that “intelligent readers” in the late 1580s anticipated Camden’s direction on this matter.

Nonetheless, Kendrick is not content with an education-based classification as a means of differentiating between believers and non-believers (perhaps because most supporters of Trojan origins were in fact educated). As a result, this emphasis on “educated opinion” appears to blur with a division based on “intelligence” as evidenced in the excerpt quoted a few pages ago where he writes that the works of “emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries such as Leland…do not reflect the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of the day” (40-41). A more targeted use of this distinction between non-believers and believers based on “intelligence” is observed when Kendrick turns his attention to Edmund Spenser’s treatment of the British History in The Faerie Queene.

Chapter three of this study provides a survey of critics whose views represent the wide range of possible interpretations adopted by Spenserians engaged in the debates about whether Spenser did or did not believe in the British History. Not surprisingly, this analysis
demonstrates that there is considerable internal evidence to support both sides of this argument. For Kendrick, however, this complex question can be reduced to a matter of intelligence:

We must sympathize with Spenser. Neither Virgil nor Ariosto could give him guidance here, for he had to introduce with apparent seriousness something that *all his intelligent friends* considered to be completely bogus history, and we may be sure that Spenser knew that he was running the risk of making his lovely poem ridiculous if he solemnly regaled his readers with the substance of the early part of the Brut. Yet that is what he did. (127, my emphasis)

Several important issues are raised in this excerpt. As in chapter three, where Kendrick relies on conjecture to recruit Sir Thomas More and Sir Philip Sidney for his side of the debate, we can observe a determined effort in *Antiquity*’s sensational title penultimate chapter – “The Eclipse of the British History” – to achieve a similar end with, among others, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, and John Milton. The governing concern that emerges here,

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9 In fact, Kendrick buttresses these opinions about Spenser with his earlier, unsubstantiated opinion about Sidney: “it can be taken as certain that a man who was the friend of Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh would smile at the story of the Trojans in Britain” (128).

10 John Milton’s reception of the British History is discussed in Paul Stevens’s recent article, “Archipelagic Criticism and Its Limits” (2012). With regard to the way Kendrick portrays Shakespeare’s attitude towards the British History, his argumentative reasoning can be best characterized as strong opinions tenuously linked with primary evidence: “Shakespeare would have nothing to do with this notion that the British History was an ingredient in the greatness of Elizabethan England…he saw no contribution to the glory of Tudor England in
as in chapter three, is the conviction with which Kendrick advances conjecture-based assertions in the absence of conclusive evidence. The passage above is followed immediately by the unequivocal assertion that “Spenser did not believe in the British History” (127).

A few examples of scholars who repeat Kendrick’s opinion-based assertions include Anglo, who, when he wishes to undermine the significance of Leland’s contribution to the sixteenth-century debates about the Arthurian legend, quotes Kendrick directly: “[Leland’s] works, however, ‘do not reflect the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of the day.’” He directs readers to Kendrick on this issue: “See Kendrick, pp.40-4, for evidence on this point” (35 n.1). Similarly, when Ferguson addresses Spenser’s treatment of the British History, he concludes that Spenser “considered himself privileged, as a poet, to do anything he wanted with it,” and Ferguson paraphrases Kendrick when he claims that “[Spenser] did not believe Geoffrey’s stories” (36). Ferguson covers his position by directing readers to pages 126-32 of Antiquity (36 n.26). More recently, Johann P. Sommerville employs Kendrick-like terminology when he writes that “educated opinion was turning sharply against the story in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries” (467). In his remarks about Spenser, Sommerville explains that England’s poet laureate “was skeptical” but that “he exploited” the British History “for his own poetic and political purposes” (467). In a footnote to this comment Sommerville writes, “[t]he legend is discussed in the context of changing attitudes towards early British history in T.D. Kendrick, British Antiquity” (467 n.39).

these remote British kings. ‘Base Trojan thou shalt die’ might fairly stand as an expression of his attitude to the British History” (132).

11 Elsewhere, Anglo writes: “The struggle over the British History that flared up in the middle of the sixteenth century was a battle between backward-looking antiquarians. As Kendrick has pointed out, it is probable that educated opinion at court would have supported opponents of the British History such as Lily and Lanquet rather than a ‘passionately over-loyal antiquary like Leland’” (27).
Positive critical reception, and the recycling of Kendrick’s opinions about what constitutes “educated opinion,” “the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of the day,” and the beliefs of Spenser and “all his intelligent friends,” establish a parallel between the force of Kendrick’s opinions in the critical tradition and the way in which he describes how, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Monmouth’s “British History rode majestically forward, brushing quibblers and doubters aside” (14).

Commenting upon Kendrick’s misstatement about Ariosto in the excerpt about Spenser quoted above is relevant to this discussion about Kendrick’s use of “educated opinion” and “intelligence” as strategies for framing the discourse about the British History. The certainty with which he comments upon Ariosto’s inability to provide Spenser with “guidance here” provides yet another example in which Kendrick confidently advances inaccurate claims. While it is true that Ariosto does not provide Spenser with “guidance” on the specific subject of Britain’s Trojan origins, Kendrick overlooks the significance of Ariosto’s caustic commentary on the relations between patrons and poets who made use of the Troy legend in a related fashion. The following example from Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso does provide “guidance” for possible approaches to negotiating the tensions between Troy-related legends, history, and propaganda. In canto thirty-five, during Astolfo’s journey to the moon, he receives a cynical lesson in literary history:

Aeneas was not so pious nor Achilles so strong nor Hector so valiant as rumor makes them, and there have been thousands and thousands and thousands who can with truth be put before them; but the palaces and the great villas given by their

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12 See James’s *Shakespeare’s Troy* (17) for her commentary upon this passage from *Orlando Furioso*.
descendents have caused the honored hands of the writers to bring them to these high and endless honors. (35.25)

It is noteworthy that this critique of literary history suggests that Aeneas, Achilles, and Hector were historical figures with “descendents” who served as patrons that ensured lasting literary monuments were erected in their honour. More significantly, this evaluation of the socio-economic implications associated with the politics of literary history (“palaces” in exchange for “endless honors” to prop up aristocratic genealogies) continues to implicate a host of real and imagined classical personae (Agamemnon, Augustus, Dido, Homer, Penelope, Vergil) while overturning conventional understanding of iconographical events: “change all this story to the opposite, that the Greeks were defeated, and Troy victorious, and Penelope a whore” (35.27). This example from Orlando Furioso does not speak directly to national foundation myths, but it does demonstrate an acute awareness of the complexity underlying the relationship among legends, propaganda, and identity, while foregrounding the way that these subjects exist on a complex threshold between reality and fiction, a murky conceptual space that does not neatly correspond with the “wiser and cleansing thoughts” that Kendrick privileges with his either-or approach.

Kendrick’s third mechanism for reinforcing the divide between non-believers and believers is through negative comparisons between British and Continental practices. According to Kendrick,

…the whole British History was solemnly studied and restudied at a time when continental nations no longer thought it worth while to hold such passionate views about their fabulous origins…. (38)
Without citing any primary evidence or referring to secondary sources to support these generalizations, Kendrick’s exaggerated and inaccurate views of Continental practices reflect yet another misconception that circulates in twentieth-century scholarship. The significance of this misunderstanding is that it further marginalizes Elizabethan supporters of Britain’s Trojan origins by tweaking English men’s and women’s self-consciousness about their status relative to Continental developments.

While we know that, as in England, there were Continental non-believers, Kendrick’s claim for a long-standing universal abandonment of foundation myths on the Continent is patently false and serves only to give the mistaken impression that continued support of Trojan origins was an unfashionable practice. One counter-example comes from Michel de Montaigne, who provides a perspective quite different from Kendrick’s when, in his 1588 essay “Of the most outstanding men,” he describes Homer’s influence contributing to a Europe-wide contemporary social phenomenon:

There is nothing so alive in the mouths of men as [Homer’s] name and his works; nothing so well known and accepted as Troy, Helen, and his wars, which perhaps never existed….Not only certain private families but most nations seek their origin in his fictions. (570)

These observations call attention to three central elements linking Troy with the historical imaginary of late sixteenth-century Europeans: the remarkable popularity of the Troy legend

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14 Montaigne’s three “most outstanding men” are Homer, Alexander the Great, and Epaminondas.
(“nothing so alive…nothing so well known and accepted”); the uncertainty surrounding the legend’s veracity (“which perhaps never existed”); and the use of Troy by “private families” and “nations” to legitimate origins. Admiring Homer’s ability to shape the European socio-political landscape, “after more then three thousand years,” Montaigne continues on in his essay to express “astonishment” that Homer, “who by his authority created and brought into credit in the world many deities, has not himself gained the rank of a god” (569). With this hyperbolic claim, Montaigne expresses awe for the legacy of Homer’s influence on the Western European social imaginary. This wonder at the commixture of fiction and reality on the European political stage ultimately comes to be expressed in theatrical terms:

Is it not noble drama in which kings, commonwealths, and emperors keep playing their parts for so many ages, and for which this whole great universe serves as a theatre? (571)

Montaigne’s ability to observe this social phenomenon objectively without critiquing or taking a position on the matter offers a refreshing perspective on how Homer’s Troy existed on a threshold somewhere between fiction and reality.

Further evidence for the continuity of foundation myths playing a part in France’s historical debates is observed in a rather severe example from 1714. George Huppart explains:

The Trojan origins of the French remained an article of faith for the monarchy. As late as 1714, the learned Nicolas Freret was thrown into the Bastille for showing that the Franks were Germans…
Valois and Bourbon kings had reasons for affirming their Trojan ancestry which were different from the motives of the Merovingians. (227-28)

While a much more comprehensive survey of late sixteenth-century Continental approaches is required to develop a proper understanding of pan-European practices, these two examples provide some basis from which to question Kendrick’s claim, which resurfaces in the works of later critics.

Comparison with purported Continental practices achieves a similar end to that of framing the divide between believers and non-believers based on intelligence, and the divide between reason and emotion. Taken together, these three divisions show how the approach to Trojan origins has been shaped according to an us-them divide that is structured upon quintessentially English character traits. The result of this framing device is that Kendrick’s narrative about the victory of the antiquarian camp – the “sober-minded,” “cool thinking,” “intelligent” men familiar with Continental practices – has become an entrenched paradigm in twenty-first-century scholarship. While it is evident that the Brutus myth’s lifecycle ended some time ago – I am not arguing for the legend’s veracity or continued existence – Kendrick’s misrepresentation of the subject through the anachronistic projection of a mid-twentieth-century paradigm onto sixteenth-century evidence has stigmatized the subject and introduced a critical narrative with a lasting influence such that historians and literary critics now rely upon one antiquarian’s “conveniently potted version.”
KENDRICK’S CONVENIENTLY POTTED VERSION

[medieval] chroniclers continued writing in all seriousness about Brutus and King Arthur, and no one, not even William of Newburgh, attempted to dispute the Trojan origin of the British; this was medieval dogma, and it was not doubted until the appearance of the first English humanists in the middle of the fifteenth century. (14)

Throughout *Antiquity* there are numerous independent expressions that reiterate the main idea in this excerpt, which introduces the notion underlying the first pillar of Kendrick’s critical narrative.¹⁵ I choose to concentrate on this specific example because Kendrick’s inclusion of the twelfth-century canon William of Newburgh (1136-98) among those who did not “dispute the Trojan origin of the British” provides yet another instance in which Kendrick misrepresents evidence in a way that accommodates his argument. More importantly, this assertion provides a platform from which to open this discussion to an exploration of the complexities associated with critical attempts to particularize the differences between medieval and early modern intellects and methodological approaches.

¹⁵ Related examples include: “Medieval chroniclers could carry credulity almost to the point at which the critical faculties were no longer used” (Kendrick 11); “For the first time since the story took shape in the twelfth century men [in the fifteenth century] had begun to doubt whether Brutus the Trojan had ever existed….” (Kendrick 34); “…even in the first half of the sixteenth century, nevertheless much antiquarian thought tended to remain medieval in kind – medieval in incredulity and in recklessness of conjecture – right through the sixteenth century” (Kendrick 65); “…the struggle to apply to the British History the critical machinery of a new scholarship did not speedily result in an easy and inevitable triumph of the Renaissance mind….” (Kendrick 77).
Kendrick describes William of Newburgh as “a conscientious and scholarly historian” (12), and he recognizes the prologue to William’s *History of English Affairs* as “a major attack…a thunderclap of courageous and devastating criticism” (13) directed at Monmouth’s *Historia*, however, in the excerpt quoted at the start of the preceding paragraph, Kendrick’s assertion that, among medieval historians, “no one, not even William of Newburgh, attempted to dispute the Trojan origin of the British” is a form of scholarly sleight of hand that deserves clarification. While it is the case that William’s prologue does not explicitly “dispute” the individual issue of Trojan origins (William’s *History* makes no mention of Brutus or the matter of Trojan origins), William is explicit that his critique of Monmouth’s *Historia* does “not mention all his fictions about the achievements of the Britons before Julius Cæsar held sway” (29). Significantly, William’s sweeping condemnation of Monmouth as a story-teller who “weaves a laughable web of fiction about them [the Britons]” (29) represents what can be described as an inclusive reproach of Monmouth’s narrative. William is unambiguous on this point:

…none except those ignorant of ancient histories can possibly doubt the extent of his wanton and shameless lying virtually throughout his book, which he calls *A History of the Britons*….He

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16 William of Newburgh’s response to Monmouth’s *Historia* is largely preoccupied with deriding Monmouth’s treatment of Arthur and his conquests of Europe. For William, Monmouth’s claims about Arthur’s defeat of Rome and Gaul (among many other European nations) are particularly outrageous: “He certainly makes his Arthur’s little finger broader than the back of Alexander the Great” (35).

17 William of Newburgh’s critique of Monmouth is contained within his prologue. The issue of Trojan origins does not surface in the body of William’s *History* because, as he explains, his study begins with the arrival of William the Conqueror: “…I shall begin with the arrival of the Normans in England…” (37).
has not learnt the truth about events, and so without discrimination he gives space to fables without substance. (29)

Despite recognizing that William “denounced Geoffrey of Monmouth as the author of an historically valueless collection of Celtic fairy-tales” (12), Kendrick feels the need to tweak his portrayal of William’s position on the specific detail of “the Trojan origin of the British.” While this example is just one of many such curious inconsistencies encountered throughout Antiquity, the significance of this case may have to do with the fact that William’s critique of Monmouth serves as evidence that undermines an important element of the central thesis in the first stage of Antiquity’s critical narrative. Portraying the medieval reception of Britain’s Trojan origins as uncritical (“unchallenged”) is vital to the success of Antiquity’s narrative arc, given that a sustained period of several centuries during which the “British History rode majestically forward, brushing quibblers and doubters aside” (14) amplifies the climactic effect achieved with the emergence of the “critical machinery of a new scholarship” and the eventual “triumph of the Renaissance mind” (77).

Classifying William as a “believer” with respect, at least, to this single element of the British History – i.e., Britain’s Trojan origins – allows Kendrick to smooth out the inconsistencies that interfere with his effort to advance a narrative of progressive development that culminates with a Renaissance “historical revolution.” From Kendrick’s perspective, William may be critical of Monmouth’s Arthur, but, if he believes in this one important aspect of the “racial nonsense” about Trojan origins, William can be grouped together with all those who are “medieval in incredulity and recklessness of conjecture” (Kendrick 65).
Minimizing, even misrepresenting, medieval criticisms of Monmouth’s foundation myths is important to building up the theory that argues for an evolution from medieval chroniclers incapable of humanist-like critiques to reason-based Renaissance historiographers such as Polydore Vergil and William Camden. Emphasizing the methodological gaps between medieval and early modern historians serves to amplify the significance of Kendrick’s conclusion about the rise of the humanist-trained antiquaries and the values that they represent:

[t]he learned world, had in truth, begun to delight in incredulity and doubt, and medieval antiquarian dogmas, now devoid of patriotic content, could no longer flourish in an atmosphere that welcomed the shock and disturbance of criticism directed against almost sacred belief. (109-110)

Kendrick’s approach accentuates the significance of the emergence of sixteenth-century humanist scepticism and antiquarian practices that come to serve as the foundation for F. Smith Fussner’s arguments about the origins of “those historical attitudes and questionings that we recognize as our own” (xxii). As discussed in the Introduction, agreeing with this position relies on a willingness to accept the notion of a sixteenth-century “historical revolution” through which early modern English historiographers acquired critical competencies that were inaccessible to their medieval predecessors. More importantly for this study, through this early example, Kendrick establishes belief in the individual issue of Trojan origins as something of a litmus test for distinguishing between medieval and modern modes of thinking. This line of reasoning is reinforced throughout *Antiquity*, which in and of
itself is inconsequential if not for the curiously static and untested persistence of Kendrick’s critical narrative, which continues to shape critical perception of Britain’s Trojan origins. Brutus, as a cultural symbol, symbolizes medieval credulity, or, as Schwyzer suggests, “a buffoonish, mendacious, and embarrassing uncle” (“British History” 12).

“THE BRITISH HISTORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES”

The first pillar of Kendrick’s narrative is anchored in the theory of a Renaissance historiographical revolution, which depends upon a belief that sixteenth-century English historiographers acquired critical competencies that were inaccessible to their medieval predecessors. This argument employs belief in the British History as a litmus test that divides early modern authors based upon an either-or-dialectic: believers represent medieval credulity and non-believers represent modern, scientific reasoning.

Medieval credulity and a turn-of-the-century eclipse are the popular critical narrative’s first and final pillars. This narrative structure does not account for the variable reception of the British History during the Middle Ages or early modern era. And, as Andrew Hadfield suggests, investigations into the early modern reception of the British History will likely undermine faith in this “local story.” Hadfield summarizes Kendrick’s and Fussner’s paradigm in the following way:

…the importation of humanism, the careful study of the classical past, transformed an existing, rather backward, native British
intellectual tradition and forced the parochial Britons to think more carefully about their heritage and place in the world. (30)

It is this long-standing critical paradigm that Hadfield reassesses in his essay, and his approach to questioning critical conventions associated with the notion of a sixteenth-century “historical revolution” moves in two directions. First, he revisits the works of some early modern historiographers to question whether sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians “are as ‘modern’ as we have imagined them to be”; and he then reassesses the works of “some of the most prominent British historians of the Middle Ages [to] see whether they are as different from their early modern counterparts as the latter claim that they are” (27). This approach pushes back against more familiar synchronic methodologies by blurring the chronological divisions on which we have come to rely. The spirit of Hadfield’s somewhat experimental inquiry is well represented in the following excerpt:

There are good and bad medieval and early modern historians and it is not always clear that those who are right are good and those who are wrong are bad. We should also be very careful not to read what Renaissance writers claimed was the case in the Middle Ages at face value, or to assume that we know what Medieval writers really thought before reading the evidence. (38)

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18 In his footnote to this excerpt Hadfield associates this approach with “Burke, ch.1; Fussner, ch. 1; Woolf Reading History, ch. 1; Cobban, p.365” (42, n.16). Hadfield’s inclusion of Woolf is noteworthy given Woolf’s contributions to this field, and it draws attention to the extent to which Hadfield envisions the need for a break with past critical approaches.
While Hadfield’s critique of current critical beliefs does not speak directly to Kendrick’s *Antiquity*, the questions that govern Hadfield’s approach are directly related to the paradigm that governs Kendrick’s narrative in that Hadfield ultimately questions whether critics have “placed too much faith in the story of the re-birth of learning in the Renaissance” (27). To flesh this question out more fully, he considers the methodological approaches of historians from both sides of the medieval/early modern divide.

In his reassessment of a few medieval chroniclers, Hadfield points out how a twelfth-century historian such as Henry of Huntingdon (c.1088-late 1150s), who “cited such classical authorities as Sallust, Juvenal, and Lucan,” was “drawing lessons from history exactly as humanist historians did 300 years later” (30). The significance of this observation is that it challenges the implications of arguments related to the emergence of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century “humanist critical machinery” as being especially revolutionary. With regard to William of Newburgh, Hadfield asserts:

…William makes exactly the same point as Polydore: that Geoffrey overrates the Britons for bad patriotic motives, a striking contrast to the objective history of Bede, a proper historian committed to the pursuit of truth…. (35)

Hadfield’s assertion here articulates an idea that is vital to his essay’s thesis. He argues for a collapse of the perceptual divide that governs thinking about the differences between medieval and early modern historiography. By contrast, Kendrick recognizes William of Newburgh as “a conscientious and scholarly historian,” and yet, in order to advance a grand
critical narrative, he misrepresents William’s approach in order to elevate a humanist historian such as Polydore: “nobody in England before him [Vergil] had approached distant historical problems with such objective sense and critical ability” (83). For Hadfield, not only does William make the “same point as Polydore” in his critique of Monmouth, but “William of Newburgh employs clear and sophisticated notions of historical causation” (37).

The central issue Hadfield addresses in his thought-provoking essay is the need for a reconsideration of current assumptions about the mentalities and methodologies of medieval and early modern historiographers: they are not necessarily as different as was once believed. Moreover, Hadfield does not limit his discussion to the artificial boundaries that define the medieval/early modern divide; he also pushes back against the idea of consistent approaches within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

A variety of intellectual positions were therefore possible for historians working in Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A historian could clearly be a good historian and wrong; a prominent humanist and an opponent of other humanists; a humanist and a defender of a native tradition; and, of course, a bad, non-humanist historian and right. (29)

Hadfield’s willingness to acknowledge and confront the messy, open-ended, and inconclusive nature of a wide array of extant evidence is a far cry from Kendrick’s efforts to narrow this discourse to focus on a handful of authors whose works provide “the wholesome tonic of some wiser and cleansing thought on the subject of the time-honored legends about Trojans in Britain” (77). Hadfield’s concluding thought in his essay
emphasizes the need for scholars to acknowledge and confront the early modern bias that gave rise to the theory of the Renaissance “historical revolution”:

our sense of historical change will be improved if we also remember what went before and refuse to think that the label “medieval” automatically excludes what we think of as “modern.” (40)

Hadfield’s approach represents an emerging critical model. The theory of the “historical revolution” depends upon periodization, a concept that is increasingly viewed as an unnecessary and misleading construct. As Margreta de Grazia explains, this period-dependent structure gave rise to an artificial sense of what does and does not matter:

Whether you work on one side or the other of the medieval/modern divide determines nothing less than relevance. Everything after that divide has relevance to the present; everything before it is irrelevant. There is no denying the exceptional force of that secular divide; indeed, it works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not. (453)

In many ways, Kendrick’s critical narrative exemplifies the theories and biases that are currently being challenged by authors such as Hadfield and de Grazia. Unlike the “cool-

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19 Kendrick’s influence in terms of reinforcing this gap between medieval and early modern approaches to Monmouth’s legacy can be observed in such prominent works as Denys Hay’s *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (1957), in which Kendrick is cited as an authority when Hay writes that Monmouth “establish[ed] a tradition
thinking,” reason-based, intelligent antiquaries of the late sixteenth century whose methodologies were aligned with the best and brightest on the continent, Kendrick’s conception of his medieval subjects’ reception of the British History reflects what can be described as primitivist. Governed by emotions and patriotic fervour, the approaches of medieval chroniclers and their early modern adherents proceed with a prelapsarian-like credulity far removed from the objective methodologies and “unrestful inquiry” of humanist historians. Bridging figures such as John Leland are shown to be torn between “affection” for the past and hope for an empiricist future:

We see him [Leland] as a man two-faced, in one direction looking hopefully forward into a new era of empirical research and practical survey, and at the same time looking with affection backward to the writing-desk of the medieval scholastic chronicler-antiquary where a traditional fable might be repeated without unrestful inquiry or impertinent sixteenth century doubt. (Kendrick 63)

Hadfield and de Grazia’s essays represent critical approaches that are part of the contemporary critical movement that has achieved considerable momentum through the works of such authors as Cummings, Kewes, Simpson, and Woolf. Towards different ends, which (despite a handful of sceptics) was to go virtually unchallenged until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Polydore 49). Elsewhere, Heather James writes: “Not until the fifteenth century and the rise of humanists in Duke Humphrey’s circle did the Brutian legend face antagonism and, for a brief moment, the threat of eclipse” (87, my emphasis). James’s choice of diction – “eclipse” – appears in the title to Antiquity’s penultimate chapter: “The Eclipse of the British History” (my emphasis).
these scholars represent active critical efforts to deconstruct the critical paradigm that
governs the approaches found in Kendrick and Fussner. Recent approaches to questioning
long-held beliefs about a late sixteenth-century “historical revolution,” differences between
medieval and early modern modes of thinking, and, more generally, the conventional
synchronic approach that reinforces artificial divides (periodization), have contributed
thought-provoking questions and meaningful new perspectives through which to reconsider
our interpretations of extant materials.
Polydore Vergil’s epistle to Henry VIII identifies “the single thing which seems to be lacking from the supreme glory” due Henry’s kingdom as a comprehensive history of England that familiarizes Continental readers with the origins of Henry’s realm:

And this is the single thing which seems to be lacking from the supreme glory of your realm of English, that, although it is most blessed in all things, its greatness is unknown to a large number of nations since no history exists from which it would be possible to learn the nature of Britain (which is now England), the origin of this nation, the manners of its kings, the life of its people, and the arts whereby its government, as it was founded in the beginning and as it grew, attained to its greatness. (1)

As Polydore explains in this excerpt’s second half, Continental readers’ appreciation of England’s “greatness” depends upon an understanding of “the nature of Britain,” “the origin

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1 On arriving in England in 1502, Polydore’s reputation as a humanist scholar was based upon his several contributions to humanist learning, especially for his De inventoris rerum (1499), which, early in his career, established him as an authority in that field most central to Renaissance humanist inquiries: the origins of things. With his expertise in this area, Polydore was particularly well suited to investigate these two topics related to England’s origins.

2 Quotations from Polydore’s Anglica are from Dana Sutton’s translation (2005).
of this nation,” “the manners of its kings,” “the life of its people,” and “the arts…[as] founded in the beginning” upon which Henry’s government is established. ³

Given Polydore’s sense that his Anglica Historia (1534) would address Continental misperceptions by providing European readers with this comprehensive history of England and its inhabitants, it is surprising that his seemingly well-intentioned efforts engendered such intense scorn from Tudor authors. John Leland (c. 1503–1552), Arthur Kelton (d. 1549/1550), John Bale (1495-1563), Humphrey Lluyd (1527-1568), David Powel (1549/52-1598), William Lambard (1536-1601), John Price (d. 1573?), Thomas Churchyard (c. 1520 – 1604), Richard Harvey (d. 1623?), Sir Henry Savile (1549-1622) and John Coke (1563-1644) are some of the English and Welsh authors who likely shared Polydore’s interest in attending to Continental perceptions. ⁴ Instead, over the next six decades, these authors attacked Polydore’s history of England as part of what is referred to as the sixteenth-century “Battle of the Books.” How is it that Anglica – “the single thing” written to share “the supreme glory” of Henry’s realm – should have resulted in such an intense vilification of Polydore?

Denys Hay introduced one of the earliest versions of what continues to serve as the authoritative explanation for Tudor authors’ angry responses. ⁵ Hay characterizes Polydore’s reception in the following way:

³ While “the nature of Britain” is an all-encompassing term that relates to much of what is discussed in this chapter, “the origin of this nation” and “the arts…[as] founded in the beginning” are the subjects for this chapter’s examination of how today’s critical tradition understands and represents Polydore’s treatment of Britain’s pre-Roman historical identity.

⁴ Readers interested in a better understanding of these authors’ positions should consult Greenlaw, Jones, Kendrick, and Millican.

⁵ Hay’s Polydore Vergil: Renaissance Historian and Man of Letters (1952) is today’s most comprehensive English-language study of Anglica. Polydore’s history of England is one of many subjects included in Hay’s biography.
There were two contradictory views of Vergil among English scholars in Tudor times: almost without exception they profess to distrust and dislike the *Anglica Historia*; at the same time they make exhaustive use of it. (*Polydore* 157)

*Anglica*’s authoritative status for Tudor authors is well documented. It is not surprising that Tudor historiographers, pamphleteers and a wide range of other authors made “exhaustive use of” *Anglica* considering that its twenty-six books were the culmination of more than fifteen years of research by one of Europe’s pre-eminent humanist scholars. In addition to providing the most comprehensive history of England available at the time, Polydore employed a methodological approach and narrative style that are considered to represent the most advanced historiographical practices applied to English history to that point in time. With *Anglica*’s publication Polydore broke new ground through the scope of his project and in his treatment of form and content.  

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6 Polydore was born into a humanist family: “There was a tradition of scholarship in the Virgili family. A grandfather, Antonio Virgilio, described as ‘most learned in medicine and astrology’ (Hay, 1), taught in the University of Paris. An older brother, Giovanni-Matteo, was a student of the philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi and himself taught philosophy at Ferrara and Padua. An uncle, Tesco Pinni, a clergyman and lawyer, wrote a book on vagabonds, *Speculum ceretanorum*, which was mentioned by Erasmus in his *Ecclesiastes* and published at Wittenberg in 1528 in an edition with a preface by Martin Luther” (DNB).

7 Polydore studied at the University of Padua and his first publication, *Proverbium Libellus* (1498), is a version of what is commonly regarded as an Erasmian innovation: *Adagia*. When Polydore first arrived in England in 1502 as subcollector of Peter’s Pence, his publications had already earned him celebrity status across Europe. Polydore’s background, the quality of his training and publications, and the extraordinary amount of time and
Still, as Hay explains, Polydore’s relationship to Tudor England’s historiographical community is a “curious situation.” Despite Polydore’s interest in promoting the “greatness” of Henry VIII’s realm, Tudor authors, “almost without exception,” expressed “distrust and dislike for the Anglica Historia.” While extant evidence confirms that there was a particularly charged quality to the criticisms leveled against Polydore, there is very little scholarship that helps with understanding exactly why Tudor authors distrusted and disliked Polydore’s Anglica. The effectiveness of Hay’s explanation may be partially responsible for this absence of inquiries: 8

For this curious situation there is a simple explanation. Vergil rejected the legends of Brutus and Arthur and he wrote primarily as a catholic European and not as a protestant Englishman. (Polydore 157)

Published more than sixty years ago, Hay’s “simple explanation” continues to serve as the governing critical model for reconciling this “curious situation.” 9 In different ways, the three issues identified by Hay in this excerpt can be identified in the responses of Polydore’s Tudor detractors. Basically, Hay’s “simple explanation” satisfies general questions about the resources that he invested in preparing Anglica for publication allow for an appreciation of how Anglica became, not simply an important resource for Tudor authors who “made exhaustive use of it,” but a work that transformed English historiographical practices, and English history.

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8 Given the seminal status of Hay’s work, and considering the dearth of Anglica scholarship, it is possible to appreciate how Hay’s “simple explanation” informs today’s critical understanding of this topic.

9 While scholars tend to group Brutus and Arthur together as a single subject, the convenience of such an approach detracts from each subject’s specificity in early modern texts, and this practice calls attention to a concept that I term “conceptual elision.” See n.31 on p. 73 of this chapter for a more detailed explanation.
ways that some Tudor authors responded to *Anglica*. And yet, there are many unacknowledged discrepancies between the details of Tudor authors’ concerns, *Anglica’s* contents and the ready-made resolution offered by this “simple explanation.”

One well-known example of a Tudor author’s response to Polydore is an animated note from an anonymous author writing in the margins of one edition of John Bale’s *Scriptorius* (1548). The commentators’ note is regularly employed as an example of the combative spirit that infused Tudor authors’ responses to Polydore:

*Polydorus Vergilius* – that most rascal dogge knave in the worlde, an Englyshman by byrth, but he had Italian parents: he had the randsackings of all the Englishe lybraryes, and when he had extracted what he pleased he burnt those famous velome manuscripts, and made himself father to other mens workes – felony in the highest degree; he deserved not heaven, for that was too good for him, neither will I be so uncharitable to judge him to hell, yet I thinke that he deserved to be hanged between both. (qtd in Hay *Polydore* 159).

While some of the details in the commentator’s note are incorrect, the accusation that Polydore “burnt those famous velome manuscripts, and made himself father to other mens

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10 Polydore was born in Italy to Italian parents, he arrived in England in 1502 and he was naturalized in 1510.
workes”\textsuperscript{11} represents the degree to which Polydore’s reputation was under assault following<br>
\textit{Anglica}’s publication.

Notably, the commentator’s attack does not conform to Hay’s “simple explanation” for understanding Tudor authors’ responses to \textit{Anglica}. There is no mention of Polydore’s Catholicism, nor is there any mention of Brutus or Arthur. And yet, it is possible to suggest an implicit association between the reference to Polydore’s “Italian parents” and his Catholicism. Similarly, the accusation that Polydore burned historical manuscripts can be understood as an indirect allusion to the British History (and thereby Brutus and Arthur), given that the absence of source materials documenting Britain’s pre-Roman history is crucial to historiographers’ inability to confirm or deny Monmouth’s claims. The absence of evidence for Britain’s pre-Roman history was a source of considerable angst for Tudor historiographers who wrestled with that “dark abyss” that was British prehistory.

The ease with which such gestures towards the potential links between the commentator’s comments and the framework offered by Hay’s “simple explanation” represent the interpretative conditioning that results from an over-familiarity with a well-entrenched critical paradigm that is fashioned upon a few interpretive certainties. Ambiguous phrasing in the commentators’ note allows for a knee-jerk-like interpretation that is anchored in Hay’s “simple explanation”: Polydore was “a catholic European” who “rejected the legends of Brutus and Arthur.” This habit of thought is endemic when it comes to critical responses to Polydore, Trojan origins, and, more broadly, the Old British History.

\textsuperscript{11} Hay explains that John Foxe accused Polydore of burning original sources, and allegation that was repeated by John Caius and which eventually developed “into a fable that he [Polydore] had shipped incriminating manuscripts to Rome” (Hay, \textit{Polydore} 159).
As Philip Schwyzer explains, “the fact that Vergil was an Italian priest undoubtedly helped in whipping up the campaign against his history” (“British History” 16), and so it makes sense that Polydore’s Catholicism should serve as a ready-made point of conflict for Protestant readers; however, Anglica’s contents do not appear to support concerns about a Catholic bias. While the absence of such evidence does not mean that Polydore’s Catholicism did not contribute to Tudor authors’ angry responses, it is misrepresentative to characterize Anglica as a text that advances a Catholic bias. In fact, Book One achieves quite the opposite end with its remarkable and unexpected treatment of English religiosity.

While the ambiguities and qualifications Polydore introduces in his response to Britain’s Trojan origins allow some room for interpretive discrepancies, his treatment of English religiosity is considerably less vague. Despite the popular perception that Anglica was written with a Catholic bias, Book One’s treatment of English religiosity does not support this view. Rather, when Polydore exclaims that he will “therefore only add something about this nation’s religion” (16), the “something” that he adds is quite extraordinary:

…by the doing of St. Gregory, it was rescued from damnation, and since then Christianity has grown to the extent that, as I believe, no nation today is more devoted to divine worship, or observes it more piously and carefully. This is attested to be so by all the very fine churches it has in every villages [sic], the throngs which come to these churches and attend divine service, and also by the costly tombs of so many saints. Wherefore the English are especially be praised for this, that they are by far the most Christian and pious of men. (16)
How is it that a papal representative writing for Continental readers at a time when the English Protestant Reformation achieved critical momentum should exclaim, “no nation today is more devoted to divine worship”? Why does the Catholic Italian “rascal dogge knave” emphasize that the English “are by far the most Christian and pious of men”? Polydore’s positive, pro-English position is at odds with Tudor authors’ attacks in which references to his Catholicism function as unsubstantiated generalizations that are not directly related to *Anglica*’s contents. This exaltation of English religiosity accords with Polydore’s praise for the English in his prefatory epistle where he identifies *Anglica* as the “single thing” that will communicate the “greatness” of Henry VIII’s realm to Continental readers.

While the excerpt above might be dismissed as an exaggerated claim introduced to flatter an important dedicatee – such approaches are commonplace in prefatory materials and Book One is something of a prefatory piece given its function as *Anglica*’s introductory book – Polydore moves beyond rhetorical courtesies when he reinforces his position with a source-based assertion:

As Gildas attests, from the origin of the Gospel, Britain embraced Christian piety, to which it has always clung tightly, even among the savage persecutions of the Romans. For indeed at that time the Britons worshiped Christ, albeit not openly since, conquered by the Romans and the Saxons, they were compelled to sacrifice to pagan gods. And yet in private many men did not fail in their duty, with
the result that the Christian religion (as another place will show below) has always existed in this island… (16)  

What exactly does Polydore mean when he agrees with Gildas that, “from the origin of the Gospel, Britain embraced Christian piety”? Is this not an exceptionally unexpected position for a Catholic European, papal representative writing about a realm that was in the final stages of consecrating the Church of England? Contrary to both sixteenth- and twentieth-century perceptions of *Anglica* as a text informed by Polydore’s Catholic bias, *Anglica*’s contents suggest a very different position. In fact, Polydore’s approach mirrors the practices of Protestant reformers who were revisioning England’s history as part of an effort to unyoke England from Rome through the establishment of an independent Anglo-Christian foundation.  

Furthermore, how is this radical statement – “from the origin of the Gospel, Britain embraced Christian piety, to which it has always clung tightly, even among the savage persecutions of the Romans” – supported? Is Polydore relying upon a single source for this

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12 And yet, Polydore introduces this controversial subject-matter in an ambiguous fashion. Does Polydore agree with Gildas’s assertion that pre-Roman Britons were Christians? Based upon the way that the subject is introduced in this relatively short excerpt, I believe that it is possible to answer both “yes” and “no.” Surely, Polydore would qualify this statement in some way if he disagreed with the idea that the British were observant Christians long before St. Gregory? On the other hand, why wouldn’t he be more explicit about his belief in the veracity of Gildas’s position given the controversial and weighty nature of this claim? Rather, readers are left with an ambiguous approach that serves well to introduce the way that Polydore’s style complicates the more contentious subjects introduced in *Anglica’s* Book One.  

13 See John Curran’s *Roman Invasions* for an in-depth analysis of the ways that both Catholics and Protestants harnessed the British History in their debates over Britain’s pre-Roman Christian identity.
assertion? Is this approach representative of the evidence-based, modern, and scientific historiographical methodologies for which Polydore is remembered? Can this statement be reconciled with Roman sources? Polydore’s inclusion of Gildas’s argument for Britons’ early Christianity introduces one of Anglica’s more inventive narrative details.

While the implications that emerge from these excerpts must be more fully developed in a separate investigation, it is noteworthy for this study’s subject that Polydore’s comments about English religiosity function as something of a prelude to Book One’s second half where he confronts the question: who were Britain’s first inhabitants?

“A REPUTATION MANUFACTURED BY HIS ENEMIES”

Polydore’s Anglica is remembered as a work that overturned a three-century-long historical paradigm which informed how English men and women understood their pre-Roman history. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia (c.1180) popularized the legendary materials which circulated as part of the Brut tradition for more than three hundred years. The Galfridian tradition engaged stakeholders that extended far beyond monastic chroniclers; and Monmouth’s narrative nurtured the medieval historical imaginary through ballads, chronicles, romances and extra-literary artefacts such as genealogical rolls, portraits and tapestries.

While Polydore’s contributions to reframing reception of the Galfridian legends are an important feature of his legacy, two markedly different interpretive models for understanding Polydore’s response to the British History circulate within today’s critical
These two approaches differ in terms of how they portray Polydore’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins. One group attributes certainty and conclusiveness to Polydore’s response, and a second group explains that Polydore’s response is ambivalent.

Of these two critical approaches, the more conventional position explains that Polydore “castigated” and “rejected” this centuries-long domestic tradition. Within this popular interpretive model, Polydore is an Italian iconoclast whose views constituted an “irreverent chiding of Englishmen on their view of the past,” and he is understood to have destabilized the British historical imaginary by “undermin[ing] the whole fabric of legend erected by his predecessors and embellished by his contemporaries.”

This conventional model for understanding Anglica’s relationship to the Galfridian tradition characterizes Polydore’s response to the Historia as an “attack” motivated by a “complete disdain” for its representation of Britain’s pre-Roman history. Also, Polydore’s response to Monmouth is occasionally represented as a personal attack in that he did not consider Monmouth to be “an accurate historian”; he viewed the Historia’s account of Britain’s early history as “altogether unworthy of belief,” and he called Monmouth “a liar” and felt “hatred” for him. Unlike medieval historiographers such as Malmesbury, who criticized Monmouth’s legendary materials but did not have lasting influence on popular opinion, conventional critical approaches portray Polydore’s legacy as results-oriented: he

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14 As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, individual critics can also move between these two positions within a single publication, thereby adding to the uncertainties associated with this anomalous critical narrative.

15 Mason 82, n.84; Royan 549; Henige 145; MacDougall 18-19; McKisack 100-101.
“discredited Geoffrey of Monmouth,” “dismissed [Geoffrey] from serious consideration,” and brought about “the destruction of the credibility of Geoffrey’s entire history.”

The British History’s most prominent topical touchstones are Brutus and Arthur. Polydore’s “debunking of the Arthurian legend,” his claims that “most of the [Arthur] story was nonsense” and his dismissal of Arthur’s Continental conquests as “silly little tales” are considered by some to have delivered a “devastating blow” to an enduring and celebrated historical and cultural symbol. While some critics assert that Polydore achieved the “wholesale demolition” of Arthur’s historical veracity, others note that there is a disjunction between Polydore’s perceived accomplishment and Arthur’s resilience in the popular historical imaginary. Polydore’s responses to the Brutus myth and Britain’s Trojan origins are described with particularly emphatic language: Polydore “demolished the Trojans,” he “demolished the myth of origin,” he “destroyed the credibility of the Troy legend” and he did so “with gusto and without reprisal.”

16 Woolf The Idea of History 230, Hay 113, Carley 186, Escobedo Nationalism and Historical Loss 53, MacDougall 18, McKisack 100, Popper 92, Waswo “History that Literature Makes” 544. See also Waswo Founding Legend 98, MacDougall 17.

17 Unlike Arthur, Brutus of Troy has largely disappeared from the British historical imaginary. Arthur’s legend was, and remains today, an important feature of the English historical imaginary. Arthur’s ongoing popularity is evident in Arthur-related pop culture adaptations (books, films, video games), scholarly publications, archaeological digs (archaeologists recently claim to have found Camelot’s ruins in Western Wales), and even Arthurian revivalist societies. In BBC News’s 2002 survey of the “Top 100 British Heroes,” Arthur ranks alongside David Beckham, Princess Diana, and Winston Churchill.

18 Mason 1987, 61. See also Landreth 266; Klausner 24; Kennedy xxii; Summit 119; Higham 2.

19 Woolf “From Hystories” 64; Heal 116; Merriman 90; Carley 186. See also: MacDougall 18; McKisack 100-101. And, also, Hay Polydore 157, McKisack 103-104, Hattaway 104, James, 87.
As a representative group, the excerpts in the three preceding paragraphs are characteristic of what may be described as the critical tradition’s conventional-normative approach to interpreting Polydore’s response to four interdependent subjects: Geoffrey and his *Historia*, the British History (in general); Arthur; and, Brutus and Britain’s Trojan origins. While there is a range of tones encountered in the preceding examples, these excerpts share one important interpretative characteristic – they achieve a tone of certainty and conviction in their interpretations of Polydore’s positions.

Despite the relative consistency of the interpretive approaches shared by most historians and literary scholars, these explanations for Polydore’s reception of the British History are, at best, only partial in terms of how Polydore treats the subject in his *Anglica*. And given this partial representation, the certainty with which the above claims are expressed should cause some concern considering that these examples represent critical dogma. This is not to say that *Anglica* does not contain evidence that supports some of the above claims; but, there is a need to acknowledge that current practices tend to isolate supporting evidence in order to advance conclusive interpretations. Doing so necessitates that Polydore’s repeated efforts to qualify his shifting positions (if only by regularly contradicting himself in the process) about British History-related subjects are ignored.

*Anglica*’s relationship to this broader critical pattern demonstrates the curious habits of critical transmission mechanisms in that, for example, despite Kendrick’s demonstrated influence on the critical reception of the legends associated with the British History, this

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20 The preceding excerpts are grouped according to these four British History-related subjects. One of the challenges in dealing with this topic relates to the many moving pieces associated with it. Sixteenth-century authors often held different views on the different elements that contribute to what is commonly referred to as the British History. Thus, an author was capable of supporting one element, while disputing details in another.
same critical tradition overlooks Kendrick’s unusually moderate position on Polydore’s reception of Trojan origins (Kendrick’s reception of Polydore is discussed next). This chapter does not attempt to resolve the critical disjunction related to *Anglica*. This chapter’s focus on the critical tradition’s misrepresentation of Polydore’s reception of the British History has less to do with an effort to rehabilitate scholarly understanding of Polydore’s *Anglica* than it does with demonstrating that the critical tradition’s treatment of Polydore is yet one more contributing factor to the critical narrative that governs perceptions of the Elizabethan reception of Britain’s Trojan origins.

This normative approach that misrepresents Polydore’s reception of Trojan origins reflects a critical practice that is encountered with each of the four narrative elements that give shape to what was introduced in the previous chapter as Kendrick’s critical narrative. This chapter demonstrates that the third pillar in the critical narrative – Polydore’s response to Trojan origins – is as unstable as the first, and, the third and fourth, which are examined in chapters three and four respectively. What follows in this chapter is a demonstration of the critical transmission mechanisms that contribute to these distorted critical commonplaces as they relate to Polydore’s reception of Trojan origins. Accomplishing this allows me to reinforce this study’s central argument by showing how the fragile foundations supporting each of the four pillars that structure the critical narrative must necessarily undermine confidence in current critical perceptions of Britain’s Trojan origins. These deeply entrenched habits of thought have gone unquestioned for more than six decades.

Unlike the certainty and conclusiveness that characterize conventional representations of Polydore’s response to Britain’s foundation myth, there is a second, less well-known interpretive model that frames Polydore’s treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins in an altogether less conclusive fashion. One of the earliest critics to articulate this more
measured approach is, quite unexpectedly, Sir Thomas Kendrick. Despite the consistency with which Kendrick treats “the confused, fabulous nonsense that could be found in, or added to, the British History” (78), his interpretation of Polydore’s response to the British History is relatively measured. Pairing Polydore with John Major as examples of “the cooler and quieter currents of thought that purged our early history of these obviously preposterous legends” (78), Kendrick describes Polydore’s treatment of the British History as “neither unpleasantly sarcastic nor conclusively destructive” (83), and he observes that Polydore’s treatment of Arthur is limited to a “cruel little paragraph” (39). When he compares John Major’s treatment of the same subject, Kendrick considers Polydore’s critique of the British History as being delivered in a “much milder manner” (79). Significantly, Kendrick concludes by observing that “[t]he extreme sensitiveness of the British to the Italian’s rather mild twitting of their traditional history” is “one of the curiosities of the Tudor period” (84).

Fritz Levy, Antonia Gransden, and Joseph Levine are some of the historians who share Kendrick’s more measured interpretive position. These authors do not suggest that Polydore believed the Historia’s legendary materials; rather, the interpretive model shared by this second group tends to qualify Polydore’s disbelief by explaining how he “was too polite

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21 Inconsistencies seem to be unavoidable in discussions of legendary materials. Consider the disjunction between Kendrick’s view that Polydore’s thoughts “purged our early history of these preposterous legends” and the series of interpretations that follow.

22 “Vergil challenges the Brutus story, because it was not mentioned by such writers as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus” (Gransden 436).

23 Others include Edward Kennedy and Schwyzter, who explain that Polydore “raised serious questions” (Kennedy xxii) and expressed “deep skepticism” (Schwyzer Literature, Nationalism 33) about the Historia’s account of Britain’s pre-Roman history.
– or too intimidated – to say so directly.” 24 Unlike more conventional critical interpretations that attribute conclusiveness to Polydore’s perceived efforts to “undermine the whole fabric of legend” (McKisack 100-01), Levy, for example, explains that “Polydore never quite went to the extreme of denying the old stories altogether” even though “his commonsense doubts made it clear to his readers where he stood” (Levy 1967, 172). 25 Regarding Polydore’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins, Levy writes:

…[Polydore’s] doubt was expressed blandly enough: Polydore merely stated a reluctance to guess too much about such obscure points, and where controversy existed, he would put down both sides – a position he continued to take up throughout the work. He disliked taking sides even on so important a matter as the origin of the Britons themselves, so he told the Brutus story for all its inherent improbabilities. …for all his distaste at taking sides, Polydore refused to accept Brutus without qualifications: for one thing it was difficult to imagine that the island could have gone so long untenanted when, as everyone knew, it could be seen from France on a clear day. (Tudor Historical Thought 58, my emphasis)

24 “It hardly needed argument to persuade someone like Polydore Vergil, who was both a humanist and a foreigner, that the British history was all legend, though he was too polite—or too intimidated—to say so directly” (Levine 49).

25 Fritz Levy’s Tudor Historical Thought (1967, rep. 2004) provides what is quite possibly the last independent interpretation of Polydore’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins.
Levy’s interpretation differs from conventional approaches given his effort to accommodate Polydore’s ambivalent response to Britain’s Trojan origins. While still acknowledging Polydore’s doubts, Levy avoids the certainty that characterizes more familiar representations of Polydore’s perceived response to the Brutus myth. Levy’s claims that Polydore’s doubt about Britain’s Trojan origins “was expressed blandly enough,” that he conveyed a “reluctance to guess too much,” that he “disliked taking sides,” and that, despite all this, he “refused to accept Brutus without qualifications” (58) present readers with a nuanced interpretation that works hard to negotiate Polydore’s ever-shifting response.

The qualitative differences that distinguish the interpretative approaches of these two models represent an unexamined interpretative inconsistency related to Polydore’s response to the four key subjects associated with the British History. Why is it that despite their authority and influence, the measured interpretations of Gransden, Kendrick, Levine, and Levy are not shared by most critics? The following case study concretizes the ways in which these two approaches complicate and undermine interpretive efforts.

26 While the critical tradition’s normative tone is occasionally substantiated through references to a short list of familiar quotations that provide necessary support when taken out of context, Levy’s approach takes time to acknowledge how Polydore’s discussion unfolds in different ways, at different places, throughout Anglica’s opening section. Readers who take the time to read these pages will eventually find themselves disoriented because of Polydore’s use of rhetorical switchbacks that introduce a continuum of differing impressions. Critics who incorporate some primary evidence from Anglica to support their interpretations largely rely upon evidence drawn from a small sample of quotations from Anglica’s Book One.
CRITICAL TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS: FEIBEL’S GLITCH

Juliet Feibel’s treatment of Polydore in “Vortigern, Rowena, and the Ancient Britons: Historical Art and the Anglicization of National Origin” (2000) draws attention to a few of the concerns that require consideration, while also demonstrating the possibilities that exist for original interpretations of Polydore’s *Anglica*. In her article, Feibel introduces two brief and relatively independent references to Polydore’s *Anglica*. Initially, she writes:

> When Polydore Vergil gently criticized Geoffrey's mythologizing in his *Anglica Historia* (1534), he, and generations of historians after him, concentrated their skepticism on Brutus and Arthur. Although there is as little documentary evidence for Rowena as for Arthur, Vortigern and Rowena escape critique. In fact, Polydore's description lingers over Rowena's “beawtie” and her “looverlike” behavior, although he dutifully condemns her as a “trulle.” (Feibel 6, my emphasis)

Feibel’s opening sentence introduces Polydore’s reception of Monmouth in the measured tone of Levy and Gransden: “Vergil gently criticized Geoffrey’s mythologizing.” This introductory remark leads into Feibel’s identification of an inconsistency in Polydore’s treatment of a few legendary figures. She explains that, unlike Brutus and Arthur, “Vortigern and Rowena escape critique.” Feibel continues by explaining that Polydore’s different treatment of these legendary figures likely has to do with the fact that, “[u]nlike Arthur and Brutus, Rowena and her story resembled historical fact” (6).
Three pages later, Feibel refers to this relatively brief mention of Polydore’s reception of Geoffrey’s *Historia* when she writes:

We saw earlier how Polydore Vergil, writing for an English patron, had ridiculed Geoffrey’s work as so much pleasant nonsense. His criticisms set off a violently patriotic response on the part of the Welsh, who saw the British History – written by a Welshman and providing glorious origins and magnificent heroes for the Welsh people – as a cornerstone of their identity (Kendrick, pp. 34-44).²⁷ (Feibel 9, my emphasis)

In the three pages that separate these two references, Feibel’s discussion makes no further mention of Polydore, or *Anglica*, however, her interpretation of Polydore’s reception of Geoffrey’s *Historia* has shifted from a measured tone to a conclusive tone: “gently criticized” becomes “ridiculed.” It is possible that there are unacknowledged subtleties in Feibel’s thinking about the differences between “Geoffrey’s work” and “Geoffrey’s mythologizing” that

²⁷ Feibel’s shift to the normative tone (“ridiculed”) is immediately followed by Kendrick-inspired language to describe the Welsh and their “violently patriotic response.” While Kendrick adopts the measured tone in his treatment of Polydore, Feibel does not adopt his approach in this reference, and yet she concludes her remarks by citing Kendrick. In n.17, she writes: “For the 16th- and 17th-century battles over Geoffrey’s *Historia*, see Thomas Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1950), still the authoritative treatment of the subject” (my emphasis). This example calls attention to the lack of precision with which critics move between interpretations, interrelated subjects, and authoritative sources.
account for this verb shift, but this distinction may also reflect yet another complicating factor for contemporary critics: conceptual elision.28

Feibel’s identification of inconsistencies in Polydore’s treatment of legendary figures (Brutus/Arthur versus Vortigen/Rownea) is a meaningful observation that is directly related to the subject of her article, and her insights about Polydore’s treatment of legendary figures point toward opportunities for original research. Given Polydore’s relative unimportance to the substance of Feibel’s central argument, the shift in her characterization of Polydore’s reception of Monmouth’s Historia is mostly immaterial to a reader’s appreciation of her paper’s argument. Polydore is introduced as a minor subject, a point of reference, and Feibel’s verb choices provide what can be read as an effort to introduce a nuanced quality to her understanding of Polydore’s reception of Monmouth. Establishing this type of interpretative familiarity lends authority to what matters for Feibel’s paper: a brief discussion of Polydore’s treatment of Vortigen and Rowena.

The disjunction between Feibel’s unsupported, and somewhat offhand, references to Polydore’s reception of Geoffrey—“gently criticized” becomes “ridiculed”—reflects what may be nothing more than a glitch in what has become a mechanical critical-response process; a critical commonplace by which authors introduce interpretative assertions that

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28 Conceptual elision refers to the process by which critics blur the distinctions between, and conflate, Polydore’s reception of the complex web of interrelated subjects associated with the British History. Over the past six decades, this process of conceptual elision has resulted in a relatively consistent normative tone being applied to four interrelated subjects that, during the Elizabethan era, and even in early twentieth-century criticism, were treated with some degree of independence. Today’s representations of the early modern reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia, Britain’s Trojan origins, Arthur, and the various other legends (e.g., Merlin’s Prophecies, Brennus, Cadwalder’s vision, King Lear) that contribute to the British History have become, at times, indistinguishable.
intimate firsthand understanding of Polydore’s reception of the British History. The treatment of Polydore’s reception of Monmouth’s *Historia* has set according to generally accepted interpretations that are, in the main, governed by the normative tone. Feibel’s references to Polydore’s reception of Geoffrey (as distinguished from her insights into Polydore’s inconsistent treatment of legendary figures) call attention to themselves because, while only some critics cross their tonal wires to this extent in a single publication, this slip foregrounds an otherwise ubiquitous critical practice. Feibel’s glitch, the mixing of verbs that are commonly associated with either the normative tone or the minor tone, is an example of the degree to which interpretative shortcuts have become familiar practices associated with the representation of Polydore’s reception of the British History.

Conventional representations of Polydore’s “rejection” of Britain’s Trojan origins are illustrative of positions articulated by some Tudor authors who associated Polydore with an “attack” on Britain’s foundation myth. While acknowledging this parallelism between sixteenth- and twentieth-century readers’ reception begins to help explain today’s critical disjunction, this observation has gone unacknowledged since Levy explained that:

Polydore’s reputation as a great debunker – a reputation manufactured by his enemies – has tended to blind students to the inconclusiveness of much that he said. Polydore *rarely set down a definite decision* on a controversial point, even if he sometimes made it clear where he stood when he printed both of two opposing stories. (*Tudor Historical Thought* 53, my emphasis)
Published more than forty years ago, Levy’s original observation that “Polydore’s reputation as a great debunker” is less representative of what Polydore wrote than it is a reflection of what his sixteenth-century opponents wrote about him helps to explain how today’s critical disjunction emerged. Perceptions of Polydore’s “attack” on Britain’s Trojan origins are representative not so much of Anglica’s contents as of Tudor authors’ responses. That is, today’s conventional interpretations are representative of “a reputation manufactured by his enemies.”

If it is the case that Polydore’s treatment of Britain’s foundation myth is a form of “mild twitting” (Kendrick 84) given a “reluctance to guess too much about such obscure points” (Levy 58), then many Tudor authors’ angry responses seem exceptionally disproportionate. For example, Lodowick Lhuyd exclaims:

[Polydore] sought, not only to obscure the glory of the British name, but also to defame the Brutaynes themselves with slanderous lies. … I beleeve that Brutus came unto Britayne with his traine of Troians, and then tooke upon him the government of the anncient inhabitants, and of his owne men, and thereof were called Brutaynes.

How much a man without shame, that Polydorus Virgillius is, who doubteth not to affirme, that Claudius Caesar vanquished the Brutaynes without any battaile, and most impudently calleth them dastards, whom Caesar himself, Tacitus, Dion and Herodian: terme by these names, most warlike, cruell, bloudthirstie, impatient both of bondage, and inuries. But an infamous beggage groome, ful fraught with envie, and hatred, what dareth he not do, or say? (Lhuyd qtd. in Greenlaw 184)
As with the anonymous commentator’s example considered earlier, in which Polydore – “that most rascall dogge” – is accused of plagiarism and burning source materials, Lhuyd’s response achieves a personal pitch through an attack on Polydore the person: that “man without shame,” that “infamous beggage groome.” Unlike the commentator’s criticism, which does not explicitly refer to the three issues included in Hay’s “simple explanation” (Brutus, Arthur, and a Catholic bias), Lhuyd’s criticism associates Polydore with questions about the veracity of Britain’s Trojan origins.

That said, Lhuyd’s concerns with Polydore’s efforts “to obscure the glory of the British name” and “defame the Brutaynes” are general criticisms not supported with evidence. How does Lhuyd believe that Polydore’s Anglica “obscure[s] the glory of the British name”? What, specifically, are the “slanderous lies” that Lhuyd has in mind? Lhuyd’s opinions about Polydore’s transgressions against the “Brutaynes” and his response to the veracity of Britain’s foundation myth are not helpful for understanding how Polydore’s Anglica achieves these ends. While Lhuyd associates Polydore with concerns about Trojan origins, this link is not grounded in textual details. Lhuyd’s defence of the veracity of Britain’s Trojan origins is associated with Polydore only by way of proximity. That is, Lhuyd’s reference to Polydore and Lhuyd’s defence of Britain’s foundation myth appear in the same paragraph.

While it seems clear that Lhuyd perceives a relationship between Polydore and questions about the veracity of Britain’s foundation myth, it is an ambiguous association. Given that several other Tudor authors responded to Polydore in similar ways, it is understandable how these animated responses came to inform conventional critical perceptions. Like Lhuyd’s response, the following excerpts from Arthur Kelton and Thomas
Twyne associate Polydore with Brutus without disputing specific details about *Anglica’s* treatment of the veracity of Britain’s foundation myth:\footnote{I was introduced to Kelton’s and Twyne’s excerpts in Greenlaw, who provides a comprehensive overview of Polydore’s detractors.}

\begin{verbatim}
But first to you, master Polidorus
Your conscience, onely to discharge
Whiche of long tyme, hath been oblivious
Against vs Brutes, in writyng so large
Your spirites incensed, all in a rage
By your reporte, vs to inflame
Your pen to rashe, your termes out of frame
Where is become, your bounden deute
Our antecessours, this to deface;
\end{verbatim}

Similarly, Thomas Twyne writes:

\begin{verbatim}
By whose endeuour Polidore,
must now surseace to prate,
\end{verbatim}

\footnote{In this excerpt from Arthur Kelton, only one of the issues from Hay’s “simple explanation” is mentioned. Kelton does not refer to Polydore’s Catholicism or Arthur, but he mentions Brutus: “Against vs Brutes.”}

\footnote{Also, in *A Chronycle with a Genealogie declaring that the Brittons and Welshmen are lineallye descended from Brute. Newly and very wittily compiled in Meter* (1547), Kelton writes: “Withdrawe your pen, Master Polidorus/Your vain reporte, and flyng fantasy/No more in this to amplify/But what maie stande, with honesty/Wordes of defame, ye maie well thinke/Men will requite, euen to the pittes brinke.”}
To forge, to lie, and to defame,

kynge BRUTUS worthy state.  

Kelton’s and Twyne’s general criticisms of Polydore are representative of other Tudor authors’ responses to Anglica. If, as Levy suggests, these positions have shaped popular perceptions of Polydore’s response to Britain’s foundation myth, these views require reassessment given the lack of specificity to charges against Polydore. Just before examining the treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins in Anglica’s Book One, it is worth returning to Lhuyd’s excerpt to note the issue of concern addressed in his second paragraph (see above excerpt, page 76). Lhuyd’s concerns in this excerpt introduce another source of tension for Tudor historiographers: Britons’ responses to Caesar’s conquest of Britain. Unlike the tentative link established between Polydore and Trojan origins, Lhuyd’s response to Polydore’s representation of Caesar’s conquest of Britain is explicit. Specifically, Lhuyd’s criticism addresses Polydore’s misrepresentation of his Roman sources.

It may be that the advantages of hindsight contribute to today’s perceptions of Polydore’s superior historiographical practices. That is, knowing which side of the sixteenth-century “Battle of the Books” ended up being right may be the chief reason for the lack of critical interest in understanding the complexities, nuances, and varied responses to Anglica.  

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32 Thomas Twyne, translator: The Breuiary of Britayne . . . Written in Latin by Humfrey Lhuyd of Denbig, a Cambre Britayne, and lately Englished by Thomas Twyne, Gentleman (1573).

33 Leland’s response to Polydore’s Anglica initiated the “Battle of the Books.”

34 With only a few exceptions (see Hadfield and Carley), there is little scholarly interest in studying the works of Polydore’s opponents. It is also the case that Anglica’s ambiguities, questions, and uncertainties remain unexamined.
For example, Levy considers representations of Polydore’s victory over John Leland as “strange and more than a little misleading”:

Polydore is acclaimed because in the end he proved to be right and Leland wrong. Yet an examination of their respective methods demonstrates that Leland’s was that of the humanist critics of sources, of Valla and his followers, and was essentially the better of the two. (131)

Levy’s view of Leland’s methodological approach as “the better of the two” is a position shared by Carley and Hadfield. Despite these three authors’ contrary views, Leland continues to serve as an exemplar of the “emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries” whose works “do not reflect the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of the day” (Kendrick 40-41). By contrast, Polydore’s iconic status as a discerning scholar35 whose “mind bred in the classical tradition”36 produced the first “critical and objective” history of England37 is today’s

35 “Discerning scholars, beginning with Polydore Vergil, were able to abandon the notion that British lore had been successfully transmitted from the supposed era of the fall of Troy down to the present” (Curran “History Never Written” 501-2).

36 “But he is always cooler than Hall and he has no taste for melodrama. And, though Hall and his successors were all too ready to criticize the monastic historians, what makes Polydore’s judgements much more remarkable is that they sprang, not from Protestant prejudice, but from the impact of the inferior annals and semi-fictitious histories of the Middle Ages on a mind bred in the classical tradition and accustomed to new methods of criticism” (McKisack 101).
unchallenged dogma. Levy describes today’s perceptions as shaped by the advantages of hindsight, “because in the end he [Polydore] proved to be right and Leland wrong.”

This interpretive disjunction is further complicated by discrepancies relating to Tudor authors’ responses. While it is commonly acknowledged that Tudor authors actively responded to Anglica during the second half of the sixteenth century, there is some confusion about the nature of these responses. For John Curran, “defenses of Geoffrey’s historicity” were “undermined by a wave of sixteenth-century criticism of Geoffrey, given voice by Polydore Vergil (1534), and stalwart authority by William Camden (1586)” (“Geoffrey of Monmouth” 4). Curran’s position represents his sense of the distribution of publications between believers and non-believers, and he identifies Anglica’s publication as the tipping point for “a wave of sixteenth-century criticism.” By contrast, Schwyzer observes that there is little extant evidence written by Tudor authors who supported Polydore’s scepticism. For Schwyzer, responses to Anglica were somewhat “one-sided”:

What some have termed “the battle of the books” consisted in fact

of a one-sided thumping of Vergil by a host of outraged English and

37 See also: “With royal encouragement he wrote the Anglica Historia (1534), the first work produced in this country to be based on objective consideration of evidence and comparison of source materials, principles that we associate with the methods of Renaissance historiography” (Parry Trophies of Time, 27).

38 Polydore’s Anglica, like Thomas More’s Richard III, stands apart by way of its innovative approach to writing English history, which influenced successive generations of historiographers in various ways and to varying degrees. For example: “What change did occur [with the chronicle tradition] was due primarily to the influence of Polydore Vergil, and that, though pervasive, was perhaps less effective than is sometimes believed” (Levy Tudor Historical Thought 167).

39 Considering Curran’s authoritative status, his views serve well to represent current conventional beliefs.
Welsh writers (the fact that Vergil was an Italian priest undoubtedly helped in whipping up the campaign against his history). ("British History" 16)

Curran’s and Schwyzer’s positions represent yet another unacknowledged interpretive disjunction. Schwyzer makes the point that between 1534 to 1586, Polydore’s Anglica was largely subject to “a one-sided thumping” by Polydore’s detractors. By contrast, Curran’s position collapses the fifty-year divide between the publication of Polydore’s Anglica and Camden’s Britannia. His approach neutralizes, even inverts, the potential significance of the disequilibrium between the volume of publications written by Polydore’s supporters and opponents. Curran’s approach, which is examined more closely in Chapter Four, serves to perpetuate the critical narrative for a revolution-like response to the British History during the Renaissance.

“NOW I PROPOSE TO DISCUSS THE NATURE OF ITS MEN.”

Midway through Anglica’s first book Polydore introduces a topical transition that shifts his focus from overviews of England’s “three other parts” (Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall) to an examination of England’s inhabitants when he exclaims: “Now I propose to discuss the nature of its men” (15). With this assertion, Polydore introduces Book One’s second half,

40 Book One consists of approximately 17, 600 words divided between thirty-three paragraphs; it examines eleven separate subjects that are grouped between two halves.

41 Explaining that England – “the first part” – is the subject for Anglica’s twenty-six Books, Polydore provides brief overviews of the “three other parts” in Book One’s first half: “I have chosen to set forth these details
which consists of three distinct subsections: Polydore’s inquiry into the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants; Polydore’s rehearsal of Monmouth’s pre-Roman history; and Polydore’s examination of Caesar’s conquest of Britain.

It is in Anglica’s six central paragraphs that Polydore responds to the matter of Britain’s Trojan origins as part of his inquiry into the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants. Polydore’s treatment of these two related subjects returns Anglica’s focus to the priorities foregrounded in his letter to Henry VIII: namely, “the nature of Britain,” “the origin of this nation,” and “the arts…[as] founded in the beginning.” Polydore introduces his analysis of these subjects in the following way:

What manner of men initially inhabited Britain, whether they were native-born or colonists, is quite unknown. As a result, from antiquity onwards authors have scarcely agreed about this about the division of Britain first, so that, now understanding the whole in terms of its parts, I may more easily describe its nature, which is as follows” (10). For each of England’s four parts, Polydore employs similar topical schemas that describe administrative and ecclesiastical districts, agricultural commodities and practices, economic resources, geographical size, livestock specimens, natural resources, topographical features and wildlife. Polydore’s overviews of England’s “three other parts” establish the governing style for Book One’s first half, which is written as a mostly objective narrative developed through an analysis of concrete details. This fact-based analysis is consistent with Polydore’s legacy.  

42 Paragraphs sixteen to twenty-one are where Polydore addresses the conceptual cognates: Britain’s Trojan origins and Britain’s first inhabitants.

43 In the second half of Book One, Polydore rehearses Britain’s pre-Roman history according to the narrative established in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae.

44 Understanding how Anglica’s Book One addresses first inhabitants is a means to acquiring a more comprehensive appreciation for the tensions between Polydore’s Anglica and its Tudor readers.
matter. Regarding this subject (that I may not on the one hand rashly give my faith in affirming something, nor on the other gain unpopularity by refuting something), here in due order I shall rehearse and set before the reader’s eyes the opinions of those men, so that everything might be subjected to the judgment of others, as ought to be done in an uncertain case of this kind. (16)

It is noteworthy that this inquiry does not begin with explicit references to the British History, Britain’s Trojan origins, or Monmouth’s Historia. Instead, Polydore’s inquiry begins by addressing long-standing uncertainties about the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants: “whether they were native-born or colonists, is quite unknown.” Nevertheless, an inquiry into the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants necessitates Polydore’s response to the Galfridian tradition and questions about the veracity of Britain’s Trojan origins. Polydore’s strategy in responding to this controversial subject is to maintain the appearance of neutrality, “that I may not on the one hand rashly give my faith in affirming something, nor on the other gain unpopularity by refuting something”; by rehearsing the “opinions” of “ancient sources”; and by encouraging readers to draw their own conclusions. These narrative strategies are the sources for many of today’s critical discrepancies.

Polydore acknowledges that the absence of evidence makes conclusions about “an uncertain case of this kind” difficult, and he distances himself from the controversy by

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45 Five major conquests, regional divides, and the absence of extant records from the pre-Roman era ensure the obscurity of Britain’s origins.

46 That is, Julius Caesar, Tacitus, Bede, Pompenius Laetus, and Gildas.
emphasizing the issue’s long-standing uncertainty: “from antiquity onwards authors have scarcely agreed about this matter.”

But where shall I do, since I perceive everything to be full of darkness? Indeed there is nothing more hidden, nothing more uncertain, nothing more unknown than early deeds of the Britons, in part because their annals, if there were any (as I have previously shown Gildas to testify) have wholly perished and cannot be drawn on by historians as a source, and partly because that nation, being located at a far distance, was very lately discovered by both the Greeks and the Romans. (20)

While there are various indirect references to Britain’s Trojan origins that make any type of definitive conclusion impossible (as in the above examples), Gransden identifies the way that Polydore comes closest to expressing disbelief in the foundation myth when she explains that “Vergil challenges the Brutus story, because it was not mentioned by such writers as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus” (436). Following a short description of the Brutus myth, Polydore writes:

Then he [Brutus] occupied the island and named it Britain after himself, and so Brutus was the father of the British nation and empire. But Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and many others who wrote diligently about Roman antiquities never made mention of this Brutus. Nor can this be fetched from the Britons’ annals, since long ago they lost all their written records, as Gildas attests… (19)
Polydore’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins, specifically, is source based. As many authors writing before *Anglica* was published observed, there is no evidence to support this claim except Monmouth.

Polydore’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins is absorbed into a more sustained and conclusive inquiry into the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants. While it seems like splitting hairs, it matters that Polydore and his contemporaries attended to these subjects in a seemingly independent fashion. Given that communicating the “greatness” of Henry’s realm to Continental readers depends upon an understanding of English “origins,” it is surprising that the end result of Polydore’s inquiry into the “origins” of Britain’s first inhabitants is a disparaging portrayal.47 Polydore’s “something certain” about “the original of the peoples” (29) includes a series of “truths” drawn from his ancient sources. Employing a Russian doll-like mode of ventriloquism, Polydore describes these original inhabitants and simultaneously undermines Monmouth’s version of pre-Roman British history by using an excerpt from William of Newbury in which William summarizes Gildas’s views:

Some other authors, who have a popular esteem which their care or accuracy in writing do not deserve, have found another origin for the nation. How important this question has come to be is shown by William of Newbury, an Englishman and their contemporary who lived about 1195 under Richard I. In the proem of his history, when he speaks of Gildas’ authority, he writes as follows:

47 Many of the controversial issues that are attended to in the second half of Book One are introduced, often in very understated ways, in Book One’s first half. In a sense, Polydore seems to be laying the groundwork early on for the approach that he adopts with the more controversial materials in the second half of Book One.
“It is no small proof of his integrity that in telling the truth he is unsparing of his own people, and, although he is sparing in speaking good of them, he deplores their many evils. And so that he might not conceal the truth, he does not shrink from writing of the Britons (though one himself) that they were neither brave in war nor trustworthy in peace. But on the other hand, in our times a writer has come forth to excuse these faults in the Britons, manufacturing many silly fictions about them, and with his impudent vanity extolling them for their virtue far above the Macedonians and the Romans. This man is named Geoffrey, having the surname of Arthur because he writes much about Arthur taken from the fables of the ancient Britons and embroidered by himself, and passing it off as honest history by giving it the coloration of the Latin language. Indeed with a greater boldness he has published very spurious prophecies of Merlin, supplying additions of his own invention when translating them into Latin, and passing them off as genuine and guaranteed by unshakable truth.”

Thus he wrote, as did Gildas before him. But not I, who write what is written, because there is no man who can justly grow irate at me for passing on that old dictum “nether brave in war,” &c. (18)

In addition to relying upon conclusions drawn from ancient sources, Polydore offers a self-described “original” resolution to the question of the origins of Britain’s first
inhabitants. His contribution to this long-standing debate is simple, unremarkable, and certainly not a methodological innovation that convincingly supplants Monmouth’s theory for Britain’s Trojan origins.

But, although I have promised I would not take either side, neither affirming any view of the nation’s origin to be true, nor reproaching it for being false, but rather that I would set it out for my readers’ judgment, as I have done until now, yet, after the matter has been placed in conjecture, I shall nevertheless speak up in this place, which seems scarcely inconsistent with the truth. When confronted with such a variety of ancient writers’ opinions, I may with at least some show of probability offer up and demonstrate something certain about the first inhabitants of this land which, as far as I can see, is absent from those writers’ testimony, since I hold it dishonorable to leave a self-evident thing unspoken as if it were not comprehended. So, then, since particularly on clear days, the island can easily be seen from the French coast, and the white cliffs along its shore (because of which it was once called Albion) are visible from afar to sailors, it could at no time have been unknown to the people of the Continent. And so it is impossible to believe that it ever lacked inhabitants, such as other lands received at the same time, and was not obliged, as more modern writers have it, to wait to be settled by some exile or runaway (often a guilty one, at that) from Spain, Germany, France or Italy. And so we may believe that
from the very beginning of this world the island was inhabited, and after Noah’s Flood it received its occupiers just like other lands, and it was these that Caesar called native-born. In this matter Gildas agrees with me, as shown above. And yet I do not deny that afterwards an admixture of neighboring Germans, Gauls and Spanish settled in it, as they do at this day, and among them Bretons of the Continent, after whom, being the first settlers and more numerous, Bede says the island received its new name. (34-35)

While these conclusions are somewhat destabilized by Polydore’s recurring qualifications, he agrees with authors who “have found another origin for the nation” (18). Adding to existing theories, Polydore explains that he believes Britain’s first inhabitants are post-diluvian immigrants. The original community was added to by subsequent waves of immigrants from France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Finally, the self-described original argument that Polydore introduces to debates about Britain’s first inhabitants is this: “the island can easily be seen from the French coast. … And so it is impossible to believe that it ever lacked inhabitants.” This simple and innocuous conclusion seems anticlimactic given Poldyore’s legacy.

“ACCURACY AND INDEPENDENT READING OF THE SOURCES”

This chapter does not challenge the notion that Polydore introduced new approaches to the writing of English history. Polydore’s historiographical innovations, and his eventual influence on his successors, are well-documented. While there are questions to be asked of
the emphasis that has been placed on the degree to which Polydore influenced the late-sixteenth-century shift away from the chronicle tradition, and on the accuracy, consistency, and integrity of his methodologies, they are not my immediate subject. Polydore’s Anglica, like Thomas More’s Richard III, stands apart by way of its innovative approach to writing English history. These works influenced successive generations of historiographers in various ways and to varying degrees.

More generally, the late-sixteenth-century surge in the publication of English histories was accompanied by the rise of active debates about the best methodological practices. As McKisack explains in her discussion of one such well-known debate:

… the controversy [between Grafton and Stow] has at least revealed that a section of informed opinion was beginning to demand from the historian a certain standard of accuracy and independent reading of the sources, if nothing more. (113)

This chapter argues for a need to re-examine the critical tradition’s interpretations of Polydore’s reception of the British History. In doing so, I attend to one of the four narrative pillars that shape the critical tradition’s understanding of the British History. Given Polydore’s unquestionably minor status as an occasional point of reference, there may be some need to emphasize that this reassessment of Polydore matters because an appreciation

48 For example: “What change did occur [with the chronicle tradition] was due primarily to the influence of Polydore Vergil, and that, though pervasive, was perhaps less effective than is sometimes believed” (Levy 1967, 167).
of early modern engagements of Britain’s Trojan origins as a whole depends upon an understanding of the parts.

The instability created by the multiple, often contradictory, positions that Polydore adopts in his Anglica has resulted in forms of divided reception among readers from both the sixteenth century and, more recently, the past six decades. As Hay explains, Tudor readers professed to “distrust and dislike the Anglica Historia” while making “exhaustive use of it” (157), whereas twenty- and twenty-first-century critical interpretations are divided in terms of their understanding of how Polydore treated Britain’s pre-Roman history. There is a need to continue reconsidering the generally accepted assumptions about the relationships among Polydore’s Anglica, the Old British History, and the responses of Tudor authors. For this study, the most significant reason to advocate for such intervention relates to the ways in which Polydore’s reception of the Old British History supports the critical narrative introduced in the previous chapter. There is a need to return attention to the primary evidence in an effort to interrupt the critical transmission cycle that currently reflects several generations of scholarship that perpetuates misconceptions which have achieved a legendary-like quality in their representation of the legend of Britain’s Trojan origins.
Interpreting Elizabethan authors’ references to Britain’s Trojan origins depends upon an understanding of Queen Elizabeth’s relationship to the Brutus myth. Studies of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, for example, approach his treatment of Britain’s foundation myth through a critical framework that relies upon the notion of what has been termed the Tudor myth, or Tudor cult. This term refers to the popular belief that Tudor monarchs, beginning with Henry VII and continuing on to Elizabeth, were particularly invested in harnessing materials from the British History to legitimate their claim to the throne. The second pillar of Kendrick’s critical narrative is the subject for *British Antiquity*’s third chapter – titled “The Tudor Cult of the British History” – in which Kendrick explains that, “[w]e need not ask for further proof of the existence of a Tudor cult of King Arthur and of the renewed affection for the British History in the first half of the sixteenth century” (40). As discussed in chapter one, Kendrick’s emphasis on “the existence of a Tudor cult” during the “the first half of the sixteenth century” has been re-examined by Sydney Anglo, whose investigation into Henry VII’s relationship to the matter of Britain qualified Kendrick’s argument about the degree to which there was an early “Tudor cult” of the British History.\(^1\)

As discussed in chapter one, the Tudor cult functions as the second pillar of the broader critical narrative introduced in Kendrick’s *Antiquity*.\(^2\) This chapter aims to establish a

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\(^1\) While Anglo qualifies Kendrick’s argument, he directs readers to Kendrick as the authority “[o]n the history of the reception of Geoffrey’s work see T.D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity*” (18, n.1).

\(^2\) The four pillars of Kendrick’s critical narrative include the following: Monmouth popularizes the legend; the legend circulates widely and goes unchallenged for two centuries, experiencing a significant revival in 1485,
better understanding of the relevance and applicability of the Elizabethan Tudor cult as it relates to literary interpretations. Revisiting the substance behind the popular notion of a Tudor cult is necessary because Queen Elizabeth’s relationship to Britain’s Trojan origins remains a central concern for today’s interpretations of Trojan origins-related works of literature written by Elizabethan authors. Toward this end, this chapter analyses the ways that the notion of the Tudor cult shapes a long-standing critical debate about Edmund Spenser’s engagement with Britain’s Trojan origins.

While no similar study testing the notion of a Tudor cult during Queen Elizabeth’s reign has been published, perceptions of an Elizabethan Tudor cult remain familiar in literary criticism today. For example, John Steadman explains his understanding of the relationship between Edmund Spenser and the Tudor cult:

Ancestor worship is inevitable, especially if one is praising a monarch; and the circuitous route by which a Welsh dynasty had assumed the crown of England and Ireland, with a titular claim to the throne of France, made it virtually inevitable also that a “poet historicall” should in some way exploit the “Tudor myth” and the Queen’s British descent. (547)

which is referred to as the “Tudor cult”; Polydore Vergil introduces a challenge to the legend in his *Anglia* (1534) and creates a stir; and, finally, William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586) brings about the legend’s eclipse.

3 Analysing the arguments that advance the notion of a Tudor cult matters because there are consequences for literary interpretations. Currently, the generally accepted existence of a Tudor cult means that there is an increased stake in terms of whether an author such as Spenser did or did not support the Trojan origins myth, in that his position ultimately adds an extra-literary quality to the poem.
Expressing a similar view, S.K. Heninger explains that, of the Tudor monarchs, it was Queen Elizabeth

who seemed most flattered by reminders of her descent from the British line and who made the greatest political capital of it. She rejoiced to be called “O Beauteous Queene of second Troy,” the refrain of a welcoming song by Thomas Watson about 1591. Particularly in the suspenseful years of the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth seemed pleased to sponsor the fiction of Brutus and Troy-novant and Merlin’s prophecy. (“Tudor Myth” 386)

Continuing along the same lines, but with a focus on William Shakespeare, Heather James foregrounds the significance of Shakespeare’s decision to use the Troy legend as the subject for his most “caustic,” “offensive,” and “nasty” play by emphasizing Englanders’ relationship to the legend. James explains that Troilus and Cressida’s “idiosyncratic character of…should be viewed against encomiastic uses of the Troy legend in histories, lyric, masques, and pageantry” (13). She continues to emphasize that Troy’s influence on the imaginations of Elizabethan audiences was embodied in a process of translation of empire that began with Monmouth’s Historia in which England is linked back to Troy through Aeneas’s grandson Brutus.

Troy’s extra-literary implications for early modern English men and women are a necessary socio-political context for James’s study. Such an approach extends beyond an author’s individual relationship to the subject of Troy to include an understanding of a communal, early modern reception of Troy. It is also the case that domestic English
reception is included in a Western European tradition. For example, James introduces her discussion of the English treatment of Troy by framing it within a pan-European context:

The Troy legend became a transcultural, transhistorical model onto which poets such as Ariosto and Ronsard might graft indigenous myths of origin. The political authority inscribed in Vergil’s epic and its Trojan myth awaited only transcription into the culture, history, and language of European governments in need of a legitimate history. (15)

Such a critical paradigm is not unique to James. In fact, this approach reflects elements of a long-standing critical paradigm shared by scholars whose works engage with early modern representations of Troy-related materials. Over the past century, this critical paradigm has had several different incarnations.

Among early- and mid-twentieth-century scholars such as Greenlaw, Kendrick, and Millican, the terms Tudor myth or Tudor cult were employed to reflect the complexities of reception that are, more universally, introduced by James. Such critical approaches frame the subject of Troy, and its implications for early modern Englanders, through a top-down model that emphasizes monarchical prerogatives as a mechanism for shaping broader cultural paradigms. While the term Tudor cult is no longer as familiar as it once was in this context, its function for early-twentieth-century scholars is satisfied for twenty-first-century critics in similar ways.⁴

⁴ The utility of the concept in criticism develops through socio-political critical approaches that frame the early modern reception of Troy within a context that allows for meaningful extra-literary implications.
One application of this broader concept is introduced by Stephen Powell and Alan Shepard, who explain the pan-generic interest in the subject of Troy among late medieval and early modern European authors as a function of “the centrality of the Trojan legend within the medieval and early modern European social imaginary” (1). This contextual framework extends to include the following extra-literary implications:

In medieval and early modern Europe, when dozens of versions of the Troy legend were in circulation and readers and auditors sometimes understood the legend's actors to be their own ancestors, the legend was made to perform weighty tasks—commenting on imperial prerogative, dynastic succession, even destiny. Indeed, in those times the legend's durability was tied far less to literary value than to its usefulness. It is well known that the myths of Trojan origin were commonplace in many parts of Europe, that Brutus (great-grandson of Aeneas) was said to be the founder of Britain and Francion (son of Hector) the founder of France. Such myths served to legitimate the identities, distinctiveness, and gloriousness of various individuals and groups. But the myths also brought with them their own warnings. By linking their pasts to Troy, medieval and early modern Europeans were surely also questioning their own futures. (1)

While this example from Powell and Shepard moves beyond the English-specific use of the Tudor cult, there are a number of parallels between such pan-European perceptions of the
reception of Troy and the ways that early-twentieth-century critics such as Greenlaw, Kendrick, and Millican used the term within a specifically English context.

A more recent example is provided by Matthew A. Greenfield, who links the late-sixteenth-century surge in the Troy legend’s popularity as a literary subject with what he describes as a surge in English nationalism. For Greenfield, the Troy legend “began to serve with increasing frequency as a point of origin for the English nation, not just for the English monarchy or English letters” (184-85):

…the English nationalists of the sixteenth century set about constructing a national literature, a national language, a shared historical memory, and common ancestors. In early modern England many of the fictional genealogies invented to give the infant nation an appearance of antiquity centered on the fall of Troy. (184)\(^5\)

Similarly, for Heather James, it was during the final decade of the sixteenth century that the legend of Troy acquired a new resonance in terms of its relationship to the English identity:

Shakespeare’s contemporaries liberally employed the Troy legend to praise the virtues of Elizabeth, James, and London itself…Elizabeth’s identification with Astraea and the return of

\(^5\) Greenfield’s remarks here are supported through a reference to an excerpt from George Peele’s \textit{A Farewell} (1589), which is the subject of analysis for the second half of this chapter. Greenfield’s comments will be examined more fully during the analysis of Peele’s pamphlet.
the golden age of Protestantism formed a strong link with the potent *renovatio* of the Troy Legend so important to earlier Tudors...[and]... When James VI and I came from Scotland to ascend the English throne, the poets in charge of royal entertainments and triumphs took pains to foster the link of English royal authority and the classical models favored in imperial Rome. (16,18)

For John Clark, it is possible to extend these literary links even further when it is acknowledged that many noble families, “particularly those with Welsh ancestry, such as Tudors and the Deveraux, could consider themselves possessed of “Trojan blood” (210) and build an iconographical base for legitimacy based on this historical claim.

England’s epic bubble of the 1590s was closely associated with the Elizabethan matter of Troy. Extant evidence supports observations that the siege of Troy achieved unprecedented popularity as a subject for London’s burgeoning, vernacular, cultural scene during the post-Armada decade; however, the extra-literary implications that serve as the foundation for interpretations of Troy-related literature, as in the preceding examples, are advanced through what can be described as an evidence-gap. This gap results from socio-political contextual frameworks built upon Troy-related evidence drawn from works of

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6 John S. P. Tatlock’s well-known and oft-repeated assertion bears repeating here: “no traditional story was so popular as the siege of Troy...[with]...the especial vogue of the Troy-Troilus story in drama occur[ring] between 1598 and 1602” (673,675). On the stage alone, there were numerous Troy-related performances including such titles as: *Troilus and Pander, Thersites, Troilus ex Chaucero, Troy* [Henslowe’s], *Ajax Flagellifer, Ajax and Ulysses, Troilus and Cressida* (Chettle and Dekker), *Troilus and Cressida* (Shakespeare), *Tragedie of Agamemnon*, and *The old destruction of Troy.*
literature – not extra-literary evidence. This imbalance in available evidence results in interpretations of Troy-related *works of imaginative literature* that extricate extra-literary implications from *works of imaginative literature* in order to reinforce, in a circular fashion, arguments about extra-literary implications. It is also the case that the extra-literary implications attributed to imaginative literature are regularly overstated given that there are very few examples of Elizabethan authors who extend their treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins, in a sustained fashion, beyond the well-established ceremonial gestures designed to glorify England’s pre-eminent domestic symbols: Elizabeth and Troynovaunt.

Until more accurate analysis of extant, extra-literary evidence becomes available, current critical approaches exist as a combination of *a priori* beliefs in some version of the Tudor cult and the old historical conceptual model of a Renaissance historical revolution. Together, these two concepts reinforce the perception that Elizabethan authors negotiated a tension “between the desire to keep what was universally recognized as an ancient tale and the growing need to represent history scientifically from verifiable facts” (MacLachlan 113). According to Hugh MacLachlan, the impetus to perpetuate the link between Britain and its supposed Trojan origins was directed from the top:

> the strongest encouragement to uphold the Trojan origins of Britain came from the Tudor monarchs. The notion of ancient and imperial lineage appealed to these recent descendents of dynastic compromise. Their coats of arms included Brutus and Arthur, and official genealogies traced their titles back to Brutus. (“Arthur” 113)
Greenfield, James, Kendrick, MacLachlan, and Steadman employ a paradigm shaped by a belief that the Tudor cult, as representative of monarchical emphasis on maintaining Trojan ancestry, explains poets’ decisions either to reinforce or to reject Trojan genealogical links in their works.

While Elizabethan authors demonstrated interest in Trojan origins, as evidenced in their choices to include references to the legend in their works, there is very little direct evidence to demonstrate that Queen Elizabeth and her advisors were interested in maintaining or propagating Britain’s Trojan origins. Despite considerable effort over several years, I have been unable to identify any direct evidence to support this popular perception, which functions as the central tenet for the Tudor cult. Nevertheless, a handful of extra-literary artefacts – e.g., “Their coats of arms included Brutus and Arthur, and official genealogies traced their titles back to Brutus” – are regularly introduced as authoritative anchors to sustain the notion of a Tudor cult, which serves as the conceptual foundation for elements of extra-literary interpretations. The details about these artefacts remain unexamined and ambiguous, and yet references to these artefacts continue to be cited based upon recycled assumptions that today’s authors and readers are somehow familiar with the implications associated with these supposedly authoritative materials.

7 None of Elizabeth’s writings include references to the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins, and, as evidenced in the absence of this topic in studies such as Louis Montrose’s _The Subject of Elizabeth_ (2006), there is a lack of evidence to support Elizabeth’s interest in the subject.

8 Most of these artefacts were introduced into the critical discourse over a century ago.
In *The Faerie Queene*’s three sections dealing with Britain’s Trojan origins (Arthur reading the *Briton moniments* [II.10]; Merlin’s prophetic chronicle of Britomart [III.3], and Paridell’s account of his Trojan ancestors [III.9]), Spenser “narrates the entire mythological history of Britain except for the time of Arthur, which is the subject of the poem” (Levy “History” 371). The *Briton moniments*, read by Arthur in Eumnestes’ chamber, includes many of the most familiar stories from Monmouth’s *Historia*, and, as Jerry Leath Mills explains, while Spenser relied on the *Historia* as his basic source, “he consulted at least eleven other works for particular details, often using several for a single stanza” (152). While the content of the *Briton moniments* is composed of materials from a variety of historical sources, Andrew Fichter explains that Spenser employs a Virgilian model to engage this history such that Spenser’s “dynastic epic brings into focus what must be considered one of the most basic elements of epic from Virgil onward, its consciousness of history” (1-2). For Fichter, “the narrative strategy of the dynastic poem reflects the assumption of a historically oriented mind that the present may be regarded as the culmination of a course of events set in motion in the remote past” (2). For many critics, this culmination of historical events in *The Faerie Queene* is inescapably bound up with the concerns examined in chapter two of this study: historiographical debates about Britain’s pre-Roman history prompted by the publication of

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9 Some of Spenser’s extant sources include, Gildas’s *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (6th century; pub. 1525, 1567, 1568); Caxton’s *Chronicles of England* (1480, etc.); Fabyan’s *New Chronicles of England and France* (1516, etc.); Stow’s *Sumnarrie of Englyshe Chronicles* (1565, etc.) and *Chronicles of England* (1580); the 1574 and 1578 additions to the *Mirror for Magistrates*; Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577, rev. ed. 1587); and Camden’s *Britanniae* (1586 etc.; tr. 1601) (Levy *Tudor Historical Thought* 371).
Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia*. Historiographers' efforts to reconcile the issues of British origins are thought to feature in *The Faerie Queene* through Spenser's efforts to recount “the famous auncestries / Of my most dreaded Soveraigne” (II.10.1).

Among Elizabethan works of fiction that include references to Britain’s Trojan origins, *The Faerie Queene* has generated a disproportionately large amount of critical attention. Scholarly interest in Spenser’s treatment of Trojan origins can be explained in part by *The Faerie Queene*’s canonical status. While Spenser's treatment of Trojan origins is a relatively minor feature of *The Faerie Queene*, the degree to which critics are interested in his treatment of English history means that even this relatively minor subject has earned considerable attention. Investigations into Spenser’s handling of Britain’s Trojan origins appear in interrelated sub-fields of scholarship that include politics and literature, the epic tradition, and history.

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10 At issue for many critics who treat the Trojan origins materials in *The Faerie Queene* is the question of whether Spenser did or did not believe in the Galfridian foundation myth. An attempt to account for the range of materials included in Monmouth’s *Historia* makes it possible to appreciate that it is somewhat inaccurate to suggest that any individual author did or did not believe the materials in *Historia*. Such generalizations gloss over the hundreds of details that appear in various ways in different texts.

11 Readers may be surprised at the relative obscurity of such references. Despite the significance that is attributed to the topic, there are in fact only a handful of works from the Elizabethan era that engage with this topic. e.g., Drama: *Gorboduc* (1565), John Higgins ed., *Mirror for Magistrates* (1574 ed.), *The Misfortune’s of Arthur*. Verse: William Warner, *Albion’s England* (1586), Thomas Churchyard, *The Worthiness of Wales* (1587), Robert Chester, *Love’s Martyr* (1601), Maurice Kyffin, *The Blessedness of Brytaine* (1587).

12 While the boundaries between these areas of study overlap, potential groupings include: Politics and Literature: Klager’s *Forgone Nations* (2006); Hadfield’s *Literature, Politics, and National Identity* (1994); and Helgerson’s *Forms of Nationhood* (1992). Epic Tradition: Waswo’s *The Founding Legend of Western Civilization* (1997) and his essay “The History That Literature Makes” (1988); Quint’s *Epic and Empire* (1993, 1989); Heninger’s
A key contextual issue upon which these critical arguments depend is the notion of a Tudor cult, which advances the idea that Elizabeth I was meaningfully invested in the origins narrative. MacLachlan’s view that the “strongest encouragement to uphold the Trojan origins of Britain came from the Tudor monarchs” (113) becomes more pointed with Michael O’Connell’s position:

The historical dimension of *The Faerie Queene* derives from Spenser’s ambition to be the acknowledged laureate poet of Elizabethan England. He wished his voice to be heard by those in power, especially the Queen. (“Allegory, historical” 23)\(^1\)

Isolated in this way, O’Connell’s comment reads as a potentially reductive interpretation of the historical dimension in *The Faerie Queene*; however, O’Connell’s position reflects a pragmatic reading that surfaces in the thinking of other critics like S.K. Heninger, who describes “the roll call of ‘my glorious Soveraines goodly auncestrie’” as being designed to flatter “Elizabeth by publicizing her grandfather’s restoration of the British dynasty,” and sure to please “the populace by recalling their time-honored heritage from Troy” (“Tudor

\(^{13}\) Authoritative reference works such as *The Spenser Encyclopedia* serve as important transmission mechanisms for the continuity of Kendrick’s critical narrative.

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Myth” 387). Along these lines, Joan Warchol Rossi argues that a “morally ambiguous and pessimistic” interpretation of Briton moniments “is an untenable position for an epic poet creating a national vision for the Age of Elizabeth” (46). O’Connell, Heninger, and Rossi take the critical position that Spenser treated early British history seriously. That is, his inclusion of the Trojan origins-related materials serves to endorse the foundation myth. In a somewhat more qualified fashion, this position is shared by Andrew Escobedo, who observes that situating oneself as such,

goes against the grain of recent criticism, much of which contends either that Spenser disbelieved Geoffrey’s narrative entirely or that the question of historical accuracy is irrelevant to Spenser’s true purpose. (Nationalism and Historical Loss 165)

At the other end of the continuum there are critics like Kendrick, who, in no uncertain terms, asserts that “Spenser did not believe in the British history” (128). While Kendrick was not a Spenserian, his influence on the critical tradition in terms of our understanding of Trojan origins means that his arguments about Spenser’s treatment of Britain’s foundation myth maintain authority today. As discussed in chapter one, Kendrick argued that Spenser, when confronted with the task of composing the chronicles, “had to introduce with apparent seriousness something that all his intelligent friends considered to be completely bogus history” (127). Similarly, when Arthur B. Ferguson addresses Spenser’s treatment of the British History, he concludes that Spenser “considered himself privileged, as a poet, to do anything he wanted with it,” and Ferguson paraphrases Kendrick when he
claims that “[Spenser] did not believe Geoffrey’s stories” (36). Ferguson covers his position by directing readers to pages 126-32 of *Antiquity* (36 n.26).  

Others who are positioned at Kendrick’s end of the continuum include Elizabeth Bellamy and Rebeca Helfer, whose contributions to *Fantasies of Troy* (2004) argue that Spenser intended to challenge the Brutus myth. Bellamy argues that the Britomart-Paridell episode in *The Faerie Queene* can be interpreted as Spenser’s view that the myth of Trojan origins serves as an outmoded fashion in late-Elizabethan England. In a somewhat more decided fashion, Helfer advances the view that “Jove’s trial [in Nature’s Court] thus implicates Tudor divinity and England’s imperium. On trial is the question of whether England can justly claim to inherit Trojan fictions of history” (247). For Helfer, “Spenser voices doubts about the use and abuse of the Troy legend”; he articulates “ambivalence toward empire-building,” and he intimates “England is building its empire upon fictions of history” (240, 242).

Unlike the somewhat polarized critical positions observed in the examples above, there are a few critics who accommodate the genre-specific distinctions that Spenser adopts with his inclusion of historical subject-matter in *The Faerie Queene*. Andrew King offers a somewhat graded sense of Spenser’s historiographical approach when he explains that Arthur’s veracity is not at stake in *The Faerie Queene* (180). While David Ian Galbrait’s *Architectonics of Imitation in Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton* (2000) is not a study dedicated to the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins, it provides a comprehensive overview of the subject of

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14 For Ferguson, Spenser imagines *Briton moniments* to be not unlike *Antiquitie of Faerie lond*: poetic fancy (124).
the Brutus myth in chapter three, “Translatio Imperii in Book III of The Faerie Queene,” in which Galbrait explains how,

Spenser uses the legend of Trojan ancestry and the political fiction of translatio imperii, the translation of imperial authority, in negotiating the boundaries between poetry and history. (52)

Significantly, Galbrait's work draws attention to the parallels between narratives of origins among Renaissance readers and classical historiographers, and the role of uncertain boundaries in epic poetry that mix fact and fiction. Galbrait's emphasis on the boundary between poetry and history is a topic that is also of interest to Escobedo. Unlike the portrayal of the Briton monuments read by Arthur – “old records from auncient times deriv’d” (II.10.57) – Escobedo explains that “The Faerie Queene is not an antiquarian treatise, but it invokes beliefs about historical evidence, physical artefacts, and Arthurianism” (Nationalism and Historical Loss 21). Sixteenth-century antiquarian debates over the veracity of Britain’s Trojan ancestry, centred on the absence of “historical evidence” for pre-Roman British history, can be added to Escobedo’s list of “beliefs” invoked by The Faerie Queene.

These debates concerned with Spenser’s treatment of the Brutus myth in The Faerie Queene provide a meaningful case study for understanding today’s critical perceptions of the Elizabethan reception of Britain’s Trojan origins. While my approach in this chapter benefits

15 Galbrait’s argument related to Spenser’s Faerie Queene is concerned with “Spenser’s use of the idea of translatio imperii, first proposed to justify the coronation of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor, [which] draws on connections between violence and violation, and textuality and insemination. These motifs underlie his narrative articulations of the relationship between poetry and history and between England and Rome” (55).
from understanding the range of voices positioned along the existing continuum of critical responses to Spenser’s treatment of Trojan origins, the subject for this study is the critical paradigm that is employed by Spenserians from all sides of the existing debate. Literary critics engaged in a consideration of Spenser’s possible reception and adaptation of the Brutus myth develop from the notion of a Tudor Cult. Assessing this shared critical paradigm’s suitability is the focus for this study’s critical intervention, and this chapter is concerned with investigating the Tudor cult’s influence upon literary interpretations.16

Debates about Spenser’s engagement with Trojan origins exist within a static critical paradigm emerging from a shared critical framework. This Spenserian discourse remains dependent upon Kendrick’s critical narrative about the life-cycle of the Brutus myth, an argument that is itself developed through the theory of a Renaissance historical revolution and belief in the existence of the Tudor cult. While not all critics share Kendrick’s view that “Spenser did not believe in the British history” (128), interpretive arguments about *The Faerie Queene*’s treatment of Trojan origins have long been based upon an either-or dialectical model split between positions arguing that Spenser either believed or disbelieved in Trojan origins. This critical context affirms this study’s central argument about the need for a new critical paradigm that will rehabilitate interpretations of Trojan origins-based references in works such as *The Faerie Queene*.

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16 As John M. Steadman explains in his discussion of *The Faerie Queene*, “the appeal to antiquity as a nobility topos was conventional” (546-47). Also, given Spenser’s efforts to consolidate material from multiple sources, why does he choose to innovate with the discontinuity of Brutus’ line based upon what has been identified as an approach included only in *Gorboduc*?
“POET HISTORICALL”

Given the range of interpretations for Spenser’s relationship to Britain’s pre-history, it is productive to remember the title Spenser identifies with in his Letter to Raleigh, where he aligns himself with the “Poets historicall” Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso. According to Levy, unlike Spenser’s approach in A View of the State of Ireland, where he “shows himself able to use the latest antiquarian scholarship and, occasionally the new ‘politie’ history,” in The Faerie Queene, Spenser remains “determinedly old-fashioned, casting himself not in the role of an historian but in the far different role of a ‘Poet…historicall’” (“History” 371).

Not unlike the assertions of authorial objectives commonly encountered in early modern historiographers’ prefaces, Elizabethan poets made similar efforts to provide readers with genre-specific ground rules articulated in paratextual materials. One of the more familiar Elizabethan examples appears in Spenser’s Letter to Raleigh, where he describes his role as poet historical in a way that echoes Philip Sidney’s articulation of this issue in his Defense of Poesy (1586). Spenser, like Sidney, emphasizes that the poet historical’s choice of genre depends upon an authorial approach that is clearly delineated from that of the historiographer:

An Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all. (738)
As Sidney explains, the shortcomings in historiographers’ approaches result from an over-concentration on artificial efforts to prove causation, while relying upon recycled evidence that is “built upon the notable foundation of hearsay,” which creates the illusion of authority:

The historian scarcely giveth leisure to the moralist to say so much, but that he, loaden with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself (for the most part) upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay; having much ado to accord differing writers and to pick truth out of partiality; better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth than how his own wit runneth… (89)

While an author such as Spenser shared Sidney’s position, it is worth noting that their views reflect the disciplinary values and methodological approaches of a unique network of authors concerned with a specific genre at a point in time when disciplinary identities in the English tradition were jostling for status. Understandably, Sidney’s criticisms of historiographical approaches are inverted when considering the positions of historiographers. Such examples of disciplinary wars can be drawn from almost any era, but the following excerpt achieves an animated pitch that serves well to represent the tensions between historians and poets. In his preface to *The History of King Richard III* (1619), Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels from 1610 to 1622, describes his sense of the distinctions between authorial approaches:
The ignorant, and never-understanding vulgare; whose faith (in history) is drawne from Pamphlet and Ballad, and their Reverend and learned Autors, the stage, or those that play the bauds to it, for a living. Let them fly their owne pitch, for they are but kytes, and Crowes, and can digest nought (soe well) as stench and filth, to which I leave them. (xx)

The significance of revisiting these seemingly obvious disciplinary distinctions has to do with my observation that one important feature contributing to confusion about the Trojan origins-related critical lens stems from a prevalent critical practice that seems to have gone unchecked: the problematization of distinctions between early modern genres of history and literature. Many critics blurred the boundaries between genres in literary interpretations of Elizabethan works of fiction that incorporate historical subject-matter. One outcome of this approach is that these porous generic boundaries facilitate ever more complex extra-literary interpretations, while neutralizing the need to address complications that arise from interpretations that account for genre-specific distinctions in the treatment of historical subject-matter. Spenser and Sidney represent the many Elizabethan authors who experimented with genres; however, my sense is that the boundaries between Elizabethan history and fiction were considerably less distinct for twentieth-century literary critics than they were for Elizabethan authors.

As discussed earlier, the notion of a Renaissance historical revolution is commonly associated with the perception that there was a notable shift in the reception of Trojan origins near the end of the sixteenth century. The conventional explanation is that the Camden-led antiquarians advanced an increasingly scientific and material evidence-based
approach to historiography. For Escobedo, as the historical veracity of Britain’s Trojan origins eroded, the subject began to shift away from the historiographer’s domain onto the “threshold” between fiction and history – the domain of poets and dramatists.

Fictional history, what Renaissance writers often referred to as “poesy historical,” represents in some ways a last-ditch attempt to imagine the nation firmly grounded in ancient tradition. (22)

While there is evidence to suggest that this may have been the case given the rise in Troy-related subject-matter published during the late sixteenth century, the resulting conclusions are another example of a priori approaches. Such conclusions might require reassessment if there is a more precise understanding of whether these Troy-related publications had anything to do with Trojan origins. Today’s research technologies allow for much more precise and comprehensive evidentiary-based approaches that are capable of substantiating these a priori assertions through a comparative analysis that accounts for the massive differences in the number of extant texts available from the early modern era and the Middle Ages.

Herein lies one of the consequences of the persistent influence of the notion of the Renaissance historical revolution within today’s critical narrative for the early modern reception of Britain’s Trojan origins. Extant evidence suggests that the vast majority of medieval texts that included references to the Brutus myth are fictional romances, not histories. And so, the popular notion that the Brutus myth became the stuff of poets during the late sixteenth century seems to miss the point: it was always the stuff of poets. But, and this is the great conceptual challenge for those working with this topic, it was also always the
stuff of historiographers. Genre-based comparisons of extant evidence can help reconcile these paradoxes. Historiographers such as Polydore recognized the force of fiction – “old wives’ tales do not agree with the truth” (2) – and made an effort to correct popular perceptions. That said, Polydore was neither the first nor last to make observations based upon disciplinary biases.

A large collection of extant publications means that there are many new insights about the English reception of Trojan origins that emerge from works written during the second half of the sixteenth century. Familiarity with these various perspectives has very much to do with the new media made possible through ever more accessible publishing technology. The voices of England’s minor authors gained new-found permanence through the printed word. As a result, materials available from late-Elizabethan authors offer unique insights into this subject if only because, unlike with preceding generations, the ideas and opinions of a much broader group of authorial voices have been preserved.

This evidence helps clarify how authors from this particular generation engaged Britain’s Trojan origins. For example, Ben Jonson reconciled the need for continuity of origins with the veracity of sources in a footnote in his Part of the Coronation Entertainment (1604) where he exclaims:

Rather than the City should want a Founder, we choose to follow the received story of Brute, whether fabulous or true, and not altogether unwarranted in Poetry: since it is a favor of Antiquity to few cities to let them know their first Authors. (Jonson qtd. in Escobedo 143-44)
While there are various examples from a range of Elizabethan authors who express angst related to the uncertainty of England’s pre-Roman history, Jonson’s response to reconciling the “vast blank” deserves attention for its genre-specific qualifications. It is possible that Jonson’s rather pragmatic response is occasionally confused, given what may be perceived as an inability to distinguish between the stuff of history and the stuff of fiction; however, Jonson’s “and not altogether unwarranted in Poetry” offers an explicit comment upon the relationship between genres and the subject of Britain’s Trojan origins. Jonson speaks to the necessary distinctions between the suitability of subject-matter for poets and historians.\(^\text{17}\) More importantly, he addresses the genre-specific conditions that apply to poetry, as distinguished from historiography.

Jonson’s acknowledgement of the subject’s uncertainty – “whether fabulous or true” – introduces a position that is also expressed by Spenser. While *The Faerie Queene* does not include this type of explicit engagement with the historical veracity of Trojan origins, Spenser seemed to articulate doubt about Britain’s Trojan ancestry in one manuscript of his *A View of the State of Ireland* where, mocking the Irish pretension of Spanish origins, Irenius remarks that

> the Irish doe heerein no otherwise, than our vain English-men doe
in the Tale of Brutus, whom they devise to have first conquered

\(^\text{17}\) As noted in Chapter One (p. 22), one of Spenser’s models, the poet historical Ariosto, provides yet another perspective on this issue. A more caustic commentary on the relations between patrons and poets who made use of the Troy legend is found in canto thirty-five of *Orlando Furioso*, where Astolfo, during his journey to the moon, receives a cynical lesson in literary history.
and inhabited this land, it being impossible to prove, that there was ever any such Brutus of Albion or England. (44)\textsuperscript{18}

“[I]t being impossible to prove” anticipates Jonson’s “whether fabulous or true,” and recalls Polydore’s “there is nothing more hidden, nothing more uncertain, nothing more unknown than early deeds of the Britons” (20).

Neither Spenser nor Jonson advocates for an outright dismissal of the foundation myth based upon what is often portrayed in literary criticism as a subject of grave import for matters of national identity and monarchical legitimacy. Jonson, Spenser, and Polydore acknowledge that there is no evidence to support claims about Trojan origins; however, unlike Polydore the historiographer who makes an effort to introduce new theories to explain the origins of Britain’s first inhabitants, neither Jonson nor Spenser seems concerned with doing the same. Spenser’s sceptical treatment of the tale of Brutus and his criticism of “vain English-men” in \textit{A View} achieve a markedly different register from the treatment these two subjects receive in \textit{The Faerie Queene} where, according to MacLachlan, Spenser makes Britain’s Trojan ancestry central to the epic’s “dynastic and imperial themes” (113). Spenser’s ability to move between these distinct positions need not be especially surprising given the differences in genres between the two publications.

\textsuperscript{18} That this passage was cancelled in all but one manuscript of \textit{A View} calls attention to itself, and some critics speculate about the possibility that these lines were excluded because of Queen Elizabeth’s interest in sponsoring the fiction of Brutus and Troy-novant (Heninger “Tudor Myth” 386). Such \textit{a priori} speculation represents conventional approaches to the application of the Tudor Cult as critical model through which to interpret potential outcomes associated with literary interpretations of Spenser’s treatment of Trojan origins.
GEORGE PEELE’S A FAREWELL

A dearth of scholarship related to the Elizabethan matter of Troy means that today’s understanding of the ways in which authors such as George Chapman, Robert Greene, John Lyly, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and William Warner, to name only a few of the better-known authors of the period, engaged this collection of materials remains partial. Elizabethans negotiated a kaleidoscope-like collection of Troy-related details within a wide range of literary and extra-literary publications. Literary interpretations of late-sixteenth-century engagements with the matter of Troy require new critical approaches that can facilitate more sophisticated assessments of the subject’s variable reception for Elizabethan authors and readers. George Peele’s A Farewell¹⁹ provides some new understanding of these Troy-related reception issues.

Peele’s A Farewell provides an example of how one of Spenser’s close contemporaries, an author whose style is considerably indebted to Spenser’s influence, engaged Britain’s Trojan origins. While the final section of this chapter is mostly concerned with A Farewell, this analysis is contextualized through a consideration of some of Peele’s other works that include references to Trojan origins: The Device of the Pageant Borne before Wolstan Dixi, Lord Mayor of the City of London (1585), Eclogue Gratulatory (1589), Polybymnia (1590), Descensus Astraeae (1591), Honour of the Garter (1593) and Anglorum Feriae Englandes Hollydayes (1595). As this list suggests, Peele’s publications are especially well suited for this study’s focus on Britain’s Trojan origins, given that his works include a wide range of genres.

¹⁹ The full title reads: A farewell Entituled to the famous and fortunate generalls of our English forces: Sir Iohn Norris & Syr Frauncis Drake Knights, and all theyr braue and resolute followers. VVbereunto is annexed: a tale of Troy, Doone by George Peele, Maister of Artes in Oxforde (1589).
that include references to this little understood subject. The analysis that follows sheds new light on Elizabethan engagements with Trojan origins in that it foregrounds the subject’s function as an Elizabethan literary convention, as opposed to current critical tendencies that, in my opinion, overemphasize the topic’s substance as a socio-political hot potato central to heated critical debates about English national identity and monarchical legitimacy.

In his pamphlet, A Farewell, Peele harnesses the legend of Britain’s Trojan origins to achieve an epic tone intended to celebrate the launch of the English counter-Armada of April 18, 1589. This includes its unique treatment of Britain’s foundation myth such that Peele attributes Trojan ancestry to Sir John Norris, Sir Francis Drake, and the more than 21,000 troops who participated in this ill-fated mission. Additionally, A Farewell serves as an example of the curious divide between Homeric Troy and Britain’s Trojan origins. The duality between these two surprisingly independent narratives in late-Elizabethan publications has not been previously examined. A Farewell offers a rich demonstration of the awkward interplay between the subjects of ancient Troy and Britain’s Trojan origins – a relationship characterized by thematic discord in Elizabethan publications.21

The final section of this chapter introduces readers to a work that will likely be unfamiliar to most, Peele’s A Farewell; however, in keeping with this study’s primary focus, what follows is an effort to advance understanding of one aspect of the Elizabethan matter of Troy: Britain’s Trojan origins. Through an analysis of Peele’s pamphlet, I hope to further

20 “Homeric Troy” refers to the Troy materials that exist as both a historical subject and a popular epic.

21 This confusion between the two Troys is also evident in today’s criticism. Perhaps it should not be surprising that today’s uncertainties and misunderstandings about the Elizabethan matter of Troy closely resemble sixteenth-century reception. One difference may be that today’s partial perspectives tend to attribute static/consistent modes of reception to Elizabethan subjects. Or, rather, there is a tendency to apply a single reception model for all.
an appreciation for the current disjunction between today’s critical conception of Trojan origins, while foregrounding areas for research that can transform understanding of this subject and its relationship to the works of literature in which it appears.

In April 1589, following that “famous yeare” of 1588, Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake set out to continue shaping European history with an ambitious plot to recast the King of Portugal. Norris and Drake’s objectives, reminiscent of plotlines from popular plays being performed on London stages, are described by Bruce Wathen:

… a plan to elevate the pretender Dom Antonio to the throne of Portugal and to destroy the surviving Armada vessels anchored in the Tagus went disastrously wrong. The expedition was commanded jointly by Drake and Sir John Norris, two experienced generals. However, a combination of poor provisions, confused objectives and disagreements between the commanders meant that little was achieved for the loss of many lives. (10)22

Despite the post-Spanish Armada momentum and sense of providential destiny that may have bolstered Norris and Drake’s confidence when they sailed from Plymouth’s ports, the expedition had an unexpected tragic ending. Peele’s A Farewell, dedicated to Norris, Drake and “and all theyr brave and resolute followers,” set the epic tone for this misplaced

22 The objective of this expedition was, as Bullen explains: “to seat the needy refugee ‘king’ Don Antonio (who spent some years in England, snubbed by Queen Elizabeth, who posed as his patroness, and shunned by courtiers) on the throne of Portugal” (237).
mission. Not unlike the ill-conceived military expedition, the Troy-based theme that structures A Farewell's three parts (i. Dedication; ii. Farewell; and, iii. The Tale of Troy) is not particularly well designed or executed.

The Farewell and Eglogue, apparently slight productions, have largely been overlooked precisely because of their connection with current affairs, as though the interest of public occasional poetry extends no further than merely noting its occasional character. In truth the events occasioning these poems loomed momentously enough in the collective consciousness of 1589 – this expedition was, as I have noted, England's Counter-Armada. If we pay sufficiently close attention to the shaping influence of that contemporary context, or occasional pretext, and also to the subtleties of the poems themselves, the works assume a piquancy and complexity they might at first seem to lack. (Gazzard 41)

23 It is quite possible that Peele worked as a hired hand, assigned with the task of boosting the morale of a large group of unsettled soldiers hastily preparing for a poorly planned, poorly supplied, and poorly managed mission. Peele may have been invited to try to build an epic mood, and, towards that end, he may have included references to the myth of Britain’s Trojan origins to motivate the soldiers so that they might achieve their epic potential. Time pressures seem an evident part of the work given that the Dedication and the Farewell consist of only three pages while the bulk of the publication is the “olde poeme” that is “annexed” onto the three initial pages.
Hugh Gazzard’s relatively recent efforts to resuscitate interest in Peele’s minor works point toward the inextricable link between “the shaping influence of that contemporary context” and “the subtleties of the poems themselves.” Gazzard’s recommended approach is necessary for appreciating the interpretive possibilities associated not only with Peele’s minor works, but also with most Elizabethan authors’ treatments of Britain’s Trojan origins – a topos with a long-standing ceremonial function in pageants, plays, and poetry. Dilating the critical lens through which Trojan origins references are interpreted in canonical works such as *The Faerie Queene* and minor works such as *A Farewell* is a much needed next step in the advancement of understanding within this neglected subfield. While there is very little written about *A Farewell*, and considerably less has been written about its treatment of Trojan origins, Greenfield has articulated his sense of *A Farewell*'s Troy-related extra-literary implications:

Toward the end of Elizabeth’s reign Troy began to serve with increasing frequency as a point of origin for the English nation, not just for the English monarchy or English letters. George Peele, for instance, claimed that he wrote his pamphlet history of Troy in order that “my Countrymen famed through the worlde for resolution and fortitude, may marche in equipage of honour and Armes, wyth theyr glorious and renowned prediecessors the Troyans.” (185)
In this glancing reference to Peele’s “pamphlet history of Troy,” Greenfield identifies Peele’s work as an example of a publication that innovates with the use of Britain’s foundation myth by shifting the symbol’s associative anchor from monarchical genealogies to the pedigree of the nation state’s citizenry. For over four hundred years, Trojan ancestry served as a “point of origin” for “the English monarchy or English letters”; however, as Greenfield suggests, A Farewell alters how the Trojan myth is employed such that the emerging “English nation” supplants Elizabeth I’s ancestry as the point of reference for the foundation myth’s authoritative associations. Greenfield’s consideration of Peele’s work does not extend beyond the reference in the excerpt above, and his observations are based upon the following citation from Peele’s “pamphlet history of Troy”:

…my Countrymen famed through the worlde for resolution and fortitude, may marche in equipage of honour and Armes, wyth theyr glorious and renowned predicessors the Troyans…. (xx)

When compared with Peele’s treatment of Trojan ancestry in his other works, A Farewell distinguishes itself through this shift that associates Trojan origins with Englanders. If not entirely unprecedented, this type of example is exceptionally rare. And, as Greenfield’s comment suggests, one interpretive approach with this example can emphasize that Peele democratizes the literary conventions associated with the centuries-old Galfridian tradition that established Brutus, great grandson of Aeneas, as Britain’s first king.

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24 While Greenfield includes the full title for Peele’s pamphlet in a footnote to his excerpt, the shorthand reference employed here reflects the blurring of the subjects contained within the pamphlet’s three distinct parts. The distinctions between these three parts will be examined shortly.
An alternative interpretation, one that accommodates the pamphlet’s commercial-material status, and its function as martial propaganda, introduces a somewhat less exciting interpretative direction: Peele’s innovations represent an unprecedented debasement of a traditionally monarchical *topos.* Unlike the more conventional ceremonial references to Trojan origins found in his other works, *A Farewell* realigns the familiar links with England’s Trojan ancestry to include somewhat less elevated subjects.

Conventionally, it is only by way of association with their city, monarch, and/or nation that all Englanders are associated with the glory and nobility of Trojan ancestry. There are occasional exceptions in which the body politic is directly associated with Trojan ancestry; however, these rare occurrences function as military calls to arms to defend a monarch’s realm, as with Peele’s examples in *Edward I* (1593), where the reference to Trojan origins is designed to bolster the troops’ morale before sending them onto the battlefield:

> To armes true Britaines sprong of Trojans seede,
> And with your swordes write in the booke of Time. (610—11)

In addition to references in his dramatic works, *Edward I* and *The Arraignment of Paris,* seven of Peele’s minor works (including *A Farewell*) include at least fifteen Trojan origins-related references: *The Device of the Pageant Borne before Wolstan Dixi, Lord Mayor of the City of

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25 “The same explanation of its presence seems to have occurred to a less kindly critic. In all probability Thomas Nashe is alluding to the *Tale of Troy* when he says, in his preface to Sidney’s *Astrobel and Stella* (published two years later, in 1591; Nashe’s Works, ed. McKerrow, 111, p. 332): ‘Others are so hardly bested for loading that they are faine to retaile the cinders of Troy, and the shiuers of broken trunchions, to fill vp their boate that else should goe empty,’ etc.” (Tatlock 682, n.11).
London (1585), Eclogue Gratulatory (1589), A Farewell (1589), Polyhymnia (1590), Descensus Astraeae (1591), Honour of the Garter (1593) and Anglorum Feriae Englandes Hollydayes (1595). In the main, these uses correspond with conventional ceremonial gestures designed to glorify England’s two chief domestic symbols: Elizabeth and Troyovaunt.

Of these fifteen references, “Albion” occurs six times. Peele’s uses of “Albion” seem designed to evoke Britain’s ancient past, offer a synonym for “Britain,” and contribute to imagery, given “Albion’s” etymological associations with “white.” Six references to “New Troy,” including such variations as “nue reared Troy” and “Troyovaunt,” are included in Peele’s civic pageants. The two references to “Brutus” are both associations that celebrate Elizabeth’s ancestry and the one instance of “Troian” is tagged onto a “Brutus” reference referring to Elizabeth’s ancestry:

*Woolstone Dixi* (1585): 26

New Troye I hight whome Lud my Lord surnam’d
London the glory of the western side:

*Eclogue Gratulatory* (1589):

Safe is he come, O swell my Pipe, with joy,  
To the olde buildings of nue reared Troy.

*Polyhymnia* (1590):

Therefore, when thirtie two were come and gone,  
Years of her raigne, daies of her countries peace,  
Elizabeth great Empresse of the world,  
Britanias Atlas, Star of Englands globe,  
That swaies the massie scepter of her land,  
And holdes the royall raynes of Albion: (2)

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26 In The Device of the Pageant Borne before Wolstan Dixi, Lord Mayor of the City of London (1585), Peele introduces allegorical figures who pay tribute to Lord Mayor Dixi of “New Troy.” Dixi’s identification with Troyovaunt is but one of a series of “conventional compliments” (Horne 104) designed to elevate the mayor’s ceremonial stature. Again, these are familiar literary elements associated with the pomp and pageantry of civic entertainments put on for Londoners. As the following chapter demonstrates, this practice became much more prevalent during the opening decades of the seventeenth century.
... 

Gresham the heire of golden Greshams land, 
That beautifi'd new Troy with royall Change, 
Badge of his honor and magnificence. 
Siluer and Sable such his colours were, (5) 

Descenus Astraea (1591): 
Astraea daughter of the immortall Ioue, 
Great Ioue defender of this antient towne, 
Descended of the Trojan Brutus line: 
Ofspring of that couragious conquering king.(4) 

... 

Honor.: With radiant beames, reflecting on the earth, 
Euen from the snowie browes of Albion, (3) 

... 

This gladsome day wherein your honors spring. 
And by the barre that thwarts this siluer streame, 
Euen to the beauteous verge of Troyquotant 
8 That deckes this Thamesis on eyther side, 
Thus farre these friendes haue pierced, & all by me; 
Salute your honour and your companie. 
Thrice worthy Praetor of this auntient towne. (4) 

Honour of the Garter (1593): 
For more then common seruice it performd 
To Albions Queene; when Foemen shypt for fight 
To forrage England, plowde the Ocean vp, 
And slonck into the channell that deuides 
The Frenchmens strond fro Brittaines fishie townes. 

Anglorum Feriae (1595): 
those quiet daies that Englishmen enjoye 
Under our Queene 
Fair Queene of Brutus new Troie. 

Peele’s Trojan origins-related references commonly appear as single lines within conventional literary catalogues that include other familiar mythological and allegorical
figures. Of the fifteen references listed here, four refer to Elizabeth’s ancestry and four refer to London as New Troy. As John M. Steadman explains in his discussion of *The Faerie Queene*, “the appeal to antiquity as a nobility *topos* was conventional” (546-47) in works written to celebrate Queen Elizabeth. Associated with the *topos genus*, the nobility *topos* is a literary device that features in the works of Peele, Spenser and their contemporaries. The significance of this observation is that it supports this chapter’s broader thesis that references to Britain’s Trojan origins in Elizabethan literature often reflect conventionalized literary practices.

Peele’s *The Arraignment of Paris* offers a more sustained engagement with Trojan origins. *The Arraignment* is one of several Elizabethan stage plays that celebrate London as Troynovaunt while introducing explicit references that link Elizabeth to her Trojan ancestors.27 *The Arraignment* is structured around a narrative framework that moves from Ate’s address in the opening scene, sometime in the ancient past when Troy fell, to contemporary London. What is commonly considered Peele’s “dramatic masterpiece” contributes to a centuries-long, pan-European literary tradition within which authors of imaginative works celebrate monarchs as genealogical descendants of King Priam’s stock.

Shifting boundaries between notions of what constitutes history and fiction require attention when responding to Troy- and Trojans origins-related works such. Louis Adrian Montrose’s consideration of Peele’s complex conclusion to *The Arraignment* provides an example of an approach that works very well:

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27 For example, Sackville and Norton’s *Gorboduc*. 

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The play ends with the providential Elizabethan fulfillment of Troy’s promise, a civilization achieved by the virtuous and gentle discipline of holiness and temperance, chastity and justice. The dynastic and imperial myth which traces Elizabeth’s lineage to Aeneas affirms that her state does not merely recapitulate but transcends the glories of Troy and Rome. (68)

Similarly, for Philip Edwards, the significance of Elizabeth’s boundary crossing role in the conclusion to *The Arraignment* is interpreted in the following way:

By making her thus step out of the fiction into the life of the audience, Peele changes the status of his play from an induction to the collapse of Troy to an induction to the self-created destiny of the second Troy. (176)

In negotiating the fictional-historical elements foregrounded in *The Arraignment*’s closing scene, Edwards’s and Montrose’s approaches reflect a critical willingness to engage Peele on his own terms. More importantly, Edwards and Montrose demonstrate what can be described as a form of interpretive restraint bounded by generic considerations. By choosing not to extend their interpretations of Peele’s treatment of familiar cultural symbols into sustained arguments about extra-literary, namely political history (as is the case with many interpretations of Peele’s use of Troy references in *The Arraignment*), Edwards and Montrose maintain positions that locate their interpretations in the same space in which Peele produced *The Arraignment* – the domain of poets and dramatists.
Greenfield's interest in the potential implications of *A Farewell*'s treatment of Britain's foundation myth is understandable given that Peele’s innovations in this little discussed pamphlet are unique; however, a closer consideration of Peele’s Trojan origins references suggests that *A Farewell*'s extra-literary implications can be overstated. Despite the temptation to complicate Peele’s apparent innovations with Britain’s Trojan origins, there is some need to acknowledge the simplicity of his pamphlet, which may represent a hurried effort to publish a propaganda piece in time for the counter-Armada’s hasty departure. Peele’s efforts to graft his English readers onto Trojan stock can be read as a clumsy leap between the foundation myth references included in the *Dedication* and *A Farewell*, and the content of *The Tale of Troy*, which provides a nutshell account of Homeric Troy.

In addition to a title-page, *A Farewell* consists of three parts: a one-paragraph prose dedication addressed to “the most famous Generalles of our English forces by land & Sea, Sir John Norris and Sir Frauncis Drake Knightes.” Following the *Dedication*, Peele includes two poems for the 21,000 “braue and resolute” captains and soldiers setting out for Portugal: *A Farewell* and *The Tale of Troy*. *A Farewell* is a seventy-five-line poem addressed to the troops, which mentions Norris, Drake, London’s theatres (including specific plays such as Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*), and various mythological references to Mars, Alcide’s pillars, and Augeas’s stalls. The second poem, *The Tale of Troy*, consists of 493 lines “annexed” onto *A Farewell*. Beyond the stock summary of the Homeric Troy materials, *The Tale of Troy* contains no references to Brutus of Troy, England, or any other details that link back, in any explicit way, to “the chialtrie of England.” *The Tale of Troy* does not include details that close the gap between the two Troys: Britain’s foundation myth and Homeric Troy.

In the *Dedication*, Peele addresses Norris and Drake with elevated praise: “Your vertues famed by your fortunes, and fortunes renowned by your vertues (thryce honorable
Generalles); he includes a self-introduction as “a man not vnknowne to many of your braue and forwarde followers”; and he introduces the two poems that follow. *A Farewell* is described as a “short farewell to our English forces,” while *The Tale of Troy* is introduced in a more extended fashion:

... an olde Poeme of myne owne, *The tale of Troy*. A pleasaut discourse, fitly seruing to recreate by the reading the chialrie of England. To whom, as to your ingenious judgements, I dedicate the same: that good mindes enflamed wyth honorable reports of their auncesty, may imitate theyr glory in highest adventure. And my Counrmen famed through the worlde for resolution and fortitude, may marche in equipage of honour and Armes, wyth theyr glorious and renowned prediecssors the Troyans. (xx)

The conceptual and topical gaps reflected in Peele’s efforts to link “the chialrie of England,” from the *Dedication*, with *The Tale of Troy*’s content, foreground a disjunction between the two Troy narratives. This disjunction, in part, represents the challenges of reconciling two interdependent narratives that straddle the gap between history and fiction.

For David Horne, *The Tale of Troy* is “the sort of thing a young university student fresh from the study of the classics might write” (149). And, based on internal evidence linking *The Tale of Troy* with Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), and Peele’s own *The Arraignment* (1584), Horne concludes that *The Tale of Troy* was most probably written between 1579 and 1581 (149) – approximately one decade before *A Farewell* was published in 1589. The chronological significance of *The Tale of Troy* in relation to this chapter’s subject is
significant only in so far as Peele apparently pulled a stock Troy piece out of a drawer and “annexed” it to a *Dedication* and *Farewell*. Peele’s sense that he could just tag this Homeric material to the three Trojan origins references in the *Dedication* and *A Farewell* reflects a curious engagement with Britain’s Trojan origins that should strike readers as surprising when considered alongside the gravita associated with the debates that shape the critical discourse about Spenser’s relationship to the Brutus myth.

While both the *Dedication* and *Farewell* were written specifically for the counter-Armada expedition of 1589, *The Tale of Troy* is an “olde poem of mine” that Peele shoehorns into the pamphlet to add some heft to the three thin pages that compose the first two parts. This third section, unlike the preceding two parts, does not include any domestic references that are specific to English readers. The disjunction between the two Troys is evidenced in the references that are divided among these three sections. Peele relies upon generalized conceptual associations between is understood as “the hugely familiar story of the Trojan War” (Bevington xvi) and the Galfridian narrative of Britain’s Trojan origins based upon the single association developed through the reference to “the chualrie of England.” Unlike Trojan origins materials encountered in histories, or even the somewhat more critical-minded excerpts from Spenser’s *A View* and Jonson’s *Masque* discussed earlier, Peele’s references seem to serve a symbolic-literary function not unlike the more conventional associations with Elizabeth and London encountered in his other works.
British Antiquity’s seventh chapter, “The Eclipse of the British History,” introduces the critical narrative’s fourth pillar, which explains that the Brutus myth’s life cycle ends around 1603. Kendrick’s timing for the British History’s eclipse corresponds with two significant turn-of-the-century events: the late-sixteenth-century rise of Camden-led antiquarianism and Queen Elizabeth’s death in 1603. As Kendrick explains, it was “the modern antiquary who thus made his appearance in England late in the reign of Queen Elizabeth” (114). That this transition in historiographical beliefs coincides with the end of Elizabeth Tudor’s reign makes sense given that the eclipse follows the critical narrative’s argument about the Tudor cult: “our Trojan ancestors in Britain had only a precarious footing in the land after the reign of Elizabeth” (Kendrick 132).

Antiquity’s central argument about the sixteenth-century shift from medieval to modern antiquarian thought associates this “abandoning of belief” in “the treasured fable” (104) with the emergence of Camden-led antiquarianism by identifying the eclipse as the signal accomplishment of England’s early antiquaries. For Kendrick, this “new kind of person” with “new antiquarian interests” that did not include “unverifiable legends” resolved a four-centuries-long debate:

The most important cause of the weakening of interest in the British History was that the British antiquary was changing into a new kind of person with much more important things to do than bother about unverifiable legends. Thus, when, probably somewhere about 1580, a Society of Antiquaries was formed in
London, the fellowship was not a company of tender-skinned patriots puffing themselves up with pride in Brutus and King Arthur… (114)

Late-sixteenth-century antiquaries’ responses to the British History also play an important role in F. Smith Fussner’s influential theory about the Renaissance “historiographical revolution.” Building upon Kendrick’s argument, Fussner associates the eclipse with the end of medieval credulity which in turn, gives rise to modern critical sensibilities. His thesis explains that sixteenth-century humanist historiographers adopted “new techniques, attitudes and facilities for research” (xv), which “helped to create those historical attitudes and questionings that we recognize as our own” (xxii). This understanding of turn-of-the-century antiquaries’ contributions to the British History’s eclipse continues to inform critical approaches. For example, Graham Parry describes the early antiquaries’ “task” as an effort to unfetter “national consciousness” from “these false trails into the past” (9):

A great deal of intellectual energy was expended in dispersing the accumulated legends generally known as the British History that filled in the vacant stretches of the remote past with shining princes from Troy and a long line of sturdy British kings that

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1 As discussed in the Introduction, for Fussner, the value of Kendrick’s study is his demonstration of how “the medievalism of antiquaries helped to sustain mistaken theories of remote history in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England” (Fussner 16). See chapter one for a discussion of Kendrick’s influence on Fussner’s theory.
included such familiar names as Locrine, Lud, Lear, and Cymbeline. *(Trophies of Time 9)*

Despite this narrative’s shaping influence in today’s critical discourse, historians and literary critics must regularly reconcile evidence that does not accord with this theory about a turn-of-the-century eclipse. Daniel R. Woolf introduces one such example when he explains that

Brutus had a longer afterlife in elite circles, especially among the Welsh, than the advent of scholarly scepticism towards him suggests. During a parliamentary debate in April 1614, on repealing the longstanding Henrician discretionary right to amend Welsh law without parliamentary consent, the MP for Cardiff Matthew Davies reminded the House of Commons that the ancient Britons derived from Brutus and the Welsh in particular from his third son, Kamber. *(Social Circulation 327 n90)*

Woolf’s remarks acknowledge a disjunction between “the advent of scholarly skepticism towards” Brutus and evidence for the legend’s continued circulation after 1600. Matthew Davies’s reference to the Brutus myth as historical precedent in a 1614 parliamentary debate occurs outside the narrative’s timing for a turn-of-the-century eclipse and, thereby, is representative of the legend’s “afterlife.” For Woolf, Davies’s anomalous case can be reconciled through an appreciation of his status as a Welshman who was a member of “elite circles.”
John E. Curran, Jr. introduces a more sustained consideration of the legend’s “afterlife” in his book-length study of Galfridian subject-matter in seventeenth-century Catholic and Protestant polemical literature. Curran’s study “contribute[s] to our understanding of the ‘historical revolution’ by investigating one of the strange but significant ways in which its effects were somewhat impeded” (Roman Invasions 16). Within his argument, British History references in seventeenth-century publications represent an unexplained impediment to the realization of Fussner’s “historiographical revolution”:

Such scholars as T. D. Kendrick, F. J. Levy, Arthur B. Ferguson, and Graham Parry have designated the refutation of Galfridian mythology as a major aspect of this trend [historical revolution]….That this influence should have been felt at all, that anyone in Camden’s day could cleave to parts of the Galfridian tradition, is a quirk in the history of historiography that calls for an explanation. (Roman Invasions 16)

For Curran, the logical progression of the eclipse narrative argument is impeded by evidence for turn-of-the-century authors who “cleave to parts of the Galfridian tradition.”

Considered as an “if → then” proposition, the “if” component is represented by “the refutation of Galfridian mythology” as a “major aspect” of the late-sixteenth-century historical revolution. A deductively valid development of this “if” statement might conclude: “therefore, seventeenth-century authors no longer referred to the British History.” Instead, a substantial body of pan-generic evidence for the legend’s “afterlife” results in a deductively invalid argument: a critical paradox. Situating his study in relation to assimilated disciplinary
knowledge requires Curran to classify the primary works that are the subject for his study according to the eclipse narrative’s “if” premise. The result is that the seventeenth-century authors whose publications are the subject for Curran’s study are considered to hold positions “which, in light of the ‘historical revolution,’ they should not have held” (Roman Invasions 16).

Woolf’s explanation for the Matthew Davies speech in 1614 and Curran’s argument for a new understanding of “the narrative’s true force” (18) are examples that can be positioned upon a critical continuum that includes a range of efforts concerned with reconciling such “quirks.” While Curran’s study is unique for its scope (it is a book-length study of the post-Elizabethan reception of Monmouth’s Historia), Woolf’s shorter explanation is a relatively familiar critical practice given the prevalence of such anomalous evidence.

An approach positioned somewhere between Woolf’s consideration of an individual example and Curran’s book-length study is Philip Robinson’s recent article in which he investigates Trojan origins-related references in seventeenth-century Lord Mayor’s Shows. This genre-specific examination of civic pageants performed between 1605 to 1639 is an original research initiative investigating a body of previously unexamined primary evidence within an increasingly active field of study. Contextualizing the evidence for his study presents Robinson with challenges that foreground some of the implications associated with the eclipse narrative’s influence on literary scholarship.

In the opening lines of his paper Robinson identifies a disjunction between the eclipse paradigm and evidence for the popularity of New Troy, Troia Nova, and Troynovaunt references in civic pageants performed during the first half of the seventeenth century: “Of twenty-seven extant mayoral texts from the period 1605–1639, nearly all invoke
the model of New Troy, directly or indirectly, at some point. Quite why the link should be made is, perhaps, less clear” (221). Understanding why links between London and New Troy were invoked in seventeenth-century civic pageants is a central question for Robinson’s study: “[p]erhaps the oddest thing, though, and the main subject of the opening portion of this article, is that the connection is made at all” (222).

In building toward the main subject for his investigation – an analysis of New Troy references in pageants written by such authors as Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Anthony Munday, and John Webster – Robinson addresses the disjunction between the eclipse narrative and the anomalous evidence that constitutes the subject for his study:

There is, it seems, a kind of double vision at work here which raises problems with current interpretations of early modern historiography on the matter of Troy. Why, if the serious-minded were rejecting, or had already rejected, the truth of the Trojan connection, did civic writing (and in particular the mayoral pageants) still stubbornly refer to London as Troynovant? (223)

Responding to the problems introduced by this “double vision” requires Robinson to satisfy two interpretive objectives. In addition to analysing New Troy references’ contributions to “a whole realm of civic discourse” (221), his interpretations must simultaneously reconcile the existence of this anomalous evidence according to the narrative’s chronology for the legend’s life cycle. As in the example from Curran considered earlier, Robinson is required to situate his primary evidence relative to assimilated disciplinary knowledge, which explains that the eclipse of the British History occurred around 1600. Satisfying readers’ expectations
for how his interpretations of seventeenth-century New Troy references relate to established
critical discourse depends upon Robinson classifying his evidence as “quirks” that are
representative of the legend’s “afterlife.”

“SELDEN WAGGED A PEDANTICALLY REPROVING FINGER”

Beyond the complications observed in individual authors’ studies, a broader pattern of
influence can be observed with the eclipse theory’s relationship to literary subfields. For
example, the narrative informs critical approaches to Michael Drayton’s *Polyolbion* (1612), the
early-seventeenth-century work of imaginative literature for which there is the most
substantial body of Trojan origins-related criticism. Interpretations of Drayton’s and John
Selden’s engagements with the Brutus myth foreground additional implications associated
with the eclipse narrative’s influence in interpretations of individual works of literature.

As the Tudor cult narrative introduces an extra-literary context and conceptual
starting-point for interpretations of Trojan origins-related literature from the sixteenth
century, the eclipse narrative serves a similar contextualizing role for interpretations of
seventeenth-century literature. As studies of *The Faerie Queene* begin with the shared
assumption that Elizabeth Tudor was invested in the foundation myth, studies of *Polyolbion*
begin with the assumption that there was a turn-of-the-century eclipse. As critical debates
move between perceptions of Spenser’s position as being either for or against the legitimacy
of the foundation myth, critical approaches to *Polyolbion*’s engagements with Britain’s Trojan
origins often develop from considerations of the degree to which Drayton and Selden did or
did not believe in the Brutus myth.
The eclipse narrative’s influence on interpretations of Polyolbion is perhaps most evident in the ways that Selden’s comments are positioned relative to Drayton’s. Given that Selden’s contributions to Polyolbion are perceived to accord with the eclipse narrative’s governing assumptions, Drayton’s and Selden’s relationship is occasionally characterized by what can be described as a genre-based, hierarchical bias.

Selden tried to discourage Drayton from using Geoffrey as a creditable historian rather than a fanciful but inspiring muse. (James 87-88)

John Selden wagged a pedantically reproving finger in his marginal notes to the text, but this was little more than a friendly flyting between scholar and poet. (Collinson 69)

Such positions portray tensions between poet and historian as if the two were divided by a seemingly irreconcilable disciplinary binary. Unlike critical approaches that position Drayton and Selden at two opposing ends of a generic continuum, many early modern authors acknowledged and accepted the uncertainty associated with Britain’s foundation myth. In fact, Selden’s response to Britain’s foundation myth echoes the views of Jonson, Polydore, and Spenser when he exclaims that, in the absence of evidence, individuals are left to opinion-based positions:
Concerning the Arcadian deduction of our British monarchy . . . from Brute, unto some Liv before Christ, about when Julius Caesar visited the island, no relation is extant which is now left to our use. How are they which pretend chronologies of that age . . . to be credited?

... Touching the Trojan Brute, I have (but as an Advocat for the Muse) argued; disclaiming in it, if alledg’d for my own Opinion. (xx)

While it is likely, based on his “Opinon,” that Selden did not believe in Britain’s Trojan origins, his response does not read like an attack and he does not seem to try to “discourage” Drayton from using these materials. Why is Selden’s position regularly portrayed as a criticism of Drayton and the foundation myth? Like many of his contemporaries, Selden offers his “Opinion” on a matter that he acknowledges as indeterminable. Still, uncertainties continue to govern critical efforts to reconcile what seem to be contradictory positions:

Although Selden went on to defend the Trojan Brute in his commentary, he did so as an “advocate for the muse,” one who would be “disclaiming in it if alleged for my own opinion.” ... Still, Selden’s own commentary on Drayton suggests that antiquaries were by no means uninterested in historical fictions. (Baker 208 n.3)

Baker’s efforts to negotiate Selden’s seemingly shifting positions create a quality of uncertainty. Although it is more convenient to frame Drayton’s and Selden’s relationship as
a believer-versus-nonbeliever binary structured upon irreconcilable differences between disciplinary antagonists, more nuanced interpretations are available. David Galbrait's approach to appreciating the interplay between poet and historian offers a more productive interpretive direction. His approach responds to the intricacies of the distinct authorial roles acknowledged and adopted by Drayton and Selden in their collaborative effort to realize a project that embodies Sidney's notion of what can result from the fusion of poetry and history:

Recent critics of the poem have quite correctly emphasized the importance of Selden’s notes in focusing the reader’s attention on the differences between the poet and the historian. Both Drayton and Selden address the reader from a venue appropriate to their stations: the poet from “most pleasant Downes, where harmlesse Shepheards are, some exercising their pipes” (v*); the historian, enmeshed in documentary evidence and dependent on the citation of authority, “From the Inner Temple” (xiv*). (Galbrait 122)

Responding to Galbrait's critical approach, Bart van Es’s sense of critical approaches to the connections between early modern poets and historical writing concludes: “such criticism is working to reveal an increasingly multifaceted ‘Poet historical’” (6). Toward this end, Philip Schwyzer's *PolyOlbion* project promises to introduce new understanding of the collaborative approach adopted by Drayton and Selden in the production of what was an exemplary effort to realize the poet historical’s vision. Selden’s interests in writing poetry (despite an apparent lack of aptitude.) and his talent for historiographical writing demonstrate that he was
interested in the complexities and potential that can develop from the union of disciplinary models.

“READY-MADE ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION”

The implications associated with the eclipse narrative’s influence on representations of Drayton’s and Selden’s relationship are foregrounded in the ways that initial perceptions of the relational dynamic between Drayton, Selden, and Britain’s foundation myth are framed. This model is structured according to a genre-based hierarchy wherein the views of the historian Selden serve as an authoritative check for Drayton’s poetically inspired musings. Emphasizing a hierarchical distinction between historian and poet supports an associated interpretive strategy that is regularly employed to reconcile the existence of various post-eclipse publications by explaining that these “quirks” are contained within the poets’ domain: “[t]he old legends now had a future as ‘poetical histories’, as in Michael Drayton’s epic poem Poly-Olbion (1612, 1622), which devoted 236 lines to the British history” (Collinson 69).

Some of the limitations of the “poets’ domain” argument were introduced in the preceding chapter’s examination of this concept’s relationship to interpretations informed by the Tudor cult narrative. Escobedo’s account of this concept serves well as a reminder of the issues discussed earlier: “[f]ictional history, what Renaissance writers often referred to as ‘poesy historical,’ represents in some ways a last-ditch attempt to imagine the nation firmly grounded in ancient tradition” (22). This chapter further tests this theory’s applicability by setting it alongside seventeenth-century extra-literary publications in which Britain’s “ancient tradition” is perpetuated.
As discussed in the preceding chapter, Trojan origins-related works of fiction are not unique to late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publications. If it were the case that the only evidence for seventeenth-century publications that engaged Galfridian subject-matter was contained within the “poets’ domain,” then the popular perception of the subjects’ turn-of-the-century shift into the realm of “historical poesy” would in fact be representative. Despite the ubiquity of the “poets’ domain” theory as a means to reconciling “quirks” by classifying them as imaginative literature, this theory is undermined by extant evidence that demonstrates the legends’ ongoing circulation in a wide range of genres: almanacs, fine art, genealogies, historiographies, crafts/jewelry, letters, pamphlets, broadside calendars, speeches, university publications, and other extra-literary artefacts.²

While it is likely that there is an increase in British History-related imaginative literature published during the first half of the seventeenth century, the inexplicit supposition underlying conventional uses of the “poets’ domain” theory suggests that there is a significant difference in the proportional distribution of references between literary and extra-literary genres. Yet, in the absence of an empirical study that corroborates what it can be supposed should be an inverse correlation between increasing and decreasing occurrences of Galfridian references in different kinds of generic publications, this a priori argument is conjecture.

These assumptions suggest a notable shift in the distribution of references between genres following the turn-of-the-century eclipse of the British History, and faith in this unsubstantiated proposition can be understood as a function of the eclipse narrative's authority. The eclipse paradigm advances the misrepresentative belief that, with the

² Greenlaw, Kendrick, and Millican provide the most comprehensive collection of Trojan origins-related artefacts.
exception of a few “quirks,” the British History no longer maintained currency, was no longer included in “acceptable historiographies,” and, more generally, was derided by “learned men.” Accepting this viewpoint, while observing that British History-related materials were popular in seventeenth-century imaginative literature, does seem to suggest that “[t]he old legends now had a future as ‘poetical histories’”; however, this conclusion fails to account adequately for evidence that cannot be contained within the “poets’ domain.”

Another strategy for reconciling “quirks” that has been applied to Polyolbion relies upon the representation of authors such as Drayton as emotional patriots: “[p]atriotic conservatism kept Geoffrey’s influence alive even in texts aimed at the classically educated. Drayton’s verse chorography Poly-Olbion (1612 – 22), for example, is full of Galfridian matter” (Kerrigan 115). Classifying Drayton’s poem as an example of “patriotic conservatism” is an extension of one of Kendrick’s chief strategies for dismissing the views of “believers.” Kendrick characterizes the “affection for the British History” as:

Founded either on popular emotion or on a fanatical patriotism,
and they are expressed largely in verse or in the most violently worded passages of the emotionally loyal historians and antiquaries such as Leland. They have little to do with cool thinking, and they

3 Readers who may be interested in a more comprehensive understanding of post-Elizabethan, Galfridian-related publications, are encouraged to read Ernest B. Jones’s survey of evidence for Monmouth’s reception after 1640. That Jones’s study is unacknowledged by Kendrick, and, with the exception of Joseph Levine, Jones’s study is seemingly unknown to most recent critics, is a “quirk” in the critical tradition of the past six decades. The evidence examined in Jones’s study (which is not, as Jones explains, a comprehensive collection) destabilizes belief in a turn-of-the-century eclipse.
certainly do not reflect the most intelligent antiquarian opinion of
the day. (40-41)

And when these characteristics are not easily applied to authors of “quirks,” Kendrick
introduces a related strategy. William Wynne, a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford and author
of the Preface to The History of Wales (1697), is an author who cannot be explained away using
the preceding examples. As such Wynne’s “defence of the Brut in 1697 with its modestly
expressed, but definite, conclusion that the story was based upon truth” (125) is classified by
Kendrick as the position of an “institutionalist”

who saluted it [British History], so to speak, as a time-honoured
tale, and was prepared to admit that, though it was mostly
nonsense, it might contain at least “the footsteps and reliques of
something true”…the institutionalist maintained that, if the proper
reservations were made, the British History could be legitimately
used as an understandable allusion to the true past that it so
guilelessly represented. (125-26)

Despite Kendrick’s conviction, there is no evidence suggesting that Wynne “was prepared to
admit that” the Brutus myth “was mostly nonsense,” nor does he make “proper
reservations” to qualify his support for the foundation myth.

Not unlike the “institutionalists” who are characterized as toeing the party line,
Curran explains that many of today’s critics rationalize seventeenth-century interest in the
British History as a function of “royal genealogy” or “monarchical propaganda drawing
Upon this idea of prophetic fulfillment” (Roman Invasions 19). Pushing back against this popular strategy, Curran explains,

[t]he narrative’s true force derived, I argue, not from royal genealogy, but from analogy between past and present – from the “us” and “them” of the ancient British past being analogous to the “us” and “them” of Renaissance England. (Roman Invasions 18-19)

For Curran, the “royal genealogy” theory falls short of offering a comprehensive means to reconciling pan-generic examples of anomalous evidence: “this interpretation, being applicable only to royal panegyric, was in itself hardly enough to offset the waves of criticism eroding belief in the British History” (Roman Invasions 19).

One final approach to rationalizing the existence of post-Elizabethan, anomalous evidence needs to be mentioned. According to Robinson, Fritz Levy’s use of a “cultural lag” theory, and the various subsequent adaptations of Levy’s ideas by other critics, are the “ready-made answers to this question” that are most frequently employed in recent criticism:

In the main, these arguments can still be summed up in terms put forward forty years ago by Frederick [sic] Levy, who labelled the

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4 More specifically, Curran’s study argues that “[t]he Galfridian epic narrative organized the ancient past into the six major phases I have named above, and collectively these phases form what I term the competition with Rome. With the Reformation, this Galfridian notion of the competition with Rome became so pertinent, complementing and symbolizing so well Protestant efforts to compete with contemporary Rome, that regard for the British History lasted much longer than it ever otherwise would have.” (Roman Invasions 19)
continuing presence of Troy in the mayoral show an instance of “cultural lag”: “[John] Taylor and Anthony Munday, and others like them, writing for the least educated segment of the populace, continued to enshrine myths that more serious historians had treated sceptically a generation or more earlier.’ There have been more subtle variations on Levy’s view, but the general narrative of an ignorant populace eating up trashy writing has proven an enduring one. (223)

As with Curran’s concerns about the “royal genealogy” theory’s inability to account for a pan-generic body of evidence, Robinson believes that “the appropriateness of the model [‘cultural lag’] to early modern scholarly enterprise requires some interrogation” (223).

“THE ANSWER IS THAT IT WASN’T”

As Robinson investigates New Troy references’ relationships to “a whole realm of civic discourse” in civic pageants, Tristan Marshall examines the Galfridian legends’ “political usefulness” in Jacobean stage plays. As Robinson’s observations about the popularity of New Troy references in Lord Mayor’s Shows published between 1605 to 1639 raise questions that foreground a critical paradox that becomes a central feature of his study, Marshall identifies a similar disjunction in his study of the relationship between an emerging “British union” identity, nationalism, and the adaptation of Galfridian legends for plays
performed in London’s public theatres. In addressing the disjunction between the eclipse narrative’s argument and evidence for the Brutus myth’s “political usefulness,” Marshall foregrounds yet another unresolved feature of this critical paradox through his consideration of the eclipse theory’s relationship to evidence for the ongoing adaptation of foundation myth stories in plays written for public stages.

Unlike conventional critical approaches that align their contextual framework with assimilated disciplinary knowledge by classifying anomalous evidence as “quirks,” Marshall’s response to the familiar critical paradox is very different. He introduces the disjunction by asking: “why was the British origins myth from the Brutus legend rejected by Antiquarians just when it seemed to have political usefulness?” (26). This variation upon conventional approaches to introducing post-Elizabethan “quirks” is followed by Marshall’s innovative reply, which inverts conventional perceptions of the problem by explaining that it is the eclipse paradigm – that “the Brutus legend [was] rejected by Antiquarians” – that is invalid:

The answer is that it wasn’t. Camden’s Britannia, like Norden’s Middlesex (1593) had already cast doubts on the Brute myth while still showing themselves eminently content to advocate a British history for the island. (26)

While Marshall’s answer to this familiar paradox is limited to only a brief commentary within his monograph, his pithy reply distinguishes itself by rejecting the eclipse narrative’s “if”

5 The order in which Robinson and Marshall’s studies are introduced potentially skews perceptions. Marshall’s study (2000) predates Robinson’s paper (2011) by more than a decade, and Robinson is indebted to Marshall’s influence for his own understanding of the topic.
premise: “[t]he answer is that it wasn’t.” Marshall’s response points towards new critical directions by introducing a paradigm-altering question: does evidence for seventeenth-century interest in the British History only become “a quirk in the history of historiography” when it is observed through a critical lens that is shaped by the eclipse narrative?

Yet another distinct body of seventeenth-century Trojan origins-related evidence includes “the various proclamations, parades, and masques that liken James to monarchs of the past” (Escobedo 143). As Christopher Highley explains, “James’s accession inspired a welter of genealogies, poems, and other tributes attesting to his British and Welsh blood and linking him to the Galfridian heroes Brut and Arthur” (110). Not unexpectedly, critics working within this monarchical subfield must address interpretative paradoxes similar to those encountered by Curran, Marshall, and Robinson:

James I and his representers (such as Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones) do not seem to have cared much about the historical accuracy of Geoffrey’s Historia when employing Brutus and Arthur as figures of legitimacy for the new king. (Escobedo Nationalism and Historical Loss 143)

Escobedo’s observation that Jones and Jonson “do not seem to have cared much about the historical accuracy of Geoffrey’s Historia” represents one more interpretive impediment that results from the disjunction between belief in a turn-of-the-century eclipse and anomalous evidence.

The narrative explains that by around 1600 the historiographical revolution transformed understanding of Britain’s pre-Roman history such that four centuries’ of
medieval credulity, expressed by belief in the British History, gave way to scientific reasoning and evidence-based approaches to investigating Britain’s pre-Roman history. A more conventional way of expressing this turn-of-the-century emphasis upon “historical accuracy” is to invoke William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586), which is known today as the catalyst for both the Renaissance historiographical revolution and the eclipse of the British History.

“The Most Ancient and the Very First Inhabitants of This Ile”

The appearance of Camden’s *Britannia* in 1586 transformed the state of antiquarian studies and gave all future research a starting point and a base of reference. (Parry *Trophies of Time*, 3)

…the great William Camden, the name perhaps most readily associated with the “historical revolution” of the English Renaissance… was chief among the scholars who engineered the “historical revolution,” a dramatic leap forward in historiographical understanding and methodology. (Curran *Roman Invasions* 15)

As these representative excerpts from two of today’s leading authorities demonstrate, Camden’s influence on British historiographical practices and his leadership role in the “historiographical revolution” are well established. While Camden’s iconic status is relevant to this chapter’s concerns, it is the critical representation of *Britannia’s* relationship to Britain’s Trojan origins that is of particular interest. Not unlike the disjunction between the two interpretive models that frame critical perceptions of Polydore Vergil’s reception of the
Galfriidian legends, critical representations of Camden’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins are inconsistent and even contradictory. Considerable clarification is required in order to understand better Camden’s reception of the foundation myth.

As with the inconsistencies that emerge from an acknowledgement of the bifurcated critical representations of Polydore Vergil, Edmund Spenser, and John Selden’s reception of the Brutus myth, Camden’s response to Britain’s Trojan origins produces similar interpretive discrepancies. Recent representations of Camden’s positions are divided between critical approaches that present Camden’s response as “cautious” and/or “ambivalent,” and others that represent Camden’s approach as a determined “rejection” of Monmouth’s foundation myth. Critical representations of Camden’s treatment of the legends depend upon a series of unverified beliefs that circulate unquestioned. In part, this misrepresentative practice results from the eclipse narrative’s unchecked and ubiquitous influence.

Despite inconsistencies in critical representations of Camden’s reception as either explicitly rejecting or obliquely questioning the Galfriidian tradition, there is critical consensus that Britannia “settled” \(^6\) questions about the veracity of Monmouth’s foundation myth while achieving an instantaneous and near-universal transformation of British historiographical beliefs. Challenges to this belief in a Camden-led “historiographical revolution” – “quirks” – produce critical confusion. Consider again the animated quality of Curran’s response to evidence of seventeenth-century authorial positions that do not accord with Camden’s perceived position: “that anyone in Camden’s day could cleave to parts of the

\(^6\) “Although Camden had settled the question of the immediate origin of the British tribes there still remained the larger question of who these people were who inhabited the northern parts of Gaul; where in turn had they come from?” (Parry Trophies of Time 32).
Galfridian tradition, is a quirk in the history of historiography that calls for an explanation” (Roman Invasions 16). Similarly, Robinson explains,

Forty years previous to Dekker’s use of the history in Britannia’s Honor, William Camden’s Britannia (1586) dismissed the link between London and Troy as nothing short of fairytale, even as it allows for the potential usefulness of such a tale….Why, if the serious-minded were rejecting, or had already rejected, the truth of the Trojan connection, did civic writing (and in particular the mayoral pageants) still stubbornly refer to London as Troynovant? (222-23)

Works written by authors who did not follow Camden’s example are the “quirks” that function as obstacles for interpretive efforts. In the main, these authors have been ignored, either treated as outliers whose anomalous views are reconciled with the eclipse narrative’s governing paradigm, or merely dismissed as over-emotional zealots writing unacceptable historiographies. Advancing beyond today’s biased, misrepresentative, and static critical narrative about the final stage of the Brutus myth’s life cycle depends upon a reconsideration of the critical narrative that assigns Camden and his contemporaries conclusive positions about the veracity of the foundation myth. Accommodating the nuances, rhetorical deftness, and tolerance for uncertainty with which many early modern authors crafted their responses requires a tolerance for multiple interpretive possibilities.

It seems possible that much of today’s confusion about this subject results from the different interpretive practices of twentieth-century historians and literary critics. In this
minor subject area, historians’ interpretations tend to countermand rhetorical intricacies in favor of achieving unambiguous conclusions. Such practices seem more concerned with critical convenience than with meaningfully engaging the rhetorical complexities woven into early modern responses to these legendary materials. As this study argues, today’s critics, both historians and literary scholars, perpetuate Kendrick’s mid-twentieth-century antiquarian values by relying upon and recirculating an untested critical model.

“No Author I Have Yet Met With”

In addition to a shared interest in better understanding seventeenth-century “quirks,” Escobedo’s consideration of monarchical pageants and masques, Marshall’s study of London stage plays, and Robinson’s examination of Lord Mayor’s Shows share the need to negotiate the critical paradox that results from an unavoidable, yet seemingly irreconcilable disjunction between the eclipse narrative and anomalous evidence. While the Trojan origins-related references examined by Escobedo, Marshall, and Robinson can be classified as imaginative literature contained within the “poets’ domain,” a long list of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century extra-literary publications do not.

Francis Drake’s *Eboracum, or, the History and Antiquities of the City of York* (1736) is a 130-year-old “quirk in the history of historiography.” This eighteenth-century history of the city of York – once known as Eboracum – is an especially late example of a history that does not conform to the eclipse narrative’s two Camden-related foundational tenets. Drake supports Monmouth’s version of Britain’s pre-Roman history and, while Drake acknowledges Camden’s accomplishments and legacy within the British tradition, Drake’s history does not reflect the eclipse narrative’s certainty about Camden’s ubiquitous influence:
… no author I have yet met with, in my judgment, has so far refuted old Geoffry’s testimony, that it shou’d be wholly rejected by a Modern Historian. (xx)

“THEIR ‘TRUTHS’ WERE NOT QUITE THE SAME THING AS OURS”

Today’s understanding of the final stage of the British History’s life cycle privileges the positions of early modern disbelievers whose works are identified as “acceptable historiographies” authored by “new people” with “new antiquarian interests.” By contrast, the eclipse narrative – unquestioned for six decades – establishes a critical context in which the publications of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century supporters of Galfridian legends are classified as “quirks” that can be explained away in various ways. Curran, Escobedo, Marshall, and Robinson represent a new generation of early modern historians and literary scholars, and the interpretive challenges they address in this field of study are just a few examples that demonstrate why this paradox, an entrenched feature of today’s critical discourse, is due for an intervention.

Camden’s Britannia serves an exemplary role by establishing an evaluative standard that facilitates distinctions between good and bad history. Appreciating the genealogy of Camden’s ideas, influence, and methodological innovations has considerable value for understanding the evolution of modern British historiography. Nonetheless, current perceptions of the early modern reception of Britain’s pre-history deserves to be refined through a considerably more nuanced appreciation for the positions of prominent historiographers such as Polydore and Camden. Furthermore, integrating an understanding
of the variegated viewpoints expressed by the many authors who have largely been ignored because they do not share Camden’s positions will undoubtedly enrich future scholarship in this field. Hopefully, the inclusion of these new perspectives will help offset the critical paradox that introduces unnecessary obstacles for today’s interpretative efforts.

The eclipse narrative is an *a priori* argument at odds with extant evidence. The significance of Marshall’s contribution to this discourse results from his inversion of the existing “if $\rightarrow$ then” model. In so doing, Marshall introduces a productive approach to reconciling this long-standing critical paradox. Current critical beliefs can be adjusted to allow for more representative interpretations by extending the narrative’s time-frame for the eclipse well beyond 1600, while emphasizing that this development in the history of British thought is more akin to a branch-like “evolution” than to a sudden “eclipse.” Instead of constructing explanations that reconcile “quirks” according to the narrative’s current time frame, it would be more productive to acknowledge that 1600 is premature for declaring the legend’s death. Adjusting the narrative’s timing for the eclipse will offset current disciplinary expectations that require post-1600 evidence to be classified as anomalous “quirks.”

Concerns introduced by Curran, Escobedo, Marshall, Robinson, and even Woolf represent some of the ways that current interpretations and arguments are informed by what remains a misrepresentative critical narrative. These examples demonstrate the necessity for

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7 That Kendrick’s turn-of-the-century timing for the eclipse has gone unquestioned is not surprising given his ongoing status as the chief authority for Britain’s Trojan origins. The critical tradition’s belief in the eclipse narrative has been redoubled through Fussner’s use of the eclipse in his influential theory about the Renaissance historical revolution. The timing for a turn-of-the-century eclipse likely has its popular origins in Kendrick’s argument about the late-sixteenth-century rise of antiquarianism. That Kendrick’s ideas were incorporated into Fussner’s broader and more influential theory about the Renaissance historical revolution likely redoubled the eclipse narrative’s authority.
this study’s somewhat unorthodox, metacritical approach. Critical interventions that respond to literary interpretations of individual works, or groups of works within a specific genre such as New Troy references in civic pageants, engage in a critical exchange that is, from the outset, governed by a misrepresentative contextual framework.

While I have considerable interest in publishing literary interpretations developed through my work with the treatment of Trojan origins by Peele, Shakespeare, and Spenser, it is necessary at this early stage first to understand the problem that functions as an unacknowledged obstacle in today’s critical discourse. New interpretations of Galfridian references in works such as *The Faerie Queene*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Polyolbion* are impeded by the need to assimilate primary evidence with the theory for a turn-of-the-century eclipse.

As with the Tudor cult narrative’s shaping influence upon interpretations of Spenser’s treatment of Britain’s Trojan origins in *The Faerie Queene*, the argument for the turn-of-the-century eclipse of the British History, the fourth pillar in Kendrick’s critical narrative, is a narrative transmission mechanism that misdirects interpretive efforts at the earliest interpretive stage – when literary critics only just begin to contextualize primary evidence. This evidence is filtered through the eclipse narrative’s lens and, as in the critical case studies introduced at the start of this chapter, the authority of dogma often overrules critics’ good sense, gut instincts, and reason-based responses to evidence. Unlike Marshall’s remarkably simple but groundbreaking response to the disjunction between governing beliefs and extant evidence, this seemingly irreconcilable paradox – “our puzzle” – has generated abstract theories that are usually predicated upon the enigmatic differences between Renaissance and twenty-first-century minds:
According to conventional ideas of what the Renaissance was about, the ‘British history’ should now have evaporated like morning dew. Not so. Anthony Grafton has taught us that the not inconsiderable critical powers of the humanists could function in strange and counterintuitive ways. The best critics made the best forgers. Even great scholars were capable of believing what they wanted to believe, and their “truths” were not quite the same thing as ours. (Collinson 68)

The unchallenged status of the eclipse narrative works against the acquisition of a complex, meaningful, and nuanced appreciation of the early modern reception of the Galfridian legends. Current critical approaches are concerned with the works of a coterie of early modern antiquarians whose views represent the positions that ultimately proved to be correct. The narrative for the Brutus myth’s life cycle is written by the disciplinary descendants of those who won the sixteenth-century Battle of the Books, and today’s literary interpretations develop within a discourse governed by a genre-based hierarchy that privileges the voices of historians over poets. This critical paradigm frames interpretations of imaginative literature according to expectations, standards, and values determined by antiquaries, and when these “quirks” cannot be ignored or easily reconciled, they are treated “like a bad answer in the class of history”:

But a myth like this of Troy, infectious, pervasive, European (for our vanity was shared), colouring men’s sentiments, and in certain relations influencing what they did – powerful enough to make
Homer the pro-Greek a suspected writer, and figuring solemnly in state documents – a belief of this kind cannot reasonably be dismissed like a bad answer in the class of history. (Gordon 55)
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