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THE POWER OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL PAST

Reader response to Queen Gwendolen and the thirty-three daughters of King Dioclesian in English histories

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Thirty-three princesses conspire and murder their husbands. They are banished from their Syrian homeland, sailing aimlessly until arriving on an island they name Albion, after the eldest sister, Albine. They consort with devils and give birth to giants. Their giant offspring are later slain by a new arrival, Brutus of Troy, whose violent conquest enables him to become the first king, found New Troy (later London), and rename the island after himself: Britain. His eldest son Locrine is slain on the battlefield for adultery by his Cornish wife Gwendolyn, who afterwards rules as regent for her son Madan, quietly retiring when he comes of age.[1]

While this may sound like a *Game of Thrones* episode, or a TV special listing the bloodiest queens in history, it is actually part of British legend, with Brutus and his descendants first appearing in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain; c.* 1136), and Albine and her thirty-two sisters a hundred years later in *Des Grantz Geanz* (*On the Great Giants*; 1250–1333).[2]

The medieval manuscript transmission and development of these tales is already the focus of much research. Instead, I will examine early modern reader engagement with the Albine sisters and Gwendolyn to illuminate the reasons why these medieval stories continued to be reproduced in a variety of early modern media, illustrating their cultural significance during an era of several European queens regnant. However, their applicability, and thus perpetuation and reader engagement, dimmed in the seventeenth century, as the myths were reformed into a new female figure: Britannia.

Very little of the myths surrounding the founding of Britain are known by modern audiences. Compounding this situation is that much of what has been written since the nineteenth century, or depicted about premodern England in television and film, often focuses on King Arthur, the Vikings, Robin Hood and the Crusades, the Wars of the Roses, and the Tudor era. From pre-Roman Britain,

the female historical figure most widely known today is Boudicca, as evidenced by her position at number 35 in the BBC's '100 Greatest Britons of All Time' poll in 2002.[3]

While modern culture no longer holds the Albine and Gwendolyn myths in prominence, twelfth- to fourteenth-century Europe focused on developing or codifying origin stories that connected nations back to the peoples of antiquity, and supported the 'peopling of the prehistoric world by giants' from Christian 'theological anthropology'.[4] As a result, for England, the story developed of Brutus, an exile from Troy and great-grandson of Aeneas, with the thirty-three Syrian princesses added later not only to explain the origin of the giants Brutus killed upon his arrival, but also to account for the ancient Celtic name of the island, Latinized as Albion.[5]

Given the medieval method of manually copying texts, there is a complex record of transmission and variation in stories, as other oral culture and texts influenced different copies.[6] Some versions were influenced by Greek mythology, in which Hypermnestra, the youngest of fifty daughters, did not murder her husband, as had been ordered by her father, Danaus, grandson of Poseidon and twin brother of Aegyptus. Some versions of the *Brut* chronicle absorbed this story by changing the thirty-three Syrian princesses to fifty Greek ones and having an unnamed youngest daughter betray her sisters' plot and save her husband's life. This later – problematic – addition to the national mythology, along with the multiplicity of versions, enabled criticism and rejection to emerge, as it became increasingly evident that England's chroniclers had not recovered long-forgotten truths about the island's many names but rather invented a memory to fit a current cultural need – a need that eventually faded.

These narrative differences are important to note, given not only medieval histories began to be printed and spread to an even wider audience, but also those readers made choices about which stories to annotate. Authors were also readers, and examined prior materials, making choices on which versions to include and how to interpret their validity. The *Brut* chronicle, a popular medieval vernacular history, contained the Syrian version of the Albine legend. The *Brut* was used by William Caxton for his *Chronicles of England* (1480, 1482), the first printed English history.[7] John Hardyng's medieval verse chronicle (1457, 1463) contained both the Greek and the Syrian versions of the Albine legend, and was continued to the present day and printed by Richard Grafton in 1543.[8] This plethora of story variations, though, confused sixteenth-century authors and led to a variety of errors and alterations. For instance, Edmund Spenser and John Milton, among others, cited fifty daughters for the Syrian version of the story, while William Camden and Gyles Godet stated there were only thirty Syrian princesses.[9] Even with the choices, authors seemed to gravitate more to the older Syrian version of the Albine legend, as it appeared in at least twenty-six books.[10] The Greek version featured in seven works, while both versions appeared in six books.[11] For Brutus' descendants, Gwendolyn's regency and her son Madan's thirty-year rule were incorrectly ordered in early sixteenth-century

lists of kings, with Gwendolyn coming eighty years after her son, but Richard Grafton's *Manuell* (1565) corrected this issue.[12]

There were some writers, though, who did not mention the Albine legend, simply acknowledging that the island 'was before called Albion' and preferring to begin with the arrival of Brutus, or use a Renaissance retooling of the medieval origin stories, which transformed Albion into Neptune's giant son.[13] Citing Caesar, Tacitus, and Gildas as his sources for early Britain, Polydore Vergil summarized Locrine and Gwendolyn's saga in one sentence, with no mention of the Albine legend.[14] In his opinion, 'What manner of men initially inhabited Britain … is quite unknown', as '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 … have wholly perished'.[15] While Vergil's attack sparked rebuttals from English authors, his criticism on the transmission of fables did echo in the increasing number of authors dismissing the Albine legend's validity, such as Leland, Speed, Verstegan, Camden, Enderbie, Milton, and Sammes.[16] However, as Phil Robinson-Self argued, restating the Albine legend in order to critique it not only ensured its perpetuation, but undermined all of the myths and national histories that came after it in the historical narrative.[17] This is evident in both Thomas Elyot's and Richard Baker's writings, for, after dismissing Albine, they also dismissed Neptune's giant son Albion as well as Brutus and his descendants into the realm of 'very Fables'.[18]

Reading the past

Readers had been engaging with these women since medieval times, as the *Brut* was one of the most popular vernacular histories, with almost two hundred extant manuscript copies, more than either the *Canterbury Tales* or *Piers Plowman*.[19] Tamar Drukker analysed many of the extant *Brut* manuscripts, noting that there was 'a diverse readership' given the quality of decoration, and most were 'heavily annotated by scribes and readers, attesting to their deep interest in the work'.[20] More importantly, D. R. Woolf showed that, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'readers very clearly used what they read, revised it in various ways, [and] lent their books to others', as I can confirm following my own research into reader usage of hundreds of copies of English histories.[21]

Of the seven books I have found with user marks on the Albine legend or Gwendolyn, only one has reader notes for the Greek version of the Albine legend: Hardyng's 1543 chronicle, where a red pencil mark brackets the first two lines of chapter 2: 'the youngest suster, the mater all discured / To her husbande, and to her father gent'.[22] This was when the youngest daughter, like Hypermnestra, had heard her sisters' plan to murder their husbands, but instead fled to tell her father and husband. At the end of the chapter, the reader underlines that the island 'was waste' when the forty-nine exiled sisters arrived.[23] As the purpose of the Albine legend was to account for the giants Brutus defeated, this reader was emphasizing that no unaccounted peoples remained. Within the next chapter's

abstract, the user underlined and bracketed 'that Danays kyng of ye Grekes had .I. doughters and that Egistus his brother kyng of Egypte had as many sonnes that maryed together'.[24]

Four of the seven books are Caxton's Syrian version, with several readers marking much of the story, or summarizing the main point of the entire story, as seen in Barbara Philpott's possibly seventeenth-century marginalia: 'Albion from albina one of Dioclesians Daughters'.[25] In a copy of the *Cronycles of Englonde* (1528), a reader underlined key passages throughout the Albine legend, even when it is repeated in the description of England at the end of the book, but in particular noted '33 daughters' in the margin to highlight the underlined text: '.xxxiii. doughters /...ye eldest was called Albyne'.[26] On the following page, the reader continued underlining specific words or phrases, but provided only two additional marks. First, when Albine outlined the plot to kill the sisters' husbands, she argued that since 'I am come of a more hyer kynges blode than myn husbonde is', she would never be obedient, making murder her solution to the impasse between quarrelling spouses.[27] At the end of the page, another mark was placed to note that the devil had transformed himself into air, travelled through many countries, and 'came into ye londe of Albion / & lay by those women'.[28] This engagement with the entire story is similar to a user of the *Chronicles of England* (1515), possibly John Coston from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, who outlined the entire story over two folios by drawing lines down the margin and between the double-columns of text, underlining of much of the story, and providing some marginal comments.[29] However, the marginalia in the gutters is no longer readable due to the rebinding that has narrowed the opening from what was available to the original user.

While simply learning that the name Albion came from Albine may have been all one reader wanted, clearly others found the entire story important, as evidenced by their extensive engagement with the narrative. Furthermore, the reader note of the sisters' sex with the devil highlights how some readers focused on morality and lust. Returning to the *Cronycles of Englonde* (1528), after the devil left, the sisters gave birth to giants, the two most famous being Gogmagog and Langerigan, who are underlined in the narrative, with 'Gogmagog fol, 11.2' in the margin.[30] A few folios later, Gogmagog has been defeated by Brutus' friend Corineus, who threw the giant onto a rock, breaking him into pieces known as the Gogmagog Hills near Cambridge, or 'the saute [seat] of Gogmagog', which the reader underlined and in the margin noted 'Fol. 9.2'.[31] These folio notes, with the '2' indicating the verso side of the page, cross-reference each other, enabling the reader to find the two instances where key information on proper names and geographical features was provided. However, in Hardyng's *Chronicle* there were also notes on 'Coryn[eus]' and 'gogmagog' in the margin next to the passage about their fight, illuminating a wider cultural significance and recognition of these figures.[32] A cultural interest in the origins of geographical features and names is further confirmed in a copy of Fabyan's *Chronicle* (1559). The early modern reader noted in marginalia that, among other things, 'gogmagog ov[er]thrown by Corineus', and underlined that

Brutus gave Cornwall to Corineus (hence its name), in repayment for his service.[33] In a copy of the *St Albans Chronicle* (1485), a reader has underlined supporting information for the marginal notes throughout the Albine story: 'dame Albinus disdayne of her husband', 'dioclesian chaistiseth his daughters but all in vaine', 'a vilanus murther', 'dioclesian bannisheth his daughters', and 'ye origenall [origin] of giants gogmagog and laugherigan'.[34]

One comment, though, does not fit these trends, and illustrates the growing undercurrent of criticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1577), the narrative states, 'These Ladies thus imbarqued and left to the mercie of the raging seas, at length by hap were brought to the ye coasts of this yle then called Albio[n], where they took land', but a reader added, 'It is much y^{t} [that] they shonde be carried such a Compasse through al the midland & west sease & new arrive til they came to Englande.'[35] Moreover, a few paragraphs later, Holinshed acknowledged that readers may find this 'incredible', but he would not remove it and instead 'leaue it to the consideration of the reader, to thinke therof as reson shal moue him'.[36]

Most of Annabel Patterson's reader response examples attack the genre or are examples of law and constitutional politics from Holinshed's pages, whereas I have found only one reader critiquing the text.[37] Instead, the examples on the Albine sisters and Gwendolyn illustrate that many read simply to improve their understanding of the past, to learn why those historical events happened, or to find the origins of names and countries. Moreover, continuing to include these stories in print, albeit while simultaneously dismissing them, bolstered memories of the past. In addition, the Albine legend had cultural significance during the sixteenth-century debate about female queens regnant, as the sisters served as evidence that unchecked female sexuality and rule without men had disastrous consequences. Furthermore, as with the Albine sisters' monstrous offspring, Queen Elizabeth I's statement to her first Parliament was 'although I be never so careful of your well-doings, and mind ever so to be, yet may my issue grow out of kind and become, perhaps, ungracious', proven later with her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, a 'monstrous' Catholic heir, who attempted to kill Elizabeth in order to claim power.[38]

Queen Gwendolyn's story was annotated in nine books. Most readers focused on underlining or noting in the margin the names of four key players (Locrine, Gwendolyn, Estrilde, and Sabrine), such as a reader of Hardyng's *Chronicle* who wrote, 'Gwendolyne [d]aughter of [C]orineus' and '[S]abren Bast[a]rd [d]aughter of Locryn [&] Estryle'.[39] Several noted how long Gwendolyn ruled successfully on her own, perhaps seeking a precedent for the queens regnant of the sixteenth century.[40] Many of these readers also marked the actions of Brutus, the inheritance of his three sons, the defeat of Humber, and the continued political issues among later descendants. As a result, this situated their notes on Gwendolyn as merely part of a broader effort to understand early Britain.

However, some focused on the causes of war, and its consequences, with Gwendolyn killing Locrine, Estrilde, and Sabrine. For instance, Barbara Philpott

wrote, 'Guentilon slew Lotryn her Husband, and reigned in his stead' and noted why the river was renamed Severn for Sabrine.[41] Similarly, in a copy of Caxton's *Chronicles of England* (1480), the reader underlined Corineus' speech to Locrine about honouring the oath he made to his father Brutus to wed Corineus' daughter Gwendolyn.[42] However, at the end of the saga, the reader also underlined that Gwendolyn drowned Estrilde and Sabrine, giving the river its new name – Severn.[43] Two other readers were more blunt, with one underlining 'Lotrine forsoke Guendolen that was his wife', and another writing, 'the first civill warre moued by a wooma[n]'.[44]

Historical context: the Elizabethan and Jacobean significance

While noteworthy for different concepts – for the Albine legend, textual criticism and a place as the first founders; for Gwendolyn, the first civil war in England and first successful reign by a woman – they were both frequently annotated by early modern readers, given most of the markings are in mixed or secretary hand. Other medieval queens of England frequently noted by readers – Ælfthryth (the mother of Æthelred the Unready), Emma of Normandy, Holy Roman Empress Matilda, Isabelle of France, Margaret of Anjou, and Elizabeth Woodville – also had reputations as murderers, invaders, and bewitching kings with their beauty, pointing to widespread concern over particular women's impact on England.[45]

There are several reasons why readers focused more frequently on Albine and Gwendolyn. First, there were more queens regnant and powerful queens regents across Europe in the mid- to late sixteenth century.[46] In particular, for Englishmen, Mary, Queen of Scots embodied the threat of invasion, murder, and destructive female lust, given the murder of her second husband Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley in 1567; her rumoured adulterous affair and resultant pregnancy with her third husband James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell; and the threatening cloud of a Catholic invasion overhanging England while Mary (the Catholic alternative to Protestant Elizabeth) remained under house arrest in England from 1568 until her execution in 1587. This spurred a backlash from many writers, such as John Knox, who attacked female rule as 'a monstre, where there was no head eminent above the rest, … no lesse monstruous is the bodie of that common welth where a woman beareth empire'.[47] Such writings highlighted additional elements of monstrosity in the Albine legend.

Beyond histories of England, the Albine women appeared in Elyot's dictionary under 'Britania', and both the Albine legend and Gwendolyn's saga appeared throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in three plays on Locrine and Elstride, Gogmagog and Corineus in the royal entries into London for Mary I, Elizabeth I, and James I, John Higgin's expansion into early Britain with *Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Anthony Munday's pageant *The Triumphes of Re-United Britania* (1605), Michael Drayton's *A Chorographicall Description … or, Poly-Olbion* (1622), Ben Jonson's masque *Neptunes triumph for the returne of Albion* (1624), and the first English opera *Albion and Albinus* (1684), by John Dryden and Henry Purcell.[48]

Indeed, many may have first learned about England's past through watching a history play, and a dozen more plays about early Britain were written, performed, and published between 1560–1625.[49] This cross-genre pollination illustrates both the Albine legend and Gwendolyn's prominent place in English cultural memory, for as Igor Djordjevic noted, if a single moment from history were selected for a standalone project, much less repeatedly for these women, it confirmed that historical episode's importance.[50] Combined with the political and religious concerns over Elizabeth's continued unmarried state and lack of an heir, in addition to Mary, Queen of Scots' behaviour, contemporary readers and viewers clearly recognized that the shadows of the past overlay current issues.[51]

Moreover, as with the Albine legend and Gwendolyn as regent, monstrous offspring and a tale about civil war came to a close only with the return of a male ruler, be it Brutus or Madan.[52] In the case of Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots, it was the accession of James I in 1603 that many hoped would bring peace and unity to the island, as evidenced in Munday's *The Triumphes of Re-United Britania*, which was performed in 1605 at the inauguration of the new Lord Mayor of London, Sir Leonard Holliday. Munday cast James I as a second Brutus, with the nymph Britannia presiding over the play. She told Brutus:

> I that was sometime termed *Albion*,
> After the name of *Neptunes* valiant Sonne:
> *Albion* the Gyant, and so had still held on,
> But that my conquest, first by thee begun,
> Hath in fames Chronicle such honor woon,
> That thy first setting from *Albania*,
> Crowned me thy virgin Queene *Britania*

which 'recalls that other Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I'.[53]

Conclusion: fading from history

Even though (re)publication of various works continued into the seventeenth century, the historical context changed. While England and Scotland may have joined under a united crown, within a generation the island would be embroiled in civil war (1642–1651), followed by republican government under Oliver Cromwell and his son during the Interregnum (1649–1660), which ended with the restoration of the monarchy under King Charles II. Moreover, there were growing religious tensions, as Puritans, Scottish Presbyterians, Catholic Irish, and Anglicans clashed over politics and faith. In addition, during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England began global colonization and fostered intellectual, philosophical, and scientific advancement. With this explosive combination of rapid change and tensions, Englishmen turned away from a divisive, violent, and fragmented past as represented in historical works and plays, and instead sought to develop a new mythical figure that better represented a unified island.

As a result, by the eighteenth century, the figure of Britannia had emerged. She fit well into the need for a recognizable national emblem of a unified, Protestant country, worthy to be taken forth and used in the forging of a global empire. Her roots were in personifications of the Church of England, the Anglo-Scottish unification begun under James I, the Protestant Parliamentary reaction to Charles I, and the Protestant salvation found in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.[54] Moreover, Queen Elizabeth I had laid the foundation during her reign, inspiring prototypes of Britannia through the fusing of the monarch and the land, as seen in her 'Armada Portrait' (1588), 'Ditchley Portrait' (*c.* 1592), and many sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century frontispieces, such as that of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, which showed a female figure surrounded by historical invaders of England, including Romans, Anglo-Saxons, and Normans.[55]

Furthermore, there were male monarchs for eighty-five years, and circumstances had changed by the time of Mary II and William III after the Glorious Revolution, so neither Albine and her sisters nor Gwendolyn enjoyed a resurgence. Indeed, harkening back to the Syrian or Greek Albine sisters or Cornish Gwendolyn as foreign invaders would be troubling, rather than unifying, given Mary and William had arrived from the Netherlands. No longer needing the Albine legend and Gwendolyn as sources for historical criticism, as examples of female gynarchy, or as an explanation for the founding of the country, they faded from the national narrative and memory.

Notes

1 I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the anonymous reviewer and the excellent editorial work of Valerie Schutte and Estelle Paranque. The chapter has benefited greatly from their feedback and suggestions. All errors are my own. Due to variations in translation from Anglo-Norman French, English, Welsh, and Latin manuscripts, and the lack of standardized orthography in premodern writing, spelling variations abound in premodern texts and modern scholarship. For instance, Hafren, Habren, and Sabrina (later Sabrine) are all names for Locrine's illegitimate daughter in different languages (Welsh, Old Welsh, and Roman, respectively). I use Brutus, Albine, Locrine, Gwendolyn, Madan, Estrildis, and Sabrine in the narrative, and the original spellings of these names in quotes. Phrases such as 'Albine legend' and 'Albine sisters' encompass all thirty-three women.

2 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, translated by Aaron Thompson and J. A. Giles, Medieval Latin Series (York: In Parenthesis Publications, 1999), 23–25, www.yorku.ca/inpar/.

3 BBC, 'Victory for Churchill as He Wins the Battle of the Britons', 25 November 2002, www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/11_november/25/greatbritons_final.shtml. Numbers 11–100 in the list have now disappeared from the BBC website, but they may be found on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at https://web.archive.org/web/20021204214727/http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/greatbritons/list.shtml/.

4 James P. Carley and Julia Crick, 'Constructing Albion's Past: An Annotated Edition of *De Origine Gigantum*', in James P. Carley (ed.), *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, Arthurian Studies No. 44 (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 349–350; Julia Marvin, 'Albine and Isabelle: Regicidal Queens and the Historical Imagination of the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* Chronicles', *Arthurian Literature* 18 (2001), 144; Anke Bernau, 'Beginning with Albina: Remembering the Nation', *Exemplaria* 21:3 (2009), 250–251;

Ruth Evans, 'The Devil in Disguise: Perverse Female Origins of the Nation', in Elizabeth Herbert McAvoy and Teresa Walters (eds), *Consuming Narratives: Gender and Monstrous Appetite in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 185–187.

5 Eilert Ekwell, 'Early Names of Britain', *Antiquity* 4 (1930), 149.

6 For discussions on the complex manuscript transmission, manuscript stemma, and variations in the Albine legend's content, see: Carley and Crick, 'Constructing Albion's Past'; Marvin, 'Albine and Isabelle'; Evans, 'The Devil in Disguise'; Lisa M. Ruch, *Albina and Her Sisters: The Foundation of Albion*, Cambria Studies in Classicism, Orientalism, and Medievalism (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2013); Tamar Drukker, 'Thirty-three Murderous Sisters: A Pre-Trojan Foundation Myth in the Middle English Prose *Brut* Chronicle', *Review of English Studies* n.s. 54:216 (2003); Lauryn S. Mayer, *Worlds Made Flesh: Reading Medieval Manuscript Culture*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2013); John Taylor, 'The French Prose *Brut*: Popular History in Fourteenth-century England', in W. M. Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), 247–254; Diana B. Tyson, '*Des grantz geanz* – a New Text Fragment', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 50 (2006): 115–128. Geoffrey of Monmouth's Brutus myth was reproduced in the very popular *Brut* chronicle. For discussions on the medieval *Brut* chronicle's manuscript transmission, see: Lister M. Matheson, *The Prose* Brut*: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies No. 180 (Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), 8–9; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 73; Christy Desmet, 'Afterlives of the Prose *Brut* in Early Modern Chronicle and Literature', in William Marx and Raluca Radulescu (eds), *Readers and Writers of the Prose Brut* (Lampeter: Trivium Publications, 2006), 227–246.

7 William Caxton, *Chronicles of England* (London, 1480), a2r–a2v; William Caxton, *Chronicles of England* (London, 1482), a2r–a2v.

8 John Hardyng, *The chronicle of Ihon Hardyng,* continued by Richard Grafton (London, 1543), fols. vi(v)–x, xiv(v)–xix.

9 Those mentioning fifty Syrian princesses: Sir Thomas Elyot's *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (London, 1542, 1545, 1548, 1552, 1559); James Harrison's *An exhortacion to the Scottes* (London, 1547); Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (London, 1590); Edward Philips's *The New World of English Words* (London, 1658); John Milton's *The History of Britain* (London, 1670, 1706, 1818); and Daniel Langhorne's *An Introduction to the History of England* (London, 1676). Those mentioning thirty Syrian princesses: Gyles Godet's *Genealogie of all the Kynges of England* (London, 1560); and William Camden's *Britain, or a Chorographicall Description* [*Britannia*] (London, 1610, 1637, 1695, 1722).

10 Using the older Syrian version of the Albine legend: Caxton's *Chronicles of England* (London, 1480, 1482, 1486; Antwerp, 1493; London, 1497); Schoolmaster of St Albans' *Chronicles of England* [*St Albans Chronicle*] (St Albans, 1485; London, 1515 (twice), 1520, 1528); Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (London, 1480, 1482, 1495, 1498, 1500, 1527); Robert Fabyan's *Chronicle* (London, 1516, 1533, 1542); John Major's *Historia majoris Britannie* (London, 1521); John Rastell's *The Pastime of the People* (London, 1529); Sir Thomas Elyot's *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (London, 1542, 1545, 1548, 1552, 1559); Harrison's *An exhortation to the Scottes* (London, 1547); John Leland's *The laboryouse iourney* [and] *serche of Iohan Leylande*, enlarged by John Bale (London, 1549); Thomas Stapleton's *A Counterblast to M. Hornes* (London, 1567); Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (London, 1590); John Norden's *Speculum Britanniae* (London, 1593); Thomas Heywood's *Troia Britannica* (London, 1609); John Speed's *The History of Great Britain* (London, 1611, 1614) and *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (London, 1612); Thomas Heywood's *Gynaikeion* (London, 1624, 1640, 1657); Thomas Heywood, *The Generall History of Women* (London, 1657); Richard Verstegan's *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (London, 1605, 1628, 1634, 1653, 1655, 1673); Camden's *Britain, or a Chorographicall Description* (London, 1610, 1637, 1695, 1722); Richard Baker's *Chronicle of the Kings of England*

(London, 1643, 1653, 1660, 1679); Philips's *The New World of English Words* (London, 1658); Percy Enderbie's *Cambria Triumphans* (London, 1661); Milton's *The History of Britain* (London, 1670, 1706, 1818); Alyett Sammes's *Britannia antiqua illustrate* (London, 1676); Langhorne's *An Introduction to the History of England* (London, 1676); and George Buchanan's *The History of Scotland* (London, 1690).

11 Mentioning only the Greek version of the Albine legend: Hector Boece's *History and Chronicles of Scotland* (London, 1540); John Price's *Historiae Brytannicae defensio* (London, 1573); Anthony Munday's *A Brief Chronicle* (1611); Stephen Jerome's *Moses his sight of Canaan* (London, 1614), *Seven helps to Heaven* (London, 1614), and *An Easy and Compendious Introduction* (London, 1655); and R. B.'s *Female Excellency* (London, 1688). Mentioning both the Syrian and Greek versions of the Albine legend: John Hardyng's *Chronicle* (London, 1543); Lloyd Lodowick's *The Pilgrimage of Princes* (London, 1573, 1586, 1607, 1653, 1659); Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1577, 1587); Roland du Jardin's *A Discourse of the Married and Single Life* (London, 1621); William Slatyer's *Palae-Albion: History of Great Britain* (London, 1621, 1622); and Samuel Pegge's *Anonymiana* (London, 1818), 84–85.

12 *A Cronycle of all the Kyng[es]* (London, 1518); *Chronicle of the 7 Ages* (London, 1530, 1532); *A Breviat Cronicle* (London, 1552); Richard Grafton's *Manuell of the Chronicles of Englande* (London, 1565); Slatyer's *Palae-Albion* (London, 1621, 1622); and John Taylor's *The Number and Names of all the Kings of England* (London, 1649). Works with brief mentions of Gwendolyn: Polydore Vergil, *Anglica Historia* (1555), edited by Dana F. Sutton (Philological Museum, University of Birmingham), paragraph 21, www.philological.bham.ac.uk/polverg/1e.html; Robert Crowley, *An epitome of chronicles* (London, 1559), fol. 32v; Thomas Cooper, *Cooper's Chronicle* (London, 1560, 1565), fol. 28v; Richard Grafton, *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England* (London, 1562, 1564), fol. 2r; Godet, *Genealogie of all the Kynges of England* (London, 1560), fol. 4r; John Chetwynd, *Anthologia Historica* (London, 1674), 257–258; James Tyrrell, *The General History of England* (London, 1696), 9–10.

13 John Stow, *Chronicles of England* (London, 1580), 17, 15–16; Crowley, *Epitome of chronicles*, fols. 32r–32v, a pirated edition of Thomas Lanquet's chronicle, which had been posthumously completed by Thomas Cooper; Cooper, *Cooper's Chronicle* (1560, 1565), fol. 28r; Grafton, *A manuell of the Chronicles of Englande* (1565), fol. vi(r); Grafton, *Abridgement* (1562, 1564), fol. 2r; Grafton, *Abridgement* (London, 1572), fol. 1r; John Stow, *Abridgement of English Chronicles* (London, 1566), fol. 8r; John Stow, *Summarie of English Chronicles* (London, 1590), 1–2; John Stow, *Abridgement of English Chronicles*, continued by Edmund Howes (1618), 7–8. The blending of Hebrew scripture with Egyptian and Greek mythology came from the Italian Renaissance fascination with Greece and Egypt. Humanist writers and nascent archaeologists claimed that Osyris Aegyptus came to Italy from Egypt along with his two sons Libyus (Hercules) and Italus (Atlas).. See David Mark Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and Justifications for Slavery* (New York: Ashgate, 2009), 46–47.

14 Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, paragraphs 18 and 21.

15 Vergil, *Anglica Historia*, paragraphs 18 and 21.

16 F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, Renaissance Society of America Reprint Texts No. 15 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 63–64; Anthony Munday, *The Triumphes of Re-united Britania* (London, 1605), A3r; Speed, *The History of Great Britain*, 158; Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, 158; Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, 24; Camden, *Britain, or a Chorographicall Description* (1637), 24; Enderbie, *Cambria Triumphans*, 5; Milton, *The History of Britain* (1670), 5; Sammes, *Britannia*, 50.

17 Phil Robinson-Self, 'Fifty Sisters Can't All Be Bad: The Early Modern Reception of the Legend of Albina', in Lynne Fallwell and Keira V. Williams (eds), *Gender and the Representation of Evil* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 17–20.

18 Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae*, s.v. 'Britania'; Baker, *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1643), 1.

19 Ruch, *Albina and Her Sisters*, xv; Drukker, 'Thirty-three Murderous Sisters', 449; Matheson, *The Prose* Brut, 8–9.

20 Drukker, 'Thirty-three Murderous Sisters', 450.
21 D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6, 44–48. For editions of Caxton's *Chronicle*, see Desmet, 'Afterlives of the Prose *Brut*', 227.
22 Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. vi(v), King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82. Despite at least five ownership marks being present in the book, none matches the handwriting or red pencil of the marginalia.
23 Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. vii(r), King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82. The reader's underlining is illustrated in the quote.
24 Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. vii(r), King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82. The reader's underlining is illustrated in the quote.
25 Caxton, *Chronicles* (1480), fol. 38r, Morgan Library and Museum, PML 20926.1–2. There are several ownership marks in the book, but Barbara's partially scratched-out inscription on the front pastedown matches the handwriting used for these notes. No more information could be found.
26 *Cronycles of Englonde* (London, 1528), viii(v), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles. The creator of the marks could not be determined, as there are only bookplates for Herschel V. Jones (1861–1928) and Grenville Kane (1854–1943). However, the early modern reader did cite Raphael Holinshed several times in marginalia.
27 *Cronycles of Englonde*, ix(r), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles. The reader's underlining is illustrated in the quote.
28 *Cronycles of Englonde*, ix(r), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles. The reader's underlining is illustrated in the quote. The passage does not capitalize 'devil'.
29 *Chronicles of England* (London, 1515), fols. 7r–7v, St John's College, University of Oxford HB4/6.d.4.13(2). John Coston's handwriting seems earlier than both the current binding and Nathaniel Crynes, who gave the book to St John's College in 1745.
30 *Cronycles of Englonde*, ix(v), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles.
31 *Cronycles of Englonde*, xi(v), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles.
32 Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. xv(r), King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82.
33 Fabyan, *Chronicle* (1559), 10, Princeton University, EXOV 1426.336. There are no known provenance or ownership marks, but the handwriting is secretary hand.
34 Schoolmaster of St Albans, *Chronicles of England* (St Albans Abbey, Hertfordshire, 1485), bvii(r)–bviii(v), Morgan Library and Museum, PML 718. The only known provenance is William Amhurst Tyssen-Amherst, Baron Amherst (1835–1909). The reader did cite John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and Polydore Vergil in marginalia.
35 Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1577), 8, Columbia University Libraries, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, DA130.H73. There are no known provenance or ownership marks. The handwriting seems a mixed style, with fairly good spelling.
36 Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1577), 8; Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1587), 6.
37 Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), x–xv, 264–276.
38 'Queen Elizabeth's First Speech before Parliament, February 10, 1559', in Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (eds), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 57.
39 Schoolmaster of St Albans, *Chronicles of England*, bviii(v), Morgan Library and Museum, PML 718; *Cronycles of Englonde* (1528), xii(v), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles (also put brackets around 'queen regned xv. Yere'); Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fols. xviii(v)–xix(r), King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82; Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. xviii(v), Princeton Library, EX 1430.432 (user unknown); Grafton, *Abridgement* (1562), fol. 2r, Bodleian Library, STC 12148, Early English Books Online; John Stow, *Summarie of English Chronicles* (London, 1587), 10, British Library, 808.a.13. The reader of Stow, writing in pencil, was likely Benjamin Washington. He also cited Philippe de Commines, John Foxe, and Richard Grafton in his marginalia.
40 *Cronycles of Englonde* (1528), xii(v), Princeton University, ExKa Americana 1528 Cronycles (put brackets around 'queen regned xv. Yere'); Hardyng, *Chronicle*, fol. xix(r),

King's College, University of Cambridge, M.36.82 ('regina xv anno' added to printed marginalia 'Guendolena'); Fabyan, *Chronicle* (1559), 12, Princeton University, EXOV 1426.336 ('a woma[n] ruled xv yeres').

41 Caxton, *Chronicles* (1480), fol. 42v, Morgan Library and Museum, PML 20926.1–2.

42 Caxton, *Chronicles* (1480), a7r, Morgan Library and Museum, PML 679.1–2.

43 Caxton, *Chronicles* (1480), a7v, Morgan Library and Museum, PML 679.1–2.

44 Schoolmaster of St Albans, *Chronicles of England*, bviii(v), Morgan Library and Museum, PML 718; Fabyan, *Chronicle* (1559), 12, Princeton University, EXOV 1426.336.

45 Katherine Olson, 'Gwendolyn and Estrildis: Invading Queen in British Historiography', *Medieval Feminist Forum* 44:1 (2008), 44. For more on women's depictions in medieval history, see Lister M. Matheson, 'Genealogy and Women in the Prose *Brut*, Especially the Middle English Common Version and Its Continuations', in R. L. Radulescu and E. D. Kennedy (eds), *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France*, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe No. 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 221–258.

46 Sharon L. Jansen, *The Monstrous Regiment of Women: Female Rulers in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1–3.

47 John Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstruous regiment of women* (Geneva, 1558), fol. 27v.

48 For more on *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine* (1588–1591; printed 1595, 1664, 1685) and Thomas Lodge's *The tragicall complaint of Elstred* (printed 1593), see Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 314–320. Charles Tilney, *Estrild* (*c.* 1585), noted by Sir George Buc on the title page of a surviving copy of *The lamentable tragedie of Locrine* (1595), *Lost Plays Database*, www.lostplays.org/index.php?title=Estrild. For royal entries into London, see Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1577), 1159, 1174; Holinshed, *Chronicles* (1587), 1120, 1178; Desmet, 'Afterlives of the Prose *Brut*', 242; Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation, 1712–1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51, 53–55; Harriet Archer, *Unperfect Histories: The Mirror for Magistrates, 1559–1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xi–xii, 39–72; Michael Drayton, *A Chorographicall Description … of this renowned isle of Great Britain, or, Poly-Olbion* (London, 1612, 1622), 11–12, 21, plate 19 for Gogmagog Hills. For further confirmation of the persistence of these legends, see Robinson-Self, 'Fifty Sisters Can't All Be Bad', 16. This evidence overturns Desmet's argument that from 1560 to 1590, the Albina legend faded into oblivion, only to return briefly. See, Desmet, 'Afterlives of the Prose *Brut*', 236.

49 Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, 7–8 and chapter 3; Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, 10, 22, 211–212, 234, 287; Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, 314–320.

50 Igor Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation: Ideals, Memory, and Practical Policy in the Chronicles* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 43.

51 Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation*, 44. For more on popular historical culture manifesting in intertextual conversations across medium and genre, see Kavita Mundan Finn, '"Of Whom Proud Rome Hath Boasted Long": Intertextual Conversations and Popular History', in Kristen Abbott Bennett (ed.), *Conversational Exchanges in Early Modern England (1549–1640)* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 70–100.

52 For more on historical parallels, see Marvin, 'Albine and Isabelle', 163–176; Desmet, 'Afterlives of the Prose *Brut*', 238–246; Olson, 'Gwendolyn and Estrildis', 46; Robinson-Self, 'Fifty Sisters Can't All Be Bad', 16, 23–24.

53 Major, *Madam Britannia*, 5–6, 23–24.

54 Ruch, *Albina and Her Sisters*, 137; Major, *Madam Britannia*, 1–7, 14, 23–53; Anthony Adolph, *Brutus of Troy and the Quest for the Ancestry of the British* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Family History, 2015), 115–127.

55 Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 120, 132.

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