“NO ROOM IN HISTORY”:
GENRE AND IDENTIY IN BRITISH AND IRISH NATIONAL HISTORIES,
1541-1691

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by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities of Northeastern University
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ABSTRACT

In this project, I build on the scholarship that has challenged the historiographic revolution model to question the valorization of the early modern humanist narrative history’s sophistication and historiographic advancement in direct relation to its concerted efforts to shed the purportedly pious, credulous, and naïve materials and methods of medieval history. As I demonstrate, the methodologies available to early modern historians, many of which were developed by medieval chroniclers, were extraordinary flexible, able to meet a large number of scholarly and political needs. I argue that many early modern historians worked with medieval texts and genres not because they had yet to learn more sophisticated models for representing the past, but rather because one of the most effective ways that these writers dealt with the political and religious exigencies of their times was by adapting the practices, genres, and materials of medieval history.

I demonstrate that the early modern national history was capable of supporting multiple genres and reading modes; in fact, many of these histories reflect their authors’ conviction that authentic past narratives required genres with varying levels of facticity. For example, I show that Geoffrey Keating’s ca. 1634 Foras Feasa ar Éirinn invokes the repetitive typological structure of medieval scéla (“stories”) to refute accounts of the Irish past that were written in support of the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland while Roderic O’Flaherty’s 1685 Ogygia accomplishes similar anti-colonial aims by mustering the cumulative genres of medieval Ireland. On the other side of the Irish Sea, Daniel Langhorne’s 1676 Introduction to the History of England includes a vigorous defense of the tradition that Brutus the Trojan first settled Britain because the Brutus legend validated England’s monarchical government and authority over Scotland and Wales, both of which had been challenged by the Interregnum. In his historical and
poetic works, Edmund Spenser shows that mixtures of fiction and history are necessary to imagine the empire that is at the heart of British identity. Ultimately, I argue that the “room” sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars found in history for a great wealth of genres and historiographic practices shows that we must construct equally capacious disciplinary and period models if we are to encompass the complex and varied genres of early modern history.
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Introduction

No Room in History

Theorizing the Historical in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

In the address to the reader from his 1689 *Hibernia Anglicana*, historian Richard Cox (1650–1733) remarks that it is “strange” that the affairs of the “Noble Kingdom” of Ireland should have found “no room in History” but remain obscure to the island’s own inhabitants and even in England. Cox writes that although England is “a Learned and Inquisitive Nation, skilful beyond comparison in the Histories of all other Countries,” and though Ireland is “a Kingdom subordinate to England, and of the highest importance to it,” the English are nonetheless “very imperfectly informed in the Story of Ireland.” To support his claim that there are not yet any “compleat or coherent” histories of Ireland, Cox dismisses a substantial body of historical texts, including Ireland’s medieval chronicle tradition and the later historical projects completed by scholars such as Geoffrey Keating (*b. c.1580, d. in or before 1644*), Roderic O’Flaherty (1627–1716), and James Ware (1594–1666). According to Cox, previous historical works on Ireland are “very faulty, and have no coherence”; they are no better than “Scraps and Fragments” or “very silly Fictions”; and they are guilty of jumbling “Times, Persons and Things together.” “It must therefore follow,” Cox concludes, “That an Entire and Coherent History of Ireland must be very acceptable to the World, and very useful to the People of England, and the Refugees of Ireland, especially at this Juncture, when that Kingdom is to be re-conquered” and he claims that *Hibernia Anglicana* will lay the groundwork for just such a history.

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1 Birth and death dates given for writers are from the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The introductory sections of *Hibernia Anglicana*, including the address to the reader as well as Cox’s “An Apparatus: Or Introductory Discourse to the History of Ireland, Concerning the State of that Kingdom before the Conquest thereof by the English,” are unpaginated.
The rhetorical move Cox makes here, asserting that previous historical works are inadequate and that his own text will fill a scholarly void, demonstrates a strategy shared by many of his contemporaries, whose histories frequently begin with similarly disparaging representations of earlier scholarship. Cox’s particular charges against the texts that make up Ireland’s historical record, that they are incoherent, inaccurate, and incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction, are characteristic of many early modern writers’ complaints about their sources, especially those that were penned by medieval chroniclers. The purpose Cox gives for his work in enabling England to understand this important subordinate kingdom demonstrates an explicit political focus often apparent in early modern national histories, which were generally represented as works intended to produce national identities and establish claims of sovereignty. The hostility Cox shows to histories that argued for Ireland’s native sovereignty and his open acknowledgement of *Hibernia Anglicana*’s function in supporting the re-conquest of Ireland exemplify the contentious nature of historiographic debates and the centrality of empire to identity productions in Great Britain and Ireland.

Arguments such as Cox’s, that previous scholarship fails when measured against the author’s rubric for what constitutes “history,” were frequently adopted by writers participating in early modern disputes over sovereignty. In this study, I consider the impacts of such contentions regarding historicity, demonstrating that despite the prevalence of assertions that history should be distinguished from the “silly fictions” and jumbled chronologies of medieval chroniclers, early modern writers frequently adopted precisely the methods and materials they claimed to

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2 For example, John Bale’s (1495–1563) dedication to Edward VI from the 1549 *The laboryouse journey [and] serche of Iohan Leylande, for Englandes antiquitees* begins by asserting that: “Amonge all the nacions in whome I haue wandered, for the knoweledge of thynge (moste benygne soueraygne) I haue founde noise so negligent and vntoward, as I haue found England in the due serch of theyr auncent hystoryes, to the syngulare fame and bewtye therof.”
reject as unhistorical. The many texts that discuss how scholars can recognize and respond to fictions, fables, and legends in historical works indicate the depth of early modern historians’ interest in theorizing their historiographic practices and establishing the parameters of their discipline. However, arguments that history should be free of fictions are not consistently reflected in the contents of many early modern histories, which very frequently include legends and other ostensibly fictional materials. I argue that the apparent contradiction of early modern historians both advocating that works in their discipline be distinguished from fiction while also including many materials that they recognized as fictional reveals that these scholars conceptualized their field with considerable flexibility and capaciousness.

It is indisputably true that many of the methods and materials represented as inadequately historical by early modern writers are those associated with medieval historians, whose works they often characterized as disorganized and overly credulous. However, focusing on early modern historians’ claims that their methods offered significant advances over the obsolete practices of medieval chroniclers can lead to overstatements of difference between these periods and inaccurate characterizations of medieval historiographic inadequacies. My research examines the fables and legends that were produced by medieval historians and then adopted by early modern ones to foreground the complex and critically engaged uses to which early modern historians put medieval materials. Similarly, I demonstrate that early modern historians were keenly aware that purportedly uncritical cumulative genres such as annals and chronicles could accomplish rhetorical effects not available to narrative history. Contributing to contemporary discussions over periodization and the development of early modern historiography, I show that medieval materials, methods, and genres were well able to address the historiographic and political concerns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thus highlighting the continuities
between these periods while acknowledging the need for early modern histories to accommodate significant political and technological changes.

Current scholarship on early modern historiography has been strongly influenced by the “historical revolution” model proposed by F. S. Fussner in 1962. Fussner argued that “historical method, in its technical aspects, became far more exact, accurate, and professional as a result of the general progress in humanistic scholarship” and represented early modern historical practices as the first to demonstrate characteristics we recognize as modern (xii). Peter Burke’s 1969 *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* was another highly influential text that drew firm distinctions between medieval and early modern historical practices, asserting that “medieval writers and scholars compared to those of the Renaissance took an uncritical attitude towards evidence” (7). While the revolution model dominated responses to early modern histories for decades, more recent historiographic studies have challenged many of its assertions to demonstrate both the continuities between medieval and early modern scholarly practices and the significance of technological developments and shifts in readership, rather than methodological innovations, in changing the ways that early modern historians worked.

D. R. Woolf’s work has been especially important in reframing discussions about early modern historiography. In his 2000 *Reading History in Early Modern England* Woolf argues that the “true historical revolution in England” was not the “working-out of proper historical method” but was instead the “much longer-lasting change in sensibility, taste, and manners” that transformed history from the “minor pastime of a small number of monastic chroniclers and civic officials” into a “major area of study and leisurely pursuit” (7). Andrew Hadfield has shown that early modern adoptions of purportedly disfavored medieval materials such as origin legends in fact increased within colonialist histories (“Scythian” 390-408). James Simpson call attention to
the ways that statements such as Cox’s have influenced contemporary conceptualizations of the medieval, arguing that the “sixteenth century invested the middle ages with a theme and gave us a method for studying that theme,” demonstrating how early modern writers created a medieval past that was “sharply different” from their present and linking twenty-first century scholarly practices to sixteenth-century arguments (19-22). Recognizing that the medieval period was to a great degree constructed by the early modern one, Simpson asserts, enables scholars to break free from “the binary, revolutionary logic that underlies the very notion of periodization in the first place” (28). Introducing the 2006 collection, *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, Paulina Kewes sums up the current state of scholarship by declaring that “the myth of the historical revolution has largely been laid to rest” (3).

The notion that early modern humanists essentially invented modern, critical historical practices may have been set aside, but some of the assumptions underlying the historiographic revolution model are still evident in scholarship today, as Andrew Hadfield argues in his article “Skeptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution.” Hadfield warns against placing stock in narratives of “unfettered” historical progress built on the nineteenth-century “story of the re-birth of learning in the Renaissance” by demonstrating both that “proper humanist principles” could be used to defend legends as much as to demolish them and that humanist historians in fact “codified and followed what had been accepted practices” among medieval historians (26-31). Hadfield shows that even Woolf’s extensive scholarship demonstrates some circularity in defining the rise of modernity and the development of national identities through each other (40).

Hadfield’s article concludes by urging scholars to “remember what went before and refuse to think that the label ‘medieval’ automatically excludes what we think of as modern”
My work takes up this invitation to disrupt associations between medieval materials (including scholarly practices, genres, and texts) and unsophisticated or pre-critical historiographic methods. This strain of contemporary scholarship has generally set aside the notion that the humanist invention of critical methods revolutionized historiography to produce practices we recognize as modern. However, even in acknowledging continuities between medieval and early modern historical historiography, scholars frequently treat early modern uses of medieval methods as relics, evidence of an incomplete disciplinary evolution. This approach to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medievalisms can be illustrated by two chapters from a recent collection, the 2013 *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles*, both of which position their subject as anticipating some (advanced) modern scholarly practices while perpetuating some (outdated) medieval ones.

Considering the genres of medieval and early modern history, Wyman Herendeen locates Raphael Holinshed’s *(c.1525–1580?)* *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* in a “liminal space” between “the moribund medieval tradition” and the “new, sophisticated humanist narrative” (237). Herendeen contrasts the *Chronicles* rather less than favorably with William Camden’s 1615 *Annales of Elizabeth*, which achieve a greater “narrative coherence and unity” than Holinshed’s work (242). Considering early modern responses to what she calls the “astonishingly long-lived” medieval origin legends, Laura Ashe writes that the *Chronicles* can be situated on the “cusp of this phenomenon [of increased skepticism toward ancient history], or in the midst of its fitful progression, neither fully committed to ‘modern’ historical method, nor entirely mired in the presumed credulousness of the past” (157, 154). Ashe’s attention to what she describes as the “inherent risk in the teleological act of identifying modernity in historical writing” is evident even in this brief quote and she is careful to remind her readers that medieval
writers themselves understood an “abstract difference” between *historia* and *fabula*, although she also adds that medieval “boundaries of plausibility and credulity remained porous and uncertain” (153). Despite her warning that “historiographical skepticism” is just one of many factors in the debate over Britain’s origins, associations between advanced historiographic methodologies and the rejection of origin legends are evident in Ashe’s assertion that it is “most surprising in the context of the early modern period’s greater historiographical awareness” that the British origin myth expanded to include the “historically fanciful” Albina account, in her need to explain the apparent “lack of historiographical progress” evident in the “sobering” fact that Holinshed and his colleagues could not improve upon a twelfth-century “stance of partial skepticism,” and in her statement that historians in Holinshed’s time “were still a long way from discarding the origin myths of Britain’s ancient past” (155-158, 169). I argue that early modern adoptions of medieval methods and materials should be recognized not as evidence of incomplete historiographic progress but instead as integral aspects of a self-critical and expansive historiographic culture.

My work also illuminates the multidirectional influence of identity production and empire on historiographic development. As scholars such as Anke Bernau, Kathy Lavezzo, and Barbara Fuchs have amply demonstrated, early modern national identities and imperial projects were mutually dependent and were theorized through literary, legendary, and historical texts.³ Andrew Escobedo, Woolf, and many other scholars have shown that while nationalisms of mass

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³ In her essay “Imperium Studies,” Fuchs outlines a scholarly approach capable of acknowledging the centrality of empire in early modern texts and identities while also recognizing that early modern imperial rhetoric was distinct in significant ways from the later discourse that has generally been the focus of postcolonial theory. Fuchs’s recent book, *Poetics and Piracy*, examines the ways that literary texts engaged with imperial projects, while Bernau and Lavezzo consider the entanglements between emerging and developing national identities and the imperial rhetoric expressed through the legends of medieval and early modern Britain.
participation may not have been possible prior to the late eighteenth century, national identities most certainly were. The chapters that follow are invested in examining productions of national identity without attempting to obscure distinctions between theories of the nation in the early modern period and those that were to come in later centuries. My work shows that early modern historians recognized the particular efficacy of fiction in bolstering narratives of sovereignty, leading these scholars to construct the national history as a genre able to accommodate fictions in service of its function of producing national identity. Rather than a failure of historiographic rigor, fictions represented a highly self-conscious and integral feature of early modern historiographic method. The historians I discuss in this project were unquestionably invested in considering the proper roles and salient characteristics of historia and fabula but they most often distinguish between history and fiction not to segregate the two but rather to leverage the nation-building capacities of both in the national histories that they produced.

In examining texts written in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland and in considering the continuities between medieval and early modern scholarly practices, I adopt a diachronic as well as an archipelagic approach, the efficacy of which has been demonstrated by J.G.A. Pocock and Willy Maley. For a project investigating formations of national identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the archipelagic approach is crucial because Scottish, Irish, English, and

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4 Andrew Escobedo sums up this matter quite neatly by writing that “one of the primary difficulties for any examination of Renaissance nationalism resides in convincing scholars of modernity, on one hand, that national consciousness existed at all in the sixteenth century, and persuading scholars of medieval culture, on the other hand, that nationalism was something other than old news in the sixteenth century” (10). For discussions of the distinct characteristics of early modern national identities and consciousness, see Escobedo 1-30, Schwyzer 3-13, and Woolf “Social Circulation” 3-14.

5 For an outline of how scholars of early modern history and literature have responded to “Pocock’s plea for a British or archipelagic perspective,” see Maley 23-36. Pocock’s argument that the early modern period can be considered an “Age of the Three Kingdoms” of England, Scotland, and Ireland is outlined in his essay “The Atlantic Archipelago and the War of the Three Kingdoms.”
British identities were worked out in response to each other. My work argues that early modern historical texts from Great Britain and Ireland must be examined with attention to archipelagic relations, the practices established by medieval historians, and the interconnections of sovereignty, national identity, and empire. I show that reading across period, national, and disciplinary lines enables a fuller picture of early modern historiographic culture while more closely reflecting the practices and contents of early modern histories themselves.

Early modern British and Irish historians frequently express their desire to separate history from fiction, to produce “coherent” histories, rather than “scraps and fragments” and to free their work from “silly fictions” and jumbled chronologies, as Cox sets out his text’s goals. Despite these assertions, early modern historians just as frequently incorporate legends, myths, and fables into their histories while early modern adaptations of the chronicle form indicate that medieval accretive genres were far from “moribund” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I argue that the equal ubiquity of attempts to separate fiction from history and of fictions within history indicates that early modern scholars were consciously engaged in producing a historical culture that could support a variety of genres, not all of which were defined by their truth-values. I offer a method of reading early modern histories that resists all of the assumptions of the historiographic revolution model to take early modern histories on their own terms, reframing narratives of disciplinary development to set aside binary periodizations and indicating how the insights of literary study allow for readings that reflect the approaches many early modern historians took to their works and discipline.

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6 Throughout the contemporary scholarship on the early modern British archipelago is the thread of awareness that, as Marie-Louise Coolahan puts it, “identities are shaped and defined in relation to each other” (1-2).
In a work situated between the fields of literary studies and archaeology, rather than history, Philip Schwyzer adopts an evocative metaphor to describe the points of contact between these fields, writing of a “border station” between “disciplinary realms” in which “legitimate migrants offering their passports at the border” were for a long time few and far between, “rumors of smuggling in both directions” were exaggerated, and “commodities touted as imports from the other side often turned out, on closer inspection, to be of domestic manufacture” (4). Schwyzer writes that the lack of interaction between the two territories caused some to question whether they had a “common border” at all and query: “Were they not rather both isolated peninsulas on the continent of History?” (4). Schwyzer continues with greater optimism to describe the recent publication of “innovative studies testifying to the possibility of contact between the disciplines,” which show that reading between the two disciplines “provides the key to a more holistic vision of the past” (5). While I must object to Schwyzer’s location of literary studies as a mere peninsula on the continent of history, I want to borrow his metaphor to assert that scholarship beginning with the declaration of an open border policy between the lands of history and of literary studies enables fuller, even more holistic, representations of the past that also adhere more closely to the disciplinary models of early modern writers.

The Species of History: Taxonomies and Terminology

In addition to considering the differences between histories and fictions, early modern writers were also interested in producing taxonomies of the discipline of history itself. For example, Thomas Stanley (1625–1678) asserts that there are two kinds of history, that which “represents general affairs of State” and that which “gives account of particular persons, whose lives have rendred them eminent” (“Preface”). Edward Leigh (1603–1671) offers his own model
for historical subgenres, dividing history into “three kindes,” the first of which is “Chronicles or Annals; the second Lives; the third Relations” (46). In this model, chronicles and annals are histories that “represent a portion of time” and can be either “universall or particular”; the latter type “comprehends the affairs of some Kingdom, or State, or Nation” (46). In a chapter titled “From whence comes the Name of History and the Different Kinds” from his 1695 *Of the art both of writing & judging of history with reflections upon ancient as well as modern historian*, Pierre Le Moyne (1602–1671) breaks history into “three principal Species, *Divine*, *Natural*, and *Humane* (48). *Humane* history “treats of Mens Actions” and is itself divided into five kinds: “*True, Fabulous, Universal, Particular and Singular*” (48–49). Of particular interest here are the categories of *Fabulous Humane* history, which Le Moyne defines as including “such things as are feigned and imagined for the Divertisement of the Reader, as what we find in *Poems* and *Romances*” and *Particular Humane* history, which “contents it self with the Extent of one Nation, as *Livy* and *Tacitus*; or one Reign, as that of *Quintus Curtius*” (49). Le Moyne’s work shows the level of detail that historiographic taxonomies could achieve while also offering an example in which “Fabulous” history, consisting of poetry and romance, remains a “Species” of history, though it might be marked as distinct from other historical genres on the basis of its truth-value and entertainment purpose.

Another historiographic taxonomy is offered by Margaret Cavendish (1623?–1673), who in the introduction to her 1667 biography *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* identifies three kinds of historical texts: general history, national history, and particular history. “National history,” as defined by Cavendish, encompasses the past events of “a particular nation,
kingdom, or commonwealth.” As with Le Moyne, Leigh, and Stanley, Cavendish identifies the national history as a distinct subgenre, whose purpose is to relate significant past events from a discrete political unit such as a nation or kingdom. In an essay from The New Cambridge Medieval History, Jean-Philippe Genet links the national history, which is organized through a chronological framework derived from “reigns and sovereigns,” with humanism and the influence of literature on politics and scholarship (25-26). Genet cites the 1416 Historia florentini populi of Leonardo Bruni, which took Livy as a model to chronicle Florence’s “unbroken line of descent from the Roman republic,” as an influential text from what he calls a “movement” in which the object of history became the political realm (26-27). The texts I examine participate in a variety of historiographic forms in that they include annals, chronicles, synchronisms, and genealogies as well as narrative histories, but they are united by their shared purpose of recording past events from the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland.

National histories were particularly fraught sites for working out debates over history and fiction because these texts were understood as producing and supporting narratives of sovereignty and were often built on such dubious materials as origin legends. The particular temptation to mingle “falshoods with truth, to make the beginnings of Policies seeme more honourable,” as John Speed (1551/2–1629) writes, or to ennoble national origins by “this immoderate Licence of coyning Fictions,” as Scottish humanist George Buchanan’s (1506–1582) translator frames the problem, was well recognized by readers of early modern national histories (154, 41). National histories were subject to a high degree of disciplinary policing, as writers

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7 Cavendish’s less-than favorable representation of the national history, which she describes as “pernicious” and guilty of “renewing old quarrels, that would otherwise have been forgotten,” reflects both her endeavor to validate the “particular history” she is introducing and the Civil War context of her work
8 For more on the development of the humanist national history, see Kelley 239-240.
attempted to counter the fictionalizing incentives described by Buchanan and Speed while also engaging in a rigorous debate over the sovereignty of the kingdoms of Great Britain in which national narratives served as contentious evidence in colonial and anticolonial claims. For this reason, I have focused here on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century national histories but many of the disciplinary theorizations I discuss influenced the other “species” of history as well.

A few notes on terminology are perhaps especially appropriate for a project that considers the many labels early modern writers used to describe the kinds of historical writing that they consumed and produced. While early modern scholars do not use the word “genre” in its current sense, these writers were invested in taxonomizing the texts they encountered by identifying the various species of history and categorizing the other kinds of materials, including fictions and fables, that were present in historical texts. Acknowledging that it introduces a slight anachronism, I refer to the “genres” of early modern texts because the term is conventional in current scholarship and because it effectively conveys the taxonomic nature of discussions in which scholars classified texts as poetry, fiction, history, chorography, chronicle, legend, fable, and so on.

I prefer “anticolonial” to “postcolonial” to reflect the fact that the British colonization of Ireland was very much ongoing in the centuries under consideration. I use the term “British” to refer to national identities that were being established in contrast to Irishness or when a pan-island identity is invoked. Thus, for example, I consider James Ware’s 1633 collection of Irish histories to be the product of writers invested in distinguishing British and Irish identities, though

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9 In early modern texts, one sees “genre” used largely in French-language phrasings such as “genre de vie,” or “form of life,” and “genre humain,” referring to the human race. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* outlines, the Anglo-Norman or Middle French term *gendre*, meaning “kind, or sort” was also used to designate a “race or people”; the related Latin term *gens*, describing peoples or races, is important for medieval theories of identity and emerging concepts of nationhood. For more on medieval uses of *gens*, see Barbara Yorke 69-82.
its authors might also be described as New English, English, and Welsh. Early modern writers themselves recognized these terms as slippery and complex; in prefacing his 1606 *History of Great Britain* John Clapham (1566–1619), for example, writes that the “Britain” is sometimes used to describe “the whole Island, which was afterwards divided into the two Kingdomes of England and Scotland.” Clapham notes that as England and Scotland were for hundreds of years “two distinct Monarchies” it may be thought “most meete, that there should be severall Histories of the English and Scottish Nation vntill the vnion of them both: (the title of Britannie in the meane time remaining indifferent, as well to the one, as to the other).” Reflecting term’s ability to encompass multiple identities, I use “British” when authors seem to be invoking the island as a whole, especially in contrast to Irishness. I use “English” when identities distinct from Scottish and Welsh ones are at stake.

To describe British populations in Ireland, I distinguish between “Old English” and “New English” individuals. The Old English, also called the Anglo-Hibernii or the *Sean-Ghall* in Irish, were the usually Catholic and often Irish-speaking descendants of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invaders. The New English, or *Nua-Ghall*, were the usually Protestant populations who arrived as part of the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland and after. Generally, I prefer Irish and Latin names and titles to translated ones, except in cases where the English versions are more widely used in contemporary scholarship, such as with Geoffrey Keating (Seathrún Céitinn) and Roderic O’Flaherty (Ruaidhrí Ó Flaithbheartaigh). Wherever sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English translations of Latin and Irish texts are available, I have included those alongside the original texts to offer the fullest possible picture of early modern textual consumption. In all cases where I have not indicated otherwise, translations from Latin and Irish are my own.
Genre and Identity in Early Modern National Histories

In this project, I build on the scholarship that has challenged the historiographic revolution model to question the valorization of the early modern humanist narrative history’s sophistication and historiographic advancement in direct relation to its concerted efforts to shed the purportedly pious, credulous, and naïve materials and methods of medieval history. I am attentive to continuities between medieval and early modern historiographic practices while also recognizing the significant changes wrought by technological developments, shifts in readership, and religious and political upheavals including the Reformation, the rebellions and wars in Ireland, the Interregnum and Restoration, and the Irish plantations. As I demonstrate, the methodologies available to early modern historians, many of which were first developed by medieval chroniclers, were extraordinary flexible, able to meet a large number of often opposing ideological, scholarly, and political needs. I argue that early modern historians worked with medieval texts and genres not because they had yet to learn more sophisticated models for representing the past, but rather because one of the most effective ways that these writers dealt with the political and religious exigencies of their times was by adopting and adapting the practices, genres, and materials of medieval history.

Chapter One, “‘Undecent Breaches’ and ‘Poetical Fictions’ in the Records of Britain and Ireland,” examines sixteenth-and seventeenth-century discourse on how historians can identify and address fictional materials in their sources to argue that questions of genre and methodology were paramount in early modern theorizations of the field of history. This chapter considers the relationships that early modern historians established with their medieval predecessors to show how contemporary conceptions of medieval history as distinct in its concerns, practices, and materials from early modern history have been influenced by early modern historians’ own
positioning of their discipline. Introducing the debates and concepts that provide a framework for the rest of this project, Chapter One shows that definitions of fiction and history were central to early modern scholarship on the past, establishes the spectrum of responses available to historians confronted by fictions in their historical texts, and demonstrates the importance of fiction for narratives of national identity. In this chapter, I show that early modern historians regularly expressed their concerns regarding historical fictionality and their commitment to distinguishing their work from that of medieval chroniclers. In the four subsequent chapters, I explore the many ways that early modern historians nonetheless adopted fictional materials and medieval methods in their texts, ultimately proving that the generic complexity of early modern national histories was far from accidental or uncritical.

Chapter Two, “‘No Nation Voide of Myxture’: Coupling National and Textual Mixtures in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century British Histories,” argues that while writers frequently identified the “mixed” quality of their sources as a flaw, assertions that texts mingled history and fiction also represented an effective strategy in claiming control over past narratives. If the records contain both truths and falsehoods and the historian’s task is to distinguish between these, then the historian possesses a great deal of power in affirming some narratives and discrediting others. Thus, when Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) describes in detail how he is able to locate the “reliques of the true antiquitie” among the “fabulous and forged” Irish chronicles through textual cross-reference and anthropological comparison, he establishes his own authority to interpret Ireland’s records and report on Ireland’s origins (39). These origins, as Spenser represents them, validate Britain’s ancient claims to Ireland while minimizing the island’s connections with Catholic Spain. Speed’s many observations that his sources are guilty of mingling truth and falsehood also function to validate his own account of Britain’s origins,
which he associates with historiographic professionalism and the “judgement of the learned” (5). In this way, Speed argues that his history is more reliable than the amateurish textual hybrids produced by his sources and contemporaries. Fictiveness in these texts is turned from flaw into opportunity as writers deployed the language of mixture to control accounts of the “beginnings of Policies,” in Speed’s phrasing, and then used origin accounts to support narratives of national identity and claims of sovereignty (154).

Chapter Three, “Chronicles of Modernity: The Medieval Forms and Genres of Roderic O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia,*” argues that early modern historians’ use of medieval accretive genres reflects these writers’ awareness that such genres could address questions of sovereignty and colonialism in ways inaccessible to humanist narrative history. For example, *Ogygia* uses chronicles, synchronisms, and king-lists to assert that Ireland’s historical record, which relates a long and independent line of Irish kings, is supported by its consistency with established world chronology. O’Flaherty traces the kingship of Ireland from the legendary sons of Míleadh to the Stuart King Charles II, whom O’Flaherty praises as restoring peace to Ireland after Cromwellian conquest. Though the chronicle form has been disparaged by both early modern and contemporary scholars as belonging to uncritical and obsolete historiographic practices, O’Flaherty’s work demonstrates that the supposed defects of chronicles—such as their lack of continuity and rigid annular framework—could be turned into strengths, as when *Ogygia* effectively compresses 405 years of English rule in Ireland into a single entry. O’Flaherty thus minimizes the gap between “Roderic O’Coner,” whom he identifies as the last native king of Ireland, and James VI and I, using the chronicle form to facilitate his central project of presenting the Stuart kings as the continuation of the Irish royal line.
A text with similar anticolonialist aims, Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* incorporates not
only the legends of medieval Ireland but also the repetitive typological structure of medieval
*scéla* (“stories”). Chapter Four, “The Poetics and Politics of Legend: Geoffrey Keating’s *Foras
Feasa ar Éirinn* and the Invention of Irish History,” argues that Keating thus produces a
distinctly Irish national history that is inaccessible to writers unable to read the Irish language,
reclaiming the writing of Ireland’s history from scholars such as Spenser. The *Foras Feasa*
asserts that the Irish historian’s task is to distinguish poetical truths from historical ones, but not
to quarantine legend from history. Instead, Keating makes legends integral to his “Foundation of
Knowledge on Ireland,” showing that the practice of reading Irish history is one that requires the
ability to recognize and draw comparisons between collections of similar tales, such as the *Foras
Feasa’s* cluster of episodes describing Christian and pagan forms of generosity during the time
of Ireland’s conversion. This historiographic model demands contextualized reading practices
and deep familiarity with Irish-language sources, thereby invalidating British versions of Irish
history, which tended to isolate purportedly risible tales, such as claims that Ireland was settled
by Noah’s niece, to argue that all of Ireland’s records were equally unreliable.

While contemporary scholars sometimes represent early modern historiography as
demonstrating increasing skepticism toward legendary materials over time, Chapter Five, “‘The
So Long Received Tradition of Brutus’: The Resurgence of Settlement Legends in Restoration
Britain,” challenges progressive models of early modern historiography. As this chapter shows,
the Brutus legend gained a number of defenders in the second half of the seventeenth century
because it proved effective in reinforcing British unity and English dominance, both of which
were challenged by the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. For example, Percy Enderbie’s (c. 1606–
1670) 1661 *Cambria Triumphans* begins with the assertion that the Brutus tradition is supported
by “many Domesticall and forrain, private and publick witnesses” (“To the Reader”). Enderbie traces the sovereignty of Britain from Brutus to Charles II for the purpose of strengthening the newly restored monarchy in the wake of the “Chymerical Anarchy” of the Protectorate (“The Dedication”). Enderbie recognized the power of this origin legend in producing a unified British identity and he thus argues that Brutus and other legendary figures, including King Arthur, merit a place in British history. The complex strategies employed by historian Daniel Langhorne (c.1635–1681) in his own Brutus defense, including extensive citation, philological and archaeological arguments, and a combination of several origin legends and settlement theories, effectively argue against any associations between positive representations of legendary figures and historiographic crudity.

As these chapters demonstrate, the early modern national history was capable of supporting multiple genres and reading modes, including fictions and fables. Furthermore, these texts reveal their authors’ conviction that authentic past narratives in fact required that the writer work in genres with varying levels of facticity and modernity. Keating constructs an Irish national history that has space for scéla in order to confound colonialist histories of Ireland and represent the totality of the island’s traditions; Spenser shows that mixtures of history and fiction are necessary to imagine the empire that is at the heart of British identity; Langhorne rehabilitates the long-challenged Brutus legend to support the English monarchy; and O’Flaherty combines a number of accretive genres to shape the future of post-Cromwellian Ireland. The “room” that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars found in history for a great wealth of genres and historiographic practices shows that we must construct equally capacious disciplinary and period models if we are to encompass the complex and varied genres of early modern history.
Chapter One  
“Undecent Breaches” and “Poeticall Fictions” in the  
Records of Great Britain and Ireland

Introduction: The Dark Road of Historical Inquiry

In his 1611 *The history of Great Britaine under the conquests of the Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans* John Speed acknowledges the limitations of his source materials by asserting that it is not to be “wondred at, that the Records of GREAT BRITAINE are eaten vp with Times teeth, as Ouid speakes,” given the lack of care with which those records were preserved (153). Speed establishes Titus Livy’s method of neither averring nor disproving those things that are more “beautified and set out with Poets fables, then grounded vpon pure and faithfull reports” as a model for his own practice of letting his sources themselves speak on the “uncertainties” of the periods in British history prior to “the certaine successions of our British Monarchs” (153). Both Speed’s less than sanguine evaluation of Britain’s early records and the methodology he adopts in response to uncertainty are characteristic of persistent threads in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historiography.¹ Many early modern historians wrote of the obscurity and confusion they confronted when attempting to determine their national origins and early histories; many historians regretted that “pure and faithfull” reports had become adulterated with “Poets’ fables”; and many shared Speed’s unwillingness to discard even these uncertain

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¹ As Speed’s citations of Ovid and Titus Livy indicate, concern with the facticity of historical records was far from limited to early modern Britain and Ireland. I will examine the characteristics of medieval (and, to a lesser extent, classical) historiographic practices and early modern ones with attention to both the links between these and the distinct qualities of texts produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
records entirely, choosing instead to leave the credit of dubious materials to the discerning reader.²

In discussing his imperfect sources, Speed references Ovid’s metaphor that the teeth of Time have “eaten up” the records of Great Britain.³ His fellow historians often expressed their own research experiences in similarly figurative language. For example, in his 1689 *Ogygia*, the Irish historian Roderic O’Flaherty writes that genealogies offer him a “filo Ariadnaeo” ("Ariadnean thread") through the labyrinth of history (19). Speed himself employs a less optimistic labyrinth metaphor, writing that historians attempting to determine the original name of Britain are “consorted with so many uncertainties, wherein the further we follow this intangled threed, the further are we lead into the Labyrinth of ambiguity” (5). Robert Brady’s (c. 1627–1700) 1685 *A Complete History of England* uses a metaphor of darkness and light to describe a similar challenge, writing that the histories produced in England prior to the coming of Augustine are so “blended with the Fabulous Hyperbolies, and Metaphors of Ignorant Writers” that “the brightest Rayes of Truth, could scarce penetrate and appear through those thick clouds of darkness, and Ignorance” (51). Metaphors of darkness were common in descriptions of the

² For example, compare Speed’s language with that of an earlier historical work, Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. In the second volume of the 1577 edition of the *Chronicles*, Holinshed writes that because “the originall in manner of all nations is doubtfull, and euen the same for the more part fabulious” no reader should “leane to that which shall be here set downe as to an infallible truth, sith I doo but onlie shew other mens coniectures, grounded neuerthelesse vpon likelie reasons, concerning that matter whereof there is now left but little other certeintie, or rather none at all” (1). Like Speed, Holinshed emphasizes the uncertainty of the early sources and marks the matter of national origins as particularly obscure, attributing much of this obscurity to the fabulous nature of the source material, while also setting forward his own work as the best possible conjecture constructed from these uncertain records and urging his readers to maintain their own judgment in evaluating the facticity of what is to follow.

³ Ovid’s metaphor appealed to scientists as well as historians; in his 1665 *Micrographia, or, Some physiological descriptions of minute bodies made by magnifying glasses with observations and inquiries thereupon*, Robert Hooke (1635–1703) describes the bookworm as “one of the teeth of time” (210).
poor records of the ancient past, as in William Temple’s (1628–1699) 1695 *An Introduction to the History of England*, which asserts that the accounts of ancient events from the “Northern Parts of our Islands” are “obscured by the length of Time, and darkness of unlearned Ages, or covered over with such gross Forgeries, made at Pleasure by their first Inventers” (31). Temple concludes that he knows few “ancient Authors upon this subject, worth the pains of Perusal, and of dividing or refining so little Gold, out of so much course Oar, or from so much Dross” (31). The deeply poetic language with which these historians express their misgivings about the fictions they perceive as having contaminated their discipline reveals how thoroughly the practices of early modern historiography are invested in metaphoric thinking, showing that early modern historians’ accounts of their work are formed as well as informed by poetry. The deployment of poetic language to describe the very problem of distinguishing poetry from history, as well as historians’ citation of poets such as Ovid in their methodological theorizations, effectively demonstrate the often problematic but nonetheless undeniable links between historical and fictional genres in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Whether they represented their work as sorting gold from dross, attempting to pierce darkness with light, or following Ariadne’s thread through the passages of a textual labyrinth, early modern historians found the process of identifying fact and fiction in their sources a considerable challenge. Here, I will examine some of the phenomena that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians identified as leading to this taxonomic exigency, demonstrating that these writers constructed their discipline as one built on difference from medieval practices and from the kinds of materials they identified as fictional, fabulous, or legendary. Arguing that the saturation of early modern historical discourse with such explorations of disciplinary limits indicates the critically engaged nature of early modern scholarship, I will explore the tensions
between these direct statements of method and the practices used by historians in texts that are more inclusive of fictions than their authors’ concern with separating the dross of forgeries and hyperbole from the gold of truth and certainty would suggest.

I do not argue that this tension is either accidental or hypocritical. Rather, I will contend that these writers made their inclusion of fables possible in what Raphael Holinshed calls a “verie nice and deintie” scholarly milieu by first proving that they recognized and were attentive to distinctions between history and fiction. For example, John Milton’s (1608–1674) 1670 *History of Britain* asserts that “nothing certain, either by Tradition, History, or Ancient Fame” remains of British history between the island’s settlement and the arrival of Julius Caesar, since the oldest sources have been rejected as fables by “the greater part of judicious Antiquaries” (2). Having acknowledged the contested nature of the record and established his own commitment to informing his reader which materials are mere “out-landish figments” and which possess enough “credit” to warrant scholarly consideration, Milton then devotes the whole of his history’s first book to relating events of admittedly dubious veracity. Irish scholar Geoffrey Keating justifies his own inclusion of many “finnscéal filideacta” (“poetic legends”) and his generically heterogeneous model for an Irish national history encompassing the breath of the island’s *seanchas* (“ancient traditions”) by attacking the ability of British writers to distinguish history from fiction. Arguing that only scholars versed in Irish-language sources can write with accuracy and fairness on Ireland’s past, Keating claims such expertise for himself and thus pre-empts colonialist criticisms against the factuality of the *Foras Feasa*, despite the many legends it relates. For these writers and many others, statements that their methodology prioritized distinguishing fiction and history, coupled with declarations of their proficiency in making such distinctions, were precisely what made their incorporations of fictional materials possible.
I also show how these discussions on the nature of history and the role of the historian have led to overstatements of difference, especially between medieval and early modern historical practices. Although many writers in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries elevated their own scholarship by disparaging their medieval predecessors, there are significant continuities between medieval and early modern histories. Readings of early modern texts that take at face value their writers’ assertions that they have set aside the crude practices of the “Writers of the Middle Age,” as Brady terms them, can lose sight of these many continuities. Even where the importance of medieval methods for early modern historical work is recognized, associations between medievalisms and uncritical scholarship have been harder to untangle. However, my readings of early modern national histories demonstrate the thoroughly modern and critically engaged uses to which these texts put medieval methods and materials. To establish the critical contexts in which early modern national historians adopted medieval and fictional materials, I will first discuss how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars identified these materials as problematic for historical texts.

In a history published at the end of the period under consideration, William Tyrrell (1642–1718) also uses figurative language to characterize his research process, writing that the early parts of his history are wanderings “through divers Ages of Fictions, or Uncertainties at best” which can be compared to “a Man in a dark Night, who knows not well whether he is in or out of his Road, yet is still forced to Travel on, till Day-light overtake him” (19). In this work, the 1696 The General History of England, Tyrrell situates his research as traveling down a long-established historiographic path, though he also distances his own methods from those of the medieval chroniclers whose inexact practices have darkened the historical road he travels. Tracing the development of historical scholarship in Europe, Tyrrell writes that when the “Art of
composing Histories or Annals” came to Europe with Christianity and “Human Learning,” it brought sufficient erudition to “instruct men not only in Divine, but Civil Knowledge” (151). Tyrrell is somewhat uncomfortable with the acknowledgement that the “Monks of that Age” were “almost the only Historians” because these Catholic scholars were “not so exact” in their representation of “Civil Constitutions” and more minded to relate “Visions and Miracles” than secular affairs (152). Nevertheless, Tyrrell reminds his reader that “Bede, our first English historian, was himself a Monk” and the Saxon Annals “were first collected and written in divers Monasteries of England” (152). The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Bede’s (673/4–735) Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum, which were among England’s earliest national histories, possess indisputable authority, despite their authors’ problematic Catholicism.

Following his brief account of historical scholarship in medieval Europe, Tyrrell concludes that from the “Remains” that the monks left, the “Constitution of their Government, and the manner of the Succession of their Kings” can be determined, representing the seventeenth-century historian’s task as one of piecing together the fragmentary remnants left by medieval chroniclers (152). Despite the imperfect quality of the records, Tyrrell is unwilling to allow any gaps in his narrative of England’s history “from the earliest accounts of time to the reign of his present” (1). Tyrrell’s preference for tracing a completed path down even the darkest historical roads is evident in his statement that he has synthesized the history of Britain’s early rulers as best as he is able from the fragmentary records because it would be “undecent to leave so great a Breach in the midst of this History” (80). Both Tyrrell’s methodology and his motivation here were shared by many of his contemporaries; confronted by the “divers Ages of Fictions” they identified in their national records, but often unwilling to leave breaches in their
own histories, early modern historians were of necessity quite active in constructing their national pasts out of the fragments and remains available to them.\footnote{For example, in his 1670 \textit{The History of Britain}, John Milton adopts a similarly completionist approach when considering whether it is worth the historian’s effort to incorporate transcriptions of previous texts: “So that were it not for leaving an unsightly gap so neer to the beginning, I should have judg’d this labour, wherin so little seems to be requir’d above transcription, almost superfluous. Notwithstanding since I must through it, if ought by diligence may bee added, or omitted, or by other disposing may be more explain’d, or more express’d, I shall assay” (33).}

As Tyrrell’s source analysis suggests, early modern historians were frequently critical of the records they had inherited from their medieval predecessors, often noting their sources’ apparent inability to distinguish history from fables, fictions, poetry, legends, and lies. However, many early modern historians chose to work in the same medieval genres and to repeat the same medieval traditions that they criticized, in large part because the materials and methods of medieval historians were effective in meeting a variety of early modern needs. The histories published in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain and Ireland were painfully aware of the problems of textual identification that Speed represents by contrasting “pure and faithfull reports” with “Poets’ fables” but they were also well aware that the fables penned by poets were highly effective in establishing sovereignty narratives. In this chapter, I will examine the historical texts that circulated in early modern Britain and Ireland to show that they are saturated with criticisms based on distinguishing history and fiction and to explore some of the methods historians used to work with fables and other fictional genres in their sources and their own texts.

\textbf{Defining the Historical and Confronting the Fabulous in Early Modern Histories}

Early modern historians had a wide vocabulary for discussing non-historical materials in their sources; they speak of “poeticall fictions,” “feigned legends,” “old Wives tales,” and “unseemly fables” as well as “hearsay and lies,” “vast heaps of Legends, Tales, and vulgar
Reports,” “vaie and fabulous narrations,” and “meer Fictions.” Moreover, texts and traditions were categorized as fictional for a number of reasons, not only for implausibility and incompatibility with established records, but also for excessive Catholicism, and faulty political or ideological claims, such as were made on both sides of the debate over whether Ireland’s origins were in Britain or Spain Early modern historians also had a wide variety of methods for responding to the presence of fictions in their historical sources, including the excision of uncertain materials, the inclusion of doubtful matters with warnings or requests that readers employ their own judgment in weighing the materials’ credit, the arguments that truth can be recovered from fictions or that some supposedly fabulous traditions are actually historical, and the invocation of allegorical readings or the claim that materials were worth including for their entertainment value.

Descriptions of and responses to fictions are particularly dense in the earliest periods of national histories because accounts of national origins and the ancient past were understood to be both obscured by time and also highly susceptible to the fictionalizing tendencies of writers attempting to augment the glory of their nations. However, acknowledgments that origin accounts were readily turned to political ends did not either hinder the use or sap the efficacy of such legends in supporting claims of sovereignty. The story that Brutus the Trojan founded the British monarchy and on his death divided the island between his three sons, bestowing the greatest portion and the chief authority on the eldest son who inherited the land that would become England, was invoked to assert English superiority over Scotland and Wales for centuries. The Brutus tale’s motifs of British unity despite the island’s divisions and its assertion that the government of Britain was fundamentally monarchial were also useful for responses to the challenges posed by James VI and I’s accession to the London throne and the Wars of the
Three Kingdoms. Other legendary accounts were equally valuable in supporting British dominance in Ireland. For example, the traditions that Ireland was first settled under the authority of the fifth-century King Gurguntius and that King Arthur later made the Irish subject to an early British empire were cited to justify the Tudor reconquest of Ireland and the plantations in Ulster and elsewhere.

Origin legends had counter-imperialist powers as well. Scottish writers invoked the traditions of Scota, her husband Galthelus, and the first Scottish king Fergus, to rebut claims made by English historians that, as William Alexander (fl. 1685–1704) expresses it, “the Kings of Scotland, were Vassals to the Kings of England” (“The Introduction”). Fergus offered writers a point of origin for the Scottish kingship that was independent of England, counteracting the Scottish subordination asserted by the Brutus tale. In Ireland, the pseudohistorical invasion narrative reported in texts such as the *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, which traced the current inhabitants of Ireland back to an expedition led by the sons of the Spanish soldier Míleadh, was useful in countering the Gurguntian claim of British origins as well as fostering alliances with Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\(^5\) These origin legends’ inclusion of such historically suspect materials as druidic mists, battles with giants, and magical stones was counterbalanced by their efficacy in supporting narratives of sovereignty and national identity. Because of their utility, their antiquity, and their acknowledged tendency toward fictionalization, origin legends were at the center of debates over the place of fictions in early modern histories.

While sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians frequently differed regarding which texts should be accorded historical status and which should be marked as fictions, these scholars

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\(^5\) For example, Philip O’Sullivan Beare (b. c.1590, d. in or after 1634) dedicates his 1621 *Historiae catholicae Iberniae compendium* to King Philip of Spain and argues from the Milesian settlement account that the Irish are descended from the Spanish people, on the basis of which kinship O’Sullivan Beare urges an alliance between these Catholic nations.
generally agreed that history and fiction should be distinguished. For example, Meredith Hanmer’s (1543–1604) *Chronicle of Ireland* includes a lengthy translation of Old Englishman Richard Stanihurst’s (1547–1618) remarks on Hector Boece (c.1465–1536) and the veracity of the Galthelus legend, as part of which he asserts that “if Hector Boëtius bee not the chiefe forger of this history, or rather vaine fable, yet he hath besprinckled (after his manner) the whole discourse with lies” (7). This skeptical response to Boece is based on the assumption that fable and history should be distinguished, calling on the venerable tradition of classifying works on the past into histories and fables. As Peter Bietenholz explains, taxonomies of knowledge in the medieval period and in classical antiquity distinguished between “things that had actually happened at some point in the past” (*historia*) and “things that had not happened” (*fabula* in Latin and *mythos* in Greek) (3-4). Stanihurst and Hanmer reject the Galthelus tradition on the basis of its categorization as fable/*fabula* rather than history/*historia*, participating in a long-established critical practice by asserting that history and fable could and should be distinguished.

This passage from Hanmer’s Irish chronicle also evokes many of the complexities of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century textual circulation and national identities. Hanmer was a Welsh historian and scholar, whose *Chronicle* was written in the sixteenth century but not published in print until 1633 when it was collected with works on Ireland by Edmund Spenser, Edmund Campion (1540–1581), and Henry Marlborough (d. in or after 1421) in an edition

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6 Stanihurst’s initial formulation of this criticism, in his 1584 *De rebus in Hibernia gestis*, reads: “si vero Hector Boëthius huius seu rei factæ, seu fabulae non est architectus, tamen totam narrationem mendaciunculis, more suo, perspergit (92-94).

7 Stanihurst also asserts the special status of history as a kind of writing in which truth is paramount; he states that while lying is disgusting in all cases it is *foedissimum* (most disgusting”) “in historia” (“in history”) 94-95.
entitled *Two Histories of Ireland* in some versions and *The Historie of Ireland* in others. The editor of this collection was James Ware, a New Englishman, who later published his own history of Ireland, the 1651 *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus eius Disquisitones*. The quote from Hanmer’s *Chronicle* above thus represents a sixteenth-century Welsh writer’s English translation of a response to a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scottish author from a sixteenth-century Latin work by an Old English scholar, taken from a text that was edited and printed by a seventeenth-century New English historian.

Hanmer and Stanihurst were two among many early modern scholars who argued that history should be distinguished from fable. Richard Baker’s (c.1568–1645) 1643 *A Chronicle of the Kings of England*, for example, asserts that it would be “ridiculous, to speake of all the Miracles reported to be done by this Saint Dunstan, which may be fit for a Legend, but not for a Chronicle,” asserting a basic distinction between the material that is appropriate for a chronicle history and that which is legendary and therefore ridiculous (17). Using similar language, Baker elsewhere argues that “To speake of the Miracles” attributed to the Earl of Lancaster after his death “might be fit for a Legend, but not for a Chronicle, and therefore I omit them” (149).

Showing a Protestant discomfort with the miracles described by the Catholic monks who penned the majority of Britain’s medieval histories, Baker acknowledges that these traditions exist but maintains that they have no place in the chronicle he is writing. John Clapham’s 1606 *History of Great Britain* is also invested in historiographic gatekeeping; on the many fabulous achievements attributed to King Arthur, Clapham writes that these are “matters indeede more fit for feined Legends, and poeticall fictions, then for a Historie, which ought to be a Register of things, either truely done, or at least, warrantable by probabilitie” (200). In this formulation,

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8 Although its title mentions only Campion and Hanmer, *Two Histories of Ireland* also includes Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and Marlborough’s *Chronicle of Ireland*. 
historical matters can be identified as those that are either “truly done” or at least probable and thus should be distinguished from legends and the fictions of poets.

Early modern scholars may have argued that fictions and histories should be separated, but they were less consistently confident that this task was achievable – and Baker’s strategy of omitting the legendary from his work was far from the only, or even the most common, response to fictional contamination in history. Raphael Holinshed’s 1577 and 1587 *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* also considers the question of whether the miracles recorded by Catholic monks belong in chronicles but does so in order to justify the inclusion rather than the excision of a purported miracle. In the sixth volume of the 1587 edition of the *Chronicles*, Holinshed describes the miraculous appearance of a cross and acknowledges that “Some will déeme this a méere fable, and saie it sauoureth of grosse superstition and idolatrie, wherevpon they will conclude that no such fragments poudered with papistrie should be inserted into a chronicle,” referencing the tenet that Catholic fables have no place in chronicle history (113). In spite of his admission that some will identify the account of this miracle as a mere fable, Holinshed urges his reader to note that “no small number of things no lesse strange and true than this seemeth vaine and false, are recorded; yea euen touching the verie crosse” (113). This, however, is as far as Holinshed is willing to go in his defense of the miraculous cross; he concludes that “considering that this our age is verie nice and deintie in making choise of matter pleasing their owne humor we will not wade too farre in this kind of argument, which we know may as soone offend” and so sets the question aside with a rather acerbic comment on the reading politics of his day (1587, vol. 6, 114).

As this example shows, the acknowledgment that materials could be considered fabulous was not always a cause for their exclusion. In fact, such admissions could be used as part of a
strategy to justify the inclusion of problematic accounts, especially when combined with counter-evidence, such as Holinshed’s assertion that reliable books have validated the miraculous cross and other equally implausible tales. Baker himself follows this practice elsewhere in his history when he asserts that though the story relating that the children of people who cut off an archbishop’s horse’s tail were themselves born with tails “may be thought a Fable, yet is related by divers good Authours” (77). Seemingly unlikely stories, even those that reflected the Catholic beliefs of their authors, could thus be deemed historical if they were supported by a sufficiency of respected writers.

In a chapter entitled “Whether it be likely that there were euer any Gyaunts inhabiting in this Isle or not” from his “Historical Description of the Island of Britain” in the 1587 edition of Holinshed’s Chronicles, William Harrison (1535–1593) takes on the question of whether the presence of fables can discredit an entire nation’s historical record. Harrison writes that to “some mens eares” accounts that Britian was first settled by giants seem so strange that “they suspect the credit of our whole historie, & reiect it as a fable, vnworthie to be read” (8) These men, Harrison writes, condemn accounts of giants in “all other histories, especiallie of the North, where men are naturallie of greatest stature, imagining all to be but fables,” again assuming a basic history/fable division (8). In response to this line of argument, Harrison offers a proof “that the opinion of giants is not altogither grounded vp on vaine and fabulous narrations, inuented onelie to delight the cares of the hearers with the report of maruellous things: but that there haue beene such men in déed” (8). Harrison constructs this proof out of a large number of sources from a wide variety of historical traditions to argue that though stories of giants might seem “strange,” the existence of giants in the past is well supported and thus their presence in Britain’s histories is no argument against these texts’ veracity.
Harrison’s response to those critical of Britain’s giant traditions takes on the question of whether the whole of a nation’s historical record can be declared unhistorical if it contains too many fables. Like the later scholar, Daniel Langhorne, who argues that the British historian can find merit in the Galfridian traditions without accepting the whole “bed-roll” of kings in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Harrison advocates a selective historiographic practice over the notion that the presence of some fabulous materials should invalidate the records that include them. Harrison’s many proofs of the historicity of giants, based on a host of scriptural and classical references, alongside archaeological findings and citations to medieval and early modern texts, exemplifies the practice of many early modern writers in acknowledging that their subjects have been derided as fabulous and then arguing, often quite vigorously, that these materials contain a thoroughly historical basis. This strategy enables historians to recover materials that had been ridiculed as fictions, such as Britain’s tradition of giants, and then assert their own authority to interpret, rather than merely endorse or reject, their sources.

For many British historians, the question of whether the presence of fabulous elements invalidated any records containing them was particularly pressing in the matter of King Arthur. Clapham’s distinction above between “poeticall fictions” and the true (or at least probable) accounts that are the proper subject of historians is part of his discussion on Arthurian historicity. Harrison also complains that Arthur’s “noble acts” have been “stained” by “manie vulgar fables” and writes that it is a “pitie” that the “incredibl e and fond fables” have brought Arthur out of “credit”; he wishes that “British writers” had not “given eare unto the fabulous reports forged by

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9 Irish writers, too, argued against judging the whole of a historical record based on the presence of some fabulous elements; for example, Geoffrey Keating’s 1634 *Foras Fesas ar Éirinn*, counters Hanmer’s claims that the fictional *Battle of Ventry* indicates the reliability of Ireland’s chronicle tradition by asserting that Hanmer is unable to distinguish between texts written as true histories and those that are legends meant to entertain (1.50-51).
their Bards” (1587, vol. 1, 120). Samuel Daniel’s (1562/3–1619) 1612 *Historie of England* asserts that Arthur’s deeds are “worthie to have been a subject of truth to posterity, and not of fiction (as legendary writers have made him)” (23). Similarly, Percy Enderbie writes in his 1661 *Cambria Triumphans* that Arthur is worthy of “true Histories,” not the “trifling tales” that even Britons in his own time “do fantastically descant and report wonders” (191). Defending Arthur’s historicity, Baker writes that many of the deeds attributed to Arthur might seem so “wonderful” that the king should be “reckoned amongst the Fabulous” were there not “enow true to give them credit” (5). All of these critiques rely on the assumption that the credit of history is damaged by the presence of fabulous accounts, forcing their writers to consider how historians should respond when their sources contain accounts that are undeniably fictional. The consensus is that the inclusion of some fictions does not automatically render the whole of a tradition unhistorical. Approaching the problem of fictions within history through the metaphor of textual credit enabled these writers to avoid binary divisions where texts must be either completely historical or utterly fictional; readers could extend partial credit to contested traditions, acknowledging that they had been challenged without rejecting them entirely.

This selective approach is fully expressed in Richard Robinson’s 1582 English translation of John Leland’s (c.1503–1552) *A learned and true assertion of the original, life, actes, and death of the most noble, valiant, and renoumed Prince Arthure, King of great Brittaine*. In his Arthurian history, Leland acknowledges the controversial nature of scholarship on Arthur, writing that “historiographers doe contend in this behalf” and asserting that his own stance is to declare nothing “rashly” (7). Leland allows that “both obscure and absurde reportes haue crept into the historie of Arthure” but states that this is not a reason that “any man should neglect, abiect, or deface the Historie otherwise of it selfe, lightsome and true” (7). “How much
better,” Leland argues, “is it (casting awaye trifes, cutting off olde wiues tales, and superfluous fables, in deede of stately porte in outwarde shew, but nothing auayleable vnto credite, beeing taken away) to reade, scanne vpon, and preserue in memorie those thinges which are consonant by Authorytie” (7). As James Carley has explained, Leland’s texts on King Arthur were responding to the skepticism of Polydore Vergil, a response Carley terms “swift and vehement” (86). Carley asserts that Leland, stout defender of King Arthur, “saw himself as an objective historian; truth was his goal, facts were his weapons” (87). An especially effective weapon is Leland’s argument that the historian can excise trifles, old wives tales, and fables to preserve true matters that are validated by historical authorities. For a figure as central to British identity as King Arthur was, fictional contamination is especially regrettable but these writers remain adamant that the “fond fables” told about Arthur should not lead the reader to conclude that there is no historical basis for this king. Instead, discussions of fictionality serve to support previously questioned narratives of the past, enabling a selective methodology in which the historian identifies, and sometimes removes, fictions to preserve historical integrity.

Despite the strong distinctions drawn between fables, fond or otherwise, and history, terms such as “fable” and “legend” were not automatically pejorative in historical texts. As is to be expected from a scholarly field so broad and complex, there is a large amount of variation in use of these terms, even within the same works. Hanmer, for example, describes one source as “the authentickne manuscript Legend of Ireland” while elsewhere reporting that he will leave the

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10 In Leland’s 1544 Latin original, *Assertio inclytissimi Arturij Regis Britanniæ*, this section reads: “Historici in hac parte certant, & ad huc sub judice lis est. Ego verò temerè nihil pronunciabo: quando quidem manifestissimè constat, obscura, & absurda inrepssisse in Arturij historiam: id quod à curiosis facile deprehenditur. At haec non satis quidem iusta causa est, ut quis historiam alîas luculentam, & veram negligat abijciat, proterat. Quanto rectius, abiectis nugis, resectis anilibus fabulis, & auctarijs in speciem verô magnificis, at nihil ad fidem pertinentibus, demptis, quae ex autoritate consonantia sunt legere, discutere, conseruare” (6).
“fabulous circumstances of the Legend” that three Irish bishops “keepe together in the dust of the earth, waiting for the resurrection at the last day” to “old Wives and long winters nights” (55). Holinshed refers to the “fable of the transmutation of mariners into dolphins for periurie” as part of a discussion on how there is “nothing more religious, nothing more holie, nothing more Christian” than an oath, associating this fable with Christian truths and holiness (1587, vol. 6, 66). However, not all of the accounts of watery miracles in the Chronicles are described so charitably; Holinshed also writes that he will not include in his chronicle any accounts of the miraculous wells of Britain, as he takes them for mere “fables, & far vnworthie that anie good man should staine his paper with such friuolous matters as are reported of them, being devised at the first by Satanas the father of lies, for the holding of the ignorant & credulous in their superstitions and errors” (1587, vol. 1, 211). Elsewhere in the Chronicles, Harrison also associates fables with unchristian lies, writing that for Christian authors: “nothing should be farther or more distant, than of set purpose to lie, and feed the world with fables” (1587, vol. 1, 10). The different values these writers assign to legends and fables show how the facticity of materials was not the only criterion by which they were evaluated, while also indicating another way that the theoretical division between history and fiction became complicated in practice.

Early modern historians frequently asserted that fiction and history should be separate from each other – that history should contain “true” material that could be verified by reference to reliable sources or at least supported by probability and should not contain the implausible and untrue accounts that were described as fictions, fables, legends, poetry, and lies. However, these writers also found that for the earliest periods of British and Irish settlement, determining historical truth was very difficult among the labyrinths and dark roads of the remaining records. Ideally, history and fiction were understood as distinct. Practically, they were often
indistinguishable. From this methodological conundrum, there developed a host of texts arguing for the veracity of some traditions over others, defending both individual elements of national historical records and the veracity of those records overall, complaining that fictions had contaminated historical accounts, and considering what strategies historians should adopt when faced with clearly fictional materials in their sources.

**Theorizing the Fabulous: Why and How Texts Were Designated Fictional**

Despite Clapham’s assertion above, the plausibility of records was just one of many measures by which early modern scholars weighed texts’ historicity. The reasons these scholars chose to defend or discredit their sources reflect the prominence of disciplinary theorizations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries while also indicating some of the political and scholarly stakes involved in the production of national histories. These texts reveal their writers’ investment in defining the proper scope of their discipline, often establishing their own credentials through attacking the scholarly competence of their sources and colleagues. Early modern historians laid claim to historiographic professionalism by arguing that their work refined the credulous and amateurish efforts of their predecessors, which they characterize as driven by ambition rather than a desire to record historical truth. Recognizing the prevalence and rhetorical force of these arguments offers another indication of the highly self-reflective nature of early modern historiographic discourse while indicating the need for caution in taking such claims at face value.

Writers in early modern England often endeavored to distance their own scholarship from the Catholic credulity they identified in the histories produced by medieval monks, although not always with the same degree of vehemence evident in Holinshed’s above assertion that accounts...
of Catholic miracles are lies devised by Satan to deceive the ignorant. Tyrrell remarks rather more mildly that the “true Story” of the life of Saint Alban has now been lost because the “Monks” who penned his history have added so many “improbable Circumstances” into the record as to make the reader “nauseous” (86). Similarly, Brady blames the “unskilful Bishop, Monk or Clerc” who chronicled the laws from King Edward I’s reign for producing a “heap of non-sence,” stating that the “Monks Wrote according to the Vulgar Tales and Traditions of the People, adding something of their own Fancies and Conjectures” (57, 52). Holinshed elsewhere criticizes the methods of England’s medieval record-keepers, writing that “the truth” is now “stained with errours and fables” which were inserted into the record by “the lewd religious sort” (1587, vol. 1, 158). The popular historian Nathaniel Crouch (c. 1640–1725?), publishing under the pseudonym “R. B.” in his 1682 Admirable curiosities, rarities, & wonders in England, Scotland, and Ireland, writes that although “The Monks” report that John the Baptist had a ring sent to King Edward the Confessor, “the Clergy in those times made no Conscience to invent fictions daily for their own advantage” (66). These scholars represent the Catholic chroniclers of medieval England as self-serving amateurs who were all too willing to add fictions into the histories they produced.

Accusations of medieval credulity were not reserved to English writers lamenting that their national record had been stained by popish fictions. New English writers such as Richard Cox and James Ussher (1581–1656) likewise disparaged the Catholic historians of Ireland, as when Cox criticizes the “Popish Legends” that report the miracles of Saint Bridget and when Ussher polemicizes against belief in “Unseemly fabl es and Divels documents,” such as the “lewd” tales of Saint Bridget, which tend “to the advancement of the doctrine of divels” (“An Apparatus,” 71). Welshman Meredith Hanmer also takes on the miracles attributed to Irish saints
by citing Albertus Krantz’s conclusion that claims made about Saint Patrick’s Purgatory, the famed holy site at which penitents experienced visions of horror or joy, are no more than “old Wives fables” (86). Catholic historian Edmund Campion describes his research into the many miraculous places referenced in “Every History of Ireland” he has seen, most of which he concludes are “but heedlesse and uncertaine tales by their complexion” (39). Campion allows that Saint Patrick’s Purgatory is sufficiently “known and confessed” to warrant discussion in his own work, but he argues that the wonders attributed to Ireland’s most prominent holy site can be explained by the superstition of its pilgrims (39-42). While Campion shared a faith with the authors of the Irish histories detailing the miraculous powers of the island’s holy places, he found even Ireland’s most famed and explicitly Catholic site to be unworthy of belief.

The Irish scholar Roderic O’Flaherty himself displays some cynicism toward the medieval Irish chroniclers; in identifying the thirteen “Mirabilia Hiberniae” (“Wonders of Ireland”) he writes that some are vera, true, but “alia falsa, alia falsis permixta” (“others false, others intermixed with falsehood”) (289). O’Flaherty also describes Ireland’s early historians as ambitious and willing to falsify their records in order to serve their own ends. He writes that when “sacra Historia” (“sacred history”) was introduced to the island, some scholars who were desirous of appropriating the antiquity of Scripture in their own work “sacris, & Ægyptiis miscerentur” (“intermingled sacred and Egyptian”) materials into Irish texts and thus confused the chronologies of the records (69). The prevalence of claims that medieval scholarship failed to meet early modern historiographic standards is evidenced by the fact that criticisms of Catholic credulity and ambition to leverage the authority of Scripture for political or personal gains were leveled against the medieval records of Britain and Ireland by Catholic and Protestant scholars from both islands. Catherine Brown has remarked that the Middle Ages offer “citizens of the
present” a handy “definitional whipping boy” in constructions of their own modernity (547). These texts demonstrate how far back that unenviable status extends: even in the sixteenth century, the medieval served as a paradigm of barbarism against which writers of many national and religious identities could define their sophistication.

Despite their shared willingness to condemn the scholarship of medieval monks, these texts are far from consistent in whether and how they attempt to purge miracles from their historical narratives. The same texts that accuse medieval chroniclers of penning fictions and nonsense also include numerous accounts of miracles and the deeds of saints, such as Holinshed’s report of the miraculous cross. Protestant scholars were often quite willing to vouch for the historicity of many very Catholic tales while Catholic historians such as Campion and O’Flaherty were equally willing to debunk the accounts of miracles they found unpersuasive. The complexity of early modern historiographic culture is perhaps best exemplified by Baker’s stance on what he calls “a strange accident upon an act of piety” in which those who were generous to the poor had plentiful crops while the miserly had “their Corne all blasted” (123). Baker introduces this story by writing that the tale “if true, is a Miracle, if not true, is yet a Legend, and not unworthy to be read” (123). Whether true or legendary, Baker asserts that this account of how the good were rewarded for their charity (and the greedy punished) merits inclusion in his history.

The strategies evident in early modern characterizations of medieval scholarship reflect the practice of “past-creation,” a phrase coined by James Simpson to describe the processes through which sixteenth-century writers cast the medieval period as “sharply different from the brilliant new present” (21-22). The distance that Speed, O’Flaherty, Brady, and their contemporaries establish between the discipline in which they participate and the uncritical work
of their medieval predecessors is evidence of how the past-creation discussed by Simpson continued into the seventeenth century. Seventeenth-century writers were quick to explain that their scholarship represents an improvement upon the “rude” practices of medieval monks; however, as Simpson’s term indicates, many of those differences were constructions of early modern historians. Arguing that the perceived ruptures between medieval and early modern historiographies were invented out of an early modern need to create “the Middle Ages,” Simpson urges his readers to set aside “strict periodization” and consider how scholarship that crosses “the medieval/early modern divide” offers at least partial liberation from “the unseen imprisonment imposed by revolutionary historiography” (19, 28-30). Taking up Simpson’s invitation to practice diachronic scholarship, I identify the past-creation at stake in these claims of disciplinary professionalism and argue that early modern historians constructed their own discipline as one distinct from the medieval even as they treated medieval methods and materials as indispensible in their work.

Disciplinarity itself was, however, primarily an early modern concern and early modern historians also policed the boundaries of their discipline by distinguishing the work of amateurs from that of learned historians in the medieval period and in their own day. Daniel Langhorne, for example, identifies some of his sources as the work of “Triflers” who pen “Fables and falsehood” while other, later, writers are “approved Historians” (167). Both O’Flaherty and Keating argue against allowing Spenser’s Irish writings the authority of history because of Spenser’s status as a poet who granted himself license, in Keating’s phrasing, to invent many “finnsgeul filidheachta” (“poetic legends”) (1.30-31). Spenser himself frequently associates Ireland’s historians with its poets, usually as a means of asserting that the former are no more accurate than the latter, as when he writes that “Bardes and Irish Chroniclers themselves, though
through desier of pleasinge perhappes to much, and ignorance of arte and pure learninge” have clouded the truth (29).

These writers argued that inexperienced readers compounded historiographic conclusion by mistaking the work of bards and poets for history. Campion warns his reader against crediting the “blinde legends” and “idle fantasies” with which some of the Irish poets “dallied at the first” and which were later taken for history through “error and rudeness” (23-24). Because of the potential for textual misidentification, Speed requests that those who would attempt to unravel Britain’s origins instead leave such matters to the “learned, and those of better experience” (5). Early modern historians asserted the professional status of their discipline by contrasting their learned practices with the meddling of amateurs and poets; however, as with the strategies of past-creation, the rhetorical force of these arguments should not go unremarked. For example, Keating and Spenser identify other writers as poets in arguments against their historical credibility but both writers were themselves poets and both produced historical works that show their keen awareness of the efficacy of poetry in supporting national narratives.

In advancing the status of their discipline and engaging with the potential for their work to establish sovereignty narratives, early modern historians also identified some fictions as deliberate ones, the products of inventions and lies. Spenser describes Ireland’s pseudohistorical invasion narrative as a series of fables and “very Milesian Lyes,” which can readily be disproved by observing that there never was a colony founded by the sons of a Spanish king in Ireland (31).11 As quoted above, Hanmer and Stanihurst write that Boece’s account of Scottish origins is “besprinckled” with lies while Speed accuses Galfridus Monemutensis (d. 1154/5) of lying “with

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11 However, Spenser also argues that “under these tales you may in a manner see the truth lurke” and, as Chapter Two will show, uses the assertion that Ireland’s records contain a mixture of truth and falsehood as a method of leveraging control over the narration of Ireland’s origins (31).
bold countenance” and of, having failed to learn “the truth of things,” instead including, “without discretion and judgement, the vanitie and vntruths of fables” (16). Like Spenser, Hanmer writes that the “Irish antiquaries” tell “fables” and “lies” in locating their island’s origins in Spain rather than Britain (3). For his part, Campion describes one Irish settlement account as “vaine and frivolous,” a “fable” and a “forgery” that is “not onely false but also impossible,” doubly damning this origin story as both untrue and patently unbelievable (21-22). On the other side of the sea, Keating makes it his purpose to refute the “breugaibh na Nua-Ghall” (“lies of the New English”) written about Ireland (1. 12-13). To counter the “lie” that the Irish once owed tribute to King Arthur, Keating asserts that Fergus the Great became the “céid-rí do Chineadh Scoit” (“first king of the Scottish race”) at the same time that the British legends claim the Irish king “Gillamar” was paying tribute to Arthur (1. 12-15). Keating’s rebuttal of these lies rests on the fact that the Fergus tale was well supported while there is not a “laoidh nó litir a seanchus Éireann” (“lay or letter in the traditions of Ireland”) that mentions this Gillamar (1. 12-13).

All of these accusations of mendacity relate to the origin legends of England, Scotland, and Ireland; the heightened rhetoric here reflects the significance of such foundation accounts in early modern identity production. Many of the most heated debates about the historicity of British and Irish national records were waged over the settlement accounts so effectively supported narratives of sovereignty. In the 1690 English translation of George Buchanan’s *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, the desire to augment one’s national glory by spinning lies about one’s national origins is explained thus: “every one would fetch the Original of his Nation, as high as he could; and so endeavour to enoble it by devised Fables, by this immoderate Licence of
Buchanan explains that origin legends were effective instruments for ennobling nations and so the temptation for chroniclers to lie in these accounts was particularly strong. Further, as evident in the commentaries of Spenser and Keating above, accusations that foundation legends were lies were used in colonial and anticolonial arguments.

The fervor of these charges of lies and historiographic incompetence, as well as the stakes involved, can be seen in the flurry of condemnations that were leveled by and against Richard Stanihurst. Spenser writes that Stanihurst has given weight to a “senseless fable” in supporting the Irish origin story; he describes Stanihurst’s sources as “rude Irish bookes” and remarks that a man of his judgment “should not so lightly have bin carried away with old wives tales” (39). Fellow Old Englishman Keating also inveighs against Stanihurst, describing him as ignorant and alleging that hatred of the Irish was the “ceud-bhallán” (“first vessel”) the historian drank from when he arrived in England (1.34-35). Stanihurst himself accuses writers on Ireland of heaping “rumusculorum mendaciunculis” (“hearsay and lies”) on the island through their ignorance (78-79). Scottish writers too, who had used the Scota story to appropriate some of the great deeds and famous figures of the ancient Irish, are subjected to Stanihurst’s criticism. On the accounts of ancient Scotland’s many great deeds and conquests, Stanihurst exclaims: “Hæc quidem somnia fabularum aniculæ fortassis admirationem” (“These assuredly dreaming fables might move little old women to wonder”) but they move the discerning only to laughter (94-95). As an Old Englishman whose work was criticized by both Irish and English writers,
Stanihurst was perhaps particularly controversial, but he was far from unique in a highly contentious scholarly field.

As with the breadth of early modern responses to Catholic miracles, scholars did not restrict their criticisms of origin legends to those of other nations and religions. The English chronicler Richard Baker, for example, credits the medieval scholar William of Newburgh as one who “bitterly inveighes against Geoffrey of Monmouth, as a Deviser of Fables” and concludes that the “first writings” on Britain are “Fictions; and nothing is delivered to Posterity of the most ancient times, but very Fables” (1). Speed also asserts that the tale of Brutus “falleth in the time wherein nothing else is related, either of the Greeks or Latines, the only learned writers, but fables and tales” (14). Temple is equally willing to set aside the legendary origins of Britain: he writes that the “Tales” of Brutus are “covered with the Rust of Time, or involved in the Vanity of Fables, or pretended Traditions; which seem to all Men obscure or uncertain, but to me, forged at Pleasure, by the Wit or Folly of their first Authors, and not to be regarded” (19). These writers may have been more likely to describe their own foundation legends as fictions than as lies but they were far from shy about questioning the credit of England’s origin legends.

Writers from Scotland and Ireland were likewise willing to set aside the origin legends of their nations. George Buchanan is dismissive of both Brutus and Galthelus, describing his methodology as purging the “res gestas maiorum nostrorum” (“achievements of our ancestors”) from “fabularum vanitate” (“vain Fables”) (fol. 1r). While his work aggressively defends the central aspects of Ireland’s invasion narrative, Keating does dismiss the claim that Ireland was settled by a man named Fionntain, who lived before and after the Flood, as a “finnsceul filidheachta” (“poetical romance”) (1. 150-151). O’Flaherty debunks the famed story that Fenius invented the Irish language after Babel as the product of Mythici (“mythologists”) who obscure
the truth in *commentis* (“fictions” or “fabrications”) (64). Though the claim that a rival nation’s records were no better than lies was certainly an effective and oft-used rhetorical tool, early modern writers were also invested in validating the histories of their own nations by freeing them from fictions, which meant that criticisms based on fictionality were leveraged against texts by writers from a variety of ideological positions.

The often polemical nature of early modern historians’ discussions of their colleagues’ and sources’ handling of fictions contributed to the invention of “the Middle Ages” as a period with distinct, and inadequate, conceptions of the historical. The prevalence of criticisms based on facticity is evidence of early modern historians’ critical engagement with their discipline and attention to the rhetorical efficacy of such critiques in arguing for their own professionalism and commitment to historical accuracy. These criticisms are not, however, evidence of a strictly enforced (or even understood) division between histories and fictions. Rather, early modern historians display a wide spectrum of responses to the fictions they located in historical texts, many of which supported the inclusion of fictions within history.

**From Shunning Fabulous Conceits to Serving the Reader’s Delectation**

Since many early modern historians asserted that history should be kept free of fictions, it is not surprising that some did choose to remove legendary materials from their narratives of the past. Holinshed, for example, remarks that British writers have made “long processe” of the departure of Cadwallader, last king of the ancient Britons, to Rome but “bicause it séemeth but fabulous” he chooses to “passe ouer” this story (1587, vol. 2, 124). Similarly, Hanmer omits the materials reported in the “Legenda Plumbea, and the booke of Houth” in order to “shunne fabulous conceits” and later states that because he holds certain accounts of Saint Patrick to be
“fabulous” he “will not rehearse” them (40, 44). Early modern national histories, even those that elsewhere relate many materials that describe miraculous, magical, or highly implausible events, often include such notices that the author is aware of specific materials but has chosen to exclude them because they are fabulous.

In addition to highlighting their deletion of specific stories and texts, early modern writers also described their methodologies as culling out the fabulous more generally. In his 1654 *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus eius Disquisitones*, James Ware notes that he has omitted the pre-Christian kings of Ireland because most of the sources containing them are “fabulae” and “anachronismis” (“fabulous” and “lacking chronology”) (20). Brady offers a list of the materials he has kept from his history, including the “Legends and Fables” pertaining to Britain’s monasteries and saints, and then informs his reader that he has “noted only such things as are pertinent to the Design of this History, and that have an Appearance of Truth” (52). Like Clapham, Brady does not assert that the veracity of every event in his account must be proven beyond any doubt, but he does expect events to have at least the “Appearance of Truth.”

As Ware does with the earliest periods of Irish history, some English historians concluded that the obscurity of their national origins meant that no reliable accounts could be salvaged and so chose to begin their works at later points in time. Thus, Hamlet Puleston’s 1663, *Epitome monarchiae Britanicae, or, A brief cronology of the Brittish kings from the first original of monarchial government, to the happy restauration of King Charles the Second*, whose title might suggest otherwise, passes by “the Catalogue of British Kings from Brute to Cassibeline, not as altogether untrue, but as very uncertain” and instead begins with “the Saxons rule” (4). Baker is even more aggressive in his stance on Britain’s earliest history, writing that “as the first Writers were Poets: So the first writings have been Fictions; and nothing is delivered to Posterity
of the most ancient times, but very Fables” (1). Having lambasted those who give credit to Galfridian fictions, Baker continues: “when we are once gotten out of Fables, and come to some truth; yet that truth is delivered in such slender draughts, and such broken pieces, that very small benefit can be gotten by the knowing it” (2). Not until the time of Julius Caesar “a thousand yeares after the Fable of Brute” are there any reliable accounts of British history and Baker structures his history accordingly. Some scholars responded to fables by discarding what they determined was neither verifiable nor plausible, even at the cost of conceding that “the only origins the nation possessed were fictional ones,” as Andrew Escobedo phrases the matter (4).

However, not all early modern historians were willing to discount a thousand or more years of the past – and many writers were both more optimistic about the state of the ancient records and more confident in their own abilities to sort fiction from history. For example, Brady describes the “many Volums of the ancient Monks” as being “nothing almost but vast heaps of Legends, Tales, and vulgar Reports which passed for current in those ignorant and credulous times” (109). Nevertheless, Brady expresses his belief that “out of these Clouds of darkness, out of these voluminous, idle, vain, inconsistent Discourses, a man may pick out matter sufficient for strange admiration” (109). Speed is equally critical of the men he calls “those ouer-zealous Monkes” who have so “mingled” their accounts with fictions worthy of rejection that even the existence of the individuals they report on are “suspected to be nought else but fictions” (317). However, such suspicions are not always warranted; turning to King Arthur, Speed asserts that, despite the faulty Galfridian account, he is able to verify “both the man, and many honorable parts in him” (317). Much as in the arguments outlined by Harrison and Langhorne above, in which the presence of some questionable materials are not reason to discard the whole of a
textual tradition, Speed and Brady allow that their sources are far from perfect but express confidence that portions of the truth remain available to the careful historian.

As with many other methodologies, this approach to uncertain sources could be turned to a variety of political and ideological purposes but its general function was to authorize writers’ claims to have located truth from under the veil of fiction. Early modern historians combined declarations of their expertise in practicing historiographic selectivity with direct textual defenses in order to counter works that had attempted to disprove the historicity of figures such as King Arthur and Brutus. For example, as Chapter Five shows, Langhorne first acknowledges that some scholars had rejected Brutus because of the “Fictions” purportedly inserted by Monemutensis and then argues that these fictions are no cause to “reject all of it as commentitious” (6). Building from this theoretical foundation, Langhorne is able to vigorously defend what he terms the “so long received Tradition of Brutus” by showing that the account is supported by citation in a large number of authors and by its consistency with other historical accounts (8).

Another method for addressing previous criticisms of texts’ historicity was the provision of authorial disclaimers warning that certain materials should not be regarded as entirely historical. Keating, for example, accommodates a wide variety of texts from Ireland’s historical traditions by prefacing many individual episodes with the observation that they should be considered legends, effectively anticipating criticisms against the historicity of his work. Some writers begin their accounts of ancient history with warnings that the material that follows cannot be validated but then continue with fairly lengthy and detailed accounts of this supposedly unreliable material, as is particularly evident in Milton’s *History of Britain*, which Nicholas von Maltzahn describes as incomparable “in the space it devotes to admittedly spurious material”
In other texts, disclaimers justify the incorporation of materials that the authors themselves find unpersuasive, as when Henry Care (1646/7–1688), in his 1679 *The Plain Englishman’s Historian*, somewhat grudgingly gives what he calls the “Traditional Account” of Brutus, despite the fact that the “best Authors” regard this text as “fabulous” (80, 1-2).

Writers could adopt an ostensibly objective stance by leaving judgment on the credit of their narratives to the reader. Speed, for example, writes, “the censures of these relations I leave to the best liking of judicious Readers” when considering the credit that should be granted to “Brutes conquests and successours” (13). On Brutus, Enderbie writes that he does not “deny” him, but leaves “every one to his own best liking and opinion” (3). Enderbie also allows the Irish origin account to “pass with as little credit as the Reader pleases” (207). The flexibility of this strategy is evident in Enderbie’s uses of it: he follows his disclaimer regarding Brutus with a long list of sources validating the tale, thus supporting the narrative that is so central to his defense of Britain’s monarchy while maintaining an apparent authorial objectivity. Enderbie makes the same kind of statement to very different ends when he treats the Irish origin account with skepticism equal to Daniel’s statement that he will leave Brutus “on the booke, to such as will be creditors” (7). The strategy of yielding to the reader’s judgment on this historicity of certain traditions could be adopted in validation or in dismissal, much as marking materials as dubious could enable writers to include lengthy legendary accounts without sacrificing historic credibility or could be used to debunk stories that writers felt had deceived the vulgar and the ignorant.

Putting further pressure on the already strained separations between history and fiction, some early modern historians authorized the presence of fictions in their histories by offering allegorical and poetical interpretations of particularly implausible materials. For example,
Keating reports a *finnscéal* (“legend”) about one early Irish king’s encounter with a shapeshifting woman and then explains that this text can be interpreted as an allegory for the Irish kingship, which begins with suffering and ends in plenty (2. 148-151). O’Flaherty also rewrites magical shapeshifting as allegory by arguing that the *Fabula* recounting the legendary hero Tuan’s metamorphosis into a series of animals can be interpreted as a representation of the Pythagorean and Platonic theories of the “animarum migratione” (“transmigration of souls”) (4). In his history of England, Langhorne explains that the “Fable of George killing a Dragon to save a Virgin’s life, seems to be taken from the Poetical Fiction of Perseus and Andromeda” but then asserts that this story can also “not unfitly be judged Emblematical, if by the Virgin we understand his Soul, and by the Dragon the Devil” (138). All of these writers first mark the tales they consider as separate from history – as *finnscéal*, *Fabula*, or Fable – before offering allegorical interpretations, invoking the authority of this venerable reading practice to argue that they and their sources are capable of recognizing shapeshifters and dragons as fictional. In this way, these writers show that both their source texts and their own histories are able to accommodate a variety of genres and interpretive practices, not limited to those that would qualify under the fact-value oriented metric in which historical materials should be “true” or, at least, plausible.

Another justification for including materials in history independent of their facticity is that legends are able to offer pleasure and inspiration to the reader. One of Langhorne’s many defenses for the early materials that are his subject rests on his assertion that though these tales are “generally by the Learned reputed Fabulous,” they may still “serve for the Readers delectation and recreation” (51). Among the numerous reasons Milton cites for his decision to includes the early history of Britain at such length is that he has selected these stories in “favour

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14 For more on the history of allegorical reading practices, see Nicolette Zeeman 148-161.
of our English Poets, and Rhetoricians” who will know “by thir Art” how to use such materials (3). As with the allegorical readings above and with the marking of certain accounts as potentially (or even unquestionably) fictional before including them in full, assertions that non-historical material has value for its ability to bring pleasure to the reader and inspiration to poets challenge the notion that fiction has no place in history. Despite the prevalence of rhetoric asserting that fiction and history should be distinguished, and the less dominant but still quite common argument that fictions should be removed from history entirely, scholars had at hand a number of strategies that could support the inclusion of fictional materials within their histories, ranging from prefatory disclaimers to justification on the basis of stories’ potential as poetic inspiration.

**The Poet Historical and the Historiographer**

The 1590 edition of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, appends a letter from the poem’s author to Sir Walter Raleigh, identified as: “A Letter of the Authors expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke: which for that it giueth great light to the Reader, for the better understanding is hereunto annexed” (591). This letter justifies Spenser’s decision to write in allegory, along with his choice to begin *in medias res*, which he explains as resulting from his role as a “poet historical” following in the tradition of Homer and Virgil (593). Spenser identifies the apparent abruptness of his text’s beginning as an outcome of his methodology, writing that:

The Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For 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, euen where it most
concerneth him, and there recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and diuining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all. (593)

In this framing, the Historiographer’s task is to present “affayres orderly as they were donne” while the “Poet historical” constructs a “pleasing Analysis,” which might seem to indicate that Spenser has adopted the sort of fiction/history divide advocated by Clapham and Baker.

However, it is important to note that Spenser is distinguishing the historiographer and the poet historical primarily on their textual chronologies, rather than on the fact-value of their work. Spenser’s explanation of how his work would differ if it had been produced by a historiographer bears out the importance of chronology and the order of information presented – rather than the content or facticity of that material – as the crux of this distinction. Spenser writes that if his “history” were “to be told by an Historiographer” it would begin with the twelfth book, “which is the last” in Spencer’s own text. Organization, not facticity, is at the core of Spenser’s distinction between the poet historical and the historiographer.

The identification Spenser gives to his own authorial position, as a poet historical, elides distinctions between poet and historian by asserting that a single role includes both. Although he refutes Spenser’s claims about Ireland by citing precisely the divide Spenser subverts here and discounting the English scholar as a filidh (“poet”), Keating also offers a definition of the historian’s role that focuses on concerns other than straightforward facticity. Keating defines the methods and concerns of the historian as part of his text’s anticolonial argument; one of the Old Englishman’s favored tactics in refuting colonialist historians of Ireland is to deny those writers

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15 Spenser’s approach here is one that has not always been recognized; Escobedo, for example, argues that “despite what some critics suggest, Spenser here distinguishes between the poet historical and the historiographer not in terms of fact and fiction – which would simply free the poet historical from the constraints of fact – but rather in terms of the order of their narratives” (166).
the status of historian. Thus, Keating asserts that neither Fynes Moryson, nor Richard Stanihurst, nor Edmund Campion are worthy of the title of historian, writing, for example, that it is not fit to regard Stanihurst as a staðaidhe (“historian”) because he is ignorant and ambitious in writing lies about Irish (1. 40-41).

In his rebuttal of Moryson Keating gives a full definition of the qualities he ascribes to the historian, citing the rules given in Polydore Vergil’s 1499 De inventoribus rerum for “scríobhadh stáire” (“writing history”) (1. 56-57). The first of these rules is that the historian should not write anything that is false; the second is that the historian should not fail to include everything that is firinne (“true”) in order to avoid any hostility in his writing (1. 56-57). According to this definition, Moryson, whose work omits all of the good qualities of the Irish, has failed at the most essential rule that historians must follow and so he does not deserve the title of staðaidhe (1. 55-57). This definition of history does place some emphasis on the fact-value of the work, which must not contain anything false, but it also gives equal importance to completeness. To be worthy of the name, histories must be thorough and comprehensive; they must explain the “comhairleacha, cúisi, briathra, gníomha, agus críochnughadh” (“counsels, causes, acts of judgment, deeds, and accomplishments”) of the people whose land they describe (1. 56-57).

For a nation whose historical tradition was as heterogeneous as Ireland’s, completionism and facticity were often odds with each other, which Keating well knew, as evidenced by the contents of his Foras Feasa. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, Keating positions his work as a text encompassing a broad approach to Ireland’s seanchas (“ancient traditions”), not all of which are self-evidently factual. Keating turns the generic variety of Ireland’s seanchas to anticolonial ends, arguing against fragmentary and biased histories such as Moryson’s that only a scholar
fluent in Irish and with access to Ireland’s manuscript sources can write a history of Ireland worthy of the name. Just as Spenser does by taking on the mantle of the “poet historian” and relating his nation’s past in an allegorical poem, Keating here demonstrates that early modern historiographic discourse was attentive to distinctions between history and poetry but not to the point of enacting disciplinary quarantines.

In this chapter, I have described the well developed vocabulary and strategies early modern writers possessed to identify and address the kinds of materials they understood as present in but distinct from history. I have also shown that statements such as Baker’s that the historian should omit any materials that are “fit for a Legend, but not for a Chronicle” and Clapham’s distinction between “poeticall fictions” and “Historie which ought to be a Register of things, either truely done, or at least, warrantable by probabilitie,” should not be taken to represent the totality of early modern disciplinary definitions, any more than Brady’s statement that the “Writers of the Middle Age” lacked historical professionalism indicates a rupture between medieval and early modern historiography. In the chapters that follow, I take up several of these intersections between early modern and medieval histories, and between history and fiction, to demonstrate that readings adopting the “diachronic historicism” advocated by Simpson and accepting “poeticall fictions” as integral to early modern history can offer a clearer picture of the discipline that was produced by early modern historians, historiographers, poets historical, and even poets.
Chapter Two

“No Nation Voide of Myxture”:

Coupling National and Textual Mixtures in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century British Histories

Introduction: National Histories and the Origins of Empires

In Book II of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, two powerful knights are ravished and driven dumb by a pair of books. Arthur and Guyon, while in the castle of Alma, chance upon:

An auncient booke hight Briton moniments,
That of this lands first conquest did devize,
And old division into regiments,
Till it reduced was to one mans governments. (2.9.59)

This is the “Chronicle of Briton kings / From Brute to Uthers rayne,” the national history of Arthur’s homeland (2.10). Guyon also finds his own national history, “Antiquitee of faery lond” and the knights “burning both with fervent fire / Their countreys auncestry to understand” beg for and receive permission to read these texts (2.9.60). The chronicle of Britain that Arthur reads begins when the island was a wilderness:

The land which warlike Britons now possesse,
And therein have their mighty empire raysd,
In antique times was salvage wildernesse,
Unpeopled, unmannurd, unproved, unpraysd.” (2.10.5)
Arthur’s chronicle then describes the island’s first settlement and name, Albion, as well as the legend that it was peopled by giants and the fifty monstrous daughters of Dioclesian, before relating the arrival of royal Brutus, who deprived these beastly inhabitants of their “unjust possession” of Britain (2.10.6-9). To establish his throne and “spread his empire to the utmost shore,” Brutus fights “great batteils with his savage fone” (2.10.10). This focus on empire and conquest continues throughout the narrative of Britain’s origins as Brutus’s people accomplish “great conquests,” he leaves his “imperiall state” to his three sons, and from this legacy grows a “nation straung” (2.10.13-15).

The heirs to Brutus’s throne prove equally adept at building empires. The second Brute, for example, with a “victour sword” first taught France “how to be conquered” while the later king Gurgiunt subdued Easterland and Denmark; he also allowed the first settlers of Ireland to colonize the island “as subject to Britayn” (2.10.23,41). However, the martial prowess of Brutus’s heirs cannot protect their island forever; Caesar, “tempted with the name / Of this sweet island never conquered” and hungering for “dominion,” conquers Britain and makes it a “tributarie” to Rome (2.10.47-48). The history Arthur reads goes on to describe the Saxon invasion of Britain before ending abruptly with Uther’s succession to the throne (2.10.65-68). Although Arthur is half-offended by this “untimely breach,” he is also struck speechless with “wonder of antiquity” and “ravisht with delight,” crying out praise for his “dear countrey” (2.10.68-69). National history here is both powerful and powerfully associated with empire.

Guyon’s national history follows a similar pattern, describing how the “puissant kinges” of this “mighty people” warred with the world and subdued “all nations” (2.10.71-72). Like the history of Britain, the chronicle of Guyon’s homeland is laden with examples of conquest and the martial successes of “states imperall” (2.10.71-74). Arthur and Guyon are equally “beguyled”
with “naturall desire of countreys state” and, in this state of beguilement, they lose sense of time, reading until Alma brings them reluctantly from their studies (2.10.77). The links between national origins and empire are as prominent here as the parallels between the history of Britain and that of the elfin kingdom. Both Arthur and Guyon approach their national histories with the same enthusiasm, both texts relate their nations’ histories as accounts of imperial triumph, and both readers experience profound affective responses to the texts they encounter. The histories of Britain and of faery land are undeniably similar and it is more than clear that the story of both these nations is the story of empire.

The correlations between the British and faery history in Spenser’s poem invoke a prominent concern for early modern historians. Here, Spenser shows history within poetry; many historians in his time and the century that followed remarked with dissatisfaction that there was poetry in history. Despite their representations of fictional contamination as problematic for historical research, many early modern scholars demonstrate that characterizations of their national records as mixtures of history and fiction offered a productive approach to the task of writing their national pasts. Assertions that sources were mixed with fictions without being entirely fictional proved an effective method for claiming control over the narratives that chronicled the origins and growth of empires. If the records contain both truth and falsehood and the historian’s task is to distinguish between these, then the historian possesses a great deal of power in affirming or discrediting narratives of the past. Fictiveness is turned from flaw into

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1 Textualities and identities also intersect in *The Faerie Queene* through the allegorization of “the human brain as an architectural space” and representation of “the portion of the human brain dedicated to memory as a vast library filled with history books” as Jennifer Summit describes the scene from book two of the poem; Summit argues that the image of “‘Memory’s Library’ manifests the importance of memory and the textual past to Protestant self-definition in the period following the Reformation” (106).
opportunity as writers represented texts as mixtures to control the accounts of national origins that so effectively supported narratives of national identity.

While modern scholarly accounts have sometimes tended to identify early modern disaffection with the legendary aspects of historical records as part of a narrative of historiographic progression, in fact many historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries recognized that the historicity of their sources was far from absolute and yet worked out strategies to justify the continued use of those sources.² Emphasis on mixture in the records was one such strategy and the British histories of England, Britain, Scotland, and Ireland that were published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are testimony to the flexibility and efficacy that representations of mixture held in addressing the questions of history and identity that the passage above dramatizes. Calling attention to the mixtures of poetry and history invoked by Spenser’s pairing of British and faery histories enabled scholars to work with a variety of sources and genres as they produced histories of the nations of Britain.

In analyzing Spenser’s representation of the practice of reading national histories, Andrew Escobedo emphasizes the function of history in producing national identity, writing that this scene shows how “history will fulfill national identity” (10). However, as Escobedo argues by pointing to the abrupt end of the text Arthur reads, “this image of Arthur at his history lesson implies that national consciousness to some degree depends on the caesura between past and present” (10). Arthur, whose reading of his national history must be incomplete, because the full narration would include his own death, is the “Tudor emblem of national consciousness, a sense of self and community hankering after a knowledge of its origins, yet nonetheless predicated on

² For example, in an article that examines the potency of origin legends in supporting imperialist and anti-imperialist claims, Roger Mason nonetheless writes that “it was impossible for an urbane humanist of Buchanan’s stature to peddle a legend like that of Gathelus and Scota, and he very sensibly laid it quickly and quietly to rest” (74).
its isolation from those origins” (10). Spenser’s understanding that national history is designed to create national identity, the prominence of both fiction and empire in that history, and the fragmentary nature of the identity and the history that prove available to Arthur are characteristic of early modern historiography and nationalism, both of which were troubled by the possibility that the origin accounts of the British empire were mere fictions and by the difficulty of producing coherent identities out of the ethnic heterogeneity of England and Britain.

National histories were written to produce national identities but these texts reveal how difficult many historians found their task. The historical writing of the late sixteenth century, which Wyman Herendeen has termed the “literature of national identity,” is fragmentary, showing a “loss of confidence in a univocal voice of the land” (218). The “crisis of origins” that Anke Bernau identifies as resulting from Polydore Vergil’s attack on the Galfridian traditions, contributed to what Escobedo has termed “a latecomer’s view of history, marked by an isolation from origins” that led to what he describes as a “distinctly Renaissance national consciousness” based on a sense of “historical loss” (113, 2, 13). Similarly, Philip Schwyzer has asserted that a “sense of nostalgia” and loss of origins was the “animating spirit of British nationalism,” which was “heavily dependent on an account of British antiquity derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth” (10). The Galfridian traditions were central to British national identities but they not consistently able to produce a unitary Britishness or solid link to the past.

Andrew Hadfield has also noted the fragmentation of history and identity in the late sixteenth century, writing that “English notions of national identity became more complex and problematic as Elizabeth’s reign continued, a phenomenon recognized in the literature which often sought to help construct that sense of identity” (“Literature” 142). Hadfield traces this identity crisis to three factors: “the development of colonialism particularly in the Americas; the
increasing importance of Ireland in English political and social calculations after the 1580s; and
the desire for a united Britain fuelled by the succession crisis and speculation that James VI of
Scotland would become king” (“Literature” 142).³ When James VI and I did become king,
British and English identities grew no less troubled. Colin Kidd argues that “no plausible British
identity capable of engaging the affections of the various British peoples emerged under the
Stuart dynasty”; the “lack of a suitable ‘matter of Britain’” is responsible for this failure of
identity because where writers sought a narrative that could offer a coherent national identity,
they found instead “a number of competing sub-traditions of Britishness” none of which were
satisfactory (“Protestantism” 321-322).

A unifying and historically defensible origin myth was necessary in sixteenth- and
seventeenth-century England in large part because of the many identities that impacted
“Englishness,” including the Britons, Saxons, Normans, Romans, and Danes whose past
invasions of England removed the possibility of a coherent English ethnic identity as well as the
Scottish, Irish, and Welsh identities that encroached on contemporary Englishness.⁴ The notion
of an ancient and encompassing Britishness was deployed to bring cohesion to the island’s
various populations, as evident in the frontispiece for John Speed’s 1611 The Theater of the
Empire of Great Britaine, which shows, in Gordon McMullen’s description: “five figures from
the British past, with one, ‘A Britaine,’ in the commanding position, and the other four A

³ For a discussion of how foundation legends were invoked in Unionist debates in the sixteenth
century, see Mason 66-77. For more on the “acute problems of blood and identity” raised by the
notion of Britishness, see Schwyzer 36-37.
⁴ The relationship between nationalism and the desire for origins was multidirectional; David
Baker has argued that nationalism was necessary because of the lack of historical continuity;
because none of the British peoples “can call upon a seamless, unadulterated history reaching
back to the pristine origins…one of those peoples – the English – must emerge as a nation-state
capable of subordinating all of the British people to it…British history is a history of chronic
instability, and it puts ‘national’ identity on the islands profoundly in question – so profoundly
that it must be answered with a fervent and compensatory Englishness” (201).
Romane, A Saxon, A Dane, and A Norman, arranged below him,” an arrangement that suggests “an overarching and ongoing British identity, despite the various foreign invasions that took place thereafter” (122). Schwyzer attributes the broadening of the term “Briton” to the “propaganda accompanying the Scottish campaign” following the Union of the Scottish and English Crowns when James VI of Scotland ascended to the London throne in 1603 (36). The “national heterogeneity” of Britain, to borrow Escobedo’s phrasing, made the need for national origins and the stability they produced particularly urgent for Spenser and his contemporaries and ensured that even historically suspect origin accounts held value for their potential to mitigate Britain’s mixed origins (23).

The close parallels between the histories of Arthur’s Britons and Guyon’s elfin ancestors indicate that Spenser recognized the insuperability of fiction and history in the accounts of national origins that brought continuity to the many identities of Britain and England. Escobedo argues that Spenser attempted to theorize “a relationship between fact and fable wherein fiction ornaments the bare thread of history, making it possible to represent a homogenous origin that the nation’s multinational past otherwise makes impossible” (23). As Escobedo’s reading suggests, narratives of national origins were able to compensate for national heterogeneity by fostering textual heterogeneity. Only by allowing fiction to ornament history can Spenser begin to produce a complete and coherent narrative of British identity.

Moreover, the deeds of elfin kind related in Guyon’s chronicle show that poetry and fiction were not simply unavoidable contaminations in the historical record. As The Faerie Queene narrates, Elfin, first king of his people, held dominion over “all India” and “all that now

5 Constructions of a pan-island Britishness were offered as a solution to the Union identity crisis by writers such as Scottish humanist John Mair, but these were unsatisfactory for any who resisted Union or did not find the long-subjugated Britons a compelling basis for identity. For more on Mair’s argument that “all men born in Britain are Britons,” see Mason 66.
America men call” (2.10.72-73). The poem has already established that Britain’s dominions extend to Denmark, France, Ireland and Easterland, a location that may refer to the “Easterlings,” Baltic traders described in Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland,* or to Ireland. While the history Arthur read relates past British conquests within Europe, the elfin tome takes a wider geographic scope and a more contemporary focus, describing conquests in America, where English settlers were struggling to build a permanent colony, and India, where the British crown would establish a foothold a decade after this section of *The Faerie Queene* was published with the 1600 founding of the East Empire Company. The British chronicle relates past conquests and the elfin history imagines future ones. The close connections between Arthur’s history and Guyon’s are not simply an uncomfortable acknowledgment that Britain’s origins might be as fictional as faery land’s; instead Spenser stages this pair of reading scenes to show how the fictional aspects of national histories can be very effective ornaments indeed. Though Spenser certainly recognized the challenges posed by the suspect historicity of the Matter of Britain and the fragmentary nature of British identity, both substantially documented in contemporary scholarship, he also recognized the potential for history and fiction to mix productively.

The relationships between empire and identity, what Barbara Fuchs has termed the “continuities and interdependence between the formation of early modern nations and their imperial aspirations,” are well established (“Imperium” 73). In the case of English identity and empire, Kathy Lavezzo has traced links between the sense of exceptionalism that enabled medieval English writers such as Monemutensis to imagine a distinct English identity and a closely related “imperial dream,” writing that “if their otherworldliness made the English

6 See Vink 96-106.
exceptional, their exceptionalism might also suggest how the English should be the rightful masters of the earth itself” (21). This imperial dream was defined and supported through reference to the past, especially to origin accounts and legendary deeds of conquest. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tales of King Arthur’s many conquests were revived “with a vengeance,” as Hadfield has observed, both to “justify the re-conquest of Ireland” and as the basis for “claims that there was a serious historical precedent for the establishment of a British Empire” (“Skeptical” 37). The British History was deployed in support of English superiority over Scotland and as well as Ireland; it was an “ideological weapon which English kings could and did draw upon to justify armed aggression against the Scots,” as Roger Mason shows (62-62).

These invocations of empire were often understood in relationship to Rome; Lavezzo describes a longlasting trend in which English identity was produced through resistance to and attempted conquests of the “imperial center” of Rome while the break with Rome was central to early modern concepts of empire and identity (22). As Willy Maley explains, the “English Reformation was among other things an anti-imperialist national movement later imposed on Ireland as a colonial settlement. When England broke with ‘Rome’ – the Catholic Church – it declared itself, in the Act of Restraint of Appeals of 1533, an ‘empire’” (25). Britain’s imperial aspirations were frequently expressed through its engagements in Ireland; the “developing Renaissance myth of imperial power” was “ideally elaborated within the Irish colonial myth” (Hadfield and Maley 16). In this chapter, I will build from the wealth of scholarship linking origin myths, British and English identities, national histories, and imperial dreams to argue that early modern writers – including Spenser as well as Meredith Hanmer, Edmund Campion, John

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7 For more on the Roman occupation and early modern colonialism see McMullen 120-122.
Speed, and Richard Cox – developed a vocabulary of mixtures, minglings, and sprinklings to negotiate historiographic and nationalist demands. By identifying their sources as fundamentally mixed in nature, these writers were able to mitigate the problematic fictionality of their origin myths and assert that these tales also contained kernels of truth. This strategy simultaneously validated the historian’s authority to determine the truth while also supporting national narratives built from both fictions and histories, narratives that could cohere identities out of the problematic heterogeneity of Britain’s past conquerors and contemporary kingdoms.

**Monkish Trash and Improbable Circumstances in the Records of Britain**

*The Faerie Queene* was not the only text in which Spenser considered the interactions between historiography and empire. His *View of the Present State of Ireland* is deeply concerned with unearthing the origins of the island that was proving troublesomely resistant to English rule in Spenser’s day. The utility the *View* for fostering Britain’s imperial dreams is evident in its print publication in James Ware’s 1633 compilation of Irish histories, a collection that “gave new life to a variety of English colonial perspectives on Ireland past and present,” as Bernadette Cunningham has shown (“Constructions” 13). Equally evident in Ware’s collection are repeated descriptions of historical sources as mixed with fictions, including Ware’s preface to the *View*, in which the New English historian writes that the “good judgment” apparent in Spenser’s account of Irish origins can be confirmed by consulting “Richard Creagh's Booke *de linguâ Hibernicâ*,” which is still available in the original manuscript and which, “although mixed with matter of story, leaning too much to some fabulous traditions, yet in other respects is worthy of light.”

Ware’s edition reveals the efficacy of historical and fictional mixtures in producing narratives of

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8 The *View* was entered in the Stationers’ Register in 1598, and circulated in manuscript form, but did not see print publication until 1633.
sovereignty; this influential collection of colonialist texts on Ireland brings together Campion’s *A Historie of Ireland* and Hanmer’s *Chronicle of Ireland* with Spenser’s *View*, a dialogue conducted between fictional characters that Ware considers of value for its ability to elucidate the origins of Ireland.

The notion of mixture is prominent in early modern portrayals of both histories and nations; most writers agreed that medieval sources mixed history and fable, but diverged on whether, how, and by whom the historical could be recovered from the fabulous. Just as Britain’s sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians asserted that the medieval sources blended history and fable, so too did these writers affirm that all nations were mixed in the peoples that inhabited them. Early modern histories of Britain frequently remark that their national records are guilty of “mixing Truth with Falshood,” as Robert Brady claimed in his 1685 *A Complete History of England*, establishing the historian’s task as one of separating the two (57). Representations of British national origins also acknowledge the persistence of mixtures: Britain’s many invasions precluded any claims to national purity, a state many of these texts argue was universal. There is “no Nation voide of myxture,” as William Harrison asserted in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587, volume 1, 5). Although British historians were clearly troubled by the mixtures they found in their own chronicles, many also recognized that source heterogeneity could be invoked to support the authority of historians in producing narratives able to address national heterogeneity.

Assertions of mixture were leveled against both British and Irish texts; Richard Cox, for example, states that the consensus of historians is that Ireland’s records are thoroughly mixed, quoting James Ware’s claim that the Irish records were either “fabulosae or fabulis mixtae” (“full
of fables or mixed with fictions”) (“An Apparatus”; citation to Ware’s *Annals* 20). In similar fashion, Brady argues that the narratives of early English saints “are so obscured, by the Fabulousness of the Relators, and so mixed with Fictitious Fancies, That we can scarce Discover Really what persons suffered” (32). The key term here is “scarce” – though British historians did at times conclude that the truth was simply unrecoverable, they more often used the uncertainty of the records as a basis for asserting their own scholarly credentials in interpreting these mixed texts.

Historiographic approaches beginning with the premise that records of the past were mixed in their matter allowed writers to claim that at least some past narratives were verifiable. British writers applied this strategy to both their own records and the Irish chronicles as they validated those narratives that were able to address their political and religious needs. This emphasis on textual mixtures was closely linked with early modern concerns over national mixtures resulting from both the problem of degeneracy in Ireland and the complex knot of identities that English, Welsh, and Scottish writers confronted due to the shifting relationships between the kingdoms of the British Isles. In writing on both Britain and Ireland, the textual arena stood in for the national arena, demonstrating that mixtures could be controlled and that order and stability could prevail even in the face of seeming chaos.

Early modern British historians used the language of mixture to describe the various sources available to them, from medieval chronicles to classical texts. For example, Brady asserts that church affairs in the time of King John were so “mixt and interwoven with the Secular Affairs of this Kings Reign, That they could not be Distinguished in Writing the History”

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9 The introductory sections of *Hibernia Anglicana*, including the address to the reader as well as Cox’s “An Apparatus: Or Introductory Discourse to the History of Ireland, Concerning the State of that Kingdom before the Conquest thereof by the English,” are unpaginated.
(519). The histories penned by medieval monks, in Brady’s reading, failed to distinguish not just between secular and ecclesiastical events but also between events that actually occurred and those that are inventions. Brady states that “the Writers of the Middle Age, except Amianus Marcellinus, were very vain and idle, mixing Truth with Falshood” (57). Brady also focuses on mixture in his sources when he asserts that King Edward’s Laws are now lost to history because the version of the laws preserved in the record are no better than an “incoherent Farce and mixture, and a heap of non-sence” (xxx).

The language Brady uses here indicates the prevalence of mixture in early modern historians’ accounts of their sources; Brady characterizes the medieval records of Britain as “an incoherent Farce and mixture,” in which secular and ecclesiastical matters are “mixt and interwoven,” penned by writers guilty of “mixing Truth with Falshood.” Both Brady’s scorn for the medieval historians and his assertion that these chroniclers’ Catholic credulity and scholarly failings had led to mixtures in the records were shared by many of his fellow historians. In his 1696 General History of England James Tyrrell is equally concerned that the medieval chroniclers were over-credulous; commenting on the martyrdom of Saint Alban, Tyrrell writes that “we must bewail our want of a true Story,” which is lacking because the “Monks have mixed with so many improbable Circumstances, that it is even nauseous either to read or hear them” (86). Tyrrell lists among his sources a number of medieval histories, including the works of William of Malmesbury and John of Wallingford, and concludes that from these “tho mingled with abundance of Monkish Trash, we have here and there excerpted several excellent Remarks” (xvii). Again, Britain’s medieval histories are represented as the products of “monkish” authors, whose credulity has lead to mixtures of fictions in history. However, despite the poor state of his
sources, Tyrell expresses confidence in his own ability to extract “several excellent Remarks” from the flawed medieval records.

Examining the contrasts early modern historians identified between their historiographic practices and those of their medieval predecessors, Escobedo has argued that the idea that “Protestant historiography replaced earlier Catholic ‘distortions’ with an ostensibly accurate accounting” in fact contributed to a sense that the past was irrecoverable (4). Colin Kidd connects religious ruptures with historiographic ones and notes how both led to early modern British historians’ dissatisfaction with their sources, writing that the Brutus “origin myth was considered typical of the monkish fabrications of the middle ages, which it was the duty of Protestant scholars to detect and expunge” (“Identities” 89). These readings emphasize discontinuities between the historical practices and identities of early modern scholars and those from the medieval period. As their slighting comments on the “Monkish Trash” produced by the “Writers of the Middle Age” show, historians like Tyrrell and Speed certainly distinguished their practices from those of the medieval chroniclers and their expressions of national identity are undoubtedly marked by the break with centuries of Catholic identity. However, not all early modern historians chose to “expunge” the historical elements they identified as fabrications from their sources. The model of textual mixture made it possible for scholars to embrace a variety of approaches to medieval records and narratives of the past.

Tyrrell and the mid-seventeenth-century historian Richard Baker exemplify the breadth of this spectrum of responses. In his 1643 A Chronicle of the Kings of England, Baker establishes that his methodology is to exclude those materials he cannot unmix; he confesses to omitting “Some Passages of small moment” that occurred during the reign of King James VI and I because: “for want of knowing the particulars, I dare not venture upon making the Relation”
(145). This is a practice he wishes were more common, observing that “if some men would have done [as he did in excluding unverified claims], the truth of our Chronicles should not have been mingled with so many falsities” (145). Baker here sets out a methodology in which the task of the historian is to purify Britain’s records, both the island’s ancient sources and its seventeenth-century materials. Baker’s scholarship conforms to practices established by the famed Scottish humanist George Buchanan, who writes, in the words of the 1690 English translation of the *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, that his research began by purging the achievements of the Scots “from the mixture of vain Fables, to vindicate them from oblivion” (1). This methodology prioritizes the production of histories that are themselves unmixed, despite the nature of their sources, at the cost of allowing some gaps in the record.

Tyrell may agree with Baker that the medieval records are mixed in their matter, but his response is quite different. Where Baker advocates excluding any materials he cannot validate, Tyrell instead excerpts what he considers to be excellent materials even from those texts that are mingled with “Monkish Trash.” In the example of the martyrdom of Saint Alban, Tyrell writes that, despite the improbable circumstances he finds mixed into his sources, he chooses to “relate what I find in Bede, without passing my word for the truth of the following Miracles” (86). A commitment to gathering fragmentary materials is central to the methodology Tyrell espouses in

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10 The passage in Latin from Buchanan’s *Rerum*, which was completed in 1579 and published posthumously in 1582, reads thus: Cum resgestes maiorum nostorum a fabularum vanitate liberare, & ab obliuionis inuria vindicare statuissem, non ab re mihi facturus videbar, si a primordio usque repecterem, quantum in nanto interuallo temporum, & literaru primum egestate, deinde calimitate fieri posset, qui regionum situs, quod soli, caelique sit ingenium, quae vetusta nomina, mores, qui primi cultores fuerint insularum” (fol. 1r).

11 Buchanan’s work also illustrates how historiographic arguments could serve counter-imperialist functions; as Mason explains, Buchanan’s “ridiculing of the foundation legends” provided the basis for Buchanan’s claim that “both Scots and Britons had much more prosaic origins among the tribes of ancient Gaul,” an argument that “effectively exploded” the “imperial pretensions” of the British History (74).
his work. He regrets that he and his fellow scholars are “bereft of the help of good Historians” and concludes that “we must be forced to take up with such scraps as we can pick up here and there” (94). Describing the state of British record-keeping under Roman occupation, Tyrrell writes that “for some years we are left in the dark, having only a few Fragments left us, lying scatter’d here and there in divers Authors, which give us just Light enough to discover, that Britain as yet continued a Roman Province” (80). Even “Geoffrey himself” has left “wide Gaps and Interregnums for many years together” in his report of this time (80).

Tyrrell concludes that even the task of building a verified history out of scraps and fragments is essentially impossible for this period: “we could not piece up a History of these Times” from the accounts that remain, but he is unwilling to simply omit what he cannot confirm. It would be “undecent to leave so great a Breach in the midst of this History,” Tyrrell writes, and so he fills in the names of the Roman Emperors “in the order they stand in the Roman Histories we have left us” (80). As in his response to the “Miracles” related by Bede, Tyrrell’s history includes materials without passing “his word for the truth” of all the accounts he gathers. Thus, while Baker presents the historian as one who sifts through the records and discards any materials in which fiction and history have become hopelessly mixed, for Tyrrell the historian’s task is one of bringing together fragmentary sources, and of marking – but not erasing – what he cannot confirm.

Britain’s medieval records were not the only sources that early modern historians measured and found wanting; in his 1611 History of Great Britaine, John Speed castigates both the monks who were guilty of “mingling foolish doting superstitions, with the sincere doctrine of the Christian Religion” and also the classical sources (9). In “The Proeme to the Learned and Lovers of Great Britaines Glory,” Speed indicates that dissatisfaction with Greek and Roman
historians dates back to the classical period itself, writing that Thucydides, whom Bodine “commendeth for an absolute Historian,” asserts that though accounts of the Trojan War are ancient, “yet a great part thereof is fabulous.” Speed then writes that “Tully out of Plato complaineth of as much”: that the Greeks are “as children in learning,” and “have mingled fables with the Warres of Thebes, and of Troy, things (perhaps) which never were, but gathered out of the scattered Verses of Homer and others, not digested by Aristarchus, and are yet uncertain and obscure” (“Proeme”). Speed uses a metaphor of digestion here, opposing the scattered material of poetry with the coherent and verified matter of history, while repeating the familiar complaint that unskilled writers have mingled the historical and the fabulous.

The uncertainty of the classical records is also an uncertainty about the origins of Britain, as the two were closely connected through early Roman occupation and the Brutus legend. Speed indicates as much by writing that the British in seeking to unearth the origins of the name “Britain” must compare themselves with “Plutarch, Liuy, and other Latine Writers” who have “complained of the many fictions and fables of Poets intermingled with the histories of truth, whereby truth itself was often made incredible” (5). Speed combines his criticism that poetry has infiltrated history with a plea for historiographic professionalism, urging those who would either impeach the credit of the ancients or attempt to approve “those things that are as yet wrapped vp in Times Oblivious “ to defer to the “iudgement of the learned, and those of better experience” (5).

For Speed as for Baker, the writing of history is not for amateurs or poets; it is a task that requires the scholar to separate fable and fiction to come as close as possible to the truth. Speed establishes that the proper territory of poets is “fictions and fables” while the purview of the
historian is “truth,” though these may have become mingled by unskillful writers.\textsuperscript{12} Early modern historians thus identified and then attempted to mitigate mixtures in their sources; they also “sought to distance the expert testimony of the nascent professional from the invested bias of the amateur” and “separate the work that ‘historians’ did from the fictionalized and literary accounts of the past that appeared on stage and in print” as Megan Matchinske argues (5-6). Speed and Baker assert that Britain’s historical sources are mixed in their matter because their authors lacked the training to sort fiction from fact; both writers urge that historical scholarship in their own day should be left to those with the knowledge and the ability to accomplish textual taxonomy.

This desire that poetry be separated from history was earlier expressed by Buchanan, who allows, in the 1690 translation, that “Poets claim a Liberty to celebrate the Original of Families, and Nations, with the mixture of Figments, but ‘tis not equal to allow the same Privilege to those who undertake, professedly, to write an History” (42).\textsuperscript{13} The power of origin accounts – particularly those that mixed poetry and fiction – to celebrate families and nations was frequently remarked on by early modern historians. Another Latin history, Old Englishman Richard Stanihurst’s 1584 \textit{De rebus in Hibernia gestis} asserts that Hector Boece is guilty of repeating “fabulae” and of “totam narrationem mendaciunculis, more suo, perspergit” (“sprinkling the whole of his narrative with lies, as is his habit”) (92-95). This claim was later translated and repeated by Meredith Hanmer, who wrote that Boece was a “silly writer” who “labored to

\textsuperscript{12} Speed and Buchanan here are participating in a broader debate over the materials and the qualities of both history and poetry or poesy, perhaps today best known through Philip Sidney’s “Apology for Poetry.” Though Speed and Buchanan are invested in asserting the great differences between poetry and history, many texts of the time reveal considerable slippage between these genres.

\textsuperscript{13} In Buchanan’s Latin original this reads: cum sciamus poetis esse concessium, ut familiarum, & nationum origins fabularum figmentis ornare contentur (fol. 16r).
advance the glory of his nation, in the which endeavours, hee hath little regarded the honour of his Country and his owne credit” and either invented the legend that Scotland was founded by “Galthelus the Greek” or else “besprinkled” the whole account with “lies” (7). Speed also recognized the potential for mingled accounts to offer especially potent narratives of national glory, asserting that the writers of antiquity “sometimes mingleth falshoods with truth, to make the beginnings of Policies seeme more honourable” (“History” 154).

For these writers, accounts of the origins of nations were both effective in bringing glory to those nations and particularly susceptible to fictionalizing tendencies. As Kidd argues, the “primary domestic function of stories of ethnic origins was to lend historic legitimacy to institutions” while, externally, “origin myths were deployed to found or refute claims made by neighboring kingdoms upon their prized jurisdictions” and writers in both the medieval period and later had ample motivation for producing origin accounts that could accomplish these functions (“Identities” 155). By arguing that the desire to augment national glory was a universal one, and by showing that the highly respected classical authors were also responsible for mingling fiction and history in pursuit of such glory, these historians re-contextualized the failures they identified in Britain’s medieval sources as part of a widespread phenomenon.

One of the means by which nations laid claim to honor was by asserting the unmixed qualities of their origins and languages. While English historians could not make any such claims to national or linguistic purity, Welsh writers could, and did. For example, the 1663 A Description of Wales, which was “drawn by Sir John Prise Knight, and perused by Humphrey Lloyd Gentleman,” asserts that the Welsh “have kept their Country and Language about 2690

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14 In Stanihurst’s Latin, this passage reads: Magna quidem ambitione scriptor ille de gentis suae Gloria laborauit. In quo sanè conatu, & patriae dignitati, & suae existimationi parum consuluit (94-95).
years, without commixtion with any other Nation” (2). Following Prise’s (1501/2–1555) Description, there is a “short account of the British Annals, originally collected by Caradoc of Lancarvan, added to by later scholars, translated and augmented by Humphrey Lloyd, and prepared for print by David Powel at the urging of Sir Henry Sidney.” The entry for king “Rodericke the Great” sets out four genealogies of Rodericke’s contemporaries, in order to show to the reader that “not only the Brytains, but all other Nations have been ever desirous to set forth their antiquity and progeny” (33). The text then asserts that Wales has “ever surpassed all other Countries” in both the “art of Genealogy” and in its national purity, “having not mingled with any other Nations, until of late years with the English” (33). In addition to offering another example of early modern awareness that national histories were produced for the purpose of supporting national glory, these texts also show how assertions of national purity could be invoked to foster a distinct Welsh identity while establishing a point of contrast to the ways that English writers were able to describe their own national origins.

Both the medieval mixtures produced by Britain’s various conquests and the more recent minglings between the kingdoms of the British Isles were troubling for productions of national identity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain. The “patent ethnic diversity” of Britain worked against assertions of a coherent national identity and English writers in particular show a keen awareness that they inhabited an island populated by conquest whose conquerors were themselves of mixed blood (“Identities” Kidd 78). Brady, for example, writes that Britain’s invaders were not “intirely Saxons, Danes, or Norwegians, or of one Nation” but instead were “a mixture of all these, and several other People of the North parts of Germany” (120). Tyrrell echoes this sentiment, writing that for two centuries invaders with “no other design but Plunder and Spoil” did not give “this Island any long respite from their Invasions”; these invaders were
“a mixture of divers of these Northern Nations” (88). Following the medieval conquests detailed by Brady and Tyrrell, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrate the volatility of relationships between the kingdoms of “Great Britain,” including the 1542 Crown of Ireland Act which made Henry VIII ruler of the kingdom of Ireland, the 1603 Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England, the mid-sixteenth-century Wars of the Three Kingdoms, and the 1660 restoration of the Stuart line under Charles II.

Much as early modern historians asserted that the ambiguity surrounding Britain’s origins was characteristic of world history overall, so too did these writers argue that Britain was not unique in its mixed national state. In the introduction to his chapter on “What sundrie nations have dwelled in Albion” from Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, William Harrison writes:

> As few or no nations can iustlie boast themselues t o haue continued sithence their countrie was first replenished, without any mixture, more or lesse, of forreine inhabitants; no more can this our Iland, whose manifold commodities haue oft allurred sundrie princes and famous capteines of the world to conquer and subdue the same vnto their owne subiection. (1587, volume 1, 5)

Here, mixture and conquest are closely connected even as Holinshed attempts to offer a positive justification for British national mixture, attributing it to the island’s “manifest commodities.”¹⁵

The “troubled legacy of repeated conquests” that these writers confronted in endeavors to produce “an irreducible ‘story’ of England,” as Kidd argues, required the development of “pride in England’s ethnic hybridity” (“Identities” 75). In addition to formulations of identity based on an ancient and pan-island Britishness, the notion of mixture itself could be deployed to confront

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¹⁵ In the “Apologall Preface to the Reader” from his English translation of the *Foras Feasa*, Michael Kearney employs a similar strategy, writing that Ireland was not “very unlike to that earthly garden of Eden” and that the island’s “fertility and beautie” were “motives of her severall and successive invasions” (RIA MS 24 G 16, fol. 27v).
early modern questions of identity. Although the Welsh might claim otherwise, if there is “no
nation void of myxture” and if the mixture of identities is as universal as the mixture of fiction
and truth in the ancient records, then the presence of mixture ceases to be an issue for identity
productions any more than the mixture in the records led to the unilateral or unanimous
discarding of early histories.

Discussions of mixture in both nations and texts are widely evident in early modern
British national histories, as the works quoted above indicate. These writers consistently
represent their nations as mixtures of multiple ethnicities produced by invasions and conquests –
and their ancient records as mixtures of history and fiction produced by Catholic superstition,
inadequate scholarship, and the desire for national glory. However, the very universality of these
mixtures is an effective means of deemphasizing their significance; mixture is shared by all
nations and all ancient histories, these writers argue, and so the ambiguities these mixtures
produce are simply the fate of all nations. Moreover, these texts show their writers’ confidence
that they could, in fact, bring order to textual mixtures through scholarly insight, offering hope
that national mixtures might be as effectively controlled, control that was especially desired in
the matter of mixture between English and Irish populations in Ireland.

“Sowed and Sprinckled with English”: Degeneracy and Mixture in Ireland

British histories of Ireland represent mixture in ways largely similar to the histories of
Britain, in that they emphasize the fragmentary and mixed nature of the available records while
advocating the necessity of historical professionalism. However, British writers tended to locate
mixture and unreliability in much more recent Irish records and were largely unanimous in
concluding that the Catholic Old English and Gaelic Irish historians of the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries were no better equipped to deal with the task of separating history and fiction than their medieval predecessors. For example, Richard Cox’s 1689 *Hibernia Anglicana* offered a New English account of Irish history, responding directly to several key Irish texts, including Keating’s 1634 *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*. Cox notes that while the *Foras Feasa* is the best available history of pre-Norman Ireland, it is persuasive only to those who do not know better, being “no more than an ill-digested Heap of very silly Fictions” (“To the Reader”). Cox describes the records of Ireland with no greater enthusiasm, writing that there is no coherent history of Ireland, a lack he attributes to Irish histories “relating to the Times before the Conquest, being Fabulous; and those since, but Scraps and Fragments” (“To the Reader”).

A century earlier, Old Englishman Stanihurst’s “Playne and Perfect Description of Irelande” from Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, described the Irish records in similar terms, relating the great labor that has been applied to pulling together “the scrapings and fragments of the Hyistorie of Ireland” (1577, volume 3, 1). While British writers also used such metaphors to refer to their own records, as Tyrrell does when speaking of the “scraps” of ancient British history, Cox asserts that even histories written after the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion are fragmentary and Keating’s fairly recent work is no better than a heap of fictions while Stanihurst describes the whole of Irish history as a collection of unsorted fragments. Metaphors of scraps and fragments piled into heaps emphasize the incoherence of the Irish historical record, portraying both medieval chronicles and contemporary histories as disorderly masses that fail to distinguish between fiction and fact. For the New English historian Cox, even seventeenth-century Irish scholars lack the historiographic professionalism necessary to locate truth in their fragmentary records.
In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ireland was threatening to England precisely because its inhabitants seemed as inclined to mixture as its records. The foreign and barbarous land against which the English had defined themselves for centuries revealed itself as a place where the English “degenerated,” losing their national identity and mixing with Irish populations. Ireland was dangerous because of its unrest and rebellions, because of the threat of an alliance between Ireland and Spain, and because the Old English’s adoption of Irish language and customs, as well as their adherence to the Catholic faith and marriages with the native Irish, revealed the fragility of any British national identity established in opposition to Irishness. British scholars often described Irish texts in terms of their mixed or inconsistent natures; these writers discussed the mixture of peoples in Ireland using the same terms and relying on similar metaphors, establishing a linguistic link between the Irish records and the Irish themselves. In this way, British writers were able to relocate the threatening national mixtures represented by the Irish into the realm of texts and historiography where careful scholarship could wrest clarity out of confusion.

Cox’s concerns with degeneracy and his fear that the English in Ireland could become enemies of England were shared by many of his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{16} The Irish were sources of considerable anxiety to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British writers and politicians, who published a great wealth of texts attempting to “solve” the problem of Ireland, with titles such as \textit{Discourse on the mere Irish of Ireland}, \textit{The grievances of the Englishe Pale}, and “A discourse of the present state of Ireland.”\textsuperscript{17} Taking up the question of degeneration, Edmund Campion writes

\textsuperscript{16}For more on the “atmosphere of fear” in late sixteenth-century British Ireland, see James Knapp 207-245.
\textsuperscript{17}The volley of texts continued throughout the seventeenth century: according to Ian Campell Ross’s count “over 500 works on Ireland appeared in England between 1689 and 1693, the vast majority of them hostile” (19 n. 24).
that the “very English of birth, conversant with the brutish sort of that people, become degenerate in short space, and are quite altered into the worst ranke of Irish Rogues” while Meredith Hanmer describes the noble origins of the Welsh and asks: “shall we now like sluggarts, degenerate from so noble a race, and like a sort of Cowards, be afraid of these naked and unarmed Raskals, in whom there is no valour, by reason of knowledge or experience in Armes? Shall such a rable of savages pinne us up within the wals of little Dublin?” (14, 129). As Hanmer’s pointed questions show, the matter of degeneracy was given further urgency by its relevance to the military situation in Ireland.

Slippages between Irish and English populations were a threat because they challenged accounts of Englishness and Britishness that depended on difference from Irishness. The interdependence of Irish and British national identities has long been established, from Giraldus Cambrensis’s (c.1146–1220) formulation of Irish barbarism in support of British exceptionalism to the “crucial symbolic place” Ireland played in post-Reformation conceptions of Britishness, in Christopher Highley’s phrasing (2). These identities were far from straightforward or stable. James Knapp, for example, has argued that “rather than representing a simple uncivilized foil to English national identity, the Irish were the cause of increasing anxiety” while John Ziegler has examined concern over the “potential slippage between identities” in Tudor Britain and Ireland, arguing that “the consistent use of forms of the word degeneration to describe English persons who take on Irish characteristics implies a relationship of the colonist to the proximate other in which the latter is somehow already present in the former” (209, 83-84). The instability of colonialist models based on narratives of barbarity is

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18 For more on the role Cambrensis’s Irish texts played in constructing barbaric Irishness against which civilized Britishness is defined, see Kathy Lavezzo 46-70. For more on the argument that definitions of Britishness depending on the production of an opposing Irishness, see Christopher Ivic 144-153 and Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley 7-9.
readily apparent in British discourse on Ireland, which, according to Richard McCabe, reveals the frightening possibility that “‘degeneration’ and ‘reversion’ were one and the same” and that the English could become as barbaric as the Irish (66).

Fear of degeneration and the mixture of nations are closely linked in Cox’s discussion on Irish national origins; he begins by allowing that the English are “undoubtedly a mixt Nation compounded of Britons, Danes, Saxons, and Normans,” but asserts that the Irish are no less mixed, writing that “some think the Irish are also a mingled People of Britons, Gauls, Spaniards, and Easterlings, and therefore called Scots, i.e an Heap” (“To the Reader”). Cox repeats this etymological claim later, observing that “the Irish being a mixt People might be called Scots, i.e. acerva, (a Heap) implying, That as a Heap consisted of many Grains, so the Inhabitants of Ireland were compounded of many Nations” (“An Apparatus”). Compounding this original mixture are the interchanges of blood that occurred in Ireland following the Anglo-Norman and Tudor conquests; Cox writes that the Irish “are at this Day a mixt People” not only because of their mixed origins but because they unquestionably now have English blood in their veins (“To the Reader”). Cox describes the Irish records as equally mixed, writing that Ireland’s native histories are so “intermixt with Impossible Stories and Impertinent Tales, that it is exceeding difficult to distinguish which is the History and which is the Fable” (“An Apparatus”). The connection between generic and national mixtures is especially clear here; the Irish are a “mixt” people much as their histories are mixt texts. Irish national mixture is reflected in the very name for the ancient Irish, which means “a Heap,” the same term Cox uses to discredit Ireland’s first narrative national history.19

19 Cox’s etymological claim was earlier presented by Hanmer, who writes that “Of Pictes and Irish the Scots had their originall, as it were comatted of divers nations; for that is called Scot which of divers things is gathered into one heap” (6). Irish and Scottish traditions offered quite
In addition to the *Foras Feasa*, Cox also represents the “Collection of Murders” published by “R. S.” as a “mere heap of Forgeries, designed only to make a noise” as part of his defense of English policies in Ireland (“An Apparatus, or Introductory Discourse, Touching the Controverted Points in this History”). Cox asserts that this anonymous account’s reports of murders committed by English Protestants against the Catholic Irish are either “utterly false” or wildly inaccurate. As he does with the question of Ireland’s previous histories, Cox sets out his work as corrective, able to locate and publish a true account of material that the “Collection of Murders” has merely and inaccurately heaped together. Cox is quite confident in his ability to remedy what the “Collection of Murders” had misrepresented through his own research into the trial records of Ireland as well as his personal experience; having lived “for some years” in Ireland, Cox can “assure the reader” that the text’s claims are either entirely false or greatly exaggerated, as he is “credibly informed from several ancient Inhabitants of that Town” (“Controverted Points”). In addition to calling on his own authority as a New Englishman, Cox here is also offering another model for bringing cohesion to mixture, relying on textual research, eyewitness accounts, and personal experience.

Despite the violence described by “R.S.,” the English in Ireland often mixed with the Irish in ways that were troubling to Cox. Describing the great “antipathies” between the Irish and English nations, which he notes are usual “between the Conquerors and the Conquered,” Cox observes that these antipathies were not sufficient to keep the Irish and the English separate, and

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20 The “Collection of Murders and Massacres committed on the Irish in Ireland since the 23rd of October, 1641” was published as a pamphlet in 1662 and later appended to the seventh volume of the first Lord Clarendon’s *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*. 

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different etymologies, most notably that the name of the Scots derived from Scota, the daughter of a Pharaoh and mother to the sons of Mileadh, in some traditions or wife to Galthelus in others. While Scottish and Irish writers frequently disagreed on to whom the term “Scots” first applied, as well as on the various versions of their founding traditions, the Scota etymology was generally preferred to the heap/acerva one espoused by Hanmer and Cox.
that the English in Ireland have “insensibly degenerated not only into Irish Customs, Habit, and Manners, but also affected Irish Names” (“To the Reader”). Troublingly, this loss of national identity is limited to the English; the Irish, according to Cox, considered the Anglo-Norman invaders “but unjust intruders into, and usurpers of other Men’s Estates,” and, in the expectation of someday being able to “get rid of them,” they “carefully kept up the distinction of Nations and by no Laws or Allurements could be brought to part with their Language or Habit, or even the most barbarous Customs” (“To the Reader”). The Irish have the power to influence their conquerors far more than those conquerors have managed to control the laws, habits, and language of the colonized nation. Mixture between Irish and English nations has led to a loss of Englishness, which Cox identifies as degeneracy.

For Cox, linguistic, textual, and national mixtures are closely connected. In addressing the Irish language, that dangerous vehicle through which English national allegiances were eroded, Cox writes that “how much soever some of the Bardes do brag, That it is a Pure and Original one; yet it is so far from that, that it is the most compounded Language in the World, (English only excepted)” (“An Apparatus”). Here, again, is the awareness that if the Irish and their language are mixed, then the English people and language are no less so. Despite the threat posed by the Irish, whose influence on the Old English reveals the fragility of Englishness itself, Cox concludes that there is no cause for despair. Echoing the martial tone of Hanmer’s Irish history, Cox urges: “let us not be dismayed for they are but the same People our Ancestors have so often triumphed over,” telling his readers that they may depend on the fact that the Irish “Nature is still the same, and not to be so changed, but that they will again vail their Bonnets to a victorious English Army” (“An Apparatus”). In its rapid progression from discussing the mixed Irish language to the post-conquest mixtures of the English in Ireland to the contemporary Irish
military situation, the *Hibernia Anglicana* demonstrates that philological and historical matters were relevant to political concerns and that reference to mixture permeated discussions of both.

Cox presents the *Hibernia Anglicana* as aiding the military situation in Ireland by paving the way toward the first “compleat or coherent History of that Kingdom” (“To the Reader”). In addition to criticizing the mixt and fictitious Irish histories, Cox asserts that the English have no better knowledge of Ireland, despite the importance of this “subordinate” kingdom. Having established that previous attempts to write on Ireland – including Keating’s work, but also Spenser’s, Campion’s, William Camden’s (1551–1623), and Ware’s – are jumbled, or limited in scope, or not actually histories, Cox avers that “It must therefore follow, That an Entire and Coherent History of Ireland must be very acceptable to the World, and very useful to the People of England, and the Refugees of Ireland, especially at this Juncture, when that Kingdom is to be re-conquered” (“To the Reader”). Cox does not claim to offer “perfection” or to remedy the gaps in Irish history with a single text, but he does position his work as bringing scholarship on Ireland closer to the important task of helping the English to understand this subordinate kingdom at the time of its reconquest.

Written a century and published five decades earlier than *Hibernia Anglicana*, Spenser’s *View* also argues that understanding Irish history is necessary for military success in Ireland. To further this understanding, the *View* offers a detailed account of how best to work with available sources and materials by staging a discussion between its two characters, the inquisitive Eudoxus and the well-informed Irenius. In response to Eudoxus’s accusation that his account of Irish

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21 The claim that previous texts on Ireland were not truly histories was not invariably a disparagement; while Cox does write that Peter Walsh’s *A Prospect of the State of Ireland* “will never pass for more than an Utopian Atchievement,” he also asserts that “Spencer’s View of Ireland is very well, and Sir John Davys his Discourse is better; but both are Commentaries rather than Histories” (“To the Reader”).
origins relies too heavily on the faulty chronicles of Ireland, Irenius asserts that although the bards and chronicles of Ireland do not merit unquestioning belief, when he adds his “own reading” to them, and:

out of them both together, with comparison of times, likewise of manners & customes, affinity of words and names, properties of natures, & uses, resemblances of rites & ceremonies, monuments of Churches and Tombes, and many other like circumstances, I doe gather a likelyhood of truth, not certainly affirming any thing, but by conferring of times, language, monuments, and such like, I doe hunt out a probability of things. (28-29)

Irenius concludes that, although the imperfect record-keepers of Ireland might have “caulded the truth,” their works nonetheless retain “reliques of the true antiquitie, though disguise, which a well eyed man may happily discover and finde out” (29). While neither Cox nor Spenser pretends to have reached comprehensive or unquestionable understandings of the past, both set out their methods as more effective than previous research, especially the work of the Irish historians. Both writers position their work as building coherent accounts of the Irish past out of the mixed historical record in order to aid in the task of subduing the “wild” Irish.

Escobedo characterizes Spenser’s response to the presence of history in fiction as a compromise forced by Spenser’s recognition that the loss of national origins is both “indisputable and unacceptable” (171). To recover lost national origins, Spenser, as Escobedo argues, relies on the notion of ornament to link history and poetry; “ornamental fiction serves as a compromise” between Britain’s “need for historical continuity and the fact of historical loss” in that it “revives the national past and yet threatens to turn that past into an empty shell void of the substance of truth” (157). The contradictions evident here – fiction is both a contamination that
Spenser seeks to eradicate from history and also an essential component of origin accounts – is expressed and addressed by Spenser through the notion of mixture.

Spenser’s representations of mixture, or “mingling,” the term he prefers, are as conflicted and often ambivalent as most of his writing on the Irish. Like Cox, Spenser describes the dangers of degeneration; Irenius informs his companion that most of the Old English have “degenerated and grewne almost mere Irishe, yea, and more malicious to the English then the Irish them selves” (54). Irenius traces this degeneration to both linguistic and physical mingling, claiming that adoption of the Irish language by English settlers has led them to lose their loyalty to their home nation, since “the speach being Irish, the heart must needs bee Irish: for out of the abundance of the heart, the tongue speaketh” (71). The next cause of degeneration Irenius gives is the “marryinge with the Irish,” an act whose danger is apparent to “every simplest sence,” given that “commonly the childe taketh most of his nature of the mother, besides speech, manners, and incllynation” (71). In this view, Old English mingling with the Irish through marriage, combined with their adoption of the Irish tongue have lead to a loss of national identity.

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22 Though Spenser’s View has frequently been criticized as a colonialist argument for military domination over Ireland, recent scholars have found cause to question the assumption that Spenser was unilaterally hostile to the Irish. For example Christopher Highley calls attention to the many years Spenser spent in Ireland, and suggests that the “bardic culture” of the Irish, more favorable to poets than England’s own, came to “offer Spenser a home or court of sorts – a space for the construction of new cultural identities and imaginative possibilities” (20). Highley argues that Spenser was “more detached from and critical of the dominant power structure in Elizabethan society than is usually accepted” and that Spenser’s work “insists upon the complexities and interconnections, slippery and palpably constructed, of the collective identities of the Gaelic Irish, and the Old and New English” (4).

23 In the 1894 edition of the View, edited by Alexander Grosart, Spenser asks: “And indeed how can such matching but bring forth an evill race, seing that comonly the child taketh most of his nature of the mother, besydes speach, mannors, and inclynation, which are for the most part agreeable to the condicons of ther mothers? (110)”
Spenser was far from alone in blaming the “degeneration” of the Old English on the Irish language; the 1366 Statues of Kilkenny, which Tony Crowley describes as “the first piece of colonial language legislation in Ireland,” associate the Old English adoption of Irish speech with their adherence to the laws and manners of their “enemies,” the Irish (122-123). Though the Statutes required English colonists who did not speak English to learn the language or lose their land, three centuries later Irish was still spoken by the Old English and, as evident in Keating’s 1634 *Foras Feasa*, the Irish language remained a powerful marker of national identity, able to bring together Old English and Gaelic Irish populations under the shared identity of an *Éirennaigh* nation.24 As Prise does when arguing that the Welsh language and people are pure and unmixed and as Cox does when making the opposite claim about the Irish and their tongue, Spenser recognizes the centrality of language in the production of national identities.

Despite the evident perils involved in any mingling between the English and the Irish in Ireland, Spenser does not advocate separating these populations. In fact, when Eudoxus suggests quarantining the Irish so as to remove the threat of degeneration, asking whether it would be “better to parte the Irish and English, then to mingle them together,” the well-informed Irenius argues strongly against separation, claiming that:

I thinke it best by an union of manners, and conformity of minds, to bring them to be one people, and to put away the dislikefull conceipt both of the one, and the other, which will be by no means better then by this intermingling of them: For neither all the Irish may dwell together, nor all the English, but by translating of them and scattering them amongst the English, not onely to bring them by dayly conversation unto better liking of each other, but also to make both of them lesse able to hurt. (144-145)

24 The *Éirennaigh* were Catholic Irish-speaking individuals born in Ireland; Keating’s work in inventing this Irish national identity is the subject of Chapter Four.
The links between textual or philological models for mixture and national ones are evident in Spenser’s description of the mingling of populations as “translating” the Irish and bringing both groups to a better liking of each other by “dayly conversation,” which again emphasizes the role of language in determining identity. As with his description of the scholarship necessary to locate the “reliques of the true antiquitie” in the Irish chronicles, Spenser here offers a program for controlling mixtures capable of bringing order to chaos and supporting his vision of a pacified Ireland.

Throughout the View, Spenser presents the separation of the Irish from English towns and governance as thoroughly dangerous. For example, Irenius argues that the Brehon law, which is practiced in Irish communities living “without any Englishman amongst them” enables these communities to “doe what they list, and compound or altogether conceale amongst themselves their owne crimes” (15). Likewise, Irenius calls the mantle a “fit house for an out-law, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloke for a theife” because it enables outlaws to hide “far from danger of Law,” the rebel to “lurketh in the thicke woods and straite passages,” and the theif to shroud himself “under a bush or a bank side” (57-58). Irenius also criticizes the custom of individuals living in “boolies” because those who live apart from towns “grow thereby the more barbarous, and live more licentiously than they could in townes, using what manners they list, and practizing what mischeifes and villanies they will” (55-56). The laws and customs and clothing of the Irish that enable them to live separately from the English also, in this argument, lead to war and rebellion; to counter this threat, Spenser advocates the mingling of Irish and English populations, despite the specter of degeneracy. The alternative of an Ireland distinct from (and thus uncontrollable by) Britain was far greater a threat. The View shows that without English

25 For more on the significance British writers placed on the Irish mantle, see John Ziegler 73-95 and Margaret Rose Jaster 61-77.
oversight “all that heape of Irish nations which there lye hudled together” in “that unquiet countrey” will never come under English control (93).

Spenser was not alone in recognizing that population mixtures might be more effective at securing peace in Ireland than military interventions, or in turning newly developed scholarly practices to colonialist ends. In his 1691 *The Political Anatomy of Ireland*, William Petty (1623–1687), for example, argued that England should decline “all Military means of settling and securing Ireland” and instead set up a program for “transmuting one People into the other” (29). One of the methods Petty advocates for accomplishing this transmutation is the exchange of women: he writes that if half of the unmarried marriageable women in Ireland were “transported into England, and disposed one to each parish, and as many English brought back and married to the Irish…the whole Work of natural Transmutation and Union would in 4 or 5 years be accomplished” (30). Although Petty refers to the “transmutation” and Spenser to the “translation” of populations, both these writers argue that the best way to pacify the Irish is to mix them with the English. Petty’s proposal indicates the longevity of the solution Spenser had proposed to the Irish problem while offering yet another example of an early modern writer attempting to control dangerous mixtures by embracing the concept of mixture itself.

Spenser uses the same term, “mingled,” for the different kinds of mixtures considered in the *View*: linguistic blends that indicate the interchange of Irish and English customs; the mixed national origins of England, Spain, and Ireland; and the equally mixed populations of Ireland. In addition to proposing the “mingling” of Irish and English populations as a means of bringing peace to Ireland, Spenser also argues that “there is no nation now in Christendome, nor much

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26 For more on how Petty “applied the methods and concepts of seventeenth-century natural philosophy to the challenges of governing a multiple monarchy and a colonial empire,” see Ted McCormick’s *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic*. 

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further, but is mingled, and compounded with others” during a discussion of Irish origins in Spain, asserting as Harrison does that national mixtures are universal. Describing the mixture of the languages that so effectively convey identities, Irenius explains that the word “Kincougish” is “mingled of English and Irish together” as “Kin is English, and Congish affinitie in Irish (43).” Spenser uses the term “sprinkle” similarly, noting that there is not a nation in the word that is not “sprinkled” with Latin, asserting that all nations “hath some mixture or sprinkling” of the Romans, and advocating that the Irish be “sowed and sprinkled” with the English (50, 70, 144). Much as Cox does, Spenser connects discussions of textual and linguistic mixtures with discussions of national and ethnic ones by using the same terms and metaphors to represent both. In the View, the desire to control such mixtures is especially clear. Spenser devotes significant effort to explaining how careful scholarship and an equally careful settlement program can nullify the threats posed by Ireland to English security and national identity.

In British accounts of Ireland, the mixture of Ireland’s histories stood in for the more troubling mixture of Irish and British populations. Cox and Spenser both align Old English degeneracy and loss of national identity with textual and linguistic mixtures, which they have already shown are susceptible to careful scholarship. Cox’s anxiety that the English may not be as distinct from the Irish as English identity formations demanded is apparent in his discussions of English degeneration and his argument that the Irish cannot be called pure because they have English blood in their veins. Cox calls the Irish people both “mixt” and “mingled” and likens them to “a heap,” employing very similar terms to those with which he derides the Foras Feasa and the anonymous “Collection of Murders.” Cox positions his Hibernia Anglicana as correcting

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27 By constructing this etymology, Spenser also constructs an origin for this practice, tracing it back to England in the time of King Alfred and arguing that it came afterward to Ireland; thus, the etymology of this term is also evidence for cultural and legislative contact.
the fictions perpetuated by Irish writers and offering a truthful rendition of the past to fill the void that is Irish history. Aligning the mixed Irish records with the mixed Irish people offered the promise that the degenerative powers of the Irish could be restrained as efficiently as the *Hibernia Anglicana* brought order to the heap of fictions presented by the *Foras Feasa*.

Spenser is even more explicit in his endeavors to bring dangerous Irish heterogeneities under control. Just as the *View* carefully establishes effective strategies for wresting truth from the mixed Irish chronicles – through close reading, informed scholarship, and careful comparison – Spenser’s dialogue also presents a plan for bringing peace to Ireland by “mingling” Irish and English populations, “sprinkling” the Irish with English, and preventing the Irish from living in dangerous isolation. The *View* shows that mixture itself can become a solution to the problem of degeneracy. Neither Cox nor Spenser is shy about the purpose of their histories in supporting empire; Cox puts his work forward as an antidote to the mixed heaps of Irish histories much needed at the time of the island’s reconquest while Spenser’s comprehensive historiographic program is equaled by the detail of his military recommendations. In these British texts on Ireland, the power of controlled mixtures – whether of texts or of populations – to realize imperial dreams is exceptionally clear.

**Fervent Love of Country in Fiction and in History**

A 1915 publication from the Welsh Board of Education entitled *A Nation and its Books* begins with the claim that: “All true Patriotism has its roots in the fervent love of country, and nothing feeds that love so much, or so well, as knowledge” (5). The text argues that if Welshmen “desire to keep alive in the hearts of the children of Wales the national language and the national spirit” then they must support Welsh children’s access to Welsh books, from which these
children can gain “ideas of Patriotism” and “knowledge of heroes and heroism” (5-6). To that end, the text offers an extensive listing of Welsh books, in Welsh and in English. These are organized first by language and second by genre, presenting, for example, Welsh-language “Tales Stories and Folklore,” “Literature and Language,” “Drama,” “Poetry,” and “History” and then providing texts under the same categories for “Some English Books on Welsh Subjects” (54, 79). A Nation and its Books indicates the endurance of links between national identity and national texts – as well as the productivity of telling national narratives in both fictional and historical genres. Much as Arthur must read the chronicle of the Britons to understand his own “deare country,” Welsh children must learn about Welsh heroes to love and understand Wales. “Fervent love of country” is fed by the “fervent fire” of desire for knowledge about one’s own country, especially about its past. In the project of building a textual framework for Welsh nationalism that is the aim of A Nation and its Books, poetry, drama, and folklore are as essential as history and biography – works from many genres are called upon to support the knowledge that is so necessary for patriotism.

The national histories that were penned by Speed, Tyrrell, and their contemporaries also set out to offer a textual foundation for British and English identities. As these writers recognized, building the imperial dreams that were at the basis of early modern nationalism sometimes required that history be combined with fictions and poetry. Commenting on the particular value of fictions for constructing narratives of identity and empire, Fuchs observes that poetry was able to “free England from the limitations of historical circumstances” because poems “construct a literary sphere in which the national tradition – a tradition of literary predecessors, but also of powerful myths about English greatness – itself becomes a source of value” (“Piracy” 38). In early modern accounts of British and Irish origins, poetry and fiction
serve not just to ornament or supplement the materials missing from historical chronicles; they are also essential to the project of imagining empire.

Early modern scholars were able to manage the matter of fiction’s simultaneous utility and unsuitability for relating narratives of nation and empire through the concept of mixture. In national histories and other past-oriented research projects, the “problem” of fictions – that they make the facticity of these all important national narratives questionable – is rephrased in terms of mixture in order to render the historian’s role an especially powerful one, able to mitigate fictional contamination and control these textual heterogeneities. The concept of mixture not only granted historians the authority to argue in favor of their own works’ veracity but also effectively addressed the problems of national mixtures posed by Old English “degeneration” and Britain’s own past conquests. The notion of mixture provided a means for these writers to describe and defend their research methodologies, exercise control over the narratives of the past that were so effective in producing national identities, and extend the metaphor of textual mixtures into the political world. The chronicles of Britain and of faery land are close cousins by design; the conquests of Brutus and Elfin, Arthur and Gurguntius made it possible for writers such as Spenser and the scholars who followed him to imagine a multigeneric version of the national history capable of building British identity out of the fragments of medieval conquests and the promise of early modern empire.
Chapter Three
Chronicles of Modernity:
The Medieval Forms and Genres of Roderic O’Flaherty’s Ogygia

Introduction: “Only Annals” and Early Modern Historiography

In his 1696 The General History of England, Both Ecclesiastical and Civil; From the Earliest Accounts of Time to the Reign of His Present Majesty, King William III, James Tyrrell sets out his reservations regarding the extant historical record of Saxon England. Tyrrell writes that because nothing “more ancient” than Bede and the “Saxon Chronicle” has survived, he has included this latter text “almost entire” as it seems to “be writ faithfully as far as it goes” (114). However, because the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle preserves “only Annals,” its contents, according to Tyrrell, have some considerable limitations: “they barely relate the Succession of their Kings with their Chief Wars and Actions, without expressing the Grounds or Causes of either, or giving us any Account of their particular Laws, and original Constitutions; so that I confess, they cannot prove so Instructive to Humane Life, as is required of a just History” (114). Tyrrell was far from alone in recognizing that the chronicle form supported accretive readings emphasizing the collection of individual events rather than narratives linking past occurrences to their causes and political contexts. However, many of Tyrrell’s contemporaries treated the very qualities he criticizes as advantages because they enabled the production of historical texts able to meet a variety of political and ideological needs. Taking Roderic O’Flaherty’s 1685 Ogygia as an exemplar of the efficacy of cumulative genres such as the chronicle, genealogy, regnal catalogue, and synchronism, I argue that historians in the seventeenth century were highly attentive to the ways that medieval historical genres could be deployed in response to early modern political and
historiographic challenges.¹ I demonstrate that *Ogygia* adopts the chronicle form to minimalize four centuries of English rule in Ireland, the synchronism to validate the Irish chronicles by demonstrating their compatibility with classical and scriptural history, and the regnal list and genealogy to link the Stuart kings with the Milesian royal line, amply indicating how these forms were adaptable to the needs of a historian writing in the aftermath of Cromwellian confiscations and compatible with critically engaged historiographic practices.²

During the two centuries prior to the publication of Tyrrell’s *General History*, many other early modern scholars cited reasons similar to Tyrrell’s in criticizing the contents and methods of the medieval chronicle tradition. Alexandra Gillespie and Oliver Harris have identified the “cumulative quality” of the chronicles, their concern with “the accretion and correction of detail,” and their understood purpose in offering “not a new argument about the past, but a compilation and augmentation of existing histories” as qualities that led to their dismissal by many modern historians (144-151). D. R. Woolf has summed up current scholarship’s conventional explanation for increasing early modern dissatisfaction with the chronicle form thus: “because historians were no longer satisfied with its rigid, annalistic structure, or because they found its style barbaric, or because its providential mode of explanation had ceased to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the unfolding events now perceived as having immediate, contingent causes, human or natural” (“Reading” 12). Woolf’s own explanation for the

¹ Following D. R. Woolf, I consider chronicles and annals as “historical genres,” but I also use the terms “forms” and “generic forms” when referencing annals, chronicles, synchronisms (in which events in Britain and Ireland were collated with major figures and events in world history), regnal lists, and genealogies as a means of maintaining focus on the considerable standardization and often rigidly defined structures of such texts.

² The Milesians were the descendants of Míleadh or Míl Espáine (the “Soldier of Spain”) who legendarily settled Ireland and were ancestors to the contemporary Irish. As Chapter Two discusses, connections between Spain and Ireland were a subject of some concern for both British and Irish writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – and Ireland’s Milesian heritage was frequently invoked in support of an alliance between the two Catholic nations.
significant decrease in chronicle publication, which he terms the “death of the chronicle,” identifies instead the “social, cultural, and technological changes” of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including shifts in the historical marketplace and “the fact that many of the functions it had previously served could now be better served by other historical genres,” as more significant factors in the chronicle’s demise.

The numbers of published chronicle histories undeniably declined over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and there were numerous early modern historians who found the cumulative structure of the chronicle dissatisfactory. However, focusing on the drop in chronicles’ publication can obscure their persistence and importance in early modern historical culture. As I will show, despite the criticisms that were leveled against the genre, many early modern historians found the chronicle served the “functions” they needed better than other historical genres did. Though early modern writers certainly marked a distinction between the characteristics attributed to chronicles and the historiographic practices valued in what Gillespie and Harris, among others, refer to as “narrative history,” and though such distinctions often painted the chroniclers as disorganized, undiscriminating, and fundamentally outdated, chronicle histories of Britain and Ireland continued to be published well into the eighteenth century. The chronicle form may not have dominated historical scholarship under Stuart reign but the many innovative annals and chronicles of the seventeenth century are testimony to their continuing relevance. Moreover, these texts demonstrate their authors’ abilities to turn the purportedly medieval chronicle form to thoroughly modern ends.

David Womersley argues that the historiographic revolution model, with its “uniform and unqualified denigration” of chronicles as “aesthetically crude” and “technically primitive,” has resulted in the slowness of scholars to recognize how “intellectually alert” these texts are (103).
Even current considerations of early modern history do not always recognize the critically engaged and quite original uses to which early modern writers put the form. The recent publication of the *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s* Chronicles offers a snapshot of current scholarly approaches to the chronicle; the impressive and wide-ranging scholarship represented by the handbook itself and the hypertextual edition of the *Chronicles* it accompanies indicate the continuing relevance of this sixteenth-century work. However, though Thomas Freeman and Susannah Brietz Monta observe that previous scholarly neglect of Holinshed has occurred because “it is a chronicle, a form of historical writing usually regarded (wrongly) as unsophisticated and ‘medieval,’” several other essays in the *Handbook* collection assert that chronicles offer an obsolete and unsophisticated approach to historical writing (233).

In the essay “Holinshed and Hall,” for example, Scott Lucas suggests that Edward Hall’s 1548 *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre & Yorke*, offered sixteenth-century historians an “advance on the traditional English chronicle form, guiding English historiography away from the baggy and disordered recital of names, dates, and notable political and natural events typical of early English annals to a relatively sophisticated, tightly controlled linear narrative” (1548). Here, narrative history is associated with sophistication while the “baggy and disordered” chronicle format belongs to the unsophisticated historiographic practices of previous traditions. In a similar fashion, Bart Van Es describes the “synthesis” evident in John Speed’s history as a “major intellectual innovation” and warns against the “danger of anachronism if we discover in Holinshed a space for ‘free’ debate, when what we really have is a more systematic version of the fairly indiscriminate presentation of all variant versions that we find in medieval chroniclers” (584-585). Van Es describes Speed’s historical works as offering
British readers a “substantially more sophisticated and equally comprehensive history of the nation,” in large part because they offer continuous narratives of past events (585-586).

The association between sophistication and narrativity is readily apparent in these examples and elsewhere in the Handbook, as in Wymen Herendeen’s statement that William Camden’s 1615 *Annales of Elizabeth* display a “sophistication of method” comparable to Holinshed’s and not evident in “earlier examples of the form” (242).³ Herendeen argues that Camden’s work achieves “a narrative coherence and unity that exceed those of Holinshed’s and [Abraham] Fleming’s work and that reflect Camden’s own disciplined methods and aesthetic” (242). For Herendeen, Holinshed’s *Chronicles* occupy a “liminal space” between the “moribund medieval tradition” and the “new, sophisticated humanist narrative” (237). In this reading, Holinshed’s *Chronicles* themselves may hold the dubious distinction of anticipating some measure of the sophistication of humanist narrative history but the chronicle format itself belongs to the medieval past, a previous stage in an assumed historiographic evolution.

In both the seventeenth and the twenty-first centuries, then, chronicles have been represented as disorderly collections of bare dates and events, lacking the sophistication and flexibility to examine the causes underlying events, to present a coherent narrative of the past, or to offer instruction to the informed reader. It is not my purpose to dispute either the significant decrease in the publication of chronicles over the seventeenth century or the largely cumulative nature of chronicle writing. However, I argue that “cumulative” does not also mean “unsophisticated” and that the accretive nature of chronicles offered advantages to the early modern historian narrative histories could not. Chronicles were able to accommodate multiple

³ On the associations between narrativity and sophistication in contemporary scholarship, see Hayden White’s seminal essay “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” which points out that “it was the narrativity of the historical discourse that was celebrated as one of the signs of historiography’s maturation as a science” (27).
perspectives and present localized historical material, while their supposed non-evaluative nature meant that they could be deployed for the writing of potentially controversial histories in a safe manner. Chronicles also carried with them the authority of tradition and the reassuring specificity of a form that emphasized dates very effectively. These aspects were especially desirable in histories of the ancient past, in which even such early events as the first settlement of Ireland three centuries after the Flood could be assigned a specific date. In histories of the more recent past, such as Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh’s (fl. 1603–1616) early seventeenth-century Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Úi Dhomnaill (Life of Red Hugh O’Donnell), the chronicle form brought the weight of heroic antiquity to the deeds of contemporary figures.

Other accretive genres, such as genealogies, regnal catalogues, and synchronisms proved equally adaptable to seventeenth-century needs. For example, in his 1634 Foras Feasa ar Éirinn, Geoffrey Keating uses royal genealogies to locate James VI and I within a Milesian line of succession while Percy Enderbie’s 1661 Cambria Triumphans offers a genealogy for Charles II that links the Stuart king with the royal lines of both Wales and Scotland.⁴ Along with its genealogies, Keating’s Foras Feasa also includes a series of synchronisms intended to demonstrate that Irish history is compatible with classical and scriptural history. Many of the failings ascribed to chronicles and other accretive forms – their association with medieval scholarship, their cumulative or accretive nature, their lack of interest in investigating causes or presenting a continuous historical narrative, their rigidly-defined form – were also advantages, enabling seventeenth-century historians to take on the authoritative mantle of antiquity, to accommodate contradictory source materials, to safely pen histories of controversial events, and to emphasize the specificity and accuracy of their national histories.

⁴ For more on Enderbie’s use of genealogy, see Chapter Five.
Roderic O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*, written in post-Cromwellian Ireland by the last of the O’Flaherty clan chiefs, is a virtuosic demonstration of the many ways that chronicles, synchronisms, genealogies, and regnal catalogues could be used in service of seventeenth-century goals. *Ogygia* is a text in which these forms are immediately visually obvious; the margins are dotted with genealogies, catalogues, and calculations of the duration of time between events while the yearly entries are prominently marked. Written long after chronicles and annals had fallen from favor, *Ogygia* is unabashedly annalistic, carefully weaving together a multiplicity of accretive forms in order to accomplish its author’s goals. *Ogygia* links the Stuart kings with the Irish royal line through the presentation of detailed genealogies and an inspired deployment of the chronicle form that erases centuries of English rule in Ireland. The text also demonstrates the antiquity and reliability of Ireland’s history by foregrounding its careful calculation and presentation of dates. Finally, O’Flaherty’s history argues that Irish historiography should be recognized on an international level through the text’s many synchronisms that both situate Irish events within world history and show the compatibility of Ireland’s history with the authoritative accounts given in biblical and classical sources. Chronicles, genealogies, and the other forms used by O’Flaherty might have lacked the “linear narrative” praised by Lucas, but *Ogygia* reveals that these forms could be deployed as highly sophisticated responses to seventeenth-century political exigencies.

**The Accretive Genres of the Seventeenth Century**

Like many other early modern historical genres, chronicles and annals were employed in a variety of not always consistent ways. Thus, while it is useful to establish what these terms mean for this chapter, it is equally important to emphasize that sixteenth- and seventeenth-
century historians often used the terms “annals” and “chronicles” (or the Latin versions *annala* and *chronica*) to refer to texts that did not fit within consistent generic boundaries. Generally speaking, “chronicle” refers to texts that were organized, as Gillespie and Harris have explained, “chronologically rather than according to selective narrative or thematic principles”; similarly, for D. P. McCarthy, the chronicle essentially presents a “sequence of textual entries embedded within a chronological apparatus which distributes these entries across time in a measured fashion” (135, 2). Annals are generally regarded as a subset of chronicles that offer entries for each year, as their name suggests, although writers since the medieval period have frequently treated the two terms as interchangeable, using “annals” to refer to chronologically-organized texts generally and describing some “relentlessly annalistic compilations” as *chronica* (McCarthy 3). While recognizing the overlapping aspects of these terms, I will nevertheless maintain a distinction between chronicles, which organize material chronologically in a variety of ways, and annals, which present historical events within the framework of successive years, while also preserving the designations given by texts’ authors and titles.

In both Britain and in Ireland, early modern chroniclers and annalists drew on long-established and largely stable traditions when writing in these genres. McCarthy traces Irish annalists’ methods back to the second century B.C. and describes the evolution of several schools of annalistic practice in Ireland, including groups centered at Clomacnoise, Cuana, and Connacht, as well as, most significant for this chapter, what McCarthy terms the “regnal-canon” group (3). The regnal-canon chronicle is distinct in that it makes the reigns of kings its central organizational principle; regnal-canon chronicles’ “primary chronological series consists of a canon of the ‘kings of Ireland’ that extends from the time of the supposed Fir Bolg inhabitation of Ireland up to the death of Máel Sechnaill mac Domhnaill in 1022” (McCarthy 12). In
McCarthy’s taxonomy, O’Flaherty’s Ogygia belongs to this tradition, as does the 1632-1636 Annála Rioghachta Éireann (Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland); McCarthy also locates Keating’s Foras Feasa ar Éirinn, the seventeenth-century Seanchas Riogh Eireann (History of the Kings of Ireland), and the Middle Irish Lebor Gabála Éireann (Book of the Taking of Ireland) within his evolutionary timeline of the regnal-canon chronicles. As McCarthy shows, the authors of these chronicles recognized their work as belonging to well-established schools and practices.

British chroniclers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also understood their works as existing within established traditions. Chronicles in Britain were recognized as distinct from other histories since at least the late twelfth century. Gillespie and Harris note that Gervase of Canterbury was the first British scholar to identify the methodologies of the chronicler; in their formulation “to make a chronicle was to be a compiler: to gather, carefully order, and in some cases continue and augment a variety of source materials and identified authorities” (136). The chronicle form was notable for its stability over time, as several scholars have observed, including Gillespie and Harris, who place the writers of Holinshed’s Chronicles within “a tradition that begins with Nennius’s lost chronicle sources and continues without any striking changes of form or technique until after the 1580s” (136). Woolf also concludes that the “structure of the chronicle had proved remarkably resistant to change over the centuries” (“Reading” 18). Chronicles, then, represented a well-established historical form, one that was recognized as distinct from narrative history and had been so for centuries.

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5 McCarthy’s formulation is useful in that it calls attention to the centrality of the royal succession in these texts, but it is also important to note that both the Annála Rioghachta Éireann and Ogygia place significant importance on chronology, giving dates at the beginning of entries where the Foras Feasa does not. Other aspects of McCarthy’s claims about the relative dating and development of Ireland’s annals have been criticized by Evans (4-6).
In addition to chronicles, accretive forms available to early modern historians included genealogies, regnal catalogues, king-lists, and synchronisms. These forms were often combined or used in conjunction with each other; for example, the “internally devised” synchronisms of Ireland “link native members of the genealogies with external figures” and were closely connected with king-lists, as David Thornton argues (60). In some variations, lists of Irish kings were paired with biblical, classical, and historical rulers, often in table format. The “Laud Synchronisms,” for example, present parallel king lists for Assyria, Judea, and Ireland, while the synchronisms appended to Keating’s Foras Feasa are adapted and abridged from Cardinal Bellarmine’s 1612 Chronologia brevis, in which the chronologically-ordered table of Ireland’s successive rulers is set alongside the “Patrairchis post diluvium,” including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the “monarchiis mundi,” including Semiramis, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, and Xerxes (123-127). The Foras Feasa asserts that Irish kings can be placed in international and chronologically-specific timelines by showing that, for example, in the year of the world 3648, King Labraid Loingseach of Ireland reigned simultaneously with the prophet Amos of Judah and the Persian king Arces (128).

In other variations, events rather than kings are brought together; some synchronisms “juxtapose events from the Eusebian chronicle-tradition with important events from what is in reality Irish pre- and proto-history” in Thornton’s description (60). For example, the twelfth-century “Dublin Fragment” records the chronological relationships of events such as the migration of Scota’s people from Egypt, the deeds of Julius Caesar and Xerxes son of Darius, and material from the biblical book Zechariah, while the “Pre-Patrician Section” of the eleventh-century Annals of Innisfallen relates in succession the story of Judith and Holofernes, Cleopatra’s dethronement by Julius Caesar, and the division of Ireland between Conchobar and other early...
kings (387, 52). Britain’s traditions also include synchronisms, such as those recorded in the
*Historia Brittonum* and by Galfridus Monemutensis in the early sections of his *Historia Regum
Britanniae*.\(^6\) Both British and Irish synchronisms validated archipelagic traditions by establishing
their compatibility with classical and biblical accounts.

The closely related genres of regnal lists and genealogies were equally useful to
historians on both sides of the Irish Sea; linear genealogies of kings, as Thornton observes, saw
widespread use because they traced a “direct line of descent to the dynastic founder, omitting
troublesome collateral rivals” (15). In Ireland, genealogical texts often gathered together the
forebears of kings or tribes; the *Genealogy of Corcra Laidhe*, preserved in the late fourteenth-
century *Book of Ballymote* and the early fifteenth-century *Book of Lecan*, for example, gives the
genealogy of the “Race of Aenghus Bulga” by tracing an ancestral line from “Dunghalach, son
of Maicniadh, son of Conda Cilline, son of Fearghus” through numerous generations to
“Lughaidh, son of Íth, son of Breogan” (25). Íth son of Breogán was the first of the Milesians to
travel to Ireland; according to medieval pseudohistories such as the *Lebor Gabála*, it was Íth’s
death at the hands of the three Tuath Dé kings that led to the Milesian settlement of Ireland.\(^7\)
Keating’s *Foras Feasa* offers genealogies for individuals and clans; the genealogy of O Brian,
the Earl of Thomond, is linked to “gac cinead do Dal gCais” (“every tribe of the Dal gCas”) while the genealogy of Meig Carrthaigh Móir covers the Eóganachta dynasty and extends from
Domhnall, “an céidiarla” (“the first earl”), all the way to Adam (15-18, 83-87). Regnal lists are
related to genealogies while remaining “nonetheless distinct,” as David Dumville notes, and are
chronologically organized, presenting “a simple list of kings with an indication of the number of

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\(^6\) For more on the synchronisms in *Historia Brittonum* see Koch 926. For more on those in the
*Historia Regum Britanniae* see Miller 373-390.

\(^7\) See Koch 1133.
years reigned” (96-97). Dumville examines king-lists from Mercia, Northumberland, and Ireland, asserting that Irish scholars, in particular, were “specialists in the techniques of synchronizing reigns from different kingdoms, and of harmonizing variants in regnal lists and genealogies” (99).

Royal genealogies and regnal lists were also prominent in medieval and early modern Britain, from Aelred’s *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* (1153-4) to Francis Sandford’s (1630–1694) 1683 *A genealogical history of the kings of England, and monarchs of Great Britain, &c. From the conquest, anno 1066. to the year, 1677*. With their ability to validate monarchs by tracing royal ancestors back to founding figures, genealogies were frequently deployed to make political arguments and were especially effective for writers addressing the uncertainties of the seventeenth century, which saw the end of Tudor rule and several wars and revolutions under the Stuarts. George Owen Harry’s (b. c.1553, d. in or before 1614) 1604 genealogy of James I, *The genealogy of the high and mighty monarch, Iames, by the grace of God, king of great Brittayne, &c. with his lineall descent from Noah, by diuers direct lynes to Brutus, first inhabiter of this ile of Brittayne...wherein is playnly shewed his rightfull title*, reveals its validatory agenda in its title, while William Allen’s (1532–1594) *A conference about the next succession to the crowne of Ingland diuided into tvvo partes* weighed in on Elizabeth I’s successor at a time when the matter was the cause of considerable unease, supporting its claims through an *arbor or genealogie of the discents of all the kinges and princes of Ingland, from the conquest vnto this day*, as the title continues.

Regnal lists, genealogies, synchronisms, and chronicles are closely linked. As Dumville notes, the regnal list can be expanded into or reduced from the chronicle, genealogies and king-lists are similarly organized, and the corpus of Irish genealogies also contains “tracts on the
interrelationships of the major genealogies and how to synchronise them in time” as well as collections of synchronisms “modeled on the techniques of the Euseibus-Jerome world chronicle” (99-101). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians recognized that these forms were distinct from narrative history as much as they were associated with each other. Despite the demise of the chronicle identified by Woolf, numerous seventeenth-century texts experiment with accretive forms, demonstrating their flexibility in accommodating goals and materials for which narrative histories were less suited. In texts such as *Ogygia*, the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*, Keating’s *Foras Feasa*, and Camden’s *Annals of Elizabeth*, accretive forms reveal their ability to address early modern political and historiographic concerns.

While the association of the chronicle with barbarism or with an outdated approach to history may have lessened the genre’s credibility with some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers, chronicles’ links to the past could also be deployed as a form of validation. Richard Helgerson calls the chronicle the “Ur-genre of national self-representation” because of its power in representing Tudor Britain’s national identity by giving the island a history extending to the ancient past (11). In Ireland, chronicles and annals were likewise associated with a validating aura of antiquity; Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh’s *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomnaill* is what Brendan Kane terms “an aggressive bit of archaism” in that it uses the “traditional form of annals” as well as the language of the fifteenth century, rather than the seventeenth (1154). As many commentators on the *Beatha* have noted, this archaism is combined with a highly innovative subject; it relates “the life of a historical personage, who was neither saint nor ecclesiastic, contemporary with the author,” a choice of subject that indicates its author’s “original outlook” despite his use of a traditional framework, in Mícheál Mac Craith’s phrasing (37). Kane likewise describes Ó Cléirigh’s “politically charged” text as “highly original” and states that “the
production of annals as personal memoirs was entirely unique” (1164, 1154). Damian McManus suggests that Ó Cléirigh chose to use traditional language and a traditional genre because he wanted to present O’Donnell’s life as a “heroic biography” (73). The archaism and the innovation of the Beatha are of a piece; both elements of the text support its author’s political goals in validating its subject’s place as a hero of Ireland and a participant in contemporary European politics.

William Camden’s Annales of Elizabeth are similar to the Beatha in their use of a traditional form to relate the biography of a contemporary (or near-contemporary) individual. Woolf identifies the Annales as a leading text in the “discernible shift in focus toward the recent past beginning in the 1640s,” calling Camden’s work “by far the most complex account of a single reign to be written during the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries” (“Hystories” 48). Herendeen queries why Camden would have chosen to write in “a form that scholars describe as ‘hopelessly archaic’”; his answer to this question is that Camden sought to achieve the sort of “poly-vocality” associated with Holinshed and with the chronicle form (241-242). This poly-vocality readily compensated for the “hopeless” archaism of the chronicle form. Writing in a genre capable of incorporating many voices suited the diverse range of sources available in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as the many perspectives and populations represented in the past narratives of Great Britain and Ireland. The advantage of the chronicle form is that it provides a framework for textual heterogeneity, reflecting the widespread tendency of early modern national historians to treat their discipline as capable of supporting a variety of genres.

The chronicle form was able to accommodate seventeenth-century subjects while covering material in the validating mantle of antiquity. For example, the Annála Ríoghartca

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8 The scholar in question here is Alison Taufer (2).
Éireann, whose chief compiler was Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh’s cousin Micheál Ó Cléirigh (c. 1590–1643), presents a “new, accessible, and comprehensive” account of Ireland’s past in the “very conventional” annalistic form (Cunningham “Annals” 301). As Cunningham explains, the decision to organize the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann* in this way represents “one element of the way in which the Four Masters sought to take control of the memory of the past, their texts gaining authority through conformity to accepted conventions” (“Annals” 136). Cunningham outlines the other advantages that the annalistic form offered to the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*’s writers; first, it “allowed recognition of a wide array of persons of varying political influence each to have their own presence in the historical record in a largely non-analytical, non-judgmental context” (“Annals” 93). This form also “suited the disparate nature of the available material” by allowing the “coherent contextualized presentation of episodes that were local and immediate” and placing them within a “larger historical framework” (Cunningham “Annals” 99). As with Camden, Ó Cléirigh and his team recognized that the chronicle form enabled the collection of multiple voices and kinds of materials, given consistency through its chronological framework and authorized by the weight of established scholarly practices.

Produced almost simultaneously with the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*, the *Foras Feasa* shares similar goals and though Keating’s main text is a narrative history, he does append two accretive forms: a set of genealogies and a synchronism. Keating’s appendices maintain the *Foras Feasa*’s focus on the line of Ireland’s kingship and further validate Ireland’s records, which are shown to be compatible with world history and scripture. In this way, Keating fits Irish history into “the history of the universal church and of the historical record of emperors and kings,” as Cunningham notes (“Constructions” 15-15). Cunningham links the *Foras Feasa*’s genealogies with a seventeenth-century “bout of genealogical fever” in which writers attempted
to respond to social change by providing a “retrospective validation of status,” invoking the stabilizing authority of tradition (“Constructions” 15). The manuscripts of the *Foras Feasa* that contain the addenda usually include James VI and I’s accession to the crown in 1603, a “simple yet effective means” of “presenting the Stuarts as the most recent in an unbroken sequence of legitimate sovereigns of Ireland” and “establishing the continuity of the historical kingdom of Ireland from earliest times down to the seventeenth century” (Cunningham “Constructions” 16). The materials appended to the *Foras Feasa* complement its narrative history in accomplishing Keating’s goals of presenting an unbroken line of Irish kingship and arguing for the validity of Ireland’s historical records.9

In explaining why he chose to write a chronicle of England in his 1643 *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, a project he allows may seem to be a “superfluous” labor given the many English histories that had already been published, Richard Baker describes his understanding of the distinct kinds of past accounts made possible by the chronicle form. Baker states that:

> Where many have written the Reignes of some of our Kings, excellently as in the way of History, yet I may say they have not done it so well in the way of Chronicle; For whilst they insist wholly upon matters of State, they wholly omit meaner Accidents, which yet are Materials as proper for a Chronicle, as the other. (“An Epistle to the Reader”)

These “meaner accidents” that are the proper material of the chronicle are set out here as one of the advantages, or at least unique attributes, of the form. Much as with the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*, Baker shows his understanding that chronicles could accommodate a variety of kinds of knowledge, often localized or seemingly trivial, covering a wider spectrum of events than narrative history.

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9 For more on Keating’s goals and methodologies in organizing the narrative of the *Foras Feasa*, see Chapter Four.
Accretive genres were also an effective means of presenting potentially problematic or controversial materials. Seventeenth-century British chroniclers adopted the form expressly because it was understood to enable non-evaluative representation of the past, a strategy important for the politically charged and potentially dangerous writing of recent history. The impartial status that many historians granted to chronicles is apparent in the titles of such texts as John Rushworth’s (c.1612–1690) 1686 *Historical collections. containing the principal matters which happened from the dissolution of the Parliament on the 10th of March, 4 Car. I. 1628/9 until the summoning of another Parliament, which met at Westminster, April 13, 1640.* : With an account of the proceedings of that Parliament; and the transactions and affairs from that time, until the meeting of another Parliament, November the 3d following. : With some remarkable passages therein during the first six months. / Impartially related, and disposed in annals. *Setting forth only matter of fact in order of time, without observation or reflection.*

Here, the failure observed by Tyrrell that annals do not inquire into causes has become a strength, enabling Rushworth to consider contentious recent history while asserting his text’s impartiality. Although Rushworth claims to set forth “only matter of fact in order of time” without engaging in either “observation or reflection,” Joad Raymond has explained how this “methodologically canny” parliamentarian accomplished “ideological work” in the selection and presentation of his sources (145-147).

“Impartial” is a term that is often associated with annals, as in Hamon L’Estrange’s (1605–1660) 1655 *The reign of King Charles an history faithfully and impartially delivered and disposed into annals* and in Thomas Frankland’s (1632/3–1690) 1681 *The annals of King James*

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10 Rushworth’s *Historical Collections* were published in several parts and editions between 1659 and 1691.
11 For more on Rushworth’s claims of impartiality, as well as contemporary responses to his claims, see Raymond 142-151.
and King Charles the First...containing a faithful history and impartial account of the great affairs of state, and transactions of parliaments in England from the tenth of King James MDCXII to the eighteenth of King Charles MDCXLII. Frankland’s politics are quite different from Rushworth’s, but his reliance on the purportedly non-evaluative nature of annals is the same, enabling Frankland to claim impartiality while producing what R. C. MacGillvray has described as a “venomously Royalist history” (58). In all of these seventeenth-century texts, the non-evaluative qualities attributed to annals are treated as an asset, allowing writers to relate recent history while claiming the impartiality that helps prevent a return to the devastatingly divisive politics they describe.

These are only a handful of the annals and chronicles produced by British and Irish writers following the death of the chronicle identified by Woolf. Many other seventeenth-century British and Irish writers similarly adapted accretive forms to their own ends. These include James Ussher, who in his 1658 The annals of the world deduced from the origin of time, used the genre to argue for his calculation of the age of the world and support his claims the Ireland’s Christianity was inherently Protestant, and James Ware, whose 1664 Rerum Hiberniarum annales set out a New English account of Irish history under the Tudors. The traditionalist, cumulative, non-evaluative, and chronologically-focused qualities of annals, chronicles, genealogies, synchronisms, and regnal lists were well recognized by seventeenth-century scholars, but not all historians treated these qualities as failings. Roderick O’Flaherty was one such historian, and his Ogygia, notable for combining a host of accretive forms while devoting minimal attention to narrative history, offers compelling evidence of the political responsiveness and rhetorical efficacy of accretive genres.
The Genres and Goals of O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*

*Ogygia* contains an impressive array of synchronisms, chronological tables, chronicle entries, genealogies, regnal catalogues, and chronographic poems, many of which reiterate previous materials, often more than once. A sketch of the contents of O’Flaherty’s text indicates its willingness to compile and combine a large number of forms: *Ogygia* begins with a dedication to James II, then duke of York and Albany, soon to be king following his brother’s death in the same year *Ogygia* saw publication. Next there are recommendation letters from Dudley Loftus, master of Ireland’s High Court of Chancery, and Richard Bellings, scholar and politician. Following these epistles is a letter from O’Flaherty to Archbishop John Lynch, dated 1665, in which O’Flaherty sets out the basics of his version of Irish chronology at Lynch’s request (1-24). Next is a “Proloquium ad Lectorum,” a preface to the reader, in which O’Flaherty clarifies the relationships between ancient Ireland and Scotland and defends his research methods (25-44). Part One of the main text follows, “Ogygiae Insula,” which covers the geography, settlement and origins, kings and elections, and names of Ireland (1-59). The second part, “Ogygiae Extera” synchronizes events in Ireland and the rest of the world prior to Saint Patrick’s arrival in 428; this section is organized in chronicle format, with dates, citations, calculations, genealogies, and other secondary material provided in the margins (61-160). The third part, “Ogygiae Domestica,” focuses on Ireland’s kings and runs from the flood to the reign of Charles II; this section comes closest to narrative history in that it is broken into a series of chapters describing events in Ireland as they occurred in the reigns of the island’s kings, but it also contains genealogies, regnal catalogues, and chronological enumerations (161-442). Following this section is a “Carmen Chronographicum,” a chronographic poem itself organized into three parts, essentially condensing and recapitulating the material from the three main sections of the
text (443-462). Finally, there is a “Scotiae Regum Catalogus, Chronologo-Genealogicus,” a catalogue of Scottish kings organized, as the title indicates, both chronologically and genealogically (463-700).

*Ogygia* is a relentlessly multigeneric text and the genre of narrative history is very little represented here. Though some chapters of “Ogygiae Domestica” do relate events from Ireland’s past as narrative episodes, O’Flaherty generally presents Ireland’s history by listing its kings, synchronizing Irish events with those described in Biblical and classical traditions, and calculating the years that passed between kings’ reigns and other important occurrences. *Ogygia* largely relies on chronological calculations, genealogies, and textual correspondences to support its claims. For example, in the “Ogygiae Extera” entry for AM 2933, O’Flaherty writes that Solomon “Davidis regis filius Hebraeorum” (“son of David, King of the Hebrews”) laid the foundation of the temple in this year, the fourth of his reign and the 480th since the “Israelitarum Exodo” (“Exodus of the Israelites”) (83). At the same time as Solomon’s reign, the Irish arrived in Ireland from Spain, a fact that is declared unanimously by “optimi quique scriptores patrii” (“all of the best native writers”) and is verified by the genealogy of the Milesians and by the statement of “Calvacus o Morra” that “ex veterum sine dubio authoritate” (“according to the undoubted authority of the ancients”) 2934 is expressly given as the year of the Hibernian expedition (83). Thus, the native Irish accounts, scriptural histories, ancient sources, and the calculations of time elapsed between events in these traditions all support the claim that Ireland

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12 The Scottish genealogy is not as long as these numbers indicate: the final pages of *Ogygia* are paginated: 503, 604, 605, 606, 607, 568, 609, 700.
13 O’Flaherty identifies Calvacus O’Morra in a footnote as “Goghagan” in his English translation of the “codicis Cluan” (*Annals of Clonmacnoise*); the original manuscript of Connell McGeoghegan’s edition and translation of the now-lost annals is no longer extant, but a copy bearing O’Flaherty’s annotations and observations is preserved in the Armagh Public Library’s archives (Dean 11).
was settled from Spain, rather than – as many colonialist texts asserted – Britain. O’Flaherty adopts a generic mixture in order to construct a unified message of Ireland’s independence.

O’Flaherty is able to confirm this date, and the synchronism of the expedition to Ireland and Solomon’s rule, by referring to the records of the destruction of Troy in AM 2767, from which “nostril veteres” (“our ancients”) are able to calculate back in time and correspond with the “anni Romani rationibus” (“Roman calculation of years”) in order to determine with complete certainty that the Milesians arrived in Ireland “Kalendis Maii, die Jovis” (“the Kalends of May, Thursday”) (83). In this example, O’Flaherty refers to native Irish sources, biblical records, and classical scholarship – with a particular focus on temporal calculations – in order to determine not only the certainty of the Milesian settlement but even the day of the week on which the colonists arrived. Ogygia’s argumentation through textual citation and chronological calculation is fully evident here, as is O’Flaherty’s concern with validating Irish history and tracing the origins of the Milesian line of kings.

O’Flaherty’s goals of improving the international reputation of Irish historical scholarship and linking current rulers with Ireland’s native succession reflect his engagements with the political and scholarly concerns of his day. McCarthy describes O’Flaherty as representing “what survived of Gaelic scholarship into the later seventeenth century”; he belonged to a network of Irish scholars and historians, including Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh and John Lynch (76). The final Lord of Iar Connacht and chief of the O’Flaherty clan, O’ Flaherty lost most of his ancestral estates in the Cromwellian land confiscations of the 1650s (McCarthy 76). O’Flaherty wrote in an Ireland that had witnessed Cromwell’s rule, the rebellion of 1641, and the massacres in Ulster that followed, but before the Jacobite rising from 1688 to 1691 in which James II, the Catholic
ruler to whom O’Flaherty dedicated *Ogygia*, was defeated by the protestant armies of William of Orange, leading to the Protestant Ascendancy.  

As a historian and as a clan chief, O’Flaherty was invested in asserting the antiquity and the historical integrity of the Irish kingship; and, like Keating before him, O’Flaherty wrote the contemporary rulers of Ireland into the Irish succession by linking the Stuarts to the Irish royal line through their traditional Milesian heritage. One of O’Flaherty’s major goals in writing *Ogygia* was to present the Stuarts as restoring a line of rulers that had been interrupted by the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion. In the dedication to James II, O’Flaherty describes Ireland as “antiquissma majorum tuorum incunabula” (“the most ancient cradle of your ancestors”), likening the island to a woman in mourning, whose only consolation is that James’s family, one of the many to whom she has given birth, has gained preeminence in Britain, an honor that is sufficient reparation for the calamities she has suffered. By describing Ireland as a woman, O’Flaherty adopts a trope that was common in Irish texts responding to the island’s colonial situation after the 1601 defeat at Kinsale. Sarah McKibben has examined the prevalence of these personifications of Ireland as “a suffering, violated, and, later, errant wife, nurse, or mother” and argued that they reflect attempts by writers to deflect their perceived dishonor over the loss at Kinsale onto a “gender-normative figure who imaginatively summoned a correspondingly heroic manhood to her rescue” (11-12). McKibben highlights the centrality of shame in these representations of Ireland, discussing, for example, a poem attributed to Keating that “explicitly envisions Ireland’s tawdry end, culminating with a rape that she is too stupefied even to register” (26). By contrast, O’Flaherty casts the mourning female Ireland as a mother not just to the Irish but also to the reigning Stuarts and thereby adapts a figure who had been

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14 See John Childs *The Williamite Wars in Ireland, 1688-91*. 

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associated with Irish shame to assert Ireland’s maternal authority over her children on the London throne and make an anticolonialist plea that the Stuarts improve the lot of their siblings in Ireland.

The Irish ancestry of James II and Charles II is an important thread in *Ogygia*; addressing the prince, O’Flaherty writes that of the 124 generations that precede him, 51 were born in Ireland and 24 of those 51 were Irish monarchs (“Epistola Dedicatoria”). O’Flaherty also distinguishes James II and his father, brother, and grandfather from any other “exteris legibus” (“foreign legislature”) to whom the Irish did not truly submit (“Epistola Dedicatoria”). In dedicating *Ogygia* to James II, O’Flaherty describes his work as “certissima regum progenies, non pictorum coloribus ductas, non poetarum inventis ornatas” (“a most certain progeny of kings, not depicted in colors, nor furnished with poetical inventions”), brought “ex intimis antiquitatum adytis” (“from the most profound recesses of antiquity”) and presented without any hyperbole or exaggeration. The Stuarts had been hailed as the resurgence of the Milesian line since James I took the London throne in 1603; as a Catholic convert, James II offered Irish scholars such as O’Flaherty hope that the position of England’s first colony might be improved under his rule. *Ogygia*’s endeavor to persuade the Stuarts that they were Irish kings as much as English or Scottish ones by offering a “most certain” account of their Irish genealogy represents O’Flaherty’s desire to influence the often-troubled relationship between Britain and Ireland in the wake of the devastations wrought by Cromwellian policies.

O’Flaherty also endeavored to improve Ireland’s lot by validating the island’s national histories. As a scholar focusing heavily on chronology, O’Flaherty confronted the discrepancies evident in medieval and early modern historical records and chronological calculations. O’Flaherty is not coy about the efforts he put into reconciling these inconsistent chronologies; he
acknowledges that there are a number of mendorum ("errors") in his sources, but writes that his extensive study has enabled him to correct them (33). Despite the errors he identifies, O’Flaherty claims to have reached certain “locos historicos” ("historical places") that are beyond controversy by “dubios, & obscuros explicando, discrepantes conciliando, & falsos resecando” ("disentangling dubious and obscure material, reconciling discrepancies, and cutting off false material") (33). O’Flaherty acknowledges that some of the Irish books require “cura, & acre judicium” ("care and sharp judgment"), as they are apocryphal and fabulosi ("full of fables") (35). Additionally, many Irish books are, because of their authors’ motives of “adulatione, & ambitione” ("flattery and ambition") filled with hyperbole (35). Nevertheless, O’Flaherty argues that the “indubitata veritas” ("undoubted truth") shines through because of the “unanimi tradititone, Antiquariorum consensu” ("unanimous tradition and agreement of the antiquarians") (35). O’Flaherty acknowledges that there are errors and inconsistencies in his sources, but affirms that the truth is not lost because he can identify the correspondences between texts that indicate the truth of Ireland’s past.¹⁵

In O’Flaherty’s argument, Ireland’s historical recordkeeping surpasses that of any other nation in the world; he writes that no other nation has more assiduously preserved its antiquities or passed on its “chronographias, genealogias, stemmatographias, majorum facta, propagationem, ditionum terminus, jura & omnem demum antiquitatem” (“chronologies, genealogies, pedigrees, the deeds of its great men, their propagation, the boundaries of their dominions, laws, and every thing regarding their antiquity”), listing here a variety of historical genres, many of which appear in Ogygia (34). Positioning his text as an anticolonial work in

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¹⁵ This is not unlike Irenius’s claim in Spenser’s View that he can identify the “reliques of the true antiquite” through textual comparison; for more on Spenser’s reading of Ireland’s chronicles, see Chapter Two.
much the same way Keating did, O’Flaherty expresses his distress that, despite the quality of Ireland’s national record, most foreign scholars know nothing of Ireland’s history. One of his goals in publishing *Ogygia*, in print and in Latin, was to communicate accurate and truthful knowledge of Ireland’s antiquities to *exteris* “foreigners” (33).

O’Flaherty attributes international ignorance about Irish history to the island’s colonial position. He writes that foreign writers can receive no information on the island, save what is written by *imperitis* (“ignorant”) authors, because this “subactae gentis” (“subjugated race”) is suffering under British rule (33). On several occasions, O’Flaherty responds to specific colonialist misrepresentations of Ireland, often by distinguishing between the credentials of poets and of historians. For example, O’Flaherty describes Spenser as a *poeta* “poet” and a *politicus* “politician” who possess a truly astonishing “in historiis pueritiam” (“puerility in history”) (370). George Buchanan, who had claimed many of Ireland’s accomplishments for Scotland, is similarly dismissed; he is a man *felicior* (“more fortunate”) as a poet than a historian (27).

Scotland’s histories in general come under sharp criticism by O’Flaherty, who writes that the most reputable scholars, including Polydore Vergil, regard Scottish historians as authors of mythologies, “nec benigiorem merentur fidem” (“not more readily worthy of belief”) than the “Aegytiae Manethonius tabulae” (“Egyptian tablets of Manethon,” a priest and historian from the third century B.C.) (31). 16 Joseph Lennon notes that Spenser and O’Flaherty share some aspects of their approach toward Irish historiography, in that they both “sought historical realities within the stories of ancient migrations and settlements”; the significant difference is that O’Flaherty

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16 O’Flaherty’s primary complaint against the Scottish historians is that they have appropriated Ireland’s glory through the “inani homonymiae” (“empty similarity of names”), claiming the deeds and the great figures of the Irish through the ambiguity caused by the old name for Ireland, Scotia (31). O’Flaherty here is participating in a “controversy” provoked by Scottish historian Thomas Dempster’s assertions that “Irish medieval philosophers, such as John Dun Scotus, and even the Irish patron saints, Patrick and Brigid, were of Caledonian origin” (O’Halloran 74).
sought to prove “the antiquity of Irish culture, not its ancient barbarity” (76). The antiquity of Ireland was central to O’Flaherty’s anticolonial project; his claim that, in Lennon’s phrasing, “Ireland’s ancient culture predates Britain” enabled him to argue against claims that the island had been settled under the authority of the fifth-century British king Gurguntius (79).

Lennon notes that because O’Flaherty set out to argue in favor of Ireland’s ancient and reliable historical record, he treated Irish legends more charitably than Spenser did. Rather than regarding less plausible tales as inventions or lies, O’Flaherty offered allegorical readings of legendary materials, treating “origin legends as fictions” and “highlighting the process of how such legends and cultural myths have been created over time” (75). For example, O’Flaherty reinterprets the tale of Fionntain’s long survival in Ireland, which had come under heavy criticism by British historians. O’Flaherty suggests that this story can be taken to represent the beliefs of the “Phythagoricae, ac Platonicae schola de animarum migration” (“Pythagorean and Platonic sects about the migration of souls”) and thus should not be considered evidence that the Irish chroniclers were so foolish as to believe that a man could live both before and after the Flood (4). While each writer’s treatment of the Irish chronicles reflects very different opinions on the place of Ireland in the British kingdoms, O’Flaherty and Spenser are both aware that allegory is an effective tool for developing national narratives from the mixture of fictions and history in the extant records.

O’Flaherty also adopts a stance quite similar to Spenser’s by asserting his own ability to sort fact from fiction. Where Spenser in the View argues that a “well-eyed man” can recover truth from the clouded records of the past, O’Flaherty stakes his own claim that his scholarship can identify and excise myths in order to determine the truth of antiquity. For example, he describes the claim that Fenius spontaneously invented the Irish language as the product of
Mythici “mythologists” who bury truths in *commentis* “fabrications”; the hidden reality is that Fenius must have codified the Irish language and given it written form (64). Some traditions do not merit even this partial rehabilitation. O’Flaherty completely discards the story that Niul son of Fenius married the Pharaoh’s daughter during the time that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt as inconsistent with scriptures and with his established chronology, attributing this tale’s invention to Irish writers who desired to lay claim to the “Sacrarum Antiquitatum” (“antiquities of Scripture”) (69). While the *Foras Feasa*, as I argue in Chapter Four, is committed to including fables within the narrative of Irish history, provided they are appropriately identified and cannot be mistaken for true history, O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia* presents a largely demythologized version of the Irish past, one in which most of the legendary accounts from Ireland’s records are either directly debunked, reinterpreted as allegories, or omitted altogether.

Much as Keating does, O’Flaherty positions his text as an impetus to future scholarship. O’Flaherty expresses his hope that any who seek to write “justae, ac integrae historiae” (“a legitimate and complete history”) of Irish events would gain considerable advantage from his “chronologicae, genealogicae, ac historicae certitudinis epitome” (“epitome of chronological, genealogical, and historical certainty”) (33). While *Ogygia* shares a great many goals with the *Foras Feasa* – both texts are anticolonialist attempts to validate the historical records of Ireland on an international scale while refuting colonialist accounts, linking the Stuart kings with an ancient Irish sovereignty, and inspiring future histories of Ireland – the organization and methodologies of O’Flaherty’s work and Keating’s are quite distinct. Rather than employing the narrative model characteristic of Keating’s work, O’Flaherty chose to adopt accretive generic forms, making claims through textual correspondence and chronological calculation. The many accretive forms employed in *Ogygia* are efficiently turned to its author’s goals of rescuing the
“undoubted truths” of Irish history from colonialist lies and improving Ireland’s place in international historiography and in the kingdoms of Charles II.

The Utility of Accretive Genres in Ogygia

By writing much of Ogygia in chronicle form with a focus on Ireland’s kings, O’Flaherty was participating in an established tradition that manifested in seventeenth-century Ireland in both manuscript and print works. A manuscript text that also belongs to McCarthy’s regnal-canon group, the Annála Ríoghachta Éireann circulated broadly on the Continent and in Ireland half a century before Ogygia. Like most annals, the Annála Ríoghachta Éireann make the notation of years central to their representation of history, thus supporting the location of even ancient events in precisely noted and carefully tracked chronological order. The Annála Ríoghachta Éireann provides prominent headings at the start of each annual entry, giving the numerals for the year in either the Age of Christ or the Age of the World and then writing out the year in full below. The standard annular format is evident in Figure 1, which shows the entry for 1444 AD. In this entry, the scribe writes in a larger script both “Aoís Criost 1444” and “Aoís Criost, míle, ceithri chéd, cethrachatt, a cethair” (“The Age of Christ 1444” and “The Age of Christ, fourteen hundred and forty-four”) (RIA MS 23 P 6, f 178). Thus, the annals subordinate all of the events that occurred during the year in question, which include the death of the Bishop of Elphin and an attack on a British settlement by the chief of the O’Neills, to the prominently indicated date.
Dates are equally evident in *Ogygia*, and are used to support O’Flaherty’s claims that his chronology accurately narrates the Irish past. “Ogygiae Extera” begins with the universal deluge, which O’Flaherty claims ceased on November 27; the second entry is for AM1717 and relates that Belus, also called Nimrod, laid the foundation of the Assyrian monarchy in this year (61-62). O’Flaherty writes that the founding of this monarchy also commenced the Chaldean era, which lasted a total of 1,903 years, a period that includes the 1,360 years that the monarchy stood before the fall of Sardanapalus and the 543 years prior to Alexander’s conquest of Babylon (62). As Figure 2 indicates, the annular entry for AM1717 is set aside from the rest of the text and the marginal notes include the calculations by which 1,360 and 543 add up to 1,903 (62). Such calculations are common in *Ogygia* and are often deployed to support O’Flaherty’s historical claims, as in the above example of the Milesian settlement aligning with Solomon’s reign and the destruction of Troy.

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17 For the earliest portions of Irish history, *Ogygia* follows a chronicle format; later entries become annular, in the sense that the text offers an entry for each subsequent year.
In the letter to Lynch which precedes the main text of *Ogygia*, O’Flaherty performs a complex series of calculations, adding and subtracting the reigns of Ulster kings, the age of the world, the death dates of Queen Macha and King Conchubhar, the time elapsed since the foundation of Emania, and many other figures in order to show that the dates align so precisely that they prove his account of the Irish succession must be accurate (15). O’Flaherty writes that his arithmetical calculations are “collatae se mutuo corroborant” (“collected and mutually corroborated”) so that if a single error had been committed in determining the reigns of the 34 kings of Ulster who reigned up to Conchobar Mac Nessa then the 387 years of their reigns, according to his calculations, would not align exactly with the dates as calculated in the “aerae vulgaris” (“vulgar era”) and with the dates given by other writers who were not investigating the “Ultoniorum Epocha” (“Ultonian Epochs”) (15). As with the entry for AM1717, O’Flaherty uses marginal space in the prefatory letter to show calculations and support his historical and genealogical claims. The emphasis on numeric precision so apparent in *Ogygia* is an advantage offered by the chronicle form and one that O’Flaherty frequently invokes in order to validate his account of Irish history. In addition to participating in the venerable tradition of the *Annála*
Ríoghachta Éireann and centuries of Irish chronicles, O’Flaherty’s work here also advances his goals of demonstrating the reliability of the Irish records to archipelagic and international audiences. Though he acknowledges inconsistencies in the old records, his thoroughly documented chronological efforts assert that the “undoubted truth” does indeed shine through the old records so clearly that events can be attached to precise and consistent dates.

The synchronisms O’Flaherty includes both validate Irish history and represent Ireland as a country engaging in politics on an international field, rather than an ancillary to the British kingdoms. O’Flaherty cites correspondences between Irish records and those from the classical world and scriptures as further proof of the accuracy of his chronology and the Irish records on which it is based; he writes that he has reconciled the “Hiberniae Chronologiam” (“Chronology of Ireland”) which had been caught “inter varia sentientes” (“between various opinions”) and adapted it to “Mundanas & Christianas aeras” (“the aeras of the world and of Christ”) (23). Correspondences between these differently calculated ages indicate Ogygia’s accuracy and provide independent corroboration of Irish history, as when O’Flaherty gives a fairly lengthy description of the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts and then explains that he has presented this material because the narrative mentions that Ireland was inhibited at this time, a detail that is “historiis patriis perquam conforme” (“exceedingly similar to the histories of our native land”) and thus shows that the Belgae, a Celto-Germanic tribe often linked with the legendary Fir Bolg, then reigned in Ireland (81).

O’Flaherty also claims that Greek histories describing the foundation of the Amazons and their later defeat by Theseus “veteris Hibernici poematis chronologici fidem confirmant” (“confirm the trustworthiness of the ancient Irish chronological poem”), which asserts that the arrival of the Belgae in Ireland and the Amazonian foundation were synchronous (81). “Ogygiae
Extera,” which is subtitled “seu Synchronismus, in quo Hibernorum tempora pariter, ac generationes cum Exteris accurate conferuntur” (“or a synchronism, in which Irish periods and generations alike are accurately collated with foreign ones”) is similar in organization to the synchronisms given in the Pre-Patrician section of the *Annals of Innisfallen* and the “Dublin Fragment,” presenting a chronological progression starting with the earliest past in which Irish events are collated with those recorded in classical documents and scripture. As the subtitle of this section indicates, O’Flaherty is attentive to the argument inherent in the synchronism form: that the records of Ireland are compatible with international ones and are thus equally accurate.

O’Flaherty’s synchronisms validate the chronology he constructs by correlating Irish records with international ones. For example, three sequential entries in “Ogygiae Extera” describe the arrival of the Tuath Dé in Ireland in AM 2737, followed by the destruction of Troy in AM 2767, and then the accession of “David Rex Hebraeorum” to the throne of Israel in AM 2889 (81-83). The format O’Flaherty adopts in “Ogygiae Extera,” represents an expansion from the tabular form used by Keating and Bellarmine and though this section is labeled a synchronism it also uses the chronicle format to allow for expanded accounts such as the Argonautic expedition while maintaining the synchronism’s focus on situating Irish records internationally. This combination of forms gives O’Flaherty space to argue that the correspondences between the records of these events indicate their veracity. Thus, in the entry for 2737, O’Flaherty writes that the Tuath Dé subdued the Belgae in the Battle of Mag Tuired, after which they “in Hibernia regnatur” (“reigned in Ireland”) for 197 years, a chronology validated by the general consent of historians (81). The entry for 2767 links Irish and classical accounts by asserting that that the Scots left Getulia at the same time as the destruction of Troy (81).

18 Legendarily, the Tuatha Dé were the penultimate settlers of Ireland, usually represented as powerful magic-users and sometimes treated as deities; for more see Koch 1694-1696.
(81-82). O’Flaherty asserts that his chronology must be valid because Irish accounts date the destruction of Troy to thirty years after the Battle of Mag Tuired, which is further confirmed by the genealogy of Nuadu with the silver hand, adding another accretive form to O’Flaherty’s argumentation (81-82). The synchronisms between Irish events and those of the wider world represented in “Ogygiae Extera” support both the chronology O’Flaherty has constructed and the Irish records from which it is developed. Further, these synchronisms show that Ireland is a nation whose transactions correspond with and are recorded in the histories of other nations. The settlement of Ireland by the Belgae is noted in accounts of the Amazons, the expedition of the Argonauts describes Ireland as known to Jason, and the Tuath Dé’s conquest of the Belgae can be located on a timeline with the reign of King David and the destruction of Troy.

Genealogy often supports chronology in *Ogygia*, as in O’Flaherty’s reference to Nuadu’s genealogy in validation of the Troy-Mag Tuired timeline. Genealogical and chronological accounts form a framework for the events of the Irish past, connecting the familial lines and reigns of the Irish kings with established dates and thus mutually validating historical records and the royal succession. O’Flaherty compares genealogy to a “filo Ariadnaeo” (“an Ariadnean thread”) through the labyrinth of history and writes that he has employed genealogies to compare domestic generations with each other and with foreign ones, so that genealogy and chronology “se mutuo corroborant” (“mutually corroborate each other”) (19). Thus, much as O’Flaherty writes a synchronisms that adopts the chronicle form to offer expanded discussions on how Irish, classical, and scriptural records correspond, so too does his text weave together genealogies and chronologies to further support its claims.

Genealogies in *Ogygia* are effective tools for reconciling historical accounts and for constructing a succession that locates the origins of the Stuart line within the Irish kingship. As
when calculating dates, O’Flaherty uses marginal space to reiterate genealogical material; representing, for example, the genealogy of Partholón, one of the very earliest settlers of Ireland, in the margins next to his description of Partholón’s reign. As Figure 3 shows, in the same passage are chronicle entries for Partholón’s arrival in Ireland, twenty years after the birth of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, with a numbered genealogy of Partholón in the margins, tracing the Irish settler’s lineage back to Japheth, son of Noah. Genealogy and chronology work together to connect Irish history with scriptural history and to establish the reliability of even Ireland’s earliest settlement.

1949 Abraham = Patriarcha Heberi trinepos na-
scitur.
1969 Partholanus, cujus proavus Noemi ex Ja-
pheto, trinepos primam in Hiberniam adduxit
coloniam à Diluvio annis 311 expiratis, & ætatis A-
brahe Anno 21.
Annum Mundi 1969, & ætatis Abraham 21. Sig-
nanter habet codex Cluainensis: a Diluvi verò annos
313, hoc est ab annis 1656, ante Diluvium absolu-
tis. Sed annos à Diluvio 311, enumarat G. Coema-
nus (); qui Anno 1658, quo Diluvium cessavit, adji-
ciendo annum eundem 1659 pertingunt, quo Abra-
ham annum ætatis 21 attigit.

Figure 3: Ogygia, pg. 65: Genealogy of Partholón

Ogygia likewise combines regnal catalogues and chronicle entries to support O’Flaherty’s account of Irish kingship. Ogygia numbers 181 Irish kings, from the first king, Heremon, to the last native king, Roderic, building from this list the claim that Ireland had never been subdued prior to the Anglo-Norman conquest (39). Adding citation to his arsenal of proofs, O’Flaherty quotes “Clarissimus Vernulaeus” (the most illustrious Vernulaeus”) to demonstrate that Ireland had never been subject to any “externum Imperium” (“foreign rule”) (39). Ogygia’s

19 One can also see here Ogygia’s transitions between roman and Irish typefaces.
accounting of the long line of independent Irish kings, presented in genealogies, chronicle entries, and regnal lists, contradicts colonialist claims based on Ireland’s subjection to Arthur or Gurguntius. Much of “Ogygiae Domestica” narrates the Irish succession over time, through chapters describing the reigns of kings and by recapitulating narrative material in regnal lists. For example, following a long section of chapters narrating the deeds of Irish kings, O’Flaherty presents a chapter entitled “Regum Hiberniae Christianorum quadraginta octo Catalogus” (Catalogue of the Forty-Eight Christian Kings of Ireland”). Here O’Flaherty gives the years of accession and length of reigns for each Christian king, from Laoghaire Mac Neill in 428 AD to Malachy the Second in 1022 AD, reiterating and condensing the materials that precede it (429-426).

In this chapter as elsewhere, O’Flaherty deploys marginal notation for a variety of purposes, keeping a tally of the dates at stake and the years that passed during each king’s reign at the left of entries and recording each king’s name in Irish orthography and type on the right (Figure 4). This is a format O’Flaherty uses multiple times in Ogygia; for example, some materials in the synchronisms from “Ogygiae Extera” are also presented in this way, indicating dates of succession and time elapsed and collecting Irish names, genealogies, and regnal lists in the margins. As with the chronicle format entries in “Ogygiae Extera,” the emphasis on dates here proves the specificity of the Irish record, while the regnal catalogues show that the Stuart kings have undeniable Irish heritage. Thus, O’Flaherty fulfills the promise to James II made in his text’s dedication: he gives a “certissima regum progenies” (“most certain progeny of kings”), supported by the consensus of Irish and international historians and validated by its situation within a specific and consistent chronological framework (“Epistola Dedicatoria”).
Figure 4: Ogygia pg. 431: Catalogue of kings with dates, reign lengths, and Irish names

Figure 4 shows Ogygia marginally tracking the accession dates and reign lengths of the Christian kings of Ireland. O’Flaherty also uses this method of organizing information to address a problematic period in Irish history: the four centuries between the Anglo-Norman conquest and the accession of James VI and I, which O’Flaherty identifies as the return of Milesian rule in Ireland. The format O’Flaherty adopts for presenting regnal entries also enables his elision of the four centuries that challenge his account of an Ireland free from “foreign rule.” Taking advantage of the chronicle form, O’Flaherty gives the 405 years between the last Irish king and the London coronation of James VI and I as a simple notation of time elapsed, no more prominent in his account than the brief reigns of minor Irish kings. A comparison of Figures 5 and 6 shows that the four centuries during which Ireland was ruled by British kings are briskly indicated by the numeral “405,” allowing this period approximately the same amount of textual space as the three years of Niall Glundub’s reign (442, 434). O’Flaherty’s text reiterates the Irish origins of the Stuarts, noting that 405 years elapsed from the death of Roderic to the accession of the monarchs
of Great Britain of “Hibernae originis” (“Irish lineage”) who are the descendants of Heremon

(442).

Figure 5: Ogygia, pg. 442: Chronicle presentation of four centuries

Figure 6: Ogygia, pg. 434: Chronology and reign of Niall Glundub

O’Flaherty’s minimizing strategy is even clearer in the “Carmen Chronographicum,” which runs smoothly from 1198, the death of Roderic O’Connor, “Ultimus indigenum Rector Inisfaliae” (“last native ruler of Ireland”) to 1603, the accession of James VI and I (Figure 7) (458). Here the date 1171 is given to the left of the poem, beneath which are noted the 27 years between the arrival of Henry II and the death of Roderic (459). The poem then gives the date 1198, beneath which the 405 years between Roderic’s death and the accession of James I in 1603 are tracked in the same way as the 27 years before them. The text of the poem itself asserts that “Post quadringentis, & quinque fluentibus annis/Scotigenae sceptrum rursus Ierna colit” (“After four hundred and five years passed / Ireland was again tended by a Scottish ruler”) (459).

20 As O’Flaherty frequently reminds his reader, Irish historians held that the term “Scot” referred to Ireland before it was applied to Scotland, an argument based on the tradition that Scotland was
format here facilitates O’Flaherty’s central project of presenting the Stuart kings as the resurgence of the Irish royal line that he has chronicled while rendering the centuries of Anglo-Norman rule as insignificant as possible.

Figure 7: Ogygia, pg. 459: The Carmen Chronographicum, 1171-1603

The third main section of Ogygia, “Ogygiae Domestica” is subtitled “Rerum Hibernarum plenior, ac susior differtatio” (a more full and plentiful dissertation on Irish events”). As its subtitle suggests, this section comes the closest to the narrative style of history used by Keating. Also like Keating, O’Flaherty maintains focus on the sovereignty of Ireland by structuring “Ogygiae Domestica” as a chronological progression given shape through the reigns of Irish kings. However, even “Ogygiae Domestica” is far from a straightforward narrative of past events. In addition to regnal catalogues, of which there are several, presented in a variety of formats and covering the “pagan,” Christian, and Christian kings who reigned “cum reluctantia” (“with opposition”), there is also a synchronism of Scottish and Irish kings and a “poema chronologicum” (not to be confused with the “Carmen Chronographicum”), as well as a number of digressive discussions, including a lengthy treatise on Ogham, a description of Hadrian’s Wall, and a list of the wonders and miracles of Ireland (214-245, 289-292, 344-357).

settled under the auspices of an Irish king and that Scotland’s own first king was Fergus son of Erc, the king of Ireland.
Even where O’Flaherty presents some historical material in narrative form, he also chooses to sprinkle his narration of Irish history with other genres, often repeating material from elsewhere in his text. O’Flaherty writes in forms that support the recapitulation of material, accreting genealogies and lists of kings that build his argument about the Milesian heritage of the Stuarts, synchronisms that establish Ireland’s place in world history, and chronicle entries affirming the specificity and reliability of the Irish records. The methodology of *Ogygia* is undeniably cumulative and multigeneric, offering particularly clear evidence that some seventeenth-century writers recognized the potential for innovation in medieval historical genres through its exuberant combination of these accretive forms. For O’Flaherty, chronicles, genealogies, regnal catalogues, and synchronisms were not the outdated genres of medieval ignorance, but robust methods through which he effectively advanced his political and historiographic goals.

**The Afterlife of *Ogygia***

In 1775, the historian Charles O’Conor (1710–1791) edited and published a book entitled: *The Ogygia Vindicated Against the Objections of Sir George Mac Kenzie, King’s Advocate for Scotland in the Reign of King James II (A Posthumous Work)*. The portions of this text produced by O’Flaherty demonstrate his continued commitment to making historical claims genealogically and chronologically. In the dedication to Randal McDonell, the Earl of Antrim, O’Flaherty again uses genealogy to make a political point, offering information on the earl’s ancestors and other important figures and then telling his addressee that “by the extent of your authentic pedigree, and by the numerous voices of living persons, sprung from the same origin, I make out, as clear as a meridian sun the fully impugned verity, that the Scottish nation in Ireland
and Britain have been of univocal name, denoting people of one lineage, language, and laws” (lviii). O’Flaherty further asserts the Stuarts are the “right and general heirs of Fergus’s blood,” a claim he supports by presenting a genealogy of King James II, beginning with “Conary the First, King of Ireland, A.D. 60” (lviii-lxxx). Much as in Ogygia, O’Flaherty uses the various forms and genres of his history to validate his version of the succession and to corroborate each other; he writes that “there is such a concurrence of chronology by genealogy, and of genealogy by chronology, that a more exact cannot be expected from any other authentic record” (37-38). Thus, though much of the text is structured around responding to George MacKenzie’s (1636/1638–1691) claims, O’Flaherty nonetheless preserves his focus on the accretive genres of Irish tradition.

However, the eighteenth-century sections of Ogygia Vindicated are less committed to validating Ireland’s genealogies and chronologies. In his “Dissertation on the Origin and Antiquities of the antient Scots,” O’Conor comments on the inaccuracies and inconsistencies evident in Ireland’s “regal lists” which he argues “mark the boundaries of truth and fiction for us, without their knowing that they did so” (xxix). O’Conor attributes the earliest accounts of Ireland to the “poetic invention” of the bards, who framed “a succession of monarchs” that never reigned and who opened the “line of genealogy” to make room for this extensive list of imaginary kings (xxvii). The Ogygia Vindicated indicates that seventeenth-century debates over the reliability of Irish history, the supposed barbarity of the Irish, and the rights to claim important historical figures continued into the eighteenth century. However, as O’Conor’s response to his source materials reveals, accretive genres such as regnal lists and genealogies were less useful a form in
which to conduct these arguments and the historicity of Ireland’s earliest accounts was much less readily defensible. 21

The tendency evidenced in the *Ogygia Vindicated* towards emphasizing *Ogygia’s* anticolonial arguments while granting less weight to the accretive genres that dominate its presentation of those arguments is even more apparent in the 1793 English translation prepared by the Reverend James Hely. Commenting on the reliability of Ireland’s genealogical heritage, Hely observes that O’Flaherty has “adjusted his dates by genealogies,” a strategy that would have been effective “had those genealogies been accurate” (x). Ultimately, Hely urges his readers to “admit that the genealogies and successions of these monarchs are, in a great measure, technical” (x). Nor are the regnal lists, genealogies, chronological calculations, and chronicle entries of *Ogygia* especially evident in the 1793 translation. In places, Hely’s edition all but erases the design strategies of the text’s original, minimizing the large date notation, using a roman typeface rather than an Irish one, and removing many of O’Flaherty’s marginal notations.

The publications prepared by Hely and by O’Conor indicate the continuing relevance of O’Flaherty’s materials for Irish historians into the late eighteenth century but also show that his historical content could be separated from the forms in which he presented it and that historical arguments based on asserting correspondences between genealogical texts, regnal lists, and chronological materials were less persuasive in the eighteenth century than the seventeenth.

The versions of O’Flaherty’s work published by Hely and O’Conor reflect the process that has led to associations between accretive genres and barbarism. A century after *Ogygia’s* publication, the genres deployed so effectively in his text were well on their way to dismissal as

21 Nor was the defense of early Irish history as urgent by this time; for example, O’Conor writes that while much ancient history is irrecoverable, this loss need not be regretted since “if what the Senachies record to be true, and it is very credible, that our more antient monarchs were chiefly employed in distressing and killing each other” (xxx).
the “baggy and disordered” historical format of unsophisticated and undiscriminating medieval collectors. However, as O’Flaherty’s work amply demonstrates, non-narrative historical genres could be put to extremely sophisticated ends: Ogygia’s synchronisms and chronicle entries offer a powerful argument for the reliability and specificity of Ireland’s historical records, as well as their consistency with international histories, while the text’s forms also enable O’Flaherty to forward his anticolonial project of presenting the Stuart kings as a resurgence of Milesian rule in Ireland and establishing the island’s fundamental independence from British domination. The complex and extremely varied interplay of forms evident in Ogygia indicate that its author found accretive genres a more effective means of conveying his argument than the relatively underrepresented narrative history that has been commended as such an innovation over earlier genres.

When Ogygia is placed in context with other seventeenth-century texts that use accretive forms – the heroic biography of the Beatha’s contemporary annals, the many argumentative genealogies of the Stuart kings, the Annála Ríoghachta Éireann’s accommodation of a variety of source materials through its annular format, the Foras Feasa’s use of synchronisms to support Keating’s rehabilitation of the Irish records, and the English annals and chronicles that rely on their genre’s allegedly impartial nature – a different picture of these genres emerges. Not only were medieval accretive genres capable of supporting a variety of complex historical and political uses, a significant number of seventeenth-century writers recognized this potential. Though annals and chronicles came to be associated with “unsophisticated” historiographies, many early modern usages of these genres are anything but simplistic. The flexibility of these forms is evidenced particularly strongly by their virtuosic deployment in Ogygia, a text that
invokes and combines a multitude of “medieval” genres in service of O'Flaherty’s thoroughly seventeenth-century ends.
Chapter Four

The Poetics and Politics of Legend:

Geoffrey Keating’s Foras Feasa ar Éirinn and the Invention of Irish History

Introduction: Truth and Error in the History of Ireland

In the polemical introduction to his 1634 Foras Feasa ar Éirinn (Foundation of Knowledge on Ireland, often called the History of Ireland), Geoffrey Keating criticizes Meredith Hanmer’s late sixteenth-century Chronicle of Ireland for including the early modern Irish narrative Cath Fionntrágha (The Battle of Ventry) when it is clear that Ireland’s historians do not regard this tale as “stáire fírinnighe” (“true history”) but assert that it is “finnsceul filidheachta” (“poetic legend”) (1: 50-51). Keating accuses the Welsh historian of misrepresenting Ireland’s historical records by inserting this less-than-plausible tale as if it were characteristic of Irish history when Cath Fionntrágha’s legendary status is well recognized. As his refutation of Hanmer suggests, one of Keating’s aims in writing the Foras Feasa was to correct the oft-repeated claim that Ireland had no reliable history and to provide a foundation, or foras, for future histories of Ireland. Without doubt, Keating’s text did prove central to the writing of Irish history for many centuries to come: it was rapidly translated into Latin and English, enjoyed a wide circulation for a manuscript text, and formed a pillar of the Irish historical canon. Today it remains central to the study of early modern Irish national identities.

The Foras Feasa is a text highly attuned to genre and Keating was well aware that the Irish records frequently mixed historical and legendary accounts. Claiming to possess the ability Hanmer lacks in distinguishing between genres, Keating occasionally informs his reader that certain episodes included in the Foras Feasa are not to be regarded as historical and should
instead be considered finnscéla, legends. Nevertheless, Keating retains sources he identifies as finnscéla, even those that had been criticized by British writers for their implausibility, such as accounts claiming that Ireland was first settled by Noah’s granddaughter (1: 140-147). The Foras Feasa asserts the necessity of including all of Ireland’s seanchas (“ancient traditions”) in the telling of its history by employing the chronological organization of the annals and chronicles alongside the taxonomic organization of tales by theme or type often used to present scéla (“stories” or “tales”). By referring to his source material as seanchas, Keating characterizes the kinds of information about the past that he considers necessary in writing Irish history. Seanchas, or senchas in Old Irish, can describe old tales, traditions, ancient history, or genealogy, and was one of the three major categories of learned medieval literature, along with filidecht (poetic lore) and scéla (Mac Cana 23).¹ If Hanmer’s failing was his inability to distinguish between history and legend, the Foras Feasa brings the two together on a structural level. The Foras Feasa deploys all of Ireland’s traditions and organizational structures in its anticolonialist reclamation of Irish historical study for Irish scholars who were able, as colonialist writers were not, to read the seanchas.² By casting Irish legends as the rich material rather than the defective method of Irish history, Keating makes a claim for a rigorous historiast method that at once honors the principles of the new humanism and yet preserves Irishness in the retelling and reframing of the Irish past.

Keating’s “foundation” of Irish knowledge imagines Irish history as incorporating all of the seanchas, positing the historian as collector and interpreter of a variety of texts, legendary

¹ Proinsias Mac Cana notes that the term senchas derives from the adjective sen “old,” and defines it as embracing “all of the traditional knowledge: law, genealogy, and historical lore whether in prose or verse” (23). For more on the generic categories of medieval Ireland, see John Koch 1651-1652.

²For a summary of recent scholarly trends in thinking about Irish colonialism, see Joe Cleary 11-57.
and historical. Keating deploys this generic inclusiveness against colonialist works claiming that Ireland’s chronicles, many of which related the island’s independence from Britain until the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion, were essentially legends. The *Foras Feasa* endeavored to refute what Brendan Bradshaw has termed “the most damaging of all English calumnies against the Irish, namely that their native land constituted a mere appendage of the realm of England” (“Apologist” 172). Keating’s project is widely accepted as an anticolonial one in that it sought, by attacking the scholarship and credentials of writers who could not read the *seanchas* of Ireland, to counter texts written to legitimate the Tudor reconquest of Ireland.\(^3\)

Anticolonialism and national identity are closely connected in Keating’s work. The *Foras Feasa* represents what Bradshaw terms a “conceptual breakthrough” as the “first account of Irish history to be constructed within a genuinely national narrative frame” because it was the first to encompass both ethnic populations of Ireland: the Gaelic Irish and the Old English descendants of the Anglo-Norman invaders, to which group Keating himself belonged (“Reading” 2). The *Foras Feasa* essentially invented a new Irish identity, as prominent Keating scholar Bernadette Cunningham has persuasively demonstrated, arguing that Keating’s purpose in writing the *Foras Feasa* was to create a community of Éirennaigh, that is, “persons born in Ireland,” including “all those of Gaelic or Anglo-Norman descent who were Irish-born and Catholic” and excluding “those who were not Irish-born, in particular the recently arrived, usually Protestant, settlers”

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\(^3\)See Tony Crowley’s “Encoding Ireland: Dictionaries and Politics in Irish History,” which considers the central role that the Irish language played in the *Foras Feasa* and other anticolonial texts, describing Keating’s work as a “revisionist history” that argued against “colonial historiographers” (128). Similarly, in “Seventeenth-century Constructions of the Historical Kingdom of Ireland,” Bernadette Cunningham examines the important role that James Ware’s 1633 collection of Irish histories played in reinvigorating colonialist writing on Ireland, arguing that Keating “chose to present his history as a response to such hostile writers, most especially Spenser,” although his focus was less on what Cunningham terms “the reality of the colonial process” than on redeeming the reputation of the Irish from the “lies” of colonialist writers (13).
commonly referred to as the New English (“World” 109-110). Language and historiographic methods are as central as national identity to Keating’s anticolonial argument; the Foras Feasa’s contents and organization confirm its introduction’s claim that the writing of Irish history belongs to the Éirennigh, not to the Nua-Gháll (“New English”) and other “foreign” writers whose histories of Ireland perpetuated damaging lies about the Irish.  

Keating’s rebuttals of the colonialist histories of Ireland often focus on their authors’ ignorance of the seanchas, as is evident in his response to fellow Old English writer Richard Stanihurst, contributor to the Irish section of Raphael Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1: 12-13). Keating writes that Stanihurst does not merit the name of historian because he is too young to have conducted any substantial research, motivated by ambition and hostility, and ignorant “i dteangaidh na tíre i n-a raibhe seanchus agus seandála na críche” (“in the language of the country in which were the seanchas and the old affairs of the territory”) (1: 34-43). Keating’s argument here calls upon the early modern practice of “textual

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4 Though I focus here on Irish history and identity, the notion of “Irishness” played a central role in productions of British and English identities as well. For a discussion of the ways that Britishness was defined through the construction of an oppositional Irishness, see the introduction to Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley’s Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660, 1-23. For a more recent consideration of the instability of English nationalism based on Irish difference, focusing on dress as an important and yet changeable marker of identity, see John Ziegler 73-95.

5 Keating uses the terms Sean-Gháll to refer to the Old English and Nua-Gháll to refer to the New English; early in the Foras Feasa’s introduction, Keating announces his intent to set out: “beagán do bhreugaibh” (“some of the lies”) of the Nua-Gháll on Ireland (1: 12-13). The terms used to distinguish “foreign” and “native” populations indicate the complex identities at stake here; as Joseph Lennon explains: “Gael and Gall originally differentiated the Irish from the Normans, but as Gall eventually came to mean any foreigner, Sean-Gháll [Old Foreigner] was used to distinguish the earlier settlers from the new Tudor settlers, the Nua-Gháll” (73).

6 The complications of identities and texts produced in colonialist contexts are not always evident in Keating’s polemical introduction; for more on Stanihurst’s own “ambivalent status” as a member of the “Anglo-Hibernii,” his term for the Old Englishmen in Ireland, see Richard McCabe 54-57. For more on the complexity of Spenser’s approach toward the project of colonizing Ireland, see Christopher Highley 1-5.
criticism,” which Peter Burke describes as “the attempt by humanists to reconstruct texts as their original authors (usually ancient Greeks or Romans) had written them, texts which had been corrupted by copyists over the centuries” (263). In the same vein, Keating argues that historical scholarship on Ireland must be based on Old and Middle Irish documents, rather than on translations into English, thus situating the Foras Feasa within the context of humanist historiography while also invalidating colonialist writers unable to access Irish “originals.”

Keating argues that the role of the serious scholar who studies Ireland’s past is to contextualize sources based on their genres (distinguishing legend and history, as Hanmer cannot) but not in order to simply extract the “relics of the true antiquities” from the “most fabulous and forged” Irish chronicles, a goal and methodology Edmund Spenser establishes in his View of the Present State of Ireland (46-47). Rather, Keating identifies legends without excluding them. The Foras Feasa is not simply a history of Ireland, but a multigenre foundational text incorporating various types of sources as well as organizational principles and methods of interpretation.

The two major organizational principles of the Foras Feasa can be described as thematic and chronological. Both of these strategies depend on and are shaped by one of the central

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7 Burke’s essay, “History, Myth, and Fiction: Doubts and Debates,” offers a concise and effective summary of generic insecurity and the use of primary sources in seventeenth-century historiography. For more on Keating and humanism, see Brendan Bradshaw “Reading” 8 and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail 140.

8 Ray Cashman calls attention to the fact that the Foras Feasa’s common English title encodes a fundamental reinterpretation of this project; Keating wrote not simply a “history of Ireland” but rather a “foundation of knowledge on Ireland” (147). Cashman argues that Keating’s “conception of history is comprehensive enough to include stories that may be considered truthful or authentic but not factual” (150).

9 Cunningham describes the “straightforward chronological framework” of the Foras Feasa as one of several factors contributing to its popularity, along with its “entertaining stories of heroic exploits” and the language and style in which it made accessible material from the Irish manuscript tradition (“Catholic” 144-145).
concerns of the *Foras Feasa*: the succession of Ireland’s kings. Like Mícheál Ó Cléirigh’s *Annála Rioghachta Éireann*, which first circulated two years before Keating’s text, the *Foras Feasa* presents the history of Ireland by describing wars, successions, births and deaths, and other major events, beginning with creation and the first invasions of Ireland during biblical times and moving forward through the centuries. However, where the *Annála Rioghachta Éireann* is structured around dates, the *Foras Feasa* is organized through kings, locating events by noting that they occurred during the reigns of various rulers and presenting Irish history as recounting an unbroken line of kingship dating from the very early past. Thus, the *Foras Feasa* makes kings central to the telling of Irish history while maintaining a chronological structure that relates historical materials sequentially over time.

The form of organization I identify as thematic also emphasizes relationships between events and makes the sovereignty of Ireland central to discussions of the island’s past. Within the framework of royal successions, the *Foras Feasa* includes many series of tales that describe similar events or present variations on certain themes. For example, Keating brings together several stories examining the interactions between women and kingship in the early history of Ireland, ranging from King Lughaidh Laighdhe’s legendary encounter with a sovereignty goddess figure to the political machinations of princesses in the succession of King Labhraidh Loingseach to the Ulster Queen Macha’s rise to power. Other thematic groupings focus on kingship and violence: between the reigns of Macha and Labhraidh Loingseach, Keating presents in quick succession eight regicides, motives for which alternate between jealousy and revenge. Similarly, Keating gives several stories of betrayal in close proximity to Brian Bóroimhe’s

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10 Like the *Foras Feasa*, Ó Cléirigh’s annals have a common English title that differs from their literal translation; they are usually referred to as *The Annals of the Four Masters*, reflecting the team of scholars led by Ó Cléirigh, but a more literal translation would be *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*.  

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accession to the throne and uses the time of Niall Naoighiallach’s reign to collect stories of Irish conquests. In the reign of Diarmaid son of Fearghus, Keating includes numerous stories of kings and clerics clashing as well as a variety of representations of the important royal virtue of generosity. These tale collections are connected by their portrayals of similar events (regicides, betrayal, conquest, etc.) while the text as a whole demonstrates a persistent concern with the matter of Irish kingship.

Keating’s collections of similar stories make two important arguments about the nature of knowledge on Ireland. First, they echo a method of organizing narratives that was well developed in medieval Irish literature, indicating the Foras Feasa’s close relationship with native Irish categories of knowledge. Second, they show that accounts of Ireland’s past require interpretation and comparison; for instance, the finnscéal narrating King Lughaidh Laigdhe’s sovereignty goddess encounter is not a legend misplaced among historical materials, but part of a sequence of episodes exploring relationships between women and kingship. In this way, the Foras Feasa responds to colonialist writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who had singled out events from the Irish chronicles in order to demonstrate their allegedly unreliable and fabulous nature. For instance, in his A Historie of Ireland, Edmund Campion derides as a “vaine and frivolous” fable the claim that the island was once settled by Noah’s niece (21). Similarly, in the “Historie of Irelande” published in Holinshed’s Chronicles, Stanhurst uses the story of Ruanus the Giant as an example of the “idle fantasies & forged tales” which serve as a warning to the reader to “beware of yelding credite” to the Irish records (1577, volume 3, 3).

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11 This is the same tradition discussed by Keating; the genealogies of this antediluvian settler of Ireland describe her as either Noah’s niece or granddaughter.

12 Stanhurst based the “Historie of Ireland” he wrote for Holinshed’s Chronicles on Campion’s Irish history, which uses similar language to discuss the Ruanus traditions: “These things I note
Against these isolative readings of Irish sources, Keating presents knowledge on Ireland as a web of deeply interconnected sources that requires a familiarity with many texts. Readings based on single tales can only be misreadings, and colonialist writers lack any claim to knowledge about Ireland not just because they cannot read Irish but also because they lack the mastery of the *seanchas* made so apparent in the *Foras Feasa*. Keating asserts that Stanihurst had never even seen the “seanchus Éireann” and it is precisely this sort of ignorance that prevents foreign writers from adopting the *Foras Feasa*’s historiographic model (1: 32-33). The text’s thematic organizational strategy rehabilitates many legends through recontextualization while also excluding colonialist writers on Ireland, who lacked the knowledge of Irish traditions necessary to write about its past as Keating does.

The *Foras Feasa* does not naively assert that *finnscéla* are historical – it identifies and often reinterprets the less plausible tales that it collects – but neither does it excise these legends from Irish history. Keating was explicit about the role he expected the *Foras Feasa* to play in the writing of Irish history; his introduction concludes with an invitation to those who would write about Ireland after reading his text to seek out the same books that he himself had used as sources and build on the foundation he had constructed (1: 94-95). Writing the *Foras Feasa* was an opportunity for Keating to establish what a national history of Ireland would look like and shape future Irish historiography. In this context, Keating’s inclusion of such problematic tales as King Lughaidh’s goddess encounter reveals not his naïveté but his sophistication. The *Foras Feasa* is Keating’s attempt to make a claim about who can legitimately write Irish history and what forms that history should take. By placing the original documents of Ireland at the center of his text, Keating reproduces the emerging orthodoxy of humanist historiography and deploys it for no other purpose, but that the simple stumbling upon such blinde legends should be warned to esteem them as they are, idle fantasies” (24).
against British histories of Ireland, which were largely written without access to Irish-language sources.

**Legend and History in the *Seanchas* and the *Foras Feasa***

The *Foras Feasa* demonstrates the often-tenuous boundaries between fictional and nonfictional texts both in the medieval Irish tradition and in Keating’s own time. While categorizations of “legend” and “history” formed a hotly contested battleground in the debate waged over British and Irish origins, medieval and early modern representations of the past written on both sides of the Irish Sea often elided distinctions between history and legend. Keating’s sources included annals, chronicles, name-lore, battle narratives, king-tales, and the host of other texts that made up the *seanchas*. Many of Keating’s sources mixed genres; for example, the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Acallam na Senórach* (*Conversations of the Old Men*) brings together material from the *dindshenchas* (place-name tales), Fenian legends, and Patrician hagiography to create a narrative of Ireland’s past grounded in its geography.

It would be an oversimplification (not to mention an insertion of anachronistic modes of analysis) to speak of Keating simply bringing literature and history together as if these were two established and opposing genres. While Keating was certainly aware that British attacks on the historicity of Ireland’s chronicles had made the defense or repudiation of some more fantastic traditions necessary, firm distinctions between “history” and “literature,” or, to use a more contemporary term, “poetics,” were far from established in the seventeenth century. Keating himself was both a historian and a poet; in addition to the *Foras Feasa*, Keating authored a number of poems, which Marc Caball argues share political goals with his famed historical text.

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13 For more on the sources used in the *Foras Feasa*, see Anne Cronin 235-279.
Caball writes that Keating’s poems contain a “politcized thematic seam” that was “firmly focused on constructing a national community undifferentiated by ethnicity or regional provenance” (“Poetry” 37). Keating the poet and Keating the historian were equally attuned to the political power of texts. Although Philip Sidney (1554–1586) asserted that “as in History looking for truth, they go away full fraught with falsehood, so in Poesy looking but for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention,” famously inverting history’s claim for veracity over poetry’s, Keating worked in both genres and toward the same ends (249).

As the Foras Feasa’s interplay of genres and methods suggests, generic distinctions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were far from absolute, but they were sufficiently established to be invoked by Keating and by the writers he criticizes. D. R. Woolf has identified this generic flexibility as one of the major transitions in historical writing between 1500 and 1700, describing early modern historians’ “growing understanding of formal boundaries between genres but also of the liquidity of historical matter and its capacity to transcend such boundaries” (36). The processes through which “myth and fable” were eliminated from “respectable history” and “clear and rigid” generic expectations for history were developed, which Karen O’Brien describes as having occurred by the end of the seventeenth century, were far from complete in Keating’s time (391). Still, the terms of generic discussion were certainly established, making it possible for scholars such as Hanmer to claim that the Irish chronicles failed as histories because of their incorporation of fables.\[14\]

\[14\] For more on distinctions between myth and history in early modern Britain, as well as the centrality of origin myths in establishing national identities despite increasing skepticism toward them, see Laura Ashe 153-169. For more on the terms used by medieval and early modern writers to distinguish the historical from the fictional, see Peter Bietenholz 146-149.
The historical genres of the sixteenth and seventeenth century are further complicated by the range of texts early modern writers and readers recognized as historical; Paulina Kewes has shown that understanding early modern historical culture requires acknowledgement of the “variety of genres” treated as historical in the early modern period (5). Keating’s own work aligns with Woolf’s description of early modern historiography, in that it both recognizes and yet subverts generic boundaries. Keating acknowledges that the seanchas include stair and finnscéal, as well as a wide variety of other genres, such as genealogies, chronologies, and etymologies, asserting that these many genres all belong to the history of Ireland.

Keating was committed to making native Irish organizational methods, as well as genres, central to the Foras Feasa; this commitment manifests in the text’s structure, which follows a well-established strategy of sorting episodes by content. The organization of texts by “the contents of the story,” in Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin’s phrasing, is especially apparent in the tale-lists of medieval Ireland (“Literature” 6).15 These lists collect a large number of scéla (numbering in the hundreds in some versions), organized into categories, such as aideda (“violent deaths”), immrama (“voyages”), and catha (“battles”). The tale-lists were not the only Irish collections that organized stories by content: there are numerous verse catalogs of aideda and catha in Old and Middle Irish; the dindshenchas is a corpus of place-name stories compiled in several Middle Irish recensions; the twelfth-century An Banshenchas (The Woman Lore) collects stories about notable women from creation to the Anglo-Norman invasion; the thirteenth-century Middle Irish Cór Anmann (the Fitness of Names) comprises etymological

15 According to Mac Cana, both extant recensions of the tale lists derive from a now-lost tenth-century list; list A survives in two manuscripts, from the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, while list B is preserved in three fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts (33).
tales; and the Irish triads gather together not stories but lists, organized into threes. By the seventeenth century, Ireland had an established tradition of sorting tales by type; the *Foras Feasa* places a similar emphasis on the subjects of the episodes it collects, aligning Ireland’s new history with native modes of scholarship.

Keating invokes the genres of medieval Ireland directly in his presentation of Irish history during the reigns of the famous monarchs Queen Meadhbh of Connaught and King Conchubhar of Ulster. At the core of the materials known today as belonging to the Ulster Cycle, Keating presents a linked series of six *aideda*, describing the fates met by Conchubhar, Meadhbh, and four other combatants in the battles between Connaught and Ulster (2: 198-219). The *aideda* formed a recognizable and well-known genre from medieval Ireland and, as Proinsias Mac Cana has shown, were “at the very core of the heroic ethos” (29). Keating’s Ulster *aideda* display the practice of organizing tales by their content in an especially clear fashion, at least for readers who, unlike the foreign scholars Keating refutes in his introduction, are versed in the traditional knowledge of Ireland.

Among these *aideda* is the account of how Conchubhar was struck in the head by the dried brain of an enemy and how he lived for seven years with that brain in his head, until a rage caused the brain-ball to burst from the king’s head, killing him and fulfilling the prophecy that the previous owner of the brain would avenge his death on the Ulstermen (2: 200-203). The *Foras Feasa* includes many accounts that, like Conchubhar’s *aided*, are vulnerable to criticism as legends, reflecting the material from which Keating was working. While the chronicles and annals of Ireland did purport to be factual records of past events, others of the *seanchas* mixed

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16 For more on the *dindshenchas*, see Edward Gywnn; for more on the *banshenchas*, see Ní Bhrolcháin, “Manuscript”; for more on the *Cóir Anmann*, see Sharon Arbuthnot; for more on the *Triads*, see Kuno Meyer.
accounts of battles and the reigns of kings with magical, even mythical tales. For example, the *Cóir Anmann* collects etymological stories for a number of mythological and historical figures. While the stories in the *Cóir Anmann* differ widely in plausibility, they share the same purpose of explaining how individuals received their names. The *Cóir Anmann* relates how, for example, the princess Eithne Uathnach was so-named from *uath* (“horror”) because she was fed the flesh of infants so that she would mature more quickly; how Conall Cremthainne gained his name more prosaically from his rearing in Cremthainne; and how Delbáed was named from *delb* (“form”) and *áed* (“fire”) when he created an enchanted fire after having been banished through magic (85, 124, 91, 130, 95, 133). The *Cóir Anmann* also provides etymologies for explicitly mythological figures, including the gods Dian Cécht “the god of the powers,” and Dagda “the good god” (94-95, 132-133). As these examples show, the *Cóir Anmann* blends magical, mythological, and political episodes, giving these varied accounts cohesion through shared etymological purpose.

While stories of gods and magic may have posed difficulties for Keating as a writer attempting to prove that Ireland’s records were as credible as Britain’s, Keating was frequently able to make the generic complexity of the seanchas work to his advantage. In fact, Keating deliberately invokes distinctions between history and legend in order to call attention to the multiple genres included in the *Foras Feasa*. By foregrounding his use of legendary materials, Keating preempts the colonialist assertion that Irish history is no more than legend – since he

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17 The incorporation of multiple genres into texts containing the affairs of the past is, of course, not limited to medieval Ireland. For a discussion of the ways that medieval manuscripts “jumbled” genres such as “poems and chronicles, romances and saints’ lives,” see Joseph Levine 19-20.

18 Sharon Arbuthnot has recently offered an edition and translation of this text, published as *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names*; citations from the *Cóir Anmann* give page numbers for both English and Irish versions from Arbuthnot’s edition.
claims for himself the ability to tell legend from history – while also establishing the role legends can play in the writing of history. Keating writes the Irish national history as a genre that incorporates other genres as well, even those that colonialist writers had dismissed as fabulous. In doing so, Keating simultaneously excludes British historians who lacked mastery of the seanchas and, at the same time, rehabilitates Ireland’s multigenre records.

Keating raises the question of whether a text is history or legend numerous times in the *Foras Feasa*. Tellingly, the first such reference is in a criticism of Spenser. Keating writes that Spenser’s representations of Irish etymologies are false and that the English scholar likewise misconstrues genealogic information, expressing his surprise that Spenser would comment on matters of which he was ignorant, unless he was allowing himself license as a poet to arrange many poetic legends with “briathraibh blasda” (“sweet words”) to fool the reader (1: 30-31). Here, Keating directly invokes the history/poetry division and places Spenser firmly on the poetry side, turning Spenser’s own claims that the Irish bards have “clauded the truth” through “desire of pleasing perhappes too much, and ignorances of arts, and purer learning” against him (47).

When Keating refers to the distinction between *stair* and *finnscéal* to refute Hanmer, as discussed above, he asserts that the historians of Ireland do not regard *Cath Fionntrágha* as history. This text was meant to entertain, rather than give a reliable account of the past, having been made up as a “chaitheamh aimsire” (“pastime”) (1: 50-51). Keating also labels the often-debunked story of the ancient traveler Fionntain’s long survival in Ireland a *finnscéal*, as well as many of the Finn tales, which Keating writes were composed, like *Cath Fionntrágha*, as
entertainment rather than history (1: 150-151, 2: 326-327). Similarly, Keating asserts that the part of King Labhraidh Loingseach’s biography that tells of how the king had horse’s ears, how his haircutter whispered this secret to a tree, how a poet made a harp from that tree, and how the harp sang of the king’s secret: “Dá chluais chapaill ar Labhraidh Lorc” (“Two horse’s ears on Labhraidh Lorc”) is “fhinnscéal fhilidheachta ioná ’n-a stair” (“poetic legend rather than history”) (2: 174-175). By identifying these stories as legends and allegories, Keating preempts critiques against their historicity while also affirming his own qualifications in making such distinctions; unlike Campion and Stanihurst, Keating speaks Irish and can read the manuscript sources of Ireland. These abilities enable him to discern which materials are legends meant to entertain and which are true accounts of the past. Furthermore, by including these legends, even with disclaimers regarding their veracity, Keating demonstrates that the generic variety of texts from the seanchas serves as a more inclusive and therefore more substantial foundation for knowledge on Ireland.

Keating was far from undiscriminating in his collection of materials; he is very open about the many texts and episodes he did not include in the Foras Feasa, noting where he has left out material and directing the reader to other books. Keating writes that he has omitted many historical accounts, stating that anyone who wishes to write about Ireland will find many valuable stories in the same “sein-leabhraibh” (“ancient books”) used in the Foras Feasa, which he excluded from his history, lest it be too difficult to distribute because of the “mhéid do dhuadh

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19 Keating instead defends a different version of the lone survivor tradition, the story of Caoilte; this tradition is supported by its centrality to the Acallam (1: 150-153).
20 Like many Irish kings, Labhraidh Loingseach was called by several different names during his lifetime: “Loingseach” is an epithet meaning “the mariner.”
21 For instance, Keating writes that to describe all of the events that occurred during the reign of Meadhbh, an “eachtra adhbhal” (“vast tale”) would be needed; Keating directs the reader interested in these accounts to seek out the Tain Bo Cuailgne, the Tain Bo Reaghmain, or one of several other named texts (220-221).
Keating shows an active hand in editing as well as arranging his sources; in the encounter between King Lughaidh and the sovereignty, for instance, he removes some of the more obviously magical details, as compared with his named source, the *Cóir Anmann*, while also indicating this text is not to be regarded as historical by introducing it as a *finnscéal* and concluding that it should be read allegorically (2: 148-149). Briefly, the *Cóir Anmann* describes a competition between the sons of Dáire Doimthech; the five youths are set, on the advice of a druid, to capture a fawn, with the understanding that the victor will become king. In the *Cóir Anmann* version, Lughaidh Laighdhe catches the fawn and then a heavy snow falls, forcing the brothers to seek shelter. Each brother in turn enters a little house, and encounters a hag who says that she will offer them a place to sleep for the night, if they will share her bed (102-103, 138-139). While his brothers refuse the hag’s offer and so forfeit “flaithus ocus rigi” (“sovereignty and kingship”), Lughaidh Laighdhe agrees to spend the night with the woman; once they get into bed together, he sees that she has become as beautiful as a May morning (102-103, 140-141). They have intercourse and she tells him “Is misi in Flatus” (“I am the Sovereignty”) and informs the young prince that he will be king of Ireland; the next morning, he wakes to find that the house has disappeared (102-103, 140-141).

Keating’s version differs from his source’s in several ways. While the first half of the story is largely consistent with the *Cóir Anmann*’s version, following Lughaidh Laighdhe’s capture of the fawn, Keating breaks off the narrative, presenting the story of Lughaidh’s rise to
kingship as concluding with the fawn’s capture, and introducing Lughaidh Laighdhe’s encounter with the hag as a separate tale, a “finnscéal filidheachta” told about the king, rather than a part of the fawn challenge (2: 148-149). In this way, the Foras Feasa is able to retain the sovereignty \textit{finnscéal} but deemphasize the woman’s role in confirming Lughaidh’s kingship, a role that sat uneasily with the legislative model of kingship central to Keating’s history.\footnote{Keating’s project does more than relate the histories of a sequence of Irish kings; it also produces an argument for the nature of Irish kingship itself as essentially constitutional and legislative. For more on Keating’s revision of the Irish sovereignty see Bradshaw, “Reading” 1-18}

In abridging the \textit{Cóir Anmann} material related to Lughaidh, Keating excises many of the elements from the encounter with the woman that mark this as an encounter with a sovereignty goddess, including the initial exchanges with the first four brothers, the sharing of food and drink, and the disappearance of the hag’s house.\footnote{These are the central elements of the sovereignty goddess motif: she encounters the hero while he is out wandering alone, she pours out drink for him in order to show her favor, and she transforms from hideous to beautiful when the hero has intercourse with (or agrees to have intercourse with) her. Keating’s version maintains the element of isolation (Lughaidh is hunting in a desert place) but removes the pouring out of drink and deemphasizes the hag’s transformation through the inclusion of the magic mask and the assertion that Lughaidh merely dreamt that she would become a beautiful young woman (2: 148-149). For more on the sovereignty goddess tradition in Irish literature, see Koch 1621-1622.} Keating also deemphasizes the innate magical nature of the hag by inventing a “cealltair dhraoidheachta” (“magic cloak or mask”) for her to wear (2: 148-149). While the hag in the \textit{Cóir Anmann} herself transforms when Lughaidh gets into bed with her, Keating instead presents the clever Lughaidh removing the woman’s mask in order to reveal her loveliness. Keating sought to assert a constitutional, not sacral, form of kingship in which the new king is chosen by election, not by offering sexual favors to magical women living in disappearing houses in the woods; these revisions reflect his goals. To make it entirely clear that the hag in this story is not functioning as a sovereignty goddess, Keating adds an interpretive coda to the legend. He writes that the woman allegorically represents Ireland, for
first Lughaidh endured “duadh is doghruing” (“painful toil and sorrow”) on her account, but later enjoyed “dtús agus áineas” (“abundance and delight”) (2: 148-149). Thus, Keating marks this text off as distinct from reliable history in two ways; first he introduces it as a finnscéal, and then he concludes by asserting that it should be understood as an allegory and offering an interpretation of the story’s true meaning as a commentary on the nature of kingship.

In modifying the Lughaidh sovereignty encounter, Keating deploys generic distinctions in the service of broadening the Foras Feasa’s scope of texts. Keating asserts that Lughaidh’s encounter with the hag, with its magical elements and half-erased references to the sovereignty goddess of medieval Irish literature, belongs to legend and allegory, precluding criticisms against its historicity. Keating here also demonstrates the range of interpretive models necessary for writing and reading Irish history, calling on the long-established tradition of reading problematic texts and figures allegorically. Allegory was a “standard term in biblical criticism” for both medieval and early modern scholars, and the location of multiple levels of allegorical meanings in texts was a well-established critical practice (Murrin 163). Moreover, there was a “long tradition of history as allegory” and of treating history as a “fund of exempla” in medieval scholarship (Springborg 295). These were traditions on which Keating could call to give his interpretation of the Lughaidh finnscéal the weight of established historiographic practices and even biblical exegesis.

While Keating certainly reworks and reclassifies the story of Lughaidh’s encounter with the magical hag to make it more believable and bring it in alignment with his model of Irish

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24 For more on the “variety of techniques for multiple reading” that proliferated in the medieval period, including readings of the Bible “literally/historically, morally/topologically (for ethical exempla) and allegorically (as an extended metaphorical narration of events in the life of the soul, Christ or the Church, including final things),” see Nicolette Zeeman 148-161. For more on early modern allegorical readings, see John Prendergast 1-16.
kingship, he does not remove the tale altogether. The Lughaidh material is doubly problematic: first, it supports a feminized and mythological mode of sovereignty, where Keating was strongly invested in establishing Irish kingship as essentially legislative and constitutional. Second, these early Lughaidh tales contain several elements that skeptical readers could critique as fabulous, including the magic mask and the “ceo draoidheachta” (“magic mist”) cast by the druid to separate the brothers from the assembly at the start of the fawn pursuit (2: 148-149). However, this episode offers a model for how tales from the breadth of the seanchas could be incorporated into Irish history: as clearly labeled legends and allegories. It also forms part of a sequence of thematically-linked tales.

The Lughaidh encounter is one of several representations of the relationship between femininity and sovereignty in the early period of Ireland’s history. This series of episodes demonstrate Keating’s awareness of the potential for mytho-poetic texts to accomplish political goals. Between the reigns of the queens Macha and Meadhbh, Keating presents a number of stories that focus on the intersections between women and royal power, including Macha’s defeat of male rivals for the throne through sexual trickery, Meadhbh’s assassination while bathing, the war and strife brought to the Ulster court by the beautiful maidens Deirdre and Blánaid, Lughaidh’s encounter with a euhemerized version of the sovereignty goddess, and King Labhraídh Loingseach’s resumption of his grandfather’s throne through political alliances forged by his own marriage to an Irish princess and his great-grandfather’s marriage to a French one (2: 152-157, 2: 212-213, 2: 190-197, 2: 222-227, 2: 148-149, 2: 160-167). These accounts extend from the mythical to the political, but are given continuity through their shared attention to the matter of femininity and sovereignty. The Foras Feasa is a text preoccupied with the matter of Irish kingship and these early tales of powerful queens and euhemerized goddesses are presented
as belonging to the ancient history of Ireland, eventually giving way to the international and political roles played by women such as Labraidh Loingseach’s wife and grandmother.

Thematic arrangements are not limited to the early sections of the *Foras Feasa*. Keating collects a series of conquest tales around Niall Noígíallach, for instance, and treachery stories around Brian Boróimhe. As above, these groups of similar stories enable Keating to present Irish history in a way that forwarded his anticolonial goals. The important foundation figure Niall is shown to be a conqueror of international prowess, as are the Irish over whom he rules, emphasizing Niall’s role on an international stage and Ireland’s engagement with European politics (2: 382-391, 2: 392-395, 2: 396-397). With Brian Boróimhe, Keating raises the question of treachery in order to negate it; while Brian’s reign is preceded with several stories of betrayal, Keating is careful to assert that this important king was legitimately chosen by the majority of the nobles of Ireland to claim the “flaitheas Éireann” (“sovereignty of Ireland”) and did not gain his throne through treachery, legitimating the rule of this famous king (3: 256-257).

Keating was able to collect tales with shared subjects in order to contextualize material from the *seanchas*, establishing that these stories cannot be considered individually and that only a broad knowledge of the *seanchas* of Ireland qualifies any scholar for writing about Irish history. Further, Keating’s invocation of subjects such as revenge, betrayal, or conquest are strategically placed so as to emphasize those aspects of the Irish kingship that Keating prefers (kings as conquerors, kings as players on international stages) and negate or quarantine aspects of the sovereignty that do not fit into Keating’s model (usurping kings, kings chosen by sovereignty goddesses). Much as the *Foras Feasa*’s chronology coheres around the succession of Irish kings, the thematic collections in Keating’s history serve to support the narrative of Irish
kingship that Keating was setting against colonialist accounts of Ireland’s dependency on the British crown.

**The Limits of Chronology**

It is difficult to say, for most of the *Foras Feasa*, whether Keating diverges from other histories due to his own revisions or rather because he was working with alternate sources no longer extant. However, on at least one occasion, Keating’s timeline differs from a known source, and from the generally accepted historical record, in a way that indicates he intentionally changed history. This revision produces a closely linked series of episodes and suggests that in this case Keating put theme before historical consistency in structuring the *Foras Feasa*. Keating’s altered timeline was notable enough to warrant comment even from his earliest readers, including ecclesiastical scholar John Colgan (1592?–1658) who, in the “Life of Colmán Mac Duach” from his 1645 *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae (Deeds of the Saints of Ireland)*, notes that Keating misplaced the Connaught king, Guaire son of Colmán. Keating, Colgan writes, indicates that Saint Colmán lived during the reign of Guaire, who was “regum Connaciae tempore Diermitij primi Hiberniae regis” (“king of Connaught at the time Diarmaid [son of Fearghus] was primary king of Ireland”), that is around the year 558 (247). However, Colgan notes that this claim is contradicted by the late fifteenth-century *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*, and other sources, all of which place Guaire almost a century later, in the reign of Diarmaid son of Aodh Sláine, who ruled around the year 630 (247). Colgan asserts that Keating erred in moving Guaire to the reign of Diarmaid son of Fearghus because the consensus in Irish history – the “communibus patriae hystoriis” – locates Guaire in the reign of the later Diarmaid (247).
This “error” is the clearest instance of Keating not just arranging and editing but also altering his source material in order to produce a sequence of similar stories. Keating’s change impacts two sections: one describes the Battle of Carn Conaill and the other involves the interactions between the two kings, Diarmaid son of Fearghus and Guaire son of Colmán, centered around Guaire’s loss to Diarmaid in battle and the kings’ reconciliation through Guaire’s demonstration of Christian charity. In the *Foras Feasa*, these episodes are presented separately, but in Keating’s likely source, a version of the *Cath Cairn Chonaill* (*Battle of Carn Conaill*) recorded in a fifteenth-century manuscript now known as Egerton MS 1782, the battle itself and the story of Guaire and Diarmaid’s friendship were part of the same account. Keating includes both elements from his source, but separates them by several generations, giving a brief account of the Battle of Carn Conaill without mentioning Diarmaid son of Aodh Sláine’s antagonist in the historical moment during which this battle is generally accepted to have taken place, but relocating Guaire, and the cluster of stories associated with him, to the earlier Diarmaid, a revision that diverges from the “communibus patriae hystoriis” but allows Keating to construct a series of linked episodes.

In Keating’s account of the Battle of Carn Conaill, most of the tale’s key elements come directly from its source. Keating writes that the Battle of Carn Conaill was fought by Diarmaid son of Aodh Sláine, that three kings died in the battle, and that Diarmaid won “tré ghuidhe choimhthionóil Chiaráin i g-Cluain Mic Nóis” (“through the praying of Ciarán’s community at Clonmacnoise”) (3: 134-135). After the battle, Diarmaid returned to Clonmacnoise and gave land

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25This is one of the very rare instances in which both Keating’s source and the manuscript he used are relatively clear, or that, at least, a “plausible case” can be made that Keating had access to this manuscript, to borrow Cunningham’s phrasing (“World” 81).

26For more on seventeenth-century responses to Keating, see Cunningham, “Readers” 39-51. For a discussion of Keating’s readers in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, see Caball, “Translation” 47-68.
to the church as altar land; in the conclusion of this section, Diarmaid wills that he should be buried at Clonmacnoise after his death (3: 134-137). These details follow closely what is given in Cath Cairn Chonaill, including the gift of altar land, the intervention of the monks at Clonmacnoise, Diarmaid’s burial there, and the deaths of the three kings (206-207).

Since Keating was working so closely with his source, it is unlikely that the relocation of Guaire was simply an error. Further, the results of this revision indicate its advantages for a text invested in presenting and comparing similar episodes. In his new context, and with a few changes, Guaire becomes part of a series of stories examining the interactions between Christian and pagan value systems at an important time of transition for Ireland. Diarmaid son of Fearghus was traditionally the last king to celebrate the “Feis Temro” (“Feast of Tara”), the pagan inauguration of kings. Placing Guaire’s life within the reign of this Diarmaid enables Keating to link stories of pagan and Christian forms of generosity, to present Guaire transitioning to Christian kingship just as Ireland transitioned to Christian nation, and to examine the intersections of royal and churchly power. Through several accounts of kings and clerics coming into conflict, Keating establishes quite clearly that Ireland’s clergy held incontestable moral authority. By assigning authority over ethical matters to the clergy, Keating is able to show Ireland’s Christian fidelity, despite the sometimes less-than-Christian actions of the island’s secular rulers, while maintaining the Foras Feasa’s central claim that the sovereignty of Ireland rested in an unbroken line of constitutional kings.

Concern over the pagan beliefs of the early Irish kings might seem surprising for a text that relates the settlement of Ireland by euhemerized gods who possess the ability to raise the

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27 See Koch 587.
28 Most of the terms that refer to religious beliefs in Ireland prior to its conversion to Christianity are problematic in one way or another; I use “pagan” here as it follows Keating’s own term, página.
dead by putting demons in their bodies and that describes druids successfully prophesying and performing magic (1: 202-203). However, Keating was committed to showing that once Christianity came to Ireland, the island’s piety was unquestionable. As with many other aspects of Keating’s project, anticolonialism is at the heart of this choice. Colonialist writers from Giraldus Cambrensis on cited the unchristian nature of the Irish as an important justification for English colonization, producing what Kathy Lavezzo has termed a “longlasting discourse of Irish barbarism in service of English colonialism” (58). Cambrensis, for example, describes the Irish as unbaptized and unchristian barbarians who live like – and even engage in sexual intercourse with – beasts (53). Following in this mode, Spenser’s View identifies the Catholic religion as one of three major causes of strife in Ireland, along with Irish laws and customs, and writes that the Irish are “Papists by their profession, but in the same so blindly and brutishly informed, (for the most part) that not one amongst a hundred knoweth any ground of religion, or any article of his faith” (85). Spenser’s proposed solution to the “evils” that are “most hurtfull to the comon-weale of that land” is notorious: he advocates sending “over into that realme, such a strong power of men, as should perforce bring in all that rebellious route and loose people” (13, 93).

Ireland’s history demonstrates a clear pattern: claims that the Irish lacked true religion were used to justify military incursions into the island. Accordingly, the Foras Feasa argues against the idea that Christianity ever lapsed in Ireland. For example, Keating confronts the claim that the papal bull Laudabiliter, which purportedly transferred the sovereignty of Ireland to Henry II in the twelfth century, instructed the English king to reform the Catholic faith in Ireland (3: 350-351). Keating asserts that whoever informed Pope Adrian IV that the faith had lapsed

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29 Though Keating was concerned with showing that the bull was based, at least in part, upon a misrepresentation of Irish piety, the grant itself was central to his portrayal of Irish sovereignty. In what Bradshaw calls “a masterful exercise of historical contextualization,” Keating represents...
in Ireland told a lie; in support of the unwavering faith of the Irish, Keating cites Bede himself and then gives a series of proofs that the Irish were steadfast in the Catholic faith, based on the many abbeys, pilgrimages, and religious councils of the Irish (3: 350-357).

Keating’s investment in presenting an unbroken Catholic faith in Ireland required him to confront the transitional period of Irish religions, during which Christianity was established but pagan beliefs had not been entirely eradicated. Ireland at the time of Diarmaid son of Fearghus was an Ireland in which druids could threaten kings with satirization while the kings themselves posed a threat to even the most vulnerable of Christian figures, solitary nuns. This Ireland was neither a Christianity-anticipating pagan nation nor yet fully Christian and thus required some intervention on Keating’s part in order to harmonize with his representation of a steadfastly Catholic Ireland.\textsuperscript{30} Keating’s relocation of Guaire enables him to dramatize intersections of pagan and Christian moral codes while also presenting multiple examples of kings and clerics clashing, in each instance demonstrating that Ireland’s Christianity was well guarded by its clergy, who were more than capable of enforcing God’s will on earth.

Keating constructs a section that includes many similar episodes, all of which center on the matter of balancing clerical and royal authority. In examining these power dynamics, Keating was drawing on a long established tradition; most of Ireland’s medieval texts were penned by monks and consequently many reveal a deep concern with intersections between clerical and regal powers. Predictably enough, these stories present the dangers of kings disobeying or interfering with clerics, including cautionary tales of the fates suffered by kings who displease

\textit{Laudabiliter} as the “formal instrument of a process whereby the native elective high-kingship was transformed into a hereditary fief vested in the crown of England” (“Apologist” 174-174).\textsuperscript{30} The \textit{Foras Feasa} frequently presents pre-Christian Ireland as anticipating the arrival of Christianity; for example, the Milesians’ wandering before arriving at the island parallels the wandering of the Israelites in the desert (2: 24-29).
churchmen seriously enough to merit cursing. Probably the most famous of these is told in the Middle Irish *Buile Shuibhne*, which describes how the Ulster king Suibhne offended Bishop Ronan by breaking his bell, throwing his psalter in a lake, and killing his psalmist; the outraged bishop cursed Suibhne to madness and death by a spear, both of which fates are suffered by the king. These stories communicate a clear moral: kings who disobey or abuse religious figures will be punished by God.

Keating’s revisions around Guaire bring together a series of accounts describing clerical curses leveled against kings who offended the Church. The first of these occurs at the very beginning of Guaire’s reign and involves the Connaught king’s accession to the throne. Keating writes that when Guaire took the throne, a young man named Ceallach, who had been studying to be a monk under Saint Ciarán, left the saint’s community to seek the sovereignty of Connaught in opposition to Guaire; angered by this defection, Ciarán curses his wayward pupil to die a violent death (3: 54-55). Ceallach repents and returns to Ciarán, who forgives the young man but tells him that he cannot avoid the foretold death (3: 54-55) Some time later, Ceallach becomes a bishop and attempts to use his influence to gain the sovereignty for his younger brother; Guaire hears of this and induces three of Ceallach’s friends to kill him (3: 54-55). Thus, Ciarán’s prophecy is fulfilled through the actions of Ceallach himself: it is when Ceallach returns to his earlier concerns with politics and succession that he sets into motion the sequence of events that lead to his death.

Following Guaire’s rise to the throne, Keating describes two battles, both of which are decided through the prayer or cursing of religious figures. The first is the Battle of Cúile, in which the people of Corcaigh were defeated because a female saint named Mhidhe had prayed

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31 *Buile Shuibhne* is available in several translations, including J. G. O’Keeffe’s and Seamus Heaney’s.
against them when they showed her disrespect (3: 56-57). The second is the Battle of Cúile Dreimhne, which the sons of Muircheartaigh Mic Earca won over Diarmaid. Keating writes that Diarmaid was defeated “tré ghuidhe Choluim Chille” (“through the prayer of Colum Cille”) whom he had offended by killing Cuarnán son of Aodh in violation of the saint’s sanctuary (3: 56-57). The text indicates that Diarmaid’s action in slaying Cuarnán was an offense worthy of punishment by noting that God avenged the killing of Cuarnán on Diarmaid through the battle. In these tales, religious figures have both the moral authority to decide whether an action is right or wrong and the power to enforce that authority through unilaterally effective prayers.

The final account of saintly cursing in this section has correspondences with both the battle stories and the prophesied death of Ceallach; it involves a battle, but also describes the cursed individual seeking forgiveness from the saint he had wronged. Keating presents two similar episodes with very different outcomes, for, unlike Ceallach, Guaire survives his cursing, and even forms an alliance with his opponent. From the Egerton version of *Cath Cairnn Chonaill*, Keating takes the story of Guaire being cursed by Saint Cáimín so that he will lose the battle. Both *Cath Cairnn Chonaill* and the *Foras Feasa* write that the saint fasted three days against Guaire because the king had offended him. Following Egerton 1782, Keating writes that Guaire begs Cáimín’s forgiveness, offering submission and restitution but is told that the curse cannot be avoided (3: 60-61). While *Cath Cairnn Chonaill* relates that the saint offers Guaire some consolation; “acht chena is comluath sain ocus doberat do reir fein duit,” which Standish Hayes O’Grady translates as “yet [so much I may procure: that] this once done they in turn shall submit to thee,” Keating simply describes Cáimín telling Guaire that “Ní fhUIL breith air gan diommbuaidh gcatha do bheith ort” (“there is no avoiding defeat in battle for you”) (209, 3: 60-61). This places the emphasis on the inevitability of clerical curses once they are given; just as
Ceallach’s violent death cannot be avoided even after he is forgiven, Guaire cannot escape defeat in battle, though he has begged Cáimín for forgiveness.

Of course, defeat is not the same as death, as the *Foras Feasa* makes clear. Guaire loses the battle, as he was fated to do, and flees into the wilderness, where a female hermit helps him to catch a salmon; Guaire thanks God for this simple meal, though he feasted on “deich maírt oídhe oile aige” (“ten beef-cows on other nights”) (3: 60-61). The next day, Guaire’s friends counsel him to submit to Diarmaid; the defeated king follows this advice and Diarmaid, after testing Guaire’s piety and generosity, releases Guaire because his submission to God is sufficient (3: 62-63). Pairing Guaire’s story with Ceallach’s makes for an instructive comparison; though both tales are unequivocal on the inevitable clerical prophecies once given, where Ceallach’s failure to learn that his place is with the Church leads directly to his death, Guaire spends a night in the wilderness meditating on his reduced state and then demonstrates true Christian piety. Guaire’s submission to the higher power of God results in his release from submission to Diarmaid and his return to kingly status. Keating here arranges these similar stories to demonstrate the unquestionable moral authority of the clerics of Ireland and to establish Guaire as a king who can dramatize the Christianization of Ireland’s kingship.

Relocated to the time of Ireland’s last Feast of Tara, Guaire begins as a less-than-perfect Christian king, one who conspires to murder a political rival and steals from a nun, but is ultimately shown to be a model of piety, submitting to the will of God as expressed by his clerics and exercising generosity in an explicitly Christian way.

This section also portrays power struggles between kings and clerics through the highly specific motif of royals stealing the only cows of holy women. There are two such stories here: one involves Guaire’s initial theft of the nun Sineach Chró’s cow, which led to the battle
between Guaire and Diarmaid (3: 58-59). The second describes Diarmaid’s execution of his son Breasal after the prince stole the only cow of a solitary holy woman, following which Diarmaid repents of his rash judgment and secures Breasal’s resurrection through the intervention of Saint Colum Cille and the holy man Béacán (3: 66-69). Keating draws attention to the similarities between these episodes by altering his source; he describes Sineach Chró as a nun, where Egerton is silent on her identity and other sources, such as the twelfth-century *Lebor na hUidre* (*Book of the Dun Cow*), have her as Diarmaid’s fostermother (3: 58-59, 14). With this minor change, Keating links these two stories: in both a holy woman’s only cow is stolen by an impetuous male authority figure, in both it is King Diarmaid who enacts justice (or revenge) on the thieves, and in both Diarmaid is reconciled with the offenders through Christian virtue and the actions of a cleric. Here, as elsewhere in this section, kings may sin but churchmen speak for God and wield unquestionable power, even to the extent of resurrecting the dead.

By thus arranging this series of episodes, Keating accomplishes several things. First, he makes the thematic organization of the *Foras Feasa* especially clear: these are very similar stories, connected not just on the broad level of interaction between kings and clerics, but through much more precise motifs, such as holy curses and rulers stealing the only cows of solitary nuns. Further, this arrangement enables Keating to offer a meditation on the spheres of power operating in early Christian Ireland. Here, the clerics are the clear holders of moral power: Diarmaid attempts to punish Guaire and his own son for stealing Church property, but his first effort leads to a conflict that is resolved only because the increasingly pious Guaire demonstrates

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32 The story of Diarmaid and Breasal is not from *Cath Cairnn Chonaill* itself but it was also not an invention of Keating’s, as evidenced by its inclusion in the fifteenth-century *Book of Lismore*, originally called the *Leabhar Mhic Cárthaigh Riabhaigh* (xxvii-xxviii).

33 Stokes’s translation includes both the Egerton and the *Lebor na hUidre* versions of *Cath Cairnn Chonaill*; the latter text begins “Diarmait mac Aeda Sláine, Sinech Cró rodn-alt” (“Diarmaid son of Aodh Sláine, Sinech Cró fostered him”) (204).
his Christian generosity. In the second instance, the hand of the Church is even clearer; after Diarmaid executes his son, two saints must repair matters and bring the dead prince back to life, presumably much chastened and unlikely to harass nuns again.

The matter of properly deployed generosity, as portrayed in the various stories Keating collects around Guaire, is without question the most prominent theme in this section. Keating writes that when Guaire submits to Diarmaid, the victorious king decides to test Guaire’s famed generosity to see if his motives are pious or only due to vanity (3: 60-63). Diarmaid sends a druid to Guaire, requesting reward for his art, but the defeated king ignores the druid’s pleas; however, when Diarmaid sends a leper to beg for alms “ar son Dé” (“for God’s sake”), Guaire gives the man several gifts, weeping as each is taken from the beggar by Diarmaid’s people (3: 62-63). When Diarmaid asks if Guaire weeps from distress over his defeat, Guaire responds that he is instead upset at seeing a poor man in want (3: 62-63). After Diarmaid hears this, he sets Guaire free and the two kings reconcile, traveling together to the fair of Taillteann to cement the peace between them (3: 62-63). At the fair, Guaire becomes alarmed that no one has asked him for alms and decides this is a sign of his impending death but Diarmaid reveals that he had instructed the men of Ireland to ask nothing of the famously generous king (3: 62-65). Upon receiving permission from Diarmaid to give gifts, Guaire shares his wealth with all present and the hand with which he gives to the poor becomes longer than the one with which he gives to the bards (3: 64-65). Guaire’s initial refusal of the druid’s request, made for the sake of his craft, as well as the miraculous lengthening of his alms-bestowing hand, emphasize that Guaire’s generosity is fundamentally Christian and that the most appropriate recipients of such generosity are poor beggars rather than bards or druids.
To further underscore Guaire’s Christian generosity, Keating includes a scene from the Egerton Cath Cairn Chonaill in which Guaire converses with two saints about their deepest desires. Guaire names his wishes: “ór is ionnmhas” (“gold and treasure”) to bestow on others while Saint Cáimín, the monk who had cursed Guaire before the battle, wishes instead to have many diseases visited upon his body and the more literary Saint Cuimín wishes for many books. However, where Egerton locates this episode during Guaire’s initial conversation with Cáimín, in which the king begs forgiveness and is told his defeat cannot be avoided, Keating places it later in the sequence of Guaire and Diarmaid stories, revealing, again, his willingness to move episodes when it suits his purpose.

In its new location in the Foras Feasa, the story of Diarmaid and Guaire follows an episode in which another generous king, Eochaidh Aontsúla, is abused by a druid, who demands and receives one of the king’s eyes. These paired stories present the virtue of generosity in both Christian and pagan contexts. In the first, which Keating places immediately prior to Guaire’s theft of Sineach Chró’s cow, Eochaidh is the victim of a druid’s avariciousness. Having learned of Eochaidh’s reputation for generosity, a “file Albanach” (“poet of Alba”) named Labhán Draoi (“the Druid”) demands of Eochaidh the gift of his eye, a request with which Eochaidh complies for fear the druid will satirize him (3: 58-59). Saint Ruadhán of Lothra witnesses this injustice and prays that Labhán’s eyes be put in Eochaidh’s head to provide him with vision during his lifetime; this prayer is granted and the king’s sight restored, reinforcing the power of the clergy.

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34 Alba originally described the whole island of Britain but later specified Scotland. The Foras Feasa relates the tradition that the name derives from Albanactus, third son of the Trojan Brutus, whose inheritance was the northern portion of the British island (1: 188-189).
to determine what is right and to enforce those decisions through highly efficacious prayers (3: 58-59).35

Eochaidh and Guaire form effective counterparts. Both have reputations for generosity and both are tested on the basis of those reputations. Eochaidh’s generosity is coded as belonging to a pagan value system, in which generosity was a necessary characteristic of any true king and in which those rulers who did not provide liberal hospitality could expect to be satirized and lose their right to rule. For instance, in the *Cath Maige Tuired (The Second Battle of Mag Tuired)*, extant in a sixteenth-century manuscript but probably dating to the twelfth century, the high king Bres fails to offer generous hospitality to the poet of the Tuatha Dé, in response to which the poet writes Ireland’s first satire, causing Bres to lose all prosperity and eventually his crown (34-35). Keating gives fear of satirization as Eochaidh’s reason for complying with the druid’s outrageous request, indicating that the generosity practiced by Eochaidh is of the sort associated with a pagan moral code. Guaire’s generosity, however, is directed toward the deserving poor; Guaire’s submission and testing amply demonstrate that his generosity is practiced not for glory but for God. Significantly, Keating does not include another traditional instance of Guaire’s generosity, in which it is he who is abused by ravening figures from the pagan traditions when he is visited by a plague of hungry poets whom he is forced to support, as Eochaidh was, for fear that they will satirize him.36 This is not the kind of generosity Keating wants to connect with Guaire, as his submission scene makes clear.

35 Keating here is drawing on an existing tradition, recorded in texts such as the *Bethada Náem nÉrenn (Lives of Irish Saints*, extant in several early seventeenth-century manuscripts); the “Life of Ruadan,” for instance, places this saint’s life within the reign of Diarmaid son of Fearghus and records the poet’s wicked demand, the king’s unwilling gift, and the saint’s righteous response (319-320).
36 This story is told as *Tromdámh Guaire (Guaire’s Burdensome Company)*, preserved in the fifteenth-century *Book of Lismore.*
Generosity and hospitality have special significance as Irish virtues; in the introduction to the *Foras Feasa*, Keating accuses Cambrensis, Spenser, and other foreigners of seeking out the wicked deeds of inferior people and “caillcheach mbeag n-uiríseal” (“lowly little hags”) while ignoring the virtues of the Irish nobility, chief of which is generosity (1: 4-7). Keating writes that it cannot be claimed that there have ever existed any people in Europe who surpass the Irish in either generosity or hospitality and then describes the Irish custom of holding assemblies and inviting anyone who might require aid to come and receive gifts and alms (1: 4-7). By contrasting Guaire’s Christian generosity with Eochaidh’s pagan generosity, Keating stages the transition of moral codes as Ireland was becoming the island of saints and scholars praised by Bede. Defending Ireland’s Christian status was crucial at a time when colonialist writers such as John Derricke (fl. 1578–1581) were claiming that the Irish were “pernicious members of Sathan” in dire need of reform, by the sword if necessary, an assertion Derricke makes in his 1581 *The Image of Irelande*. Keating dramatizes the success of Christian moral codes over pagan ones, even though the revision that made this section possible was a clear divergence from his source and from the accepted historical timeline.

This sequence demands a contextualized mode for reading and interpreting Irish historical texts. The clear correspondences between stories of cursing, cattle-theft, and generosity in this section argue against reading any of these episodes in isolation. Keating shows that Guaire’s theft of Sineach Chró’s cow exists in context with the extremely similar episode of Breasal’s appropriation of the solitary nun’s cow, just as the story of the druid’s monstrous request that Eochaidh Aontsúla give his own eye in proof of his generosity must be understood in the context of Diarmaid’s test of Guaire’s generosity. The *Foras Feasa*’s insistence on thematic

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37 The 1581 edition of the *Image of Irelande* is not paginated.
arrangement reveals the necessity of reading Irish texts in conversation with each other, validating Keating’s claim that foreign writers on Ireland cannot be trusted because they lack familiarity with the *seanchas*.

**History and Legend in the Writing of Ireland’s Past**

By collecting similar episodes and presenting them in linked series, Keating integrates a long-established means of Irish knowledge formation into his foundational work of national history. In support of Keating’s assertion that Stanhurst, Hanmer, and all of the other foreign writers on Ireland cannot be regarded as serious historians because they could not read the *seanchas* of Ireland, the structure of the *Foras Feasa* demonstrates the centrality of the *seanchas* to Irish history. Written in Irish, for the Éirennaigh nation it invented, the *Foras Feasa* creates an Irish genre of national history built on native sources and categories of knowledge. Keating rejects categorizations of the Irish chronicles as “fabulous” and shows that criticisms of single episodes or texts are misreadings based on a fundamental confusion about how to approach the *seanchas*. Irish history, as Keating constructs it, is multigeneric and thoroughly contextualized, requiring knowledge that colonialist writers did not possess.

Keating’s generic manipulations supported anticolonialist endeavors by reclaiming Irish history, but at the risk of rendering the *Foras Feasa* vulnerable to the very criticisms it was attempting to disprove. Though seventeenth-century readers of Keating, such as Colgan with his concern for accuracy and Richard Cox with his dismissal of the *Foras Feasa* as an “ill-digested heap of very silly fictions,” tended to evaluate this text on the basis of historical accuracy, its anticolonial rhetoric was evident to Keating’s contemporary, Michael Kearney (“To the Reader”). Kearney offered the first translation of the *Foras Feasa* into English, produced with
the intention of bringing to a wider audience Keating’s refutation of the “false English writers” who showed their “venom and gall” towards Ireland (RIA 24 G 16, 25r-25v). In the early eighteenth century, Keating’s argument about the inability of hostile foreign writers to understand Irish genres was redeployed against Cox by Hugh MacCurtin (1680?–1755) in his 1717 *A Brief Discourse in Vindication of the Antiquity of Ireland* as part of a defense of Irish histories in general and the *Foras Feasa* in particular. MacCurtin writes that Cox and the other “Foreign Authors” who complain that it is difficult to distinguish between fable and history in the Irish records are simply confounded by their inability to “distinguish the true Histories which are Authentick, from the School-Books, and other Romances that were written for Pastime,” restating in almost a direct translation Keating’s original rebuttal of Hanmer and indicating the continuing influence of the *Foras Feasa* on the historiographic discourse of Ireland (xii-xiv).

The *Foras Feasa*’s presentation of Irish history as independent, noble, and knowable was central to anticolonial endeavors in Ireland for many centuries. Its strategy of blending legendary and historical genres would prove especially useful for a later group of Irish writers, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revivalists who found in the old legends of Ireland a “Celtic” version of Irishness accessible to both Protestants and Catholics. In his *Life and Times of Aodh O’Neill* (1879), for instance, John Mitchel inserts the New English into the narrative of legendary invasions of Ireland, writing that “new immigration was made, early in the sixteenth century, like that of the Tuatha-de-Danaan and Milesians of remoter times” and employing essentially the same strategy Keating did with his own Anglo-Norman ancestors (vii). National histories of Ireland, such as Douglas Hyde’s *A Literary History of Ireland* (1899) and Standish James O’Grady’s *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period* (1878), incorporated accounts from the ancient records and, as their titles indicate, were attentive to the utility of generic inclusivity in
writing anticolonial histories. Keating’s version of the Irish national history offered an effective strategy for leveraging all of Ireland’s traditions, historical and legendary, in support of Irish anticolonialism.

Thematic arrangements, which encourage comparison and interpretation, enabled Keating to include many of the finnscéla preserved in Ireland’s seanchas because they placed these stories in new contexts. Keating’s choices here have two thrusts: first they form an argument for the kinds of sources that belong in the telling of Ireland’s past, incorporating even those texts that must be read as legend or allegory, rather than history. Second, Keating shows that these stories belong to sequences that can only be understood through context and comparison.

Keating critiques Hanmer for his inability to distinguish between texts that are meant to give an accurate account of the past, and those that were invented as entertainment. The Foras Feasa includes many such episodes – it is a work of history liberally sprinkled with legends – but the allegorical and contextualized modes of interpretation these texts demand indicate that any attempt to interpret them as simple historical facts would be as much of a misreading as Hanmer’s. Thus, Keating is able to rehabilitate many stories that, because of their legendary nature or their problematic content, otherwise would have been incompatible with his goals in writing the Foras Feasa, and even to present them as belonging to the telling of Irish history just as much as the chronicles and annals. Keating’s text reclaims the writing of Irish history for those who understand the seanchas well enough to tell history from legend and, crucially, are able to recognize that many genres belong to the foundation of knowledge on Ireland.
Chapter Five

“The So Long Received Tradition of Brutus”:

The Resurgence of Settlement Legends in Restoration Britain

Introduction: The Bones of King Arthur

In his 1661 _Cambria Triumphans_, the historian and antiquary Percy Enderbie describes a twelfth-century archaeological discovery in which the bones of the famed King Arthur were unearthed. Enderbie asserts that these bones of “enormous bigness” fulfill a dual function: first, they make it clear to those who would credit “so vain a fable” as the claim that Arthur is not dead but carried away by fairies that they are deceived in believing the legendary king will some day “return again” (191). “On the other side,” however, Enderbie asserts that the bones equally confute any who would “doubt whether any such man was ever, _In rerum Natura_” (191). This twofold refutation is characteristic of Enderbie’s approach to most of the Matter of Britain, the legends of Brutus the Trojan, of King Arthur, of the giants who once occupied Britain and the deeds of its ancient inhabitants. Enderbie wrote more than a century after the 1534 publication of Polydore Vergil’s _Anglica Historia_, which asserted that Galfridus Monemutensis’s _Historia Regum Britanniae_ was guilty of spreading lies and which was followed by many other texts contending that the island’s origin accounts were fundamentally fictional.¹ However, Enderbie’s text was also published immediately following the Restoration of Charles II, at a time when the monarchy of Britain and the unity of the British kingdoms stood in great need of the stability that the Matter of Britain could offer. The material proof offered by Arthur’s bones was irrefutable evidence that Britain’s traditions were not mere fables and thus that the long line of Britain’s

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¹ For more on the influence of _Anglica Historia_ on English historiography, see Anke Bernau 106.
monarchy “from Brutus to King Charles II,” as the subtitle of *Cambria Triumphans* continues, was faithfully recorded in its histories.

Enderbie responds to the tradition of skeptical responses toward the Matter of Britain and to his own time’s great need for unifying legends through strategies such as his invocation of Arthur’s bones, which simultaneously demythologize and authenticate this legendary king. The duality of Enderbie’s response here illustrates the limitations in models of early modern historiography that associate an assumed increase in skepticism with the growth of historiographic sophistication. The publication of *Cambria Triumphans*, along with a number of other late seventeenth-century texts that set out to validate the Matter of Britain, shows that critical responses to medieval legends did not simply grow over time as British scholars increasingly learned to set aside their nation’s fictions. As Enderbie’s invocation of a twelfth-century archaeological find to vindicate a fifth-century king in response to seventeenth-century criticisms indicates, early modern defenders of Britain’s legends had access to a wide variety of scholarly tools, which they deployed to produce carefully constructed and critically engaged arguments. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century representations of the Brutus traditions in national histories reveal not a steady increase in caution toward these legends but shifting responses dependent on contemporary political exigencies, particularly those driven by colonial projects and questions of national identity. As Enderbie’s invocation of a twelfth-century archaeological find to vindicate a fifth-century king in response to seventeenth-century criticisms indicates, early modern defenders of Britain’s legends had access to a wide variety of scholarly tools, which they deployed to produce carefully constructed and critically engaged arguments validating their historiographies.
The resurgence of texts defending the historicity of the Brutus materials was possible because of the breadth and complexity of the historiographic field. Although many histories written in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James VI and I do mark accounts of Brutus as separate from the more readily verifiable events following the invasions of the Romans or Saxons, such skepticism was far from universal. For example, while the English historian and cartographer John Speed contends in his 1611 *History of Great Britaine* that most scholars consider the “storie of Brute doubtfull,” John Milton’s 1670 *History of Britain* concludes that although some of Britain’s traditions can be dismissed as fabrications, of “Brutus and his Line, with the whole Progeny of Kings, to the entrance of Julius Caesar, we cannot so easily be discharg’d” (6, 6). Despite the previous century’s vigorous questioning of British origin legends, Brutus had undeniably not been “discharged” in the late seventeenth century. Restoration writers were quick to invoke the unifying narrative in which Brutus bequeathed Scotland to his son Albanactus and Wales to his son Camber, both under the leadership of the eldest son Locrinus, ruler of what would become England. More than just asserting that the Trojan account should not be dismissed out of hand, some Restoration writers argued vigorously in defense of this useful narrative. For example, Enderbie’s *Cambria Triumphans* avers that the tripartite division of Britain and the naming of the island from Brutus is supported by the testimony of “many Domestickall and forrain, private and publick witnesses” while Daniel Langhorne’s 1676 *Introduction to the History of Britain* takes as its sole subject matter the period prior to the Saxon invasion and offers a number of arguments in support of Brutus (“To the Gentle Reader”).

Both *Cambria Triumphans* and the *Introduction to the History of Britain* devote considerable attention to addressing criticisms such as Speed’s, reflecting the need of Restoration-era Brutus accounts to confront the decades of skepticism that preceded them.
Attempts at historical apologetics pervade late seventeenth-century discussions of the Matter of Britain, distinguishing the works of Langhorne, Enderbie, and their contemporaries from earlier historical accounts, in which it was still possible to present these materials without discussion of their contested status. Seventeenth-century defenses of Brutus complicate the skeptical trajectory often attributed to early modern British historiography, showing that, for scholars working in the aftermath of the Protectorate, the Brutus legend’s ability to support a coherent national identity among internal divisions amply outweighed its doubtful historicity.

Representations of early modern historiography based on what Andrew Hadfield has termed “the standard narrative of historiographical progress,” in which humanist skepticism triumphed over medieval credulity and historians developed the critical tools necessary for winnowing the myths and legends from Britain’s historical record, do not take into account either the often highly critical practices of medieval historians or the methods used by early modern ones to justify their inclusions of legendary materials (“Skeptical” 34). Hadfield urges his reader to challenge narratives of historiographic progress in which “the importation of humanism, the careful study of the classical past, transformed an existing, rather backward, native British intellectual tradition” (“Skeptical” 29-30). Here I build on Hadfield’s resistance to narratives of early modern historiographic progress to challenge linear models that chart purported historiographic advancements by treating skepticism toward medieval legends as

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2 Hadfield’s essay, “Skeptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution” effectively dismantles the narrative of “unfettered” historical progress built on the nineteenth-century “story of the re-birth of learning in the Renaissance” by demonstrating both that “proper humanist principles” could be used to defend the Matter of Britain as much as to demolish it and that humanist historians in fact “codified and followed what had been accepted practices” among medieval historians (25-31).
evidence of increased scholarly sophistication. As the post-Restoration accounts of Britain’s legends demonstrate, seventeenth-century historians used a variety of extremely sophisticated strategies to justify their use of the legendary materials whose credibility had been questioned but whose utility was undeniable, constructing a model for the national history in which historical and poetical reading practices and objectives came together to support national identities.

D. R. Woolf describes early modern skepticism by writing that “a caution” took hold in seventeenth-century antiquarian and genealogical scholarship. As a result of this caution, historians such as Samuel Daniel, whose 1618 *The Collection of the Historie of England* Woolf describes as “the single most highly regarded survey of the medieval past through much of the seventeenth century,” refused to discuss Britain’s earliest history in any detail (124). The caution that Woolf attributes to Daniel is clear in the metaphor Daniel uses to represent the “credit” available to the Brutus tale: he “cannot see” what credit can be cleared to “the account of above a thousand yeares from Brute to Casseuellaunus” and so, with palpable disdain, leaves this period in history to “such as will bee creditors, according to the substance of their vnderstanding” (2). As discussed in Chapter One, reference to the “credit” that legends possessed was a common way of discussing their credibility because the term allowed writers to emphasize their readers’ role in evaluating sources, by granting or withholding credit, and placed texts and traditions on a spectrum of credibility, rather than treating them as purely fictional or purely historical. Despite

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3 For example, Peter Bietenholz describes how “from the beginning of the fourteenth century a historical consciousness developed among the educated classes and, as education broadened, became more sophisticated,” one aspect of which was that “thinking in terms of *historia* and *fabula* also became more differentiated” (189). Similarly, Roger Mason associates urbanity and skepticism with historiographic advancement, writing that by the late sixteenth century “it was impossible for an urbane humanist of Buchanan’s stature to peddle a legend like that of Galthelus and Scota” (74).
widespread concern that the credit remaining to Britain’s origin accounts might be very slender indeed, few national historians writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ignore the island’s legendary settlement altogether. Some, such as Speed and the Scottish humanist George Buchanan, devote considerable attention to debunking what Speed calls “the vulgar received opinion” that Britain was settled by the figure Buchanan names “commentitium istum Brutum” (“that fictitious Brutus”) (6, fol. 16r). Others, such as James Tyrrell, who writes in his 1696 *The General History of England* that Brutus’s history ought to be “condemned” for its inconsistencies with Roman genealogies, and yet concludes that it is still “fit” to give an account of the Brutus narrative, begin with caveats regarding their subject matter and then devote considerable space to that material in their histories (7). As late as the end of the seventeenth century, even those histories that argue the Brutus tale is a complete fiction still acknowledge a need to address the legendary settlement of Britain. These tales might have been doubtful but they could not be ignored.

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century responses to the ancient origins of Britain were often driven by the uses to which origin legends were put. Hadfield, for example, has noted that reliance on the Matter of Britain grew “dramatically” in English histories of Ireland, as Britain’s legends were called upon to support colonialist claims (“Scythian” 390). The utility of origin legends for colonialist narratives is also examined by Anke Bernau, who notes that the giants Brutus reportedly defeated upon his arrival in Britain were equated with the “savagery” attributed to Scotland, thus justifying colonization and providing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars with a motive for maintaining the truth of these accounts (112). Settlement legends were useful for nationalist narratives as well; Philip Schwyzer identifies a “distinctively Tudor form of nationalism rooted in the desire to recapture British antiquity,” which was
nonetheless “almost completely expelled from English politics and literature” within a few years of James VI and I’s rise to the throne (151). However, when the 1633 Scottish coronation of Charles I called attention to a sense that “English national identity was being besieged by Scottishness, Irishness, Welshness, and Frenchness,” as Lisa Hopkins asserts, writers found models “for both the divisions and the fundamental integration of Britain” in the Brutus legend and were able to negotiate troubling matters of national identity by invoking their shared “Trojanness” (151, 51). This same model for unity among the three kingdoms of Britain was taken up in Restoration attempts to knit together a cohesive narrative of identity for the island by asserting the ancient origins of the British crown, the monarchy’s perseverance through multiple invasions, and the preeminent authority of England over Scotland and Wales. The credit British writers were willing to their legends was highly responsive to contemporary politics, increasing whenever stable national identities were threatened.

Early modern historiography does not follow a trajectory in which scholars increasingly recognized the fictitious nature of medieval pseudohistorical materials. The Brutus traditions may be “doubtfull,” but their efficacy in narrating national unity and English dominance ensured that they were not readily discharged, particularly at times in which such narratives were needed, as in the decades following the Protectorate. Restoration defenses of Brutus reveal the inadequacy of teleological models in which early modern writers gradually gained the sophistication to discard the credulity of their medieval predecessors.4 Rather, as evident in the example of Enderbie citing an archaeological find to simultaneously rebut both skeptical and uncritical accounts of King Arthur, seventeenth-century historians developed a variety of

4 This progressive narrative is contemporaneous with the texts discussed here; for more on how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians disparaged the credulity of the “Writers of the Middle Age,” as Robert Brady terms them, see Chapter One.
strategies that supported their use of medieval legends. Thus, much as with the seventeenth-century uses of accretive genres discussed in Chapter Three, early modern histories that incorporate materials associated with medieval credulity are not evidence of an incomplete evolution toward more sophisticated methods but instead reveal a historiographic field that allowed for a variety of representations of the past.

**Contexts and Criticisms of the Matter of Britain**

The tale of Brutus’s settlement and conquest of Britain was one of many origin accounts that circulated in medieval and early modern Britain. Other legendary figures included Albina, the princess who was set adrift with fifty female companions as punishment for murder and then populated the island named for her by copulating with giants or wicked spirits; Albion, the son of Neptune and a giant himself; Galthelus and his wife Scota, daughter of a Pharaoh, who wandered at sea for some time following the Israelite exodus before landing in either Scotland or Ireland; and Fergus, the Irish king who founded the Scottish royal line. The Brutus tale was also associated with accounts of King Arthur, another conquering king from the Matter of Britain whose legend was tied to the credit of Galfridus Monemutensis. These traditions were not all relegated to the fable bin simultaneously. For example, Albina and her grotesque lovers were among the first to face widespread ridicule. As Bernau explains, the Albina tale was “dismissed or ignored” after the sixteenth century because it did not offer “glorious foundation myth a la Brutus, but one that posits an inherently flawed and troubled beginning for British history” (106-107). Where the Albina tradition lost its credit as an implausible and ignoble account of British
origins, the historicity of Arthurian legends is discussed to this day. Arthur’s significance in British identity is evident in the urgency that many early modern scholars demonstrate in arguing that the tradition’s fabulous elements should not bring it out of credit. The very different treatments of Albina and Arthur show how lightly the fabulous elements of tales might weigh in evaluations of their fitness for history. Although both traditions contain such historically problematic figures as giants, Albina offered British writers an unappealing national origin in which murderous women defy male authority and populate the island with monstrous offspring. The early modern writers who argued that the presence of giants in Arthurian legends are not a valid argument against their historicity show no need to similarly defend Albina.

Galthelius and Fergus were also invoked in national identity productions, especially as Scottish writers attempted to refute the English superiority fostered by the Brutus tale through the subjugation of Albanactus’s Scotland to Locrinus’s England. For example, Galthelius appears in the 1682 *Scotiae Indiculum: Or the Present State of Scotland Together with Divers Reflections Upon the Antient State Thereof* by “A. M. Philopatris,” a pseudonym of Alexander Mudie. This text asserts that “the Ancient Histories of the Kingdom by unanimous consent” relate how Galthelus and Scota settled Scotland and Ireland; soon after this settlement, “Fergusius, the first King of Scots” was crowned on “the fatal Marble Chair” (2-4). As its title

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5 For example, see Frank Reno’s 2007 *The Historic King Arthur: Authenticating the Celtic Hero of Post-Roman Britain* and Rodney Castleden’s 2000 *King Arthur: The Truth Behind the Legend.*  
6 For more on early modern explorations of Arthurian historicity, see Chapter One.  
7 For more on the competition between English and Scottish origin legends, see James Goldstein 57-91.  
8 This is the artifact variously known as the Stone of Scone, “An Lia Fàil” (“The Stone of Destiny”), and the Coronation Stone; Hector Boece’s Scottish chronicles, printed in 1540 under the title *Heir beginnis the hystory and croniklis of Scotland,* describe “Hovv the chiar of marbyll vvas brocht out of Argyle to Scone,” writing that “the fatall chiar of merbill” was brought “out of Ireland be Fergus the first king in Argyle” and then that the stone on which “all scottis kyngis” received their “diademe” was taken to Scone Abbey (cxliii).
indicates, *Sotiae Indiculum* is concerned with linking present Scotland with its ancient past and its author gives his goal as manifesting to the world “the respect that is due to so Antient a Kingdom, in which by a Lawful and Legitimate Descent of the crown to this present King, being an Independent Monarchy, and an Imperial Crown; none of the European Kings can hardly equal” (A4r). Tracing Charles II back to Scotland’s King Fergus was an effective means of affirming the “Lawful and Legitimate” line of the Scottish crown.

As the example of Galthelus indicates, the Brutus account competed with a number of other traditions, whose value was usually driven by their ability to support viable narratives of national identity or empire that served both historical and present political requirements. The efficacy of the Trojan settlement account in establishing the authority and legitimacy of the English crown was recognized for centuries; for example, Enderbie’s introduction to the Brutus story cites in its favor the “Apologetical Letters” sent by Edward I to the Pope, in which the king argued that England’s claim to Scotland dated from the sovereignty that Brutus’s eldest son Locrinus exercised over his brother. Thus, while Albina might be discharged as implausible and immoral, an account of British origins that did no credit to the Britons and could not be supported through historical inquiry, Brutus was more defensible and more necessary to British

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9 Similarly, in his 1685 *A defence of the antiquity of the royal line of Scotland with a true account when the Scots were govern’d by kings in the isle of Britain*, George Mackenzie calls out the utility of the Brutus tale for claims of English superiority, writing that “Edward the First did upon that account claim the superiority to England over us, as younger Brother to Locrinus the eldest Son of Brutus” (51).

10 As Chapters Three and Four demonstrate, establishing connections with ancient settlement accounts proved effective in Ireland as well. Roderic O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*, for example, sets out to link the Stuarts with the ancient kings of Ireland, much as the English and Scottish texts discussed here do. For more on how Enderbie’s “Galfrian royalism” competed with O’Flaherty’s “boast” that the “Stuarts derived their greatest glory from their Milesian ancestry,” see Kidd 325-325.
national identity, while still belonging to the problematically obscure period of Britain’s first origins.

While recognizing that many traditions and figures from the Matter of Britain were significant for early modern national identity formations, I will focus on the Trojan account because it was both more enduring than Albina and less defensible than Arthur. The difficulties of postulating a coherent English or British identity, given the island’s many invasions, combined with the sense of rupture from the past that the Reformation caused, as discussed by Philip Schwyzer, Andrew Escobedo, and many other scholars of early modern national identities, meant that origin legends maintained an important places in British and English national histories. For Britons, Brutus was the problematic and potentially fabulous originator of their kingdom, a figure who stood between the nation he founded and the unwelcome conclusion that, as Escobedo has phrased the problem, “the only origins the nation possessed were fictional ones” (4). Representations of Brutus in histories written after 1660 illustrate early modern explorations of the room that could be found for legend in history quite clearly because the Brutus tale’s legitimizing qualities were badly needed in the Restoration but the decades of previous scholarship arguing against the tale’s veracity, as well as the fact that other European nations had discounted their own Trojan origin stories, meant that the tale’s problematic associations with myth and legend could not be ignored.11

Restoration-era scholarship arguing for the fitness of including the Brutus tale within national history had to contend with texts such as George Buchanan’s 1582 *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, which offered an early and influential criticism of British origin legends. Buchanan

11 Schwyzer has noted that “the continued allegiance of the English to Brutus the Trojan, at a time when other European peoples had relinquished their own mythical Trojan founders, made them a laughing-stock among continental scholars” (77).
spends several pages demolishing the credibility of both Brutus and Albina, citing implausibilities in their tales – such as the inadequate navigational technology available at the time and the anachronism in Brutus speaking Latin with the oracle of Diana – and concluding that the Brutus account is a fiction among fables (45-46, 16-17). In like manner, John Speed cites from a wide variety of scholars the “many obiections made both by forraine and home-bred Writers” in proof of his assertion that the story of Brutus, though it may be upheld in the “vulgar receiued opinion” is nevertheless “fabulous” (14). Brutus, Speed concludes, is an ignoble foundation figure in any case, a parricide whose ancestors lost the battle of Troy and who “sprung from Venus that lasciuious Adulteresse” (166). This doubled response indicates the ambivalent status of Brutus in the seventeenth century. It is not enough for Speed to simply dismiss the Trojan hero as fictional; following a detailed scholarly debunking, Speed also objects that the historical character he has just argued never existed was also not a noble hero.

Speed’s fairly dim assessment of the Brutus account’s credibility was far from unique in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholarship. For example, Richard Baker’s 1643 A chronicle of the Kings of England, from the time of the Romans goverment unto the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King Charles dismisses in one paragraph Albina, Albion, and Brutus. Demonstrating a willingness to concede that his national origins are irretrievable, Baker writes that all of the British origin accounts are “Fictions” produced by “Poets” and that “nothing is delivered to Posterity of the most ancient times, but very Fables” (1). Having “exploded” the stories of Albion and Albina, Baker writes that there follows “another with great Attestation, and

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12 As indicated by the use to which the Brutus legend was put in the papal letter of Edward I, Buchanan’s motives in debunking this tale extended beyond humanist professionalism; he was also invalidating a longstanding claim to English dominance over Scotland. For more on the contention between the Brutus legend and the Scottish account of Galthelus and Scota in medieval and early modern constructions of national identity, see Roger Mason 60-84.
yet as very great a fable as these,” which is the story of Brutus, whose invention he attributes to Monemutensis (1). Baker calls the Brutus account “such stuffe, which may please children” and concludes that the truth is delivered in “such slender draughts, and such broken pieces” that there is “very small benefit” in knowing anything from before the time of Julius Caesar (1). Baker’s chronicle, published six years before Charles I was beheaded, offers a full version of early modern skepticism toward Britain’s legends. Baker dismisses all of the records that predate Caesar, describes the three major origin traditions as tales for children, identifies Geoffrey of Monmouth as the sole and highly flawed source of these traditions, and makes the argument that the early histories were written by poets as fictions.

The debate over Brutus was one marked by considerable reciprocity. In his brief and skeptical discussion of the Brutus account, Daniel acknowledges that the tradition does have its creditors. Speed does the same, asserting that there are some “Criticks that faine would take aduantage from the defenders of Brutes history” and who cite the origin accounts of other nations in support of Britain’s. However, Speed argues that other nations have set aside their mythical settlement figures and makes an impassioned plea for Britain to do the same, writing: “as France hath cast off their Francio King Priamus his sonne, Scotland their Scotia King Pharaoes daughter, Denmarke their Danus, Ireland their Hiberus, and other Countries their Demi-gods; so let BRITAINES likewise with them disclaime their BRVTE” (166). Similarly, the political scholar and historian James Tyrrell asserts that the British are like “almost all other Nations of Europe, since they began to write Histories of their Originals, in claiming heroes as their founders (7). Daniel Langhorne also identifies Brutus as one of several European founding figures but does so in order to make the opposite argument. He writes that “even the most unlearned and barbarous of nations have preserved the memory of some of their old Heroes
especially of the Founders” and asks why Brutus should be singled out for disdain when scholars are willing to credit the heroes of other nations (9). Early modern writers situated Brutus within a European pantheon of foundation figures and characterized both the practice of writing national histories and the problems of determining national origins as common to all nations.

Early modern historians were highly attentive to the rhetorical power of the Brutus tale in validating the authority and antiquity of the English crown and in fostering claims of English primacy over the other kingdoms of Britain. However, as evident in the work of Speed and Daniel, this awareness did not always inspire writers to defend the tale. In fact, the efficacy of Brutus in providing the Britons with a noble national origin was one of the reasons that some early modern scholars found his historicity suspect. In the 1690 English translation of Buchanan’s *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, the invention of “that Commentitious Brutus” is ascribed to the desire of every man to “fetch the Original of his Nation, as high as he could” (41-43). Tyrrell wrote that British claims about Brutus are nothing more than imitations of “the Vanity of the ancient Greeks and Romans, who derived their Kings from some God or Heroe” (7). In a much-discussed passage from his *View*, Edmund Spenser writes that the Irish claim that their own nation was founded by Galthelus the Spaniard and thereby attempt to seize the “high regard” they attribute to Spain (27). Identifying the ambition motivating the Irish origin legend leads Spenser to assert that the Brutus legend is equally baseless and driven by vanity; the Irish “doe heerein no otherwise, then our vaine Englishmen doe in the Tale of Brutus, whom they devise to have first conquered and inhabited this Land, it being as impossible to proove, that there was ever any such Brutus of England, as it is, that there was any such Gathelus of Spaine”

13 In Buchanan’s Latin, this is: “commentitium istum Brutum” or “that fictitious Brutus” and “Nam dum suae quisque gentis originem e longinquo petunt” (fol. 16r, 15r).
As these texts show, despite, and even because of, his efficacy in producing narratives of empire and identity, Brutus was subjected to serious criticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scholars wishing to argue, as Langhorne and Enderbie do, that the Brutus account was not vaine fable but credible history first had to contend with the tradition’s many detractors; these historians’ clear engagements with the body of scholarship on ancient Britain show that legendary histories could also follow highly critical historiographies.

**Fighting Anarchy: *Cambria Triumphans* and Restoration Narratives of Monarchy**

It is the richness of the strategies employed by Restoration defenders of Brutus that argues most tellingly against associations between historians’ inclusion of origin legends and an ostensible medieval credulity. Percy Enderbie’s 1661 *Cambria Triumphans* produces a pan-island Britishness linking the Scots, English, and Welsh through Charles II’s genealogy and the account of Brutus both founding the British monarchy and organizing the island into three kingdoms with England at the head. To validate the material that is at the core of his version of British identity, Enderbie engages in a discussion of the many and reputable sources that affirm the historicity of Brutus, including the extensive research process that went into Edward I’s papal

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14 For more on how Spenser’s “historiographic rigor threatens to dismantle antiquity altogether” and his “attempt to deny the Irish a Spanish origin, depriving them of a historical basis to resist English rule, forces him to question the origins of all nations,” see Andrew Escobedo 168-171.

15 For example, Laure Ashe allows that “medieval chroniclers knew well enough the abstract differences between *historia* and *fabula*” but contends that for these historians “the boundaries of plausibility and credulity remained porous and uncertain” (153). Locating Holinshed’s *Chronicles* on the “cusp” of early modern historiographic changes, Ashe represents the text as combining “skeptical analysis with astonishing credulity” and cites Holinshed as evidence that sixteenth-century historical scholars were “still a long way from discarding the origin myths of Britain’s ancient past” (161-169). Ashe cautions against “the teleological act of identifying modernity in historical writing” and describes the “process” of “shifting myth from history” as “halting and uncertain” but does not challenge associations between “greater historiographical awareness” and increasing skepticism (154-158).
letter. Enderbie also adopts a purportedly objective stance on his subject matter, which allows him to acknowledge the previous scholars that had questioned Brutus while he is simultaneously listing the many records that verify the core of the Brutus tale. By focusing on the essential elements of Brutus’s Trojan descent, his founding of the British monarchy, and his division of the island between his sons, Enderbie distinguishes the Brutus account from the less plausible and certainly less palatable Albina legend.

_Cambria Triumphans_ is a text committed to fighting anarchy and Enderbie uses all of the weapons at his disposal, including Britain’s legends, in order to accomplish this goal. This “intensely patriotic work,” as Philip Jenkins describes it, was dedicated to the recently restored King Charles II (218). Enderbie begins his dedication with a defense of Britain’s monarchical government; the purpose of the “ensuing treatise,” he writes, is to “lay open and unfold the manner of Great Brittain’s Government, which was ever Princely, (contrary to this Chymerical Anarchy).”

Enderbie’s national history is one that states openly its function in supporting Britain’s royal line, a purpose its author accomplishes by connecting the present king with a monarchical tradition stretching back to Brutus. For _Cambria Triumphans_, the Brutus myth offers a powerful model for uniting the three kingdoms of the island of Britain because it asserts the island’s fundamental unity and tripartite organization.

Following his text’s dedication, Enderbie presents a “Genealogy of Charles the IInd. Monarch of Great Brittain, from the Welsh Blood,” which traces the current king’s ancestry from Cadeth “King of South-wales” through several kings and princes of Wales to the marriage between Nest, “daughter of the Welsh King Griffith ap Lhewelyn, and Fleance, Son of Banquo”; the issue of this royal pair was Walter Stuart, first in the Stuart line. Several generations later,

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16 The prefatory sections of _Cambria Triumphans_ are not paginated.
Walter Lord Stuart “Married Margery D. and Heir of Robert the first King of Scots, and had Issue,” that is, “Robert the Second King of Scots.” The English throne enters into this genealogy in the reign of “James the Fourth King of Scots,” who married “Margaret Eldest Daughter to King Henry the 7th King of England”; two generations later, Enderbie lists “James Monarch of Great Britain.” This genealogy neatly erases the “Chymerical Anarchy” preceding Charles II’s London coronation by drawing a direct line between Charles I and “Charles the Second Monarch of Great Brittain, whom God of his infinite Goodnesse protect from his Enemies.” As discussed in Chapter Three, genealogies and king-lists were exceptionally effective genres for asserting the legitimacy of kings, for linking current rulers with previous monarchs, and for erasing disruptions in the royal line.

Through this genealogy, *Cambria Triumphans* demonstrates the British monarchy’s ties with all of the kingdoms founded by Brutus’s sons; Charles II, the “King of Great Brittain, and Prince of Wales, &c.” has ancestors in the royal lines of Wales, Scotland, and England, including an English princess, numerous Scottish kings, and the kings and princes of Wales and South-Wales. Cadeth, the king of South-Wales with whom Enderbie begins his genealogy, was one of three sons of Roderick the Great (or Rodri Maur) who, in some traditions, divided Wales between his three sons, much as Brutus did. By beginning with this Cadeth, Enderbie maintains attention to Charles II’s Welsh connections and to the motif of unity among divisions.

As its title indicates, *Cambria Triumphans* is concerned with the ancient history of Wales in particular. Although Enderbie himself was not Welsh, the address “To the Gentle Reader Whether Welsh or English” that follows Charles II’s genealogy defends Enderbie’s decision to

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17 For example, the 1747 *History of England*, written by Paul de Rapin de Thoyras (1661–1725) and translated by Nicolas Tindal (1687–1774), writes that Roderick the Great “divided Wales between his three sons, allotting each his part” (vol. 4, part II, 234).
write on Wales by citing other histories that were written by individuals not born in those nations and by asserting that his “long continuance” in Wales and marriage to a Welsh woman have rendered him “in a manner a Native.” For the most part, *Cambria Triumphans* treats Welsh history as British history – it is subtitled “Or Brittain in its Perfect Lustre” and its main narrative is titled “The Ancient and Modern Brittish and Welsh History. Beginning with Brute and Continued Untill King Charles the First.” As Chapter Two discusses, reference to the ancient Britons and the notion of a pan-island Britishness was one method that writers adopted in addressing the identity crises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Enderbie’s text acknowledges distinctions between Wales and England while also asserting that Charles II’s ancestry includes Welsh, Scottish, and English royal lines and pairing British and Welsh identities. This account of the triumphant Cambria, last refuge of the original Britons, provides a complete and cohesive narrative history of Great Britain, linking the “ancient and modern” British from Brutus to the Stuarts.

*Cambria Triumphans* is designed to produce narratives of unity and continuity. The text’s dedication to Charles II informs the recently restored king of Great Britain that its purpose is to confound any reader so “brain-sick as to question the Antiquity of Kings and Monarchical Government” by unfolding the “Princely” nature of Great Britain’s government. The genealogy that follows passes directly from Charles I to his son, writing Cromwell’s Protectorate out of the history of British government. Reference to Britain’s ancient history, and particularly the Brutus account, is one of Enderbie’s most effective strategies in bolstering British unity. Enderbie’s address to the reader states that the Britons took their name “from Brutus”; though he writes that he will relate the story of Brutus in detail “in the ensuing History,” Enderbie finds space in this address to assert that “many Domesticall and forrain, private and public witnesses” testify “that
this tripartite division was here from the beginning, and the first name of Brittain given by Brutus.” Enderbie argues that the Brutus account is supported by a large number of texts written in Britain and elsewhere and that it illustrates important aspects of the fundamental nature of Britain: the nation was founded by (and named for) Brutus who established its monarchial government and tripartite division.

As with most seventeenth-century considerations of Brutus, Enderbie must address that this is a contested tradition. In the account of British origins from his “Ancient and Modern Brittish and Welsh History,” Enderbie acknowledges the debate over Brutus’s historicity and informs his reader: “I deny not Brute, but leave every one to his own best liking and opinion” (4). This policy, Enderbie asserts, is an approach to the Brutus tradition evident in the work of William Camden, who “doth not altogether deny Brute, but leaves it to the Counsell, Consent, and Decree of the Learned Parliament and Senate of Antiquaries” (4). The strategy of leaving the historicity of Brutus to the judgment of his learned reader is one that Enderbie nominally shares not just with Camden but with Daniel, who writes that he has left the Brutus story “on the booke” to those who can credit it, but Enderbie’s apparently disinterested stance here prefaces a lengthy list of the sources that support the Brutus tale, in which Enderbie offers his discerning readers some considerable motivation for judging that the weight of history supports Brutus.

Immediately after aligning his historical methodology with Camden’s strategy of leaving Brutus to the common consent of Britain’s antiquaries, Enderbie turns his attention to other sources more willing to argue in Brutus’s favor. “Let us hear what others write,” Enderbie pens, and then cites “Mr Broughton,” as well as “the testimony of Gildas, Nonnius, the Antiquities of Landass” and St. Isiodore, who agrees with Pope Eleutherius in calling Britain “Gens Bruti, the

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18 “The Learned Cambden,” as Langhorne terms him, was frequently cited in reference to the ambiguity of Britain’s origin tales, Brutus in particular.
offspring and Nation of Brute” (4). Enderbie further cites: “Thomas Archbishop of York a
Norman by birth, in the time of King William the first, Thaliessianus above a thousand years
since; William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntington, Gualterus Calenus, Sigibertus, with many
others before Galfrid Mon. wrote, and Vicunnius himself with innumerable after both of this and
other Nations and publick Parliament,” offering a list that impresses with its length and breadth
(4). These are, as Enderbie stresses for his reader, writers from Britain and elsewhere, covering a
period of time that predates the account offered by Monemutensis. Showing that the Brutus
legend could be supported independently from the Historia Regum Britanniae was an important
method of addressing criticisms that the entire tradition was a “meer product of Geffrey of
Monmouth’s Brain,” as Langhorne puts it (5).

Following this flurry of sources, Enderbie returns to the papal letter that he first cited in
the address to his reader. Here, he affirms that this letter was written “after most diligent search
of Antiquities, and due examination as the greatest matter the right of a Kingdom required” and
“sealed with an hundred Seals and Witnesses” (4). Enderbie refers only peripherally to the
letter’s function in establishing the “right of a Kingdom” and claiming Scotland for England. For
Enderbie, the letter is significant because it was produced following a great review of the sources
and thus its conclusions are validated by extensive research as well as by its official function as a
letter from the King of England to the Pope in Rome. The matter so meticulously validated is
that “Brutus the Trojan” landed in Britain, “by his own name called the country Britannia before
named Albion,” and at the time of his death divided “the land into three parts or portions”
between his three sons (4). This is the core of the Brutus legend: the warrior’s Trojan ancestry
and the marks he left on Britain in naming it and dividing it in three.
Enderbie is heavily invested in using the Brutus legend to assert that, as the address to the reader claims, the island’s “tripartite division was here from the beginning.” As with the papal letter that proves Brutus is supported by extensive research, this material is important enough to bear repeating in Cambria Triumphant’s main narrative of British history. The text reiterates that Brutus, on his deathbed, bestowed the island he had settled thus: “Loegria now England to Locrinus, his eldest Son; Cambria Wales to Camber; and Albania Scotland to Albanact” (4). Enderbie concludes again that “the Tripartite division was here from the first name and beginning of Brittain,” reaffirming the fundamental nature of Britain as an island nation of three units, distinct and yet united by their rulers’ fraternity and the authority Brutus granted to his eldest son (4). The utility of such claims for a Restoration writer (as well as the text’s penchant for repetition) is apparent in Enderbie’s statement that “Our most ancient Historians begin with Brute, and so continue the succession of Kings till CHARLES the First; which Brutus divided the Kingdome into three parts: To Locrinus he gave Loegria now England, to Camber his second sonne he gave Cambria now Wales, and to Albanist or Albanact, Albania now Scotland” (2). The three kingdoms that Enderbie locates in Charles II’s genealogy are also the fundamental divisions of Britain and historians can trace the monarchy of Britain from Brutus to the Stuart line. Though Britain may have been divided during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, the Brutus legend offered a persuasive model for these kingdoms’ essential unity and for the durability of the English crown.19

The preeminent authority of England was further supported by the tradition that Brutus founded the city of London, also called Troynovant, or New Troy. To substantiate the claim that London is “the most ancient Citie of this Island builted by Brutus” Enderbie again employs

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19 For more on the history of these wars, see The Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms, 1638-1660 by Trevor Royle.
textual citation and the authority of tradition, referring to “the common opinion of Antiquities,” as well as to “the British History, Galfridus, Vicunnius, and our English Antiquaries” and to Gildas and Sigibertus (4). Enderbie concludes: “except Mr. Stow be deceived in his Authors, Aethieus and old Pagan Philosopher testifieth no less, affirming that Brutus named this Kingdom Britannia” (4). Having established the many sources that affirm Brutus founded the kingdom of Britain and the city of London, named the island for himself, and provided the basis for its tripartite divisions, Enderbie further validates key aspects of the Brutus tradition by stressing that they are supported by historical consensus. “It is commonly held,” he writes, that Brutus’s mother died giving birth to him and that he was exiled after accidentally killing his father (7). At the end of Brutus’s own life, Enderbie states, the “Concordance of Writers” asserts that he divided Britain in three parts before dying and being buried in London (11). Against the scholarship that had questioned Brutus’s historicity, Enderbie marshals a host of specific sources as well as the consensus of the learned.

In portraying Brutus’s deathbed bequest, Enderbie stresses the Trojan ruler’s authority to establish laws and prevent disorder: “having left Rules for his Britons to live in civil Amity and orderly government; after a prosperous Reigne, and happy in a hopeful posterity, he bethinks himself of settling his Estate whereby to avoid all Contention and Discord betwixt his Sons” (11). This representation of Brutus presents the Trojan as a lawgiver and peacemaker, whose foresight enabled him to ensure “orderly government” and avoid “all Contention and Discord” after his death. Enderbie makes the tripartite division of Britain as central to the island’s peace and prosperity as the laws provided by the island’s first king. *Cambria Triumphans* is dedicated to proving that the ancient and divinely-ordained “monarchial government” of Britain, led by kings whose laws combat discord and whose persons unite all of their “Loyal Subjects,” extends
back to the first origins of the island. As Enderbie argues in his dedication, “Great Brittain Government” was “ever Princely” and the tale of Brutus supports that claim, invalidating the anti-monarchial rhetoric of the Protectorate while also providing a model for unity among the island’s kingdoms.

In combating the “Chymerical Anarchy” of the Protectorate, Enderbie requires certain elements of the Brutus tale: the hero’s Trojan ancestry, his foundation of London, his role as lawgiver and bringer of order, and his tripartite division of the island. The royalist scholar discards the less useful or less acceptable aspects of Britain’s foundation accounts, including the Albina story. Enderbie states that while “all writers” agree that the island was called Albion before Brutus’s arrival, the most “just and most rational Writers” trace this name to the “high and white Cliffs and Rocks” (from the Latin: “ab albis kupibus”) and it is the “quaint” writers who refer to the Albina tradition (5). Enderbie argues that no “Authentick Writer” has ever supported this tale and avers that the giants whom Brutus encountered must have come to the island by sailing there, rather than being “produced by the copulation of any such murdering Harpies” (5). Enderbie explains to his reader that Albina and her murderous companions have no basis in reliable scholarship and then offers an alternate explanation for how giants arrived in Britain. Here, again, we see how Albina was problematic for British historians because of the tale’s unflattering account of British origins, as much as for its fantastic elements.

At the beginning of his discussion of Arthur, Enderbie begs his reader to believe that “as I would not willingly add or insert anything which may be fabulous, or without Historical grounds, so would I not leave out any thing which may redound to the true honour of so glorious a King” (186). This is essentially the strategy Enderbie employs in presenting his origin account; he incorporates all elements from the tale that add to the legacy of Britain’s Trojan foundation
while dismissing matters that are ignoble or without historical support, such as the story that Brutus displaced the descendants of a group of “murdering Harpies.” There is no question that Enderbie was writing at a time when the “caution” described by Woolf required some intervention on the part of any scholar wishing to invoke the Brutus tradition. However, as Cambria Triumphans makes clear, arguments based on invoking the weight of scholarly consensus and citing the many sources that had validated Brutus retained their rhetorical power. Enderbie also demonstrates his engagement with the questions raised by scholars such as Buchanan and Speed by prefacing his discussion on Brutus with the standard disclaimer of objectivity and then carefully demonstrating to his readers how one can locate the bones of Britain’s noble origins underneath centuries of accumulated myth.

The “Proper” Matter of History: Defending Brutus through Textual Inclusivity

Daniel Langhorne’s 1676 Introduction to the History of Britain is unapologetically concerned with the earliest periods of British history. Langhorne’s text begins with the island’s first settlement and ends in the year 449 A. D. with the arrival of the “English Saxons” and “the Foundation of the Famous English Monarchy” (191). Like Enderbie, Langhorne is invested in linking the early history of Britain with the present and future stability of its monarchy. He concludes by stating that the monarchy founded by the English Saxons “hath here flourished by Gods mercy ever since its first erecting, and may, I trust, by the same mercy continue flourishing to the end of the World” (191). Also like Enderbie, Langhorne makes a detailed case for the veracity of the Brutus account, displaying an even wider range of strategies able to tackle this thorny question. To Enderbie’s practices of extensive citation, selective validation, and reference to the weight of historical consensus, Langhorne adds the fusion of previously competing
traditions, argument through philological and cultural analysis, and an invocation of the national history’s capacity for encompassing multiple genres.

After he acknowledges and then rebuts several of the complaints made against Brutus’s historicity – including the question of why the Roman sources make no mention of him and the assertion that the whole matter is the product of the less than reliable Monemutensis – Langhorne then sets out a version of British settlement that brings together both the ancient origin legends and the arguably more plausible claims of Gaulish settlement, demonstrating that the purported contradictions among the several accounts of Britain’s settlement can be resolved to verify the Brutus tradition. Langhorne cites biblical and classical scholarship, as well as claims made through anthropological and philological analyses, in order to support his version of British origins, in which Britain has always been ruled by the monarchy that he praises.

Langhorne shares Enderbie’s awareness that defenders of Brutus must address Galfridus Monemutensis as a source and, like Enderbie, Langhorne argues that Monemutensis is far from the only sources for these materials. On the Galfidian question, Langhorne writes that although “Many Learned men explode the whole Narration of Brutus, and deny that ever there was any such man,” claiming that this figure is “the meer product of Geffrey of Monmouth’s Brain,” in fact there are ample other sources that speak of Brutus (5). These include: Nennius, Henry of Huntingdon, Giraldus Cambrensis, Taliesin, and a poem from an “old Saxon Manuscript in Trinity Colledge Library in Cambridge” (9). In listing these sources, Langhorne counters the frequently delivered argument that the Brutus account was supported only by the notoriously unreliable Monemutensis, whose fictions were recognized as such even by his contemporaries. For example, in his dismissal of the ancient history of Britain, Baker writes that the story of Brutus was “first broached by Geoffry Archdeacon of Monmouth: for which all the Writers of
his time cryed shame upon him” (1-2). This is the claim that Langhorne and Enderbie dispute by citing a range of other scholars whose texts are independent of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

Langhorne also argues that while Monemutensis many have been “no faithful Translator” and though he is guilty of inserting a “great many Fictions into that little Chronicle which was brought over from Armorica” yet this is no reason “why we should reject all of it as commentitious” (4-5). Recognizing that the *Historia Regum Britanniae* is suspect and yet refusing to reject it altogether is an approach Langhorne promises to follow in his address to the reader, writing: “I have neither absolutely followed nor rejected Geoffrey of Monmouth, but have made use of him as far as he may be reconciled with better Writers, and give some light to what we find delivered by them.” Langhorne echoes some of the skepticism that Baker and others had expressed toward Monemutensis, but he turns even dismissals of Geoffrey into defenses. Promising that his work will obtrude “nothing upon the Reader’s belief of this that we have taken either from Annius of Viterbo, or Geoffrey of Monmouth,” Langhorne then insists that “both those Authors have been followed and owned by some Learned men” (70). Much as Enderbie professes to leave judgments about Brutus’ historicity to his readers while also compiling an array of sources defending the Trojan account, Langhorne here acknowledges and even echoes some of the criticisms of Monemutensis while simultaneously reminding his reader that “Learned men” have followed him and that his work is compatible with “better Writers.”

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20 Among those claiming that Monemutensis was the primary source for the Brutus account was John Milton, who wrote in his 1670 *History of Britain* that the “Principal Author” of the Brutus tradition “is well know’n to be Geoffrey of Monmouth” (6). This opinion was upheld by Tyrrell, who writes that “Geoffrey of Monmouth is look’d upon as the chief (if not only) Author of the Story of Brutus and his Successours,” concluding that “the whole relation of the Actions of Brutus, and the Succession of all the Princes that followed him, do all depend upon the Credit of Geoffrey and the truth of his transaction” (7).
When Langhorne announces his purpose of setting down the events that the *Historia Regum Britanniæ* describes as occurring “before the coming of the Romans, which though generally by the Learned reputed Fabulous, may yet serve for the Readers delectation and recreation” he offers yet another reason for valuing Britain’s ancient past, one that links history and poetic or fictional reading modes (51). While Langhorne elsewhere expresses his commitment to adhering to the generic expectations of national history that had been developed and refined over several centuries, writing that he would offer more detailed praise of his country save that such material is more “proper for a Chorographer than an Historian,” he shows greater flexibility when Brutus is the subject under discussion (44). Langhorne offers a variety of reasons that Britain’s origin accounts have a legitimate place in his history: Monemutensis is far from the only source for Brutus, his work may be suspect in some matters but it was also followed by learned authors, a selective approach allows the attentive historian to discard fictions without dismissing the entire text, and, historicity aside, the material Monemutensis presents has value to the reader for its ability to delight. In this way, Langhorne establishes the fundamental importance of these tales through a standard that does not rely on their truth-value, although he is also invested in arguing that Brutus was historical. The instability of models that draw a firm distinction between history and poetry is well evident in Langhorne’s argument that the origin accounts of Britain are worth including in his history, even if they are fabulous, because they offer delectation and recreation to readers; Langhorne simultaneously sets aside the requirement that histories contain only that which can be proven “true” while also making readerly pleasure a valid objective of historical writing.

In addition to the matter of Monemutensis’s reliability, Langhorne also responds directly to other common critiques leveled against the Brutus account. Countering the assertion that if
Brutus were historical he would have been mentioned in the Roman sources, Langhorne writes that he does not find persuasive the argument “against the so long received Tradition of Brutus, that no Roman Historian speaks of him, since we find in them but a slender account of those times wherein he must be supposed to have lived, and little more than the bare names of the Alban Kings which more directly appertained to them” (8). Langhorne reminds the reader that the Brutus tradition is “long received” while also pointing out that it would be unreasonable to expect Roman writers to detail such peripheral events when they offer only the barest mention of kings more directly connected with their empire.

From historiography, Langhorne turns to philological analysis to rebut another argument: that the name “Brutus” is not as ancient the time at which Brutus was supposed to have lived. Showing again that Monemutensis is far from the only source for this account, Langhorne writes that Nennius called Britain’s foundation figure “Brito,” a name whose antiquity is apparent in its use by “Hyginus Polyhistor” and “other Greek Writers” (9). Langhorne then asserts that it is possible that the Britons, “ambitious to claim Kindred” with their Roman occupiers, later varied “the Greek name of this Prince into the Roman name of Brutus” (9). Langhorne also references philological analysis when he argues against those who would “have the Britans to come of the Race of the Grecians” instead of the Trojans; he allows that there are great affinities in the languages and customs of the ancient Greeks and Britons but asserts that “all that they say to prove them sprung from Greece, may serve as well to make good their original from the Trojans; who were themselves a Colony of the Grecians” (7-8). As is often his practice, Langhorne acknowledges the basic validity of opposing claims but asserts that their significance has been misconstrued and shows how they can be redirected to support his own view of Britain’s ancient history.
One of Langhorne’s most powerful methods for validating Britain’s Trojan heritage is through combining various origin accounts, thereby asserting that seemingly incompatible traditions can be shown to support each other. Much as Langhorne asserts that one can accept some parts of the Galfridian account without having to admit “the whole Bed-roll of Kings recited in the Monmouth History,” arguing that the dichotomy between believing Monemutensis entirely and absolutely rejecting his “fictions” is a false one, he also shows that apparent contradictions in Britain’s origin traditions can be reconciled. While other historians made the Brutus account one of many possible versions of British origins, Langhorne contends that Brutus is compatible with and even supported by other ancient settlement accounts and with the theory that Britain was settled from Gaul. Langhorne thus remove the imperative to choose between Brutus and other explanations for how Britain was settled, showing how origin theories that had been positioned as replacements for or alternatives to the Brutus legend actually supported Britain’s Trojan heritage.

Langhorne devotes considerable attention to refuting the idea that the Brutus tradition and Britain’s Gaulish settlement are irreconcilable. To validate the origin account that he constructs, Langhorne cites Monemutensis and Ammianus Marcellinus, while also asserting that his narrative is based on Scripture and the works of scholars such as Camden, Tacitus, and Humphrey Lhuyd. Langhorne references similarities in language, religion, nomenclature, and customs, as well as geographic proximity to argue that the Trojan settlement was also a Gaulish one. In building this argument, Langhorne was responding to scholarship that set the Trojan account at odds with the theory that Britain was settled from Gaul. For example, the 1636 edition of scholar and clergyman George Abbott’s (1562–1633) A briefe description of the whole world asserts that while “the people of that Nation doe labour to fetch their pedigree from one Brutus,
whom they report to come from *Troy,*” yet “it is not to be doubted, but at the first this Countrey was peopled from the continent of *France*” (190-191).21 The popular historian Nathaniel Crouch, publishing under the initials R. B. in his 1685 *England’s Monarchs,* repeats this argument, writing that while “Jeffry of Monmouth relates. That it was Peopled by Brute with his Trojans” others believe that “the whole of these Relations to be meerly Fabulous, affirming, That the first Inhabitants thereof were derived from the Gauls, or French, by reason of their Agreement in Laws, Customs, Speech, Buildings, and other Usages” (1).22 Against associations between Gaulish heritage and modern scholarship (and between Trojan settlement and mere fables), Langhorne argues that these origin accounts are compatible and that the Brutus tradition is as supported by “learned” scholarship as the Gaulish settlement theory.

Like Crouch, Langhorne references the customs, language, and laws of the ancient Britons and Gauls, but he does so in order to support his own claim that these two traditions are equally accurate and essentially compatible. Concerning the “Original” of the Britons, Langhorne references “Learned Cambden’s” proof that they were “descended from the Gals, by solid Arguments drawn from their agreement in Religion, Customes and Language, their vicinity, & their very name” (12). Langhorne traces the ancient settlers of Britain to the Gals and to the “Cimbrians, who were the same with the Gauls, being one Nation called by two names” (12). In support of this line of descent, Langhorne references Lhuyd, whose assertion that the Britons were a stock of the “famous Cimbrians” is based on Plutarch, as well as “from

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21 Abbott also assigns the responsibility for disseminating the Trojan account to Monemutensis, whose work was questioned even at its first circulation: “the originall of that Truth began by *Galfriaus Monumetensis,* above five hundred yeares agone, and his Booke contayneth great shew of Truth, but was noted by *Nubringensis,* or some Authour of his time, to be meerely fabulous” (191).

22 The English printer and bookseller Nathaniel Crouch published under the pseudonyms “Richard Burton” and “R. B.”
the agreement of that people with the Britans, in Language and names of their Kings, and their
Customes” (14). Linking these two strands, Langhorne argues that “it is not at all unlikely that
the name of Armorica might extend so far, as to take in the Countrey of those Britans” and cites
the etymology of “Armorica” as well as what “Geffrey of Monmouth tells us, that Brutus set
saile from the River Loire which belongs to Armorica when he came hither; thereby confessing,
what Bede had said, That they came from Armorica, but bringing them thither from a farther
Countrey” (16). Langhorne continues: “whether our Britans had their name from them of the
Continent, or they of the Continent from our Ilanders; most credible it is that the Britans came
over hither from Gaule, as Tacitus tells us” and then repeats the common justification for this
belief, that “it stands to good reason that every Countrey received the first Inhabitants from
places near bordering” (16). Thus, language, customs, logic, and the ancient sources all agree
that Brutus came to Britain from Gaulish Armorica and the original Britons were Cimbrian
Gauls.

In his lengthy consideration of the history of the Cimbrians, Langhorne weaves together
events from classical and scriptural traditions, following a validating strategy similar to
O’Flaherty’s but in narrative, rather than synchronism, form. Langhorne then turns to “the
History of the Ancient Britans, before the Entrance of the English,” at which time “Britain and
Gaule are said to have made up one Kingdom” ruled by “Samothean Kings” (51). During the
reigns of these kings “nothing remarkable” happened except that “Osiris the great King of Egypt
was slain by his Brother Typhon” with the aid of, among others, “Albion and Bergion the
Grandsons of the murdered Heroe by his Son Neptune” (52). After this murder, Albion and
Bergion with a “multitude of Africans coming into Spain (where Gerion reigned) from thence
invaded and conquered Britain and Ireland, where they ruled for some years” (52). The two
brothers were later slain by Hercules in revenge for their part in his father’s murder, which inspired the Samotheans in Britain to take up “Arms against the residue of the Africans that were left behind, commencing a long war, which continued till the coming of Brutus” (52-53).

Langhorne’s commitment to integrating traditions from classical and biblical sources as well as the varied settlement accounts of Britain is especially evident in this section, which features the founding figure Albion alongside Hercules, Osiris of Egypt, Geryon of Africa, and the Samothean kings in Britain and Gaul.

During the “interval” of the long war between the Africans and Samotheans in Britain, Langhorne writes that the “fifty Daughters of Dioclesian King of Syria, having all murdered their Husbands in one night” were exiled in punishment for this crime (53). Langhorne offers a brief account of the Albina tale, including the wanderings of Dioclesian’s fifty daughters and their eventual arrival on the west coast of Britain, which was “inhabited by the African Progeny, to whom women were very welcome, in regard the Samotheans disdained to give their Daughters to them” (53). Langhorne’s editorial hand is well evident here, as he works the Albina tradition into the account of the war between the Africans and Samotheans while also replacing the rather fabulous giants of other Albina accounts with the Africans whose arrival in Britain he has just shown to be compatible with scriptural and classical accounts. Finally, Langhorne integrates both of the island’s pre-Brutus etymological figures, writing that the eldest of Dioclesian’s daughters, “named Albina, was married to the Prince of these Barbarians, and renewed to this Isle the name of Albion, which had been before imposed by Neptune’s forementioned Son of that name, but now was worn out” (53). At the end of this section, Langhorne notes: “this Fable I conceive to be founded upon the Grecian Story of Danaus his Daughters,” identifying the much-
contested Albina account as fable with a marked lack of vehemence, especially in comparison with Enderbie’s own rebuttal of these “murdering harpies” (53). Langhorne’s brisk statement here is his only comment on the veracity of the Albina tale, which he has also taken some pains to show is compatible not only with the account of Albion but also with the Brutus tradition itself.

Langhorne takes on the question of seeming incompatibility between Britain’s various ancient settlement accounts as directly as he does the matter of Gaulish and Trojan descent. In addition to producing a narrative that integrates the ancient founding tales, Langhorne also addresses the question of why, if Brutus was the first settler and founder of Britain, he had to subdue inhabitants who were there before him. Langhorne’s history explains the apparent discrepancy between the claim that Diana’s oracle gave Brutus the “propitious Answer” that he could found a nation of his own by sailing to an empty land and the indisputably settled state of the island at which Brutus and his people arrived by focusing on the “war between the Samotheans and Albionians” (56). This war, Langhorne writes, “had lasted for divers Ages,” ravaging Britain to the point that after these “many bloody Battels both Nations were reduced to such a paucity, that Diana’s Oracle, when consulted by Brutus about the event of his Voyage, is said to have termed this a Desart Island” (59).

Thus, the war that Langhorne describes between the indigenous Samotheans and the invading Africans not only resolves the seeming inaccuracy in Diana’s prophecy but also provides a means of bringing together the three most prominent British settlement legends: the island that came to be called Britain was first settled by the Samotheans whose kingdom combined Britain and Gaul and was then invaded by Albion’s people out of Africa. Years of war ensued, during which time Albina and her women arrived, married with the Africans, and
renewed the island’s name of Albion. The war between these factions continued for generations and became hereditary, leading to the chaos that prompted Diana’s oracle to declare the island desert prior to the arrival of Brutus from Gaulish Armorica. Landing on the island, Brutus founded the kingdom of Britain and gave it his name. Langhorne’s decision to combine the various settlement traditions thus enables him to narrate the origins of Britain with some confidence and to argue in favor of the Brutus account in particular.

The story of Brutus as Langhorne presents it not only gives the historical continuity and support for national identity that is the general function of origin accounts; it also offers a telling illustration of the power of a good king to bring order out of chaos and an example of the longevity of Britain’s monarchial tradition. Langhorne’s emphasis on the war that divided Britain before Brutus’s arrival enables him to present the Trojan hero as a peace-bringing conqueror. When Brutus arrives at the island, he unites (or eradicates) its various populations and establishes an enduring system of government. Langhorne writes that when Brutus is “settled in his new Kingdom” he ordains that “all his Subjects both Samotheans and Trojans should be called Britans”; he also founds a city on the bank of the Thames as “place of Residence for himself and his Successors” (60). At the end of his reign, Brutus fosters the continuation of his island’s peaceful government by dividing it between his sons: “he left his Kingdom to be divided between his three Sons, but reserved the Superiority and Soveraignty to the Eldest which was Locrinus, whose part was better than both his Brothers, and was of him named Loegria, as Camber’s part was named Cambria, and Albanactus his share Albania” (60-61). This is the organization Britain held before the coming of the Romans, divided “into three parts, Loegria, now England; Albania, Scotland; Cambria, Wales” (45).
As Enderbie does, Langhorne is careful to explain that the most significant portion of Brutus’s inheritance goes to his eldest son: Locrinus receives “Superiority and Sovereignty” and is granted the “better” part in ruling the country that is to become England. Although there is no direct line of descent between Brutus and the “Famous English Monarchy” with which Langhorne concludes, the story of Brutus’s founding Britain and dividing it between his sons provides a powerful argument for the superiority of England over Scotland and Wales. Brutus also offers a model for the island’s rulers unifying its populations and ending the wars caused by usurpers of authority and territory. The value of the Brutus account is as evident here as it is in *Cambria Triumphans* and Langhorne’s multi-layered defenses of Brutus reveal the sophistication of his strategies in rescuing Brutus from the category of mere fable to which previous scholars had consigned him. Langhorne brings together multiple narrative traditions and historiographic methodologies in order to make the case that Brutus should not be rejected as commentitious but rather celebrated as the founder of an island nation whose monarch Langhorne wishes will flourish “to the end of the World.”

**Conclusion: Discharging Brutus in the Seventeenth Century**

The close links between national narratives and origin accounts – as well as the complexities of seventeenth-century responses to Britain’s ancient histories – are particularly evident in one of the best known early modern national histories: John Milton’s 1670 *The history of Britain, that part especially now call’d England from the first traditional beginning, continu’d to the Norman conquest*. As Nicholas von Maltzahn explains, the ambivalence with which Milton regarded “the ancient Britons” is demonstrated by the contradictory responses of scholars to Milton’s history as well as in the unequaled space the *History of Britain* “devotes to
admittedly spurious materials” (91-92, 106). Andrew Escobedo also examines Milton’s engagements with fictions and history, noting that, like Spenser, Milton was “alert to the value of fiction to promote continuity” but also concerned that “fictional ornaments may empty their narratives of historical content” (23). While Milton was comfortable discounting the Albina tale as a “fond invention” too “absurd and too unconscionably gross” to warrant any serious consideration, he was less willing to write Brutus off so quickly (5-6). Turning to Brutus from Britain’s other early traditions, Milton asserts that while these tales “themselves have giv’n us a warrantable dispatch to run them soon over” of “Brutus and his Line, with the whole Progeny of Kings, to the entrance of Julius Caesar, we cannot so easily be discharg’d” (6). Milton’s summary of his discipline reveals the space that remained for arguments in favor of Brutus in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Milton bases his evaluation of Brutus in large part on previous scholarship; all of his sources “agree in this, that Brutus was the Son of Silvius; he of Ascanius; whose Father was Aeneas a Trojan Prince” (6-7). While allowing that some scholars do “explode for fiction” the Brutus account, Milton nevertheless asserts that he will provide the tale in full, because there are many scholars “not unread, nor unlerned in Antiquitie” who support it and because “oft-times relations heertofore accounted fabulous have bin after found to contain in them many footsteps, and reliques of somthing true,” and, finally, “in favour of our English Poets, and Rhetoricians, who by thir Art will know, how to use [the legends] judiciously” (3). Like Langhorne, Milton offers poetic inspiration as a valid reason for incorporating Britain’s legends in his national history; despite their detractors, the legends merit inclusion because they are of interest to poets

24 For more on Milton’s engagements with patriotism and Britain’s ancient history, and the shifts in these over time, see Escobedo 188-205 and von Maltzahn 91-116.
and rhetoricians, a quality that is independent of their ability to pass on the relics of historical truth.

This way of framing the historian’s selection process takes up a common criticism of Britain’s ancient traditions, that they were no more than the fictions of poets composed for entertainment, and turns it into a justification for these stories’ inclusion in national histories. Crucially, in this construction, the truth-value of such narratives ceases to be a concern; their ability to delight the reader and inspire poets is not dependent on their factual content, and therefore their place in history does not stand or fall on their historicity. Focusing on the differences between early modern historians and poets ignores the great number of early modern historians who were poets – Milton, Spenser, O’Flaherty, Keating, and many others all found that writing the narratives of their nations required them to work in both historical and poetic genres. Such framing also obscures the fact that these poet-historians (or poets historical, if I may borrow Spenser’s term), contended that the historian can include materials without having to prove that they are factual, if they have entertainment or poetical value.

Despite the skeptical tradition referenced by Milton, the utility of Brutus and the Matter of Britain for both historians and poets is well evident in the texts published during the last four decades of the seventeenth century. Texts that addressed the Interregnum from a royalist perspective, for example, invoked Brutus to contextualize and mitigate the disruptions they recognized to the monarchy of Britain. Among these is committed royalist Fabian Philipps’s (1601–1690) 1686 *Investigatio jurium antiquorum*, subtitled “a vindication of the government of the kingdom of England under our kings and monarchs, appointed by God.” In this work, Philipps describes an “exact Search and inquiry into the Memorialls, Antiquities, Annalls, and Historians” of Britain, which determined that after the destruction of Troy “Brute came into
this Island, called it by his name, and divided his Kingdom to his 3 Sons” (247). As in Cambria Triumphans, the Brutus legend’s model of tripartite division is invoked by in vindication of Britain’s monarchial government.

Similarly, the stability offered by Brutus was set against disruptions to the monarchy and the question of religious discord in the poem “A Prophecy of Merlins” from George May’s 1662 The White-Powder Plot Discovered. This poem describes the “many irruptions” Britain suffered under foreign kings but affirms that in “despight” of these “Our Kings shall wear Brute’s antient Diadem,” prescribing the monarchy founded by Brutus as a direct antidote for disorder (32). The poem asserts that Brute’s reign over all Britain is “well known” and his stabilizing qualities are extended to the matter of religion as well as government when the poem claims that Brutus’s “seed and issue” reigned until the gospel was arrived and was embraced “wholly through the Land” (32) The stanza concludes with a statement of monarchial and religious unity: “Brute’s Monarchy did thereby stand, / Not only having all one King alone, / But all consenting in Religion” (32). Brutus is linked here not only with the stability of Britain’s monarchial government but also with a declaration of the strength in religious unanimity.

The royalist scholar Thomas Frankland’s 1681 The annals of King James and King Charles the First contains a number of legislative documents, including the “Short Account” of an argument by Baron Trevor that offers claims almost identical to those from Enderbie’s text:

This Kingdom hath been always Monarchial; a Democratical Government was never in this Kingdom. In the time of the Brittain, 500 years before the Birth of our Saviour, when Brute came from Troy into Brittain (as one writes) it had a Politick and Regal Government; this is confirmed by the Letter from the Pope to King Lucius. 581
In Frankland’s *Annals*, the Brutus tradition, confirmed by a papal letter, proves that Britain’s government has always been monarchial, responding directly to the rhetoric of the Protectorate and again demonstrating the efficacy of the Brutus legend in affirming monarchial stability and the preeminent place of England in the kingdoms of Great Britain.

Showing a more local focus but with an equal desire for the luster of antiquity, John Brydall’s (*b. c. 1635, d. in or after 1705?*) 1676 *Camera regis, or, A short view of London containing the antiquity, fame, walls, bridge, river, gates, tower, cathedral, officers, courts, customs, franchises, &c. of that renowned city*, cites several “known and approved Writers” in proof of the “Antiquity of this City,” including Stow and Monemutensis, who write that London was founded by Brute on the Thames as Troynovant (13). Likewise, when writing on the “Antiquity of the famous City of London,” in his 1673 *London Almanack*, Saumel Butler (*bap. 1613, d. 1680*) reports that “Geoffrey of Monmouth recordeth, that the City of London was built by Brute.”25 Physician Edward Jorden’s (*d. 1632*) 1669 *A discourse of natural bathes* argues for the antiquity of the city of Bath in a like fashion, citing Brutus’s arrival in Britain, conquest of the Giants, division of the island, and royal lineage, in order to assign the “highest pitch of Antiquity” to the baths of Bath (2-4). As these mid and late seventeenth-century references to Brutus show, many writers were attentive to the Trojan legend’s model for unity among divisions and narrative of Britain’s fundamentally monarchial government.

Framing early modern skepticism as evidence of a process leading to the rejection of origin legends obscures the complex range of responses by early modern (not to mention medieval) scholars to these materials. The Interregnum caused a pressing need for supporters of Charles II to prove that Great Britain’s monarchy was fundamental to the island’s governance.

25 Butler’s *London Almanack* is unpaginated.
that their kings were legitimated by an authority dating to the island’s earliest days, and that the
division of the island into three kingdoms was always balanced by their founders’ fraternity and
the superior authority of England. The Brutus account answered precisely these exigencies and
so Restoration historians developed strategies enabling them to rehabilitate this tradition. These
texts challenge the notion that rejection of the Matter of Britain was a process in which scholars
increasingly adopted the sophisticated historiographic practices of humanist skepticism, which
required them to set aside the legends to which credulous medieval chroniclers had incorrectly
granted historical status. In fact, as both Enderbie and Langhorne amply demonstrate,
seventeenth-century scholars were thoroughly aware that the credit of Britain’s early legends had
been challenged many times over the course of centuries. The variety and complexity of the
methods that Enderbie and Langhorne deploy in order to counter those centuries of skepticism
demonstrate that late seventeenth-century references to legend are not the relics of medieval
credulity but instead the product of a thoroughly self-critical scholarly milieu. Historians such as
Baker, Daniel, and Buchanan may have claimed that the fables of Britain’s first settlement had
been “exploded” through their work, yet the Trojan account’s resurgence after the Restoration
indicate both the tale’s power as an antidote to “Contention and Discord” and the ability of the
“Learned men” who produced early modern British histories to exploit that power in
exceptionally sophisticated ways.
Coda

No Room in Literature?

In his 1737 “A Proposal for Removing the Impediments of writing An History of England,” the English scholar Thomas Carte (bap. 1686, d. 1754) measured the histories that had been published on his nation and found them all wanting. “No Country in Europe,” he wrote “affords such a quantity and variety of materials for its History, as England does; and yet none is so destitute of a good one: a defect easy to be perceived, and much to be lamented” (1). Carte describes the chronicle records of England as “preserving short and indigested memorials of public facts and transactions in this Kingdom” that contain “little more than the military exploits of our Ancestors”; he notes that the later historians who put these “uncouth originals” into a more “modern style” were more agreeable but still did not offer the “infinitely more interesting and useful than any relations of battles, sieges, and military actions” type of history that he asserts is lacking (1-2). This is a “Civil History of this Nation,” which would present the “History of our Constitution, Laws, Usages, Customs and Manners, with the various, sudden, or gradual alterations which these have undergone in the course of time” (1). To produce this much-needed civil history of England, Carte suggests forming a society of members dedicated to accomplishing what “single man” cannot do (6).

Carte followed up on this proposal by publishing in 1738 “A General Account of the necessary Materials for an History of England, the Society and Subscription proposed for defraying the Expences thereof, and the Method wherein Mr. Carte intends to proceed in carrying on the said Work.” In this text, Carte expands on his assessment of the state of English history, writing that England does have “some Historians,” but those have largely borrowed from “old Chronicles, compiled chiefly by Monks, and other well-meaning but injudicious Writers”
(7). These amateurs may have managed to convey “Facts and Events which passed openly in the view of the world” but they “were no way qualified to discover the more secret springs, motives, and causes of such Facts and Events” (7-8). Carte argues that a “judicious account of the nature and wisdom of our Laws and Constitutions” would serve the honor of his nation and enable the “people of England” to “see upon what foundation their Civil Rights, Privileges, and Liberties stand, and be better enabled to support them” (9). Carte provides an update for his readers on the success of his “Society for encouraging the writing of an History of England,” which has enrolled “several Noblemen and Gentlemen” at the rate of ten or twenty guineas a year (16). By 1747, Carte was able to publish the first volume of his General History of England and he produced three subsequent volumes, the last of which was published in 1755, a year after his own death.

A century later, the Irish scholar and nationalist Thomas Osborne Davis (1814–1845) penned his own proposal for the writing of a national history. Davis’s “The History of Ireland,” published in The Nation in 1846, begins with a bald statement of Ireland’s need for a national history: “Something has been done to rescue Ireland from the reproach that she was a wailing and ignorant slave” (83). Davis writes that Ireland, like any country, will fail if it attempts “to be a nation without a knowledge of the country’s history”; to forward the goal of writing Ireland’s history, Davis writes that “the Association for liberating Ireland has offered a prize for a new history of the country” (83-86). Davis argues that this history should be “written from the original authorities,” and that it should be “a History,” by which it means that it should describe “the acted realities of men, bad and good” rather than “a set of moral disquisitions on what ought to have been” (86-89). Davis further asserts that those who “keep chronicling the dry events would miss writing a history”; a history must fathom the “social conditions” of the nation as well
as “the nature of the government, the manners, the administration of law, the state of useful and fine arts, of commerce, of foreign relations” (89). Davis argues that “to give such a history to Ireland as is now sought will be a proud and illustrious deed” because it would “materially influence our destiny” (91). His article concludes with a question and a call to arms: “Shall we get such a history? Think, reader! has God given you the soul and perseverance to create this marvel?” (91). Following this stirring conclusion is a list of “books given as the present sources of history” in which appear several of the texts I have discussed, including “Annals of the Four Masters, from the earliest times to 1616,” “Campion's, Hanmer's, Marlborough's, Camden's, Holingshed's, Stanihurst's, and Ware's Histories,” “O’Sullivan’s Catholic History,” and “Spencer’s View” (91). Davis’s body of work also includes essays advocating the publication of a “Commercial History of Ireland” and a “Ballad History of Ireland,” characterized as able to accomplish the “highest duties of history,” among which are: “to give to the imagination the arms, and homes, and senates, and battles of other days” (286, 240).

I mention these proposals not simply because they demonstrate how assertions that nations had found “no room in history” continued to be effective justifications of new historical projects, nor because they show eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptions of how national histories augment their countries’ honor and make national identities possible. I have not included these proposals merely as further examples of how medieval histories were characterized as lacking analytical or narrative coherence – or even as evidence of how medieval and early modern histories maintained their utility as sources, if not historiographic models, into the nineteenth century. Nor do I reference Carte’s desire for a “civil history” able to help Englishmen understand the foundations of their civil liberties and Davis’s assertion that history must represent social conditions and the study of “fine arts” to exemplify shifts in the functions
of history as nationalisms shaped by mass participation also impacted historiographic discourse. Certainly, all of these aspects of how history as a discipline experienced both continuity and change over the centuries following those that I have examined are evident in these two proposals. But I have chosen to close this study with Davis’s impassioned demand – “Shall we get such a history?” – and Carte’s courting of “publik encouragement” in order to accomplish the “absolutely necessary” work he asserts “cannot be done too soon” – primarily because the zeal these authors display for their projects reflects my own desire to show that medieval and historical works are not just significant but also genuinely exciting subjects for early modern literary studies (91, 16).

My initial exposure to early modern histories will perhaps help to crystalize why I believe that reading across periods and disciplines is so important and exciting. I first read Keating’s *Foras Feasa* in an Irish literature survey taught by Professor Patrick Mullen during my second semester of graduate study. As a self-described medievalist whose work focused on Irish prose, I found Keating’s text to be disorienting because it was quite different from the medieval tales I had been studying while also containing many materials that I found familiar: the stories of Diarmaid and Guaire, Queen Meadhbh and King Conchubhar, the Tuatha Dé, Brian Bóroimhe, and Niall Niall Naoighiallach. Keating’s work was novel to me because it wove together all of the characters I recognized from individual tales and collections into a complete narrative of Irish history running from the Flood to the Anglo-Norman invasion. The stories of Ireland had become the story of Ireland.

A degree of disorientation can be a very effective research impetus; I found myself wondering why Keating had worked the tales together in *that* way, why he’d chosen to include *this* episode but not another one, why he had changed some stories considerably and left others
largely intact. Soon enough, I began exploring other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century adaptations of medieval tales, expanding my focus to include Scottish, Welsh, and English texts as well as Irish ones; at an early point in the writing of this study I found, to some surprise, that I had introduced myself as “an early modernist” to a co-panelist at a conference. As satisfying as it is to joke about being a “lapsed medievalist” or to feel that I am appropriating at least some small degree of modernity, the works of medieval writers remain absolutely central to my own research and to the texts I study. I started my graduate studies as a medievalist and I still am a medievalist. I argue here that the early moderns were most certainly medievalists as well.

Keating and I are both readers of the medieval; both of us care about the ways the past is reshaped and recirculated by writers in the present.

Keating and I have another trait in common: both of us work against generic and disciplinary boundaries restricting what the proper study of our subjects should be. The Foras Feasa shows how the national history can produce an authentic account of Ireland’s past only when its scope encompass all of the seanchas. I have applied the tools of literary study to national histories, following the writers I examine in adopting a willingness to work around disciplinary borders while remaining attentive to the many kinds of textualities evident in my sources. I have not tried to pretend that history and literature are the same thing, any more than Keating elided the differences he recognized between stáir and finnscéal, but, inspired by the Foras Feasa’s commitment to acknowledging textual difference without attempting to impose textual quarantine, I have set out to value the fictions written into national histories as an important part of the genre and to demonstrate how these texts can reward literary criticism.

I will close by applying myself the strategy used by Davis, Carte, Cox and so many others: talking about those things that the subject I study has not found room for and suggesting
how my research might begin to remedy that gap. Most scholars today acknowledge the considerable continuities between medieval and early modern historical practices but the medieval and the modern are frequently still constituted in ways that suggest they are incompatible. Taking up Hadfield’ s invitation that scholars make room for the modern in their readings of medieval texts, my research demonstrates that early modernists must move beyond simply acknowledging cross-period continuities. Medievalisms in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century histories are not the remnants of a moribund tradition but instead an integral part of a historical culture that was highly attentive to contemporary political and disciplinary concerns. These critically engaged early modern historians demonstrate a strong investment in examining the qualities and nature of their discipline, in establishing what history is – and what it is not. My work asserts that this attention to disciplinary boundaries did not preclude the production of thoroughly heterogeneous national histories in which the historical interacts with the fictional to produce narratives of sovereignty, national identity, and empire. These texts themselves resist strict disciplinary divisions, even when they are in the processes of establishing the borders of their field; at the heart of my research is the principle that scholarship on early modern historiography must be equally willing to work against conventional disciplinary limits. In reading early modern histories for a program in English studies, I follow the interdisciplinary and cross-period practices already established by my texts. With a conviction equal to Davis’ s, I am staking here a claim that as the early moderns found room for fictions in their histories, we must find room for history in literature.
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**Works Cited – Coda**


