



Alphabetizing the Nation

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"Alphabetising the Nation:

Reforming Medieval Origins in the Sixteenth Century"

In "An Occult History of Britain, 1521-1529," a long chapter in Hilary Mantel's immensely successful novel Wolf Hall, the late medieval origin myth of Albina and her sisters is recounted, before we are told of the fateful appearance at court, in 1521, of Anne Boleyn. When the novel's protagonist and narrator, Thomas Cromwell, asks his still all-powerful mentor Cardinal Wolsey how Henry could possibly justify a marriage to Anne Boleyn, Wolsey explains to him: "You can't know Albion ... unless you go back before Albion was thought of." One needs to keep going back, to the "bones of giant animals and men" resting beneath London's foundations, and the "sins and crimes of the kings who rode under the tattered banners of Arthur." He warns Cromwell: "These are old stories ... but some people, let us remember, do believe them."¹ Outlining the legendary history of Britain through the stories of Albina, Brutus and Arthur allows Mantel to introduce some of the novel's central themes: the power of old stories; the mutability and slipperiness of historical narratives; the return of the repressed; the violence of new beginnings. Whether they want to be or not, the Tudors, Wolsey and Cromwell are deeply enmeshed in the often invisible, but powerful, webs of such "occult" stories,

which cannot easily be pushed aside, and whose claims are not easily resisted.

The story of Albina and her sisters emerged in the fourteenth century, and explained the derivation of the name of "Albion," before the arrival of the Trojan Brutus, who was said have laid claim to the land in his own name.² In this sense it was both supplementary and, chronologically speaking, primary; Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britannie* had popularised the Brutus founding story, but in his account Brutus and his men did not find the empty isle they had been promised by Diana - for it turned out that giants already populated these shores and had to be vanquished by them. So how did the giants get there in the first place? The Albina myth tells us that Albina and her sisters, women who had plotted the murder of husbands they had been forced to marry by their father, were exiled from their homeland for this crime and placed on a rudderless boat. When they reached an uninhabited island, they named it Albion after the eldest daughter, and eventually populated it with their monstrous giant offspring, sired by demons. The story thus offered audiences a memorable entry into national history;³ as Christy Desmet points out, the Brut, in which the origin stories of Brutus and Albina were circulated, not only existed in many manuscript versions, but was also reprinted eleven to

thirteen times between 1480 and 1528, confirming it as "one of the most popular among English chronicles."⁴ Yet along with other long-cherished narratives about "Britain," it became the focus of intense criticism in the sixteenth century.⁵

John Rastell complains in the prologue to his Pastime of People (1529-30), in the first detailed critique of the Albina myth, that while the story "semeth more meruaylous than trewe," it "hath contynued here in englande & taken for treuth amonge vs englysshemen." Fearing that it makes Englishmen look foolish, he marvels that anyone should give such a story credence, "for no man can tell who is [th]e Auctour of this story / nor of whome it shulde come / nor of any wryter of name in this lande that euer wrote therof." For Rastell, the problems with the Albina story reside both in the unavailability of reliable sources and in the absence of credible narrative detail; he concludes that it is nothing but a "fayned fable."⁶ Rastell's critique reveals the key concern that underlies sixteenth-century debates about the status of medieval origin myths such as those of Albina and Brutus: the need to differentiate between "true" and "fabulous" history - a debate about modes of knowledge-construction that was powerfully shaped by the need to differentiate the reformist present from the medieval, Catholic, past, while also necessarily relying on it.⁷ Yet

the question of national origins also exercised contemporary thinkers exploring and developing other kinds of knowledge production. This essay will think through the issues at stake in this debate in relation to the turbulent decades around the middle of the century -- not with reference to historical chronicles or literary retellings, but by considering an overlooked treatment of those legendary founders of Britain in Thomas Elyot's Latin-English dictionary. Elyot's dictionary brings together in revealing ways two concerns that were at the forefront of intellectual, religious and political developments throughout the sixteenth century, and which were closely connected: national origins on the one hand and linguistic accuracy as a way of determining truth on the other.

Thomas Elyot was a senior clerk of Henry VIII's council and "one of the foremost intellectual figures of Renaissance England."⁸ He wrote a range of works during his lifetime, the most famous of which is The Boke Named the Governour (1531), a treatise on political theory and the education of the political elite. Elyot's Dictionary was first published in 1538, and was arguably itself a foundational event in English intellectual history.⁹ Although it was not the first Latin-English dictionary to be written, it was the most extensive, the first whose title appeared in English, and the first whose author was named; it was "hugely popular"

and massively influential.¹⁰ The appearance of such a work had political as well as pedagogic implications; Stephen Merriam Foley compares the significance of its publication to that “of the Great Bible or the royal prescription of Lyly’s Grammar” in “position[ing] the royal court as an almost mythical source of learning and wisdom,” and concludes that Elyot’s work “proves finally to be a national institution.”¹¹ By setting down the definitions of Latin words in English, and in print, Elyot’s work made this kind of knowledge accessible to a wider audience than ever before.

As Neil Kenny points out, dictionaries are “active makers of meaning;”¹² in Elyot’s Dictionary, that “making of meaning” was not limited to the kinds of words one might expect to find in a language dictionary, for Elyot also included a wide range of entries on legal, historical, proverbial, topographical, botanical and mythological matters – resulting in the work’s “encyclopedic bias.”¹³ This versatility also speaks to the centrality of language to humanist and reformist enterprises: origins were important to projects such as biblical translation as well as to the accurate recovery of ancient sources more generally.¹⁴ In the dictionary’s much-extended 1542 edition, now called the Bibliotheca Eliotae, or Eliotis Librarie, the medieval

origin myths make their appearance, under entries for "Albion" and "Britania."¹⁵

Only four years before the appearance of the first edition of Elyot's dictionary, in 1534, a history of England, the Anglica Historia, written by the Italian humanist, Polydore Vergil, caused a storm of controversy due to its caustic rejection of the Galfridian account of the Trojan origins of Britain and of King Arthur.¹⁶ Origin myths were an integral part of medieval historiography;¹⁷ in the sixteenth century, their truth-value was contested even as medieval chronicles were being sought out by Thomas Cromwell's agents, of whom Elyot was one. It was hoped that these would furnish the evidence -- the precedents and thus the authority provided by the past -- that was needed to support, among other things, Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon and the Act of Supremacy. At the same time, they were used to discredit the immediate past; as Jennifer Summit wryly concludes: "Monastic libraries proved invaluable to Henrician reform by yielding the primary historical sources that validated it; but they were also called on to supply the evidence that would support their own demise."¹⁸ It was a question, then, of sorting the wheat from the chaff,¹⁹ in this instance history from fable -- a process that Elyot presents his dictionary as facilitating and Henry as leading.²⁰

Yet this was by no means a straightforward process in the 1530s and 1540s; as Seth Lerer points out, "[t]he story of the Dictionary is ... a story of royal power worked through minion service and Cromwellian intrigue," in a context in which "[w]riting, reading, and iconic presentation were the marks of fealty or treason."²¹ As a supporter of Katherine of Aragon and a religious conservative, Elyot's own position in relation to Henry and Cromwell was not always an easy one.²² Sent in 1531 as an ambassador to Charles V, Katherine's nephew, he was called back to England in 1532 -- seemingly because he was considered insufficiently effective in his efforts to test the waters for Henry's desired divorce. Despite his opposition to Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn, Elyot was a concerned and loyal supporter of Henry; Greg Walker describes him as "a member of that class of men who saw themselves as the backbone of Tudor England, a stakeholder in the administration."²³ Some of the tensions and ambivalences this entailed come into sharper focus through a consideration of the dictionary's discussion of the medieval origin stories.

Elyot's Dictionary was directly and materially shaped by his active involvement in what Summit calls the "conquest of formerly monastic spaces ... to patriotic aims."²⁴ In the dedication to Henry VIII in the first, 1538, edition, he explains how the volume was already well into the process of

being printed when Henry -- having been told of it by Anthony Denny (of the king's privy chamber), William Tyldesley, "keper of your gravis Lybrarie," and, most importantly, by "the most honourable lorde Crumwell, lorde priuie seale" -- sent Elyot "suche bokes as your grace had, and I lacked" (Dictionary, doc. image 2).²⁵ Henry's support of Elyot's enterprise changes it fundamentally; Elyot recounts how the sheer wealth and diversity of the source material now available to him even threatens to overwhelm him: "desperation was euen at hand to rent al in pieces that I had written" (Dictionary, doc. image 3). Remembering the King's "grace," however, gives him fresh courage and so, in the end, the dictionary is presented as being the product of two authors: Elyot and, more importantly, Henry (Dictionary, doc. image 4). The Dictionary, then, was understood to be part of the reformation of the commonwealth through new learning. In the dedication to Henry that opens the Bibliotheca (1542), Elyot predicts that if "bothe your temporaltie and clergy do flouryssh in doctrine, as (your hyghnesse procedynge to the settinge vp of good lectures with lyberal salaries) it is likely to happen right shortly," then England will surely "surmount all other countrys."

He also sets out the careful method by which he proceeded in putting the volume together. After sequestering himself and collecting a long list of relevant authors, he "dyd

seriously and dilygently trye and examyne euery worde, which eyther in sygnification or fourme of speakyng ... moughte make any doubt to them that shulde reade it." He is following the "exauple of Suidas the greke,"²⁶ and has omitted neither the "fables and inuentions of paynymes," nor information about heresies, in the hope that such scrutiny and divulgence will allow the latter to be "the sooner espyed and abhorred" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 3). The long-standing medieval origin myths were at this time still positioned squarely (if increasingly tenuously) between "truth" and "fable;"²⁷ the difficulty of rejecting them, or of erasing their historicity by recategorizing them unequivocally as fable, lay not least in their familiarity and their ongoing affective as well as political potency.²⁸ Origins were important - but they were also obscure, due to their very antiquity and the absence of surviving, authoritative historical records.

The entry on Albion appears for the first time in this extended 1542 edition. What follows is the first part of that lengthy entry:

Albion was the most aunciente name of this yle, which conteyneth Englande and Scotlande: of the beginninge of the whiche name haue benne sundrye opynions. One late fayned by hym whiche fyrste prynted the Englysh chronicle, wherin is neyther similitude of

trouth, reason, nor honestie: I meane the fable of the fyfty daughters of one Dioclecian kynge of Siria, where neuer any other historie made mencion of a kynge of Siria being so named and also that name is greke and no part of the language of Siria. More ouer the commynge of them from Siria in a shyp or bote withoute any marinours thurgh the sea called Mediterraneum, into the ocean, and so fynally to fynde this yle, and to inhabite it, and haue generation by deuilles, is bothe impossible, and moche reproche for this noble royalme to ascrybe her fyrste name and habitation, to such inuentours. (Bibliotheca, doc. image 22)

Elyot's critique of the Albina myth, like Rastell's cited above, is based partly on the doubtful veracity of the story's details (historical and linguistic), and partly on what Elyot perceives to be its inappropriateness. Not only are the journey described and the account of offspring resulting from copulation with devils "impossible," but the story also presents a national origin that is scandalous. When Elyot chides its "inuentours," it is unclear whether he is referring to the sinful women or the unreliable authors of earlier chronicles. The production of undesirable national narratives is thus likened to the monstrous results of demonic sex: both are processes rooted in dubious desires and imaginings; like fables, they are unrestrained by reason. In the 1542 entry for "Britania," that "moste noble yle of

the worlde," we see a similar problem: the name's origins are obscure and displeasing; there is, he writes, no "authentique, and ancient history, makynge therof remembrance," since the Saxons destroyed all of "the olde bookes of the Britonnes (suche as were)" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 52-3, at 52).²⁹

Elyot negotiates these difficulties by focusing on one concept in particular: that of "similitude." In the passage on Albina, cited above, we are told that the story possesses "neyther similitude of trouth, reason, nor honestie." Much of the rest of the entry is taken up with trying to find a more acceptable origin for the name "Albion" -- one which "hath a more honeste similitude." He briefly considers the idea that it stems from a reference to the white cliffs of the coast: "ap albis rupibus,"³⁰ but rejects it as an explanation since "Albion is no latten word, nor hath the analogy, that is to saye, the proportion or similitude of latine." He concludes that, in the absence of any authoritative sources, it is permissible to provide one's own "coniecture:"³¹

[W]here aunciente remembraunce of the begynnynge of thynges lacketh, if it may be lefull to men to use theyr coniectures, ... specially if it may appere,

that my coniecture shall approche more nere to the
 symilitude of trowth. Wherfore I wyll also set forthe
 myne opinion, onely to the intente to exclude
 fables, lackynge eyther honestie or reasonable
 similitudes. (Bibliotheca, doc. image 22)

'Reasonable similitudes' are what fables lack, which allows Elyot to provide his own. In the dictionary's entry for similitudo, the English translation given is "lykenesse" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 260). The first time Elyot uses it, however, is in his opening dedication to Henry VIII, where he cites Plutarch's "similitude moste apte and proper" to define the meaning of the word "kynge." Plutarch he notes, likens the role of king on earth to "[t]hat which god is in heauen, and the sonne in the fyrmament" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 2).³² This "fitting" similitude sets the tone for the similitudes that follow -- the term next appears in the entries on Albion and Britannia; it is central to Elyot's definition of both king and nation. Yet similitude is a particularly unstable term to place at the centre of a consideration of the nation's origins -- because it gestures towards the absence of firm textual authority, because the term itself is ambivalent and because similitudes can highlight connections that are undesirable.

In The Arte of Rhetorique (1559), Thomas Wilson explains that "similitude" is "a likenesse when [two] thynges, or mo then two, are so compared and resembled together, that thei bothe in some one propertie seme like."³³ Similitude was central to medieval theories of cognition and rhetoric; the images needed for thinking themselves were understood as likenesses of things encountered through the senses.³⁴ Furthermore, similitude was related to figurative language (such as metaphor), translation theory, and moral education. Elyot's contemporary, Juan Luis Vives, argued that similitude -- similitudo in Latin -- was a key feature of ingenium, which together with reason formed the "higher part of the soul;" without it, one would not be able "to understand ... the cognitive, aesthetic, and practical-moral function of ingenium [or] to attain to inventive creativity."³⁵ Similitude served a wide range of intellectual and pedagogical purposes; R. H. Bowers notes that in this period:

similitude collections could ... serve as handy reference and source manuals for young students wrestling with Latin compositions; for the controversialist searching for authoritative, because ancient, writ to smite his opponents; for the poet starved for figures to elaborate or transform according to the current doctrine of imitation; or for the preacher's apt

parable. Like the sentence, the similitude could be adapted or taken verbatim from an authority or source; it could be devised by the compiler himself either as his own creation or attributed, inter alia, to "Socrates" or "Hermes"; or it could be silently copied from previous compilers.³⁶

Thomas Elyot himself composed and published one of these collections for Henry in 1539, entitled The Bankette of Sapience. Yet similitudo, along with ingenium (or 'wit'), was not necessarily considered to be a direct or even reliable path to knowledge; indeed, by the seventeenth century, thinkers like Thomas Hobbes were decidedly suspicious of what they perceived to be its close associations with imagination and 'fancy' rather than reason or judgement.³⁷

The Middle English Dictionary entry for similitude reveals a wide semantic range that indicates why it was treated with ambivalence: 'similitude' could mean "appearance, guise, form," "representation" - even, ominously, "idol."³⁸ It could refer to "analogy, simile," as well as certain kinds of narrative, including "a parable" or "fable."³⁹ These latter two terms were neither synonymous, nor neutral; David Norton shows that writers in this period, like John Skelton (c. 1460-1529), "avoid[ed] the unfavourable connotations of 'fable'," while "parable" "tended to retain favourable

connections" because of "its use in the Bible." He explains that "'[f]able' is never used in the Bible for 'parable'; rather, the earlier translators used 'similitude' before the literal rendering of the Greek and Latin took over."⁴⁰ The 'likenesses' afforded by similitude, then, could be highly problematic, and potentially associated with idolatry and fables. While in his dictionary entries Elyot is clearly working with the positive, perhaps even scriptural, associations attached to 'similitude' in mind, and is concerned to link similitude to reason, he also tacitly acknowledges the term's limits by saying that it will allow him only to "approche more nere" to the truth.⁴¹

Elyot's explanation of the origins of "Albion" attempts, then, to set up a proper likeness between the word and its referent, the name and the nation's origin, and he does so by constructing an alternative linguistic history, which itself emerges out of a connection between the Greeks and the national landscape. The Greeks, he argues, came across to England in their explorations and, noting its fertility and abundance, named it "Olbion," "whiche in englysh signifieth Happy."⁴² As time passed, the name changed from "Olbion" to "Albion" due to the emergence of "dyuerse langages" -- a change which is not surprising, he argues, as it is still possible to see in his day how "in some mannes mouthe" these two letters often sound indistinguishable.

Elyot thus manages to combine the medieval translatio studii et imperii trope with humanist method and biblical allusion, all of which associations are structured by similitude. The Greeks (like Albina and her sisters) find an Edenic locale ("Olbion" = happy), and the likeness of the original name to its referent is altered by a linguistic "fall" from Greek into the "dyuerse langages" of "sundry peple."⁴³ Yet even the difference between Olbion and Albion still recognisably signals a -- desirable -- similitude between current denomination and original/originary referent. Elyot might be an ingenious "inuentour" himself, but by following his Greek model, he is also able to construct a "happier" and more 'reasonable' similitude. In doing so, the dictionary is enacting its -- crucial -- part in the recuperative process: it actively reverses the unhappy fall of Olbion into Albion, and thereby transforms the misleading fable of Albina, which is one of its signs, into something nearer the truth -- something more fitting and 'honest'.

Elyot's entry on Albion can be read as a stand-alone piece; a dictionary, unlike the kind of historiography found in the Brut, does not provide a narrative, and its alphabetically-ordered entries break up the linear, or chronological, narrative of history into seemingly discrete, self-contained parts.⁴⁴ (This is particularly true of the entry on Albion, which does not mention Brutus at all.) They articulate, and

speak to, different (if related) "structures of feeling."⁴⁵ In the dedicatory epistle to the Historia Regum Britanniae, for instance, Geoffrey of Monmouth explains that he has translated his source text, which is "attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative," into a Latin of "homely style," so that readers would not be "bored" with having to spend all their time "discovering the meaning of my words" instead of "following the story."⁴⁶ Yet while the dictionary privileges words over story, some words remain particularly resonant parts of a larger intellectual, affective and ideological project -- building blocks of, and for, a certain kind of national consciousness and feeling.

In his entry for "Britania," Elyot dismisses the version of British origins made popular by Geoffrey's Historia, in which the name is said to have derived from its Trojan founder, Brutus. Elyot concludes that, "as I haue done in the worde Albion, so wyll I here declare a reasonable cause of coniecture."⁴⁷ What follows, however, is a strange story, not unlike Geoffrey's account of his book's authoritative source. In the dedicatory epistle, Geoffrey tells his readers how he had been pondering the sad absence of sources relating the glorious lives and doings of the earliest kings of Britain, when "Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, ... presented me with a certain very ancient book written in the British language" containing precisely the longed-for material. The

book contains all the "deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first King of the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo."⁴⁸ We do not find out what happens to this mysterious source. In his entry on Britannia, Elyot relates a similar story, telling his readers how, about thirty years previously, a "holowe stone fast keuered with a nother stone" was discovered at a place called Ivychurch in Wiltshire, "about ii. myles from the Citie of Sarisbury," as men were digging a foundation. In this hollow stone was found a book, consisting of twenty pages of "very thyck velome." When it was shown to the priests and cannons "whiche were there at that tyme," they could not read it, and so they tossed it back and forth, causing the pages to be torn. After this "they dyd neglect it and dyd cast it a side." Elyot gets hold of a piece of the text "[l]ong tyme after" and shows it to "maister Richarde Pace," then "chiefe secretary to the kynges moste royal maiestye." Pace pores over the book, but "coulde not fynde any one sentence perfyte." Nevertheless, before returning the book to Elyot, he thinks he can decipher one line which seems to suggest "that the sayde boke conteyned some auncient monumente of this yle;" one word, "Prytania," which he believes "was there put for Britaniae," stands out (Bibliotheca, doc. image 52).⁴⁹

It is at this point that the national stories -- separated from one another in the dictionary -- are linked up again.⁵⁰

Just as in the late medieval Brut chronicles the Albina narrative precedes and leads to that of Brutus, so here "A" comes before "B," and it is Albion that helps Elyot explain the single legible word in his mystery source:

Afterwarde I gyuyngge moche study and diligence to the reading of hystories, consyderynge wherof the worde Britania firste came, fyndinge that all the yles in this part of the Oceane were callid Britaniae, after my first coniecture of Albion, the sayde olde wrytyng was reuiued in my remembrance[.] (Bibliotheca, doc. image 52)

Remembering the methods that led him to "Albion" in connection with this ancient, defaced text, allows Elyot to connect his conjecture for that name with his discovery in "Suidas" of the Greek word "Prytania," meaning: "metalles, fayres or martes, also reuenues belongynge to the commune treasour." He puts the two things together, in a fortuitous joining of etymology, national history, classical authority, and contemporary politics - a conjecture underwritten by the land that predates and contains all. "Britania," from "Prytania," "signifies the place, by that whiche came out of it:" the material wealth and economic infrastructure of Britain follow on from the Edenic bliss of Albion. This is validated by the "original" source -- found deep in the native soil -- in which the ancient Greek name is inscribed.

Elyot's account reads like a veiled commentary on -- or perhaps like a parable of -- recent political events.

Ivychurch, an Augustinian priory, was dissolved in 1536,⁵¹ six years before the appearance of the Bibliotheca.

Enshrined deep in the earth in a hollow stone capsule, the book emerges from under foundations, like a natural resource (like the metals of "Prytania"), and reveals the local clergy to be sadly lacking. They are ignorant both of languages and of the past (they treat an ancient text violently, defacing it). They either do not recognise, or do not care about, the "auncient monumente of this yle" that the book contains, and show a general disregard for books, allowing this precious antiquity to be "rente, partely defaced, and bloryd with weate." The time capsule in which the text is housed speaks of human craftsmanship, and an intention to preserve something of value from the passing of time, or from other kinds of violence. The true inheritors of this ancient learning, and of the nation's history, are men of the present, like Richard Pace and Thomas Elyot -- men who value the "commune tresour."

In conclusion, Elyot reiterates that he does not feel that the Brutus legend provides the right kind of origin for Britain:

Fynally, I haue alwaye thought and yet doo, that it is more honourable unto this countrey, to haue receyued his fyrst name by suche occasion as I haue rehersed, and the generation of the inhabitauntes therof, to be eyther equall with the moste aunciente, or myxte with the moste wyse and valyaunte people of Greece, vainquisshours and subduars of Troyanes: than to take the name and fyrste generation, eyther of a vayne fable, or of a man (if any suche were) whiche after he had slayne his father, wandred about the worlde, vncertayne where to dwell.

Not only were the Trojans vanquished by the Greeks, and fated to a nomadic existence until they found a new homeland, but the cause of this reversal of fortune was the adulterous love of Paris and Helen, "of whom neuer proceded any other notable monumente, but that they were also breakers of theyr oth and promyse" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 53). The clergy's disregard for the ancient national "monument" contained in the unearthed book resembles the monumental failure of Paris and Helen's adulterous affair; those who are ignorant, follow selfish desires and break oaths endanger "monuments" -- because they do not produce any, but even more damningly because they do not even recognise or know what to do when confronted with them.

This evocation of a senseless destruction of cultural objects that might turn out to be important national monuments echoes uneasily in the midst of the Dissolution (in which Elyot was actively involved) -- even while it is the same context in which Elyot imagines a recovery of what might have been lost becoming possible. In Elyot's account, then, the illegible fragments of the past are reconstructed in favour of a new reading (triggered by the old, but incomplete, text) that highlights the nation's organic connection to happiness, natural wealth and human productivity, and guaranteed by a certain kind of education, and by certain kinds of men, who know how to value -- and 'read' -- the past in the light of the present. The complex temporality of this reading gestures towards, even as it seeks to avoid, the deeply uncomfortable "similitude" with recent and contemporary events that the story of Paris and Helen, and their failure to produce anything but broken oaths and political turmoil, might be thought to foreshadow. Knowing how to read the past reasonably -- no matter how partial the sources are, or how defaced -- means being able to match the nation to a fitting monument; that is, to find -- or create -- an honest similitude. Such a similitude, which necessarily proceeds out of the conditions and possibilities of the present, thus becomes the most "originary," and most properly monumental. At the same time,

the conjecture that makes possible the new "Britania" still relies on "Albion", even as the latter is dismissed.

The legends of Albina and Brutus, unlike the union of Paris and Helen, feature offspring. The giants, as already mentioned, are said to be the result of the women's intercourse with devils, and are conquered by Brutus and his men upon their arrival.⁵² The Albina legend, by explaining the origin of the giants that Brutus encounters, fills a gap in Geoffrey's account by going even deeper into the past. These giants are sometimes referred to by the names of Gogmagog, or Gog and Magog -- names the medieval accounts derived from biblical and classical sources.⁵³ Victor Scherb has shown that while their existence was "increasingly doubted" in the early modern period, "the giants' association with London grew rapidly in the sixteenth century." They were "assimilated into local history, provincial landscape, and civic iconography," and had even become "symbols of national identity."⁵⁴ Alexandra Walsham has recently offered a close analysis of the wider processes by which different understandings of, and attitudes to, the landscape developed in the early modern period, arguing that from the sixteenth century onwards, "the study of preternatural rarities and prodigies ... led scholars to dismiss traditional stories about them as silly falsehoods and groundless fictions" -- a move that "coalesced with

Protestant contempt for Catholic legends of miraculous events". Giants crystallized and complicated these dynamics, because they were associated on the one hand with the contested medieval origin myths, as well as popular-traditional accounts that featured them in connection with specific landmarks, and, on the other, with the authority of scriptural accounts.⁵⁵ Walsham shows that while diverse "intellectual tendencies were combining to discuss aetiological tales about notable landmarks as 'vulgar errors' and 'popish fables'," others responded to "remnants of the ancient and medieval past with a mixture of regret, nostalgia, and antiquarian conjecture."⁵⁶

The 1542 entry on "Britania" offers an insight into how reformist critique of monastic ignorance, the destruction caused by the Dissolution, and the emergence of antiquarian interest come together uneasily in Elyot's search for national origins. And although Elyot does not mention giants in the entries on Albion and Britannia,⁵⁷ and the entry on "Magog" (there is none for "Gog") simply states that this is "the sonne of Iapheth," citing Genesis 10:2 (Bibliotheca, doc. image 167), there is an entry on giants: "Gigas, gantis, a gyant, a man or woman farre excedyng the comon stature of men, of whom as wel holy scrypture, as other credible wryters doo make mention" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 131).⁵⁸ Giants, who had a much longer (and more authoritative, since

scriptural as well as classical), history than the Galfridian narrative, provide a test case both for epistemology and for national history in Elyot's entries. The approach used in relation to Albina or Brutus does not work here, even though the giants have a very close historical (even genealogical) connection with them.⁵⁹

At the end of his entry on giants, Elyot relates another anecdote about Ivychurch priory. He tells us that thirty years ago -- around the same time that the mysterious Greek book was unearthed -- he visited there with his father:

Aboute thirty yeres passed, and somewhat more, I my selfe beyng with my father syr Rycharde Elyote, at a monasterye of regular chanons, called Iuy church, two myles from the citie of Sarisburye, behelde the bones of a deade man founde depe in the grounde, where they dygged stone, which being ioyned togyther, was in lengthe .xiiii. foote and tenne ynches, there beyng mette. Whereof one of the teethe my father hadde, whyche was the quantytie of a great walnutte.

Elyot includes this story "bycause somme menne wylle beleue nothyng that is out of the compasse of theyr owne knowledge & yet som of them presume to haue knowlege aboue any other, contempnyng all men but them selves, or such as they fauour." The giant's bones and tooth, then, are minatory, warning of the limits of human experience and reason, as

well as of the dangers of making knowledge partisan.⁶⁰ Thus two things come out of the ground at around the same time: the mysterious book, which, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's own source, allows Elyot to develop his similitude for "Britania," and the remains of a giant, which remind him (and now others) of what lies beyond the bounds human knowledge.

D.T. Starnes points out that Elyot was one of the early disseminators of material gleaned from "fables, mythology, profane and sacred history:" "strange stories ... of beasts, and birds, and stones -- such as were never on land and sea."⁶¹ As the entries on Albion, Britannia and giants show, the precise distinctions between mythology and history were at this point still in flux, even as attitudes towards them were hardening. Because of the kinds of similitudes they could generate -- some desirable, others not -- a blurring between them, or a creative engagement with them, could either be 'honest' or deceptive. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the entry on Arthur, that other contested figure placed centre stage in the national imagination by Geoffrey's Historia.⁶² Despite Polydore Vergil's attack on the Galfridian account of Arthur in 1534, in Elyot's dictionary Arthur is presented unequivocally as a historical figure: "a kyng of Englande, whan it was callyd Britannia, a man of excellent prowesse."⁶³ Yet he must

acknowledge that despite the fact that Arthur was "a very noble & famous prince," he too was "vnremembered" by those who "wrate hystories about his time." As for the "incredible fables" that have sprung up around his name, these are the fantasies of foreigners -- of "frenchemen and Spanyardes" -- and are of no greater significance "than the semblable inuentions & fantasies of the grekes" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 40). Greek mythology here stands as the fabulous counterpart to Greek etymology, producing "semblable inuentions" rather than properly conjectured similitudes.

But with so much likeness, it can be hard to see the difference, as Elyot himself knew all too well. On March 6, 1536, Elyot had written to Cromwell about Henry's "proclamacion concerning sediciouse bookes." He reminded him of "the similitude of our studies," which he says is the "moste perfeict fundacion of amitie."⁶⁴ Summit notes that Elyot, recognising that "similitude" might not in itself be considered sufficient proof of loyalty, adds that he would be only too glad to "likewise divulge the contents of his mind; for if 'he [Cromwell] mowght see my thowghtes as godd doeth' ... he would thereby 'finde a reformear of those thinges, and not a favorar'."⁶⁵ By 1542, however, Cromwell was dead. The kind of proof required of Elyot is beyond that which similitudes -- reasonable, honest or otherwise -- can provide; the search for unequivocal truth leads to a

chilling fantasy of complete transparency, beyond all likenesses, in which nothing is outside the "compasse" of a god-like Cromwell's "knowledge."

Elyot does not tell us whether he was also there when the mystery book was dug up at Ivychurch (his account does not suggest he was), but the two entries on Albion and Britannia are connected chronologically and formally, if not explicitly in terms of content. Read serially, as they would be in a chronicle, Elyot's entries on Albion, Britannia and giants illustrate the ongoing difficulties posed by stories of an uncertain past in an uncertain present -- in terms of content (sources and origins to which we have no access) as well as form (the forms in which knowledge of the nation's history are produced and transmitted). These problems become particularly acute when the ways in which stories of the nation's past are told -- and which stories are told at all -- are thought to be vital to the future; the relationship between old and new is negotiated through but also problematized by similitude.⁶⁶ If in the first two entries, on Albion and Britannia, Elyot seems to champion with optimism and confidence the new knowledge that makes his conjectures possible, the entry on giants indicates misgivings about the scope of human knowledge.

The ravages of time, materialised in the buried bones and defaced texts that emerge from under buildings themselves

recently brought to ruin, efface clear distinctions. The entry conjectures that there are truths that escape definition -- that are more elusive and perhaps more powerful for not being "reasonable," -- and that this both drives and stymies the project of and desire for reformation and definition.⁶⁷ Although the account of national origins is dismembered by the alphabetical organisation of the dictionary, its parts nonetheless lie scattered within it, like the bones of a giant within national soil.⁶⁸ One can read them individually, but they are also quite easily sutured back together -- because of the familiarity of these histories, the ongoing cultural and ideological importance of national origins (as well as their affective power), and the content of the entries themselves. Reassembled -- if not seamlessly -- they speak of an ambivalent recognition that while these might be "old stories," one should remember that "some people ... do believe them."

Post Script

As Mantel's Wolsey would have known, this was not the end. By 1559, Thomas Cooper's enlarged edition of Elyot's Bibliotheca, included an appendix;⁶⁹ Starnes notes that it contained the "myths, legends, lives, geography, etc.," which had now been moved to this "separate section at the end of the dictionary proper".⁷⁰ It is this appendix that we now find "Albion," while "Britania" and the giants remain in

the 'proper' dictionary.⁷¹ Elyot's dictionary entry on the giants, like the originary stories that placed giants at the very beginnings of the nation, turned out to have its own echoing, scattered afterlife -- an afterlife that we can link back to those debates emerging in the sixteenth century, even if they are not the same. In an article for the Wiltshire Notes and Queries from 1893, one contributor recalls the story of the Ivy Church giant from Elyot's Bibliotheca, and says he can "in part" explain it by comparing it to something that had happened there very recently, just "ten or twelve years ago." At that time, the "skeleton of a Saxon chief" had been found buried in the ground -- the size of his bones seemed to suggest that he had been a "giant of a man." Yet it turned out that it was merely that his bones had been measured incorrectly, and that "he was really of very ordinary stature."⁷² Despite this reasonable explanation, the topic resurfaces again one year later, in the March 1894 issue, when "P. J." from Clapham writes to ask fellow readers for "corroborative evidence" of an entry that he has found in an elusive seventeenth-century volume, entitled England's Remarques:

In Ivy-Church, was found a Corps 12 foot long, and a Book of very thick parchment all written with great Roman letters; but when the leaves were touched, they mouldered to Dust.⁷³

Books and bones: the entries on Albion, Britannia and the giants in Elyot's Bibliotheca refuse to stay fixed in place and time. They enter into, and become themselves part of, the restless power of "old stories" -- the desires that fuel them, the knowledge that defines them, and their many different guises.

I would like to thank Louise d'Arcens and Mike Rodman Jones for giving me the opportunity to present different versions of this material at events they organised. I would also like to thank the Humboldt Foundation, whose generous support made research for this article possible.

¹ Hilary Mantel, Wolf Hall (London: Fourth Estate, 2009), pp. 65-153 (p. 94); the story of Albina is on pp. 65-6.

² On the Albina myth, see: James P. Carley and Julia Crick, "Constructing Albion's Past: An Annotated Edition of the De origine gigantum," in Arthurian Literature XIII, ed. James

P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 41-91; Lesley Johnson, "Return to Albion," in Arthurian Literature XIII, ed. Carley and Riddy, 19-40; Tamar Drukker, "Thirty-Three Murderous Sisters: A Pre-Trojan Foundation Myth in the Middle English Brut Chronicle," Review of English Studies, New Series 54.216 (2003): 449-63.

³ See Anke Bernau, "Beginning with Albina: Remembering the Nation," Exemplaria 21, no. 3 (2009): 247-73.

⁴ Christy Desmet, "Afterlives of the Prose Brut in Early Modern Chronicle and Literature," Trivium: Readers and Writers of the Prose "Brut" 36 (2006): 227-46, at 227.

⁵ On pre-sixteenth-century debates over the validity of the Galfridian origin account, see, for instance, Arthur B. Ferguson, Utter Antiquity: Perceptions of Prehistory in Renaissance England (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), esp. 89-91; also T. D. Kendrick, British Antiquity (London: Methuen, 1950). On the response to medieval origin myths in the sixteenth century, see Anke Bernau, "Myths of Origin and the Struggle Over Nationhood in Medieval and Early Modern England," in Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England, ed. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106-18.

⁶ All references for citations taken from texts on EEBO will be given by date of publication and relevant image document number. John Rastell, The Pastyme of People (1529-1530),

Early English Books Online (EEBO) (STC 20724), doc. image 3.
See also Desmet, "Afterlives," 234.

7 On the whole, while sixteenth-century writers were willing to discuss the pros and cons of the Brutus myth, Albina was dismissed much more easily. Desmet locates the reason for this in the political context of the sixteenth century, in particular with Elizabeth's accession to the throne; see Desmet, "Afterlives". Origin myths also played a role in sixteenth-century Anglo-Scottish hostilities; see Bernau, "Myths of Origins," 111-12.

⁸ Gabriele Stein, "London in Elyot's Dictionary (1538)," Notes and Queries 57, no. 3 (2010): 339-41, at 339.

9 Thomas Elyot, The Dictionary of Sir Thomas Eliot Knight (1538), Early English Books Online [EEBO] (STC 7659). Clare Carroll calls him: "The first English humanist to display a wholehearted commitment to writing in the vernacular," and notes that his is "the first Latin-English dictionary (1538) to be based on humanist principles" ("Humanism and English Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 246-68, at 262). See also the entry on Thomas Elyot in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online edition). The most extensive study of Elyot's work as lexicographer is Gabriele

Stein's recent Sir Thomas Elyot as Lexicographer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁰ Greg Walker, Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation (2005; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 128. Furthermore, as Stein notes, Elyot "is the first to have used the word 'dictionary' for his word list, which was to become the generic term in English." Stein, The English Dictionary before Cawdrey (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985), 140.

¹¹ Stephen Merriam Foley, "Coming to Terms: Thomas Elyot's Definitions and the Particularity of Human Letters," English Literary History 61 (1994): 211-30, at 211, 212. Albeit "with a complex and surprising cultural volatility" (212) - an assessment with which this essay concurs.

¹² Neil Kenny, Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Band 81 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 18.

¹³ See Stein, English Dictionary, 143. See also D. T. Starnes, Renaissance Dictionaries: English-Latin and Latin-English (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954). On the differences and overlaps between language and encyclopedic dictionaries, see Werner Hüllen, English Dictionaries 800-1700: The Topical Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), esp. 7-11.

¹⁴ Stein notes that there are numerous "entries in the dictionary [that] seem to suggest that Elyot had a special interest in the beginnings of things and customs," and refers to a book Elyot spoke of having written in 1545, entitled De rebus memorabilibus Angliae, but which was never published (Sir Thomas Elyot, 68).

¹⁵ Thomas Elyot, Bibliotheca Eliotae Eliotis Librarie (1542), EEBO (STC 7659.5). I will refer to the 1542 edition as Bibliotheca, and the 1538 edition as Dictionary. Further citations will be given parenthetically in the text by relevant title and EEBO document image number. An entry on Albion is included in some, if not all, of the editions of Elyot's dictionary. It is not present in the first (1538), but appears in the second (1542); after the dictionary's enlargement under the supervision of Thomas Cooper, it also appears in the third (1548) and fourth (1552) editions. By the fifth edition (1559) it has been either excised or relegated to an appendix. While this appendix is found in STC 1727: 23 of the 1559 edition, STC 338:04 does not have it and does not include an entry under "Albion" anywhere. Entries on "Britania" and "gigas" (giants) are very concise in the 1538 edition, with no reference made in either to the origin myths.

¹⁶ See Ferguson, Utter Antiquity, esp. 84-105; Bernau, "Myths of Origin."

17 See Anke Bernau, "'Britain': Ordinary Myths and the Stories of Peoples," in The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature, ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 629-48; Bernau, "Beginning with Albina."

18 Jennifer Summit, Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 80. Summit calls Elyot "a master of equivocation" (87).

19 Summit explains that "[monastic] libraries could supply historical and doctrinal truth, but they could also generate religious 'dreams'; the job of Cromwell's agents was to sift the former from the latter" (Memory's Library, 80).

20 Summit argues that, "[w]here [Thomas] More reveals that the spread of English humanism occurred through conquest of formerly monastic spaces, [Thomas] Starkey and [Thomas] Elyot turned such conquest to the service of the English Reformation, as they helped convert libraries, including the very buildings that housed them, from monastic to patriotic aims" (Memory's Library, 12). See also Seth Lerer, Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30-4.

21 Lerer, Error, 30-31, 31.

22 On Elyot's changeable relationship with Henry VIII and his understanding of the role of counsellor, see Walker,

Writing. See also John Guy, "The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England," in Tudor Political Culture, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292-310; Foley, "Elyot's Definitions"; Arthur E. Walzer, "The Rhetoric of Counsel and Thomas Elyot's Of the Knowledge Which Maketh a Wise Man," Philosophy and Rhetoric 45, no. 1 (2012), 24-45; K. J. Wilson, "The Letters of Sir Thomas Elyot: Introduction," ed. K. J. Wilson, Sources in Philology 73, no. 5 (1976), ix-xxx.

²³ Walker, Writing, 126.

²⁴ Summit, Memory's Library, 12.

²⁵ The fact that Elyot stops the printing process at the letter "M" in response to the king's intervention, and overhauls all of the earlier entries as well as the later ones, shows, Foley argues, "how the mechanical letters of the printing press and the human letters of the new learning could be reinscribed as the vehicles of a broadly nationalist and absolutist ideology"; Foley, "Thomas Elyot's Definitions," 214. It is published in 1538 "with Kynge's Gracious Privilege" (Dictionary, doc. image 2).

²⁶ "Suidas" was the supposed author of an important tenth-century encyclopedia composed in Greek, with a strong emphasis on classical and biblical literary history. The name of the work was incorrectly assumed to be the name of a single author, and was translated into Latin in the

thirteenth century by Robert Grosseteste. See Anne Mahoney, "Tachypaedia Byzantina: The Suda On Line as Collaborative Encyclopedia," Digital Humanities Quarterly 3, no. 1 (2009), available online at:

<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/003/1/000025/000025.html>

Stein tells us that "Suidas' Greek lexicon, the most important source for Greek philology, became accessible when it was printed in 1499" (Sir Thomas Elyot, 32).

27 This was a distinction that had been made already in the twelfth century, but which was pursued with renewed vigour in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See Alistair Minnis and A. B. Scott (eds), with the assistance of David Wallace, Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100 - c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 113.

28 Brutus and Arthur continued to be important, for instance for James VI of Scotland and Charles II. See Hugh A. MacDougall, Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons (London: University Press of New England, 1982).

29 He also argues here that the word cannot be derived from the name "Brutus" since "there is so moche diuersitie betwene Britania and Brutus, that is semeth unlykelye and agaynste reason."

30 This derivation is given in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's thirteenth-century encyclopedia, De proprietatibus rerum; see Desmet, "Afterlives," 234.

31 He translates "coniectio, ~ are" as "to suppose, to judge" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 80). As Ferguson notes, on the prevalence of the use of "conjecture" in sixteenth-century debates about early British history: "Where little or no hard evidence can be found either to support or reject a legend, it becomes necessary to make the most of hypothesis based on reasoned conjecture. Success, of course, depends on how reasoned the conjecture may be" (Utter Antiquity, 92ff.).

³² Foley argues, of the 1538 dedication, that Elyot makes "'King' the first and premature entry in the Dictionary" - which he sees as an expression of Elyot's "own doctrinal relation to ... absolutism" ("Thomas Elyot's Definitions," 214).

³³ Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (1553), EEBO (STC 25799), doc. image 110-11, at 110.

³⁴ See, for instance, Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300 - 1475, ed. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 24-6.

³⁵ Emilio Hidalgo-Serna, Lynne Ballew and Holly Wilson, " 'Ingenium' and Rhetoric in the Work of Vives," Philosophy and Rhetoric 16, no. 4 (1983), 228-241, at 233, 236.

³⁶ R. H. Bowers, "The Similitude as Essay: The Case of Robert Cawdrey," Huntington Library Quarterly 20, no.2 (1957): 177-82, at 178-9.

³⁷ For two different readings of Hobbes' attitude to similitude, see Roger D. Lund, "Wit, Judgment, and the Misprisions of Similitude," Journal of the History of Ideas 65, no.1 (2004): 53-75; and Andreas Musolff, "Igues fatui or Apt Similitudes? -- The Apparent Denunciation of Metaphor by Thomas Hobbes," Hobbes Studies 18, no.1 (2005), 96-112.

³⁸ The 1540 Great Bible uses 'similitude' in this negative sense in its iteration of the first commandment in second book of Moses (Exodus), chapter 20; EEBO (STC 2069), doc. image 33.

³⁹ Middle English Dictionary, s.v. 'similitude'.

⁴⁰ David Norton, The History of the Bible as Literature: Volume 1, From Antiquity to 1700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 68. He illustrates this by citing George Puttenham (1529-90): "whensoever by your similitude ye will seem to teach any morality or good lesson by speeches mystical and dark, or far fetched, under a sense metaphorical by applying one natural thing to another...Such parables were all the preachings of Christ in

the Gospel"" (69). The 1540 Great Bible uses both 'similitude' and 'parable'; see Matthew 13, for instance. 41 Similitude was, as stated above, also known to medieval rhetoricians and was widely used, particularly in devotional literature. It was a feature of allegorical, anchoritic, mystical and visionary writings and modes of thought - precisely those kinds that many reformers were critical of.

⁴² Stein notes that Elyot strove "to make the ideas, culture, and wisdom of classical antiquity available to his countrymen in the vernacular" by "translating from Greek and Latin into English." However, he also coined new terms in English if he could not find "adequate expressions to render the ideas expressed in the classical languages" (Sir Thomas Elyot, 9).

⁴³ Having a Greek origin arguably also removes the name from the context of medieval Latin chronicles.

⁴⁴ On the not entirely straightforward nature of Elyot's alphabetical ordering, see Stein, Sir Thomas Elyot, at 33-4.

⁴⁵ I am referring here, of course, to the concept developed by Raymond Williams throughout his work. See, for instance, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. and intro. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), 51-2, at 51.

⁴⁷ Elyot, Bibliotheca, doc. image 52. He had previously stated: “[T]hat the name began of Brutus, whome our wrytars haue of theyr owne heades ymaged to haue discended from Aeneas the Troyane, it is no more lykely, than that this yle was called Albion of Dioclesians daughter, or of whyte rockes, wherof I haue before writen” (doc. image 51).

⁴⁸ History, ed. Thorpe, 51.

⁴⁹ In his 1569 Chronicle, Grafton claims to base his account of the story of Brutus on that found in “an olde Pamphlet which hath no name” (doc. image 23).

50 Elyot’s entry on Britannia repeatedly points us back to his entry on Albion – he thus confirms the foundational and memorable nature of “Albion,” which includes the Albina material.

51 See “Houses of Augustinian canons: Priory of Ivychurch,” in A History of the County of Wiltshire, Volume 3, ed. R. B. Pugh and Elizabeth Crittall (1956), 289–95. See

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=36539>

[Date accessed: 8 May 2015]

52 See Bernau, “Beginning with Albina”; and Bernau, “Myths of Origin”.

⁵³ See, for instance, Genesis 10:2; 1 Chronicles 1:5; 1 Chronicles 5:4; Ezekiel 38 and 39. See Victor I. Scherb, “Assimilating Giants: The Appropriation of Gog and Magog in Medieval and Early Modern England,” Journal of Medieval and

Early Modern Studies 32, no.1 (2002): 59-84, at 59. See also Stephen Nicholas, Giants in Those Days (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

54 Scherb, "Assimilating Giants," 77. On the "giants" included in the 1540s Midsummer Shows, see Philip Butterworth, Magic on the Early English Stage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 113.

⁵⁵ Alexandra Walsham, The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern England and Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 360. On giants as the builders of Stonehenge, and as discussed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Polydore Vergil and John Leland, see 297ff.

⁵⁶ Walsham, Reformation of the Landscape, 472.

57 While Elyot does mention giants with reference to another possible source for the name of Albina (as stemming from a giant called Albion, son of Neptune and slain by Hercules), he does so only to dismiss it (Bibliotheca, doc. image 22).

⁵⁸ The "credible wryters" include Plutarch (again), Pliny and Solinus. In the 1538 edition, the entry for "Gigas, gigantis" reads simply: "a gyaunt" (Dictionary, doc. image 57). Stein briefly discusses this entry as an example of how Elyot includes "eye-witness evidence ... to convince readers

of the accuracy of unusual phenomena reported" (Sir Thomas Elyot, 84).

59 On sixteenth-century writers commenting on archaeological and topological "evidence" of giants having lived in England, see Ferguson, Utter Antiquity, 108-09.

⁶⁰ The tone of this entry echoes that of late-medieval, alphabetically organised preacher's compendia. In the fourteenth century, they were 'systematically amalgamated in an encyclopedic manner', included 'very long entries' and rested on a 'central core of authoritative material' that included scriptural and patristic sources; see Christina von Nolcken, "Some Alphabetical Compendia and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England," Viator 12 (1981): 271-88, at 271, 272.

61 Starnes, "Literary Features," 27, 28, 31. Seth Lerer calls the Dictionary a 'cultural lexicography'; see Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 44.

⁶² The acrimonious debates over the existence of Arthur were also linked to antiquarian projects in this period, as Leland's work in particular demonstrates.

⁶³ Although I do not have the space to go into it here, it is clear that Elyot's entries on Albion, Britannia and Arthur all share an anti-Scottish agenda. Both Albion and Britannia are ancient names that refer to a landmass that

includes both England and Scotland, and Arthur is said to have "subdewed Scotland and Ireland" (Bibliotheca, doc. image 40). For a consideration of the role of the Albina myth in sixteenth-century Anglo-Scottish hostilities, see Bernau, "Myths of Origin".

Elyot's entry on "Scoti, Scottes, or Scottyshemen" and cites St Jerome in calling them cannibals (Bibliotheca, doc. image 255).

64 Wilson (ed.), Letters, 26-28, at 26. That such foundations are anything but "perfeict" became clear in another letter Elyot wrote to Cromwell, from July of the same year, in which he asked Cromwell to "lay a part the remembraunce of the amity betwene me and sir Thomas More" (Wilson (ed.), Letters, 31).

⁶⁵ Summit, Memory's Library, 91.

⁶⁶ The respective value of both "old" and "new" is, for Elyot, radically uncertain. See Patricia Clare Ingham, The Medieval New: Ambivalence in an Age of Innovation (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) on the ways in which "the new" comes to be constituted as a value; I would argue that this necessarily also affects the perceived value of "the old."

⁶⁷ Summit notes that when Elyot was given access to the king's library in preparing the Dictionary, it was "the repository for numerous 'legendes' and 'superstitious

bookes'" and therefore "paradoxically the most heterodox in the nation". This changed when, in 1551, all such books were removed from the royal library (Memory's Library, 93).

⁶⁸ Summit argues that the dedication to the 1538 edition show Elyot overwhelmed by the "impossible challenge of imposing ideological unity on a diverse and divided collection of sources"; Memory's Library, 92. This seems to me to be very much a part of what Elyot is expressing in his 1542 entry on giants.

⁶⁹ Thomas Cooper, Bibliotheca Eliotiae (1559), STC 1727.23, doc. image 615.

⁷⁰ Starnes, "Literary Features," 27.

⁷¹ Cooper, Bibliotheca Eliotae (1559), STC 1727.23, doc. image 621. Elsewhere, Elyot's entries cause Albina and Brutus to reappear, in the 1569 edition of Richard Grafton's Chronicle, for instance. While the earlier editions of that work do not mention Albina at all, and only give a very brief account of Brutus, this one not only includes much fuller (if critical) versions of the traditional accounts of Albina and Brutus, but also cites Elyot's "conjectures" concerning the true origins of these names (EEBO (STC 12147), doc image 23-4).

⁷² Wiltshire Notes and Queries, Vol. 1, 1893-95 (March 1893), 24. Available online:

<http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/gettextimage.php?id=8844>

⁷³ See Wiltshire Notes and Queries, Vol. 1, 1893-95 (March 1894), 227-28 (27). Available online:

<http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/gettextimage.php?id=9095>

There are numerous references to the Ivy Church giant specifically, and giants in Wiltshire more generally, in the issues from 1893 and 1894.