LINGUISTIC CONQUEST:
THE ORIGINS OF A TRADITION OF PLACE NAMING IN GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH,
WACE, AND LA3AMON

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ABSTRACT

By the fourteenth century, historical place names had become a fundamental component of medieval Brut chronicles. The present thesis aims to pinpoint the origins of that tradition of British place naming, in particular within the Brutus myth, by inspecting three twelfth-century Brut chronicles: 1) Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), written in Latin; 2) Robert Wace’s *Le Roman de Brut* (1155), a loose translation of Geoffrey’s *Historia* into Anglo-French; and 3) Layamon’s *Brut* (c. 1190-1215), an Early Middle English compilatory history which heavily features Wace’s *Roman*. In *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the earliest of these three chronicles, Geoffrey embellishes an already extant Brutus myth chiefly by depicting the linguistic conquests of Britian’s mythical founder: in a performative act, Brutus conquers Britain and founds cities there. The efforts of Wace and Layamon draw attention to linguistic corruption. Wace, writing for Eleanor of Aquitaine, places the *Historia* within the Anglo-Norman court. Layamon, at the end of the twelfth century, carries a budding tradition of place naming into the English language, helping to fashion for linguistic conquest a solidified, religious, English home.
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Linguistic Conquest: The Origins of a Tradition of Place Naming in Geoffrey

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Writing an abridged Brut chronicle for his patron, earl Henry de Lacy, in 1309, Rauf de Boun abbreviates in one sentence the prominent Brutus foundation myth by then essential to British history:

Devant la Nativité Nostre Seigneur Jesu Christ mil et .cc. aunz
vient Brutus, le filz Silu, en Engleterre, si fist la ville de Loundrez;
ainz avoit .iii. nouns dount l’un fuist Troye Niue, l’autre
Trinavaunt, le tierez et le derainer fuist Loundrez, quel noun ly est
tenz jekis en ça….¹

[1,200 years before the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Brutus, the son of Silvius, came to England and founded the city of London; previously the city had three names, the first of which was New Troy, the second of which was Trinovant, and the third and the last of which was London, which name has persisted there until now….]

Rauf then concludes his account of Brutus by detailing, briefly, Brutus’ family—again with a focus on naming. His abbreviation reveals much more at stake than the short scope of his work. The myth of Brutus undoubtedly had become a solidified part of British historical consciousness, or at least that of the British nobility, by the fourteenth century. What information Rauf chooses to include in the condensed space allowed him thus reflects necessity less than a desire for emphasis. Yet, strikingly, that emphasis neither elaborates the rich classical background of the

Brutus myth nor mentions the eponymous naming of Britain, which is here called England. It falls not necessarily upon the building of the city of London, moreover, but falls rather upon the name of London and the corruption of that place name over time. For Rauf, the name seems to hold as much importance as (if not more importance than) the place itself.

His favor is not unusual. Within medieval Brut chronicles (which, spanning from the ninth century to the end of the medieval period as well as employing various languages, comprise multifarious accounts of Brutus and his legacy) there exists a fascination with place naming, or the conquering of geographical territory via the performative act of naming—what I call “linguistic conquest.” I here detail the origins of this fascination and therein demonstrate the emergence of a tradition of place naming within three landmark “histories” of the long twelfth century: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae (HRB), c. 1136; Robert Wace’s Roman de Brut (RdB), c. 1155; and La3amon’s Brut, c. 1190-1215. These three texts in particular allow one to consider place naming within several crucial contexts. Not only do they reflect the passage of time and change of generations throughout the twelfth century, but they also reflect different socio-political settings (the university, the court, the monastery) as well as divergent literary purposes, forms, and languages. Each of these texts utilizes and “translates” (in the liberal, medieval sense of the term) its immediate predecessor(s). Geoffrey frames his Historia as a Latin, prose translation of an ostensibly “very ancient book in the British language” (Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum), although he also clearly displays a knowledge of Nennius and of course Virgil. Wace draws heavily from Geoffrey in crafting his Anglo-French verse chronicle for Eleanor of Aquitaine and for her Norman court. La3amon, finally, cites Wace as the primary source of the compilatory history which God has inspired him to write for Britain.

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The latter two of these texts, in responding to their predecessor(s), help to establish a tradition of place naming stemming from *HRB* in which the name holds as much importance as the place—and which, as Rauf de Boun evidences, endures beyond the twelfth century.

*Historia Regum Britanniae*

Because Geoffrey neither invents Brutus nor is the first chronicler to cast him as the founder of Britain, an acquaintance with his precursors clarifies the numerous changes, additions, and omissions found in *HRB* which drastically expand the attention given to place names. Brutus, long before he appears in *HRB*, arises out of several texts, both literary and historiographical. The earliest and most obvious of these texts—which inspires rather than mentions Brutus—is Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which exerted a tremendous influence upon medieval Europe and of which any learned Englishman of the twelfth-century would have possessed a detailed knowledge. As Christopher Baswell has noted, “the Norman Conquest brought with it new scholars and a considerable influx of new manuscripts” and sixty-five manuscripts of the *Aeneid* survive from twelfth-century England alone.³ Additionally, although only one surviving medieval English manuscript of Virgil’s works (London, Lambeth Palace 471) contains an illustration, visual representations of the *Aeneid* appear in many of the popular Latin redactions which “circulated in the Norman milieu…includ[ing] England”: significantly, “artists...had to formulate those episodes in terms of the visual models available to them,” resulting in “a radical transposition of classical event…into a contemporary visual world.”⁴ The nationalistic thrust of Virgil’s familiar epic undoubtedly engrained itself within the English historical consciousness.

Aeneas, on the one hand, provided ample fodder for the creation of a corresponding founding hero for England; a postulated origin in Troy, on the other hand, offered the fledgling medieval nation a means by which to eclipse or at least to equal Rome. That in *HRB* Brutus travels not directly from Italy to Albion but rather from Greece—where he frees enslaved Trojans—to Albion is hardly coincidental. Like his ancestor Aeneas, Brutus, without a home, leads exiled Trojans on an epic voyage, the endpoint of which becomes the central location of a tremendous political empire. Virgil’s *Aeneid* offered the medieval English a way to achieve a strong, worldwide status by paralleling a classical empire.

The earliest (and major) text in which Brutus appears is the *Historia Brittonum (HB)*, attributed to Nennius, c. 830. Within *HB* we find not only the very beginnings of a foundation narrative for Britain but also the first mention of place naming:

> Et expulsus est ab Italia…. Et postea ad istam pervenit insulam, quae a nomine suo accepit nomen, id est Britanniam, et inplevit eam cum suo genere, et habitavit ibi. Ab illo autem die habitata est Britannia usque in hodiernum diem.\(^5\)

[He was exiled from Italy…. And after a while he came to this island which is named after him (that is, Britannia), and filled it with his people, and lived there. From that time to the present day Britain has been inhabited.]

*HB* also provides us with another component of the Brutus myth, the prophecy offered before Brutus’ birth which destines him to kill both his mother and his father. In addition to Brutus’\(^5\) 

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classical ancestry *HB* depicts a biblical ancestry as well, casting Britain’s founder as a descendant of Noah:


[I have heard another tale of this Brutus from the ancient books of our ancestors. The three sons of Noah divided the earth into three parts after the flood. Shem extended his boundaries into Asia, Ham into Africa, and Japheth into Europe. The first man of Japheth’s people who came to Europe was Alanus with his three sons, Hisicion, Armenon, and Neugio. Hisicion himself had four sons: they were Francus, Romanus, Brutus, and Albanus.]

For Nennius, Brutus was at once Roman and biblical. The most fundamental component of *HB* which Geoffrey omits in constructing *HRB* involves, therefore, Brutus’ role as a biblical as well as a classical heir.

In a recent article Thea Summerfield has argued that MS F of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* involves the first instance in which a chronicler casts Brutus as the true origin of British history.⁷

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In total nine manuscripts of the largely annalistic *Chronicle* have survived, none of which is original. MS F (the Domition Bilingual) contains entries first in English and then in Latin, and displays the closest affinity to MS E (the Peterborough Chronicle).⁸ According to Summerfield, a prologue precedes the annalistic portion of MS F; the prologue describes (in Latin which closely resembles that of *HB*) Brutus’ emergence from the Trojan diaspora, his voyage in exile, and his arrival in England. For example,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Postea ad istam peruenit insulam, que ab eo nominata est} \\
\text{Britannia.}^9
\end{align*}
\]

[After a while he came to that island which after him is named Britannia.]

Summerfield thus argues that “before Geoffrey presented his own elaborate account hung on the framework that he found in...*HB*, an earlier scribe, who clearly had access to the same or a nearly identical manuscript, also found the story of Brutus suitable as the beginning of a record of events in England.”¹⁰ While Geoffrey’s intense creative genius remains the force which truly transforms the Brutus story, *HB* and MS F of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* demonstrate that earlier authors were developing the same myth before *HRB*, even if to a lesser extent.

That Geoffrey embellishes the Brutus myth in *HRB* is well recognized. Perhaps the most radical shifts which *HRB* registers occur between the religious and the political realms and within the classicization of the Brutus concept. Geoffrey’s motive in composing *HRB* is undoubtedly political, as his relationship to his patrons Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and Waleran, Count of Mellent, as well as the Anglo-Norman political climate of twelfth-century England,

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would suggest. Nennius’ religio-political myth of Brutus becomes for Geoffrey the legend which must legitimize the contemporary government by casting its members as Arthurian heirs. As mentioned, Geoffrey finds little value in Brutus’ biblical and thus Christian ancestry—he omits it entirely. In *HRB* the founding of Britain becomes rather a classically-inspired epic, the goal of which—like that of Virgil’s *Aeneid*—involves imperial conquest. Following in classical footsteps, *HRB* at once expands and restricts the Brutus myth. Geographically Geoffrey details Britain and embellishes Brutus’ odyssey before his arrival upon the island. Like Aeneas, moreover, Brutus’ mission is inspired by the classical gods and strictly imperial—consequently linguistic conquest becomes both more active and more pronounced.

One of Geoffrey’s most fundamental contributions to the Brutus myth involves the emphasizing and embellishment of place naming or linguistic conquest. As mentioned, the founding and naming of Britain does appear before *HRB*, in *HB* and MS F of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Yet in *HRB* Geoffrey expands the Brutus myth to include depictions of naming as a performative act and also to relate contemporary geography back to an ancient era in a very political fashion.

*HRB* depicts Brutus as a classical hero fated for conquest not only of Albion but also—foreshadowing the Arthurian empire—of the Western world. Brutus is hardly original in founding Trojan cities: Ascanius, Aeneas’ son and Brutus’ ancestor, famously founds the city of Alba; and of course the largest consequences of Aeneas’ journey to Italy are the eventual founding of Rome and the development of the Roman empire. Moreover Brutus is fated to found more than England. Before reaching Albion, he and the Trojans whom he has freed through cunning and valiant battle will found Tours:
….uenit ad locum ubi nunc est ciuitas Turonorum quam, ut Homerus testatur, ipse postmodum construxit.\textsuperscript{11}

[….he came to the place where now stands the city of Tours, which, as Homer testifies, he himself founded.]

De nomine ipsius predicta ciuitas Turonis uocabulum nacta est quia ibidem sepultus fuit.\textsuperscript{12}

[The city of Tours, as I have mentioned, took its name from Turnus, for he was buried there.]

With the Trojans (and, naturally, within the British), therefore, Geoffrey locates an imperial spirit which extends beyond Britain itself.

Geoffrey’s account of Britain’s founding in \textit{HRB} is far more active than in \textit{HB} and MS F of the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle}. The latter two of these texts claim, passively, that Britain was named after Brutus. \textit{HRB} depicts the founding of Britain rather as a leader’s choice and desire for the posthumous fame of his name:

\begin{quote}
Denique Brutus de nomine suo insulam Brioniam appellat sociosque suos Britones. Uolebat enim ex deriuatione nomini memoriam habere perpetuam. Unde postmodum loquela gentis que prius Trioana siue curuum Grecum nuncupabatur dicta fuit Britanni\textsuperscript{c}>a.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

[From his own name Brutus named the island Britain, and his followers Britons. He wanted to have his memory perpetuated by

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
the derivation of the name. A short while later the language of the people, which initially had been called Trojan or crooked Greek, was called British for the same reason.]

The extent to which Brutus’ name—and thus his identity—encapsulates the land is striking. Not only is Albion renamed after Brutus, but his Trojan followers, the new inhabitants of the island, as well as their language, assume a derivation of his name. Geoffrey, by emphasizing naming in the above passage, seems to suggest that conquest involves both geographical and cultural components.

Brutus then founds New Troy, which episode constitutes Geoffrey’s most distinct consideration of place names and their power.

Condedit itaque ciuitatem ibidem eamque Troiam Nouam uocauit. Ex hoc nomine multis postmodum temporibus appellate tandem per corruptionem uocabuli Trinouantum dicta fuit. At postquam Lud, frater Cassibellani qui cum Iuliano Cesare dimicauit, regni gubernaculums adeptus est, cinxit eam nobilissimis muris necnon et turribus mira arte fabricates. De nomine quoque suo iussit eam dici Kaerlud, id est ciuitas Lud.14

[There he constructed his city and called it Troia Nova. For a long time it was called by this name until through a corruption of the language it came to be called Trinovantum. And after Lud, the brother of Cassivelaunus, who had fought with Julius Caesar, seized command of the kingdom, he surrounded the city with

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beautifully built walls and towers. He ordered it to be called

Kaerlud, or Lud’s city, after his own name.]

Two aspects of this passage are particularly important, and the first involves the corruption of place names with the passage of time. Geoffrey deals sometimes with toponymic corruption in HRB, but more often claims the persistence of the original Trojan place names. In this passage, however, the corruption which he provides—“Trinovantum”—cannot be a corruption of the original Trojan place name but must rather represent a corruption of its Latin translation which Geoffrey provides. “Troia Nova,” that is, is hardly a Trojan place name, if the Trojan language was understood as being, as Geoffrey explains, a sort of “crooked Greek.” Although Geoffrey elsewhere in HRB provides non-Latinate place names, here he chooses a Latin name and its subsequent Latin corruption. Second, Lud here changes the Trojan heritage both physically, by embellishing Trinovantum, and culturally, by ordering the city to be renamed after himself. Over time the characteristics of a place transform, as do the qualities of its inhabitants: names, Geoffrey seems to suggest, can reflect this change adequately.

Thus in HRB Geoffrey expands the limited focus of his sources to include both an epic journey and linguistic conquest. Chiefly Geoffrey expands the attention given to place naming in medieval Brut chronicles and emphasizes the cultural implications of a name.15

* * *

Roman de Brut

Wace “translates”—and at times transforms—the British place names of HRB. Because Wace relies heavily on Geoffrey for source material, much of the geography in RdB reflects that of the HRB. An important difference exists, however, in the strikingly disparate form and

15 London and Troy are, of course, not the only place names which Geoffrey discusses in HRB, and copious examples exist.
audience of the later work: Wace is tasked with versifying Geoffrey in French, as well writing for a courtly audience (specifically, for the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine). RdB reflects an increasing desire of the Norman aristocracy to learn more about English history as well as to assimilate English values—albeit in their own tongue. Only a short time before the completion of RdB and after years of civil war, in 1153, had the treaty of Wallingford recognized Henry as king of England: a French, courtly account of British history therefore made quite an appropriate gift for Eleanor. Precisely when Wace came to England remains unclear, although the fact that he was writing actively in Normandy is certain. Wace began his career writing religious texts and saint’s lives; his movement towards secular historiography thus reflects both a developing awareness of the Norman fascination with the British past and a recognition of its literary potential. Of the countless HRB manuscripts which existed Wace seems to have utilized a MS of the Variant Version (VV)—more complete than any copy which has survived—in preparing RdB. Indeed the sequential flow of Wace’s text may derive from the VV, which according to Judith Weiss (agreeing with Neil Wright) strives to improve the narrative coherence of the Vulgate HRB. RdB itself survives in roughly thirty MSS and fragments, which attest to the chronicle’s popularity despite, perhaps, an initially limited audience. I will use Judith Weiss recent edition, a composite text from MS P (BL Addit. 45103) and MS D (Durham Cathedral Library C iv 27[I]). Here I will consider two aspects of Wace’s place naming in RdB: first, the origins of the names of Tours, Britain, and London; and, second, the corruption of names.

The dramatic presentation and poetic style often present in—but by no means exclusive to—the literature of the twelfth-century court pervade the Brut, and there are indeed instances

when Wace embellishes the history of a place name, making it more vivid and more appealing to the ear. His account of the founding of Tours, for example, incorporates several details not found in the Historia. As cited partially above, in HRB Geoffrey writes:

Erat ibi quidam Trous nomine Turnus, Bruti nepos, quo fortior siue audatior nullus excepto Corineo aderat. De nomine ipsius predicta ciuitas Turonis uocabulum nacta est quia ividem sepultus fuit.\(^{18}\)

[There was there a certain Trojan named Turnus, Brutus’ nephew; no one except for Corineus was more brave or more bold than him. The city of Tours, as I have mentioned, took its name from Turnus, as he was buried there.]

Wace adds a description of Turnus’ sword—“[q]ui mult esteit ensanglantee [which shone with blood]” (1015-6) in the heat of battle—and the image of Brutus carrying his slain nephew to his grave: “Brutus l’en traist si l’en porta / E el chastel sus l’enterra [Brutus dragged him, carried him away, and buried him in the castle]” (1021-2).\(^{19}\)

Although both Geoffrey and Wace do represent the gradual corruption of British toponyms, the subject enjoys greater prominence in the Brut, and Wace regularly reminds his audience of the ways in which language changes and names evolve. For example, immediately after reproducing the fundamental moment when Brutus renames Albion “Britain,” his followers “Britons” and their Trojan language “British,” Wace anticipates the eventual rise of the English:

Mais Engleis l’unt puis remuë;

La parole e li nuns dura

Tant que Gormund i ariva;

\(^{18}\) Wright, Bern, 13. My translation.

\(^{19}\) Weiss, Wace’s Roman, 26. My translation.
Gormund en chaça les Bretuns
Si la livra a uns Saissuns
Qui d’Angle Angleis apelé erent,
Ki Engleterre l’apelerent;
Tuz les Bretuns si eissillierent
Que unches puis ne redrescerent. (1192-1200)²⁰

[But the English language has since altered it. The British language
and name endured until Gurmunt arrived; Gurmunt chased the
Britons away and gave the land to the Saxons who, from being
Angles, were called English and called the land England after
them. They chased away all of the Britons, who never returned.]

Here the verbs “chaça” and “eissillierent” are strong—the Britons will not leave willingly but
will be “chased out” by Gormund or “banished, never to return”—and contrasting parallels
create an entirely distinct people, land and language. Every trace of the British is eradicated: the
Saxons acquire their lands, English corrupts and replaces their tongue and, linguistically and
culturally, Britain becomes “England.” From the start Wace emphasises that the majestic lineage
of Brutus will fall at the hands of incoming foreigners. The ramifications of conquest are for the
conquered population threefold, occurring culturally, linguistically and geographically.

As in HRB the most detailed account of the corruption of a place name in RdB concerns
Troia Nova. Both Wace and Geoffrey treat the place name’s transformation; Wace, however,
presents a more comprehensive view of linguistic development by anticipating once again the

effects of the Saxon invasions and also those of the Norman conquest. Wace emphasizes, much more than Geoffrey, the instability of political control:

Par plusurs granz destruiemenz
Que unt fait alienes genz
Ki la terre unt sovent eüe,
Sovent prise, sovent perdue,
Sunt les viles e les contrees
Tutes or altrement nomees
Que li anceisor nes nomerent
Ki premierement les fonderent. (1239-46)²¹

[Through many instances of terrible destruction done by foreigners, who often have held the land, often taken it, often lost it; all of the towns and regions now have names different from those which their founders gave them.]

In this passage the old and the new are clearly distinguishable: the name of every city and town, claims Wace, has now changed from that which it was originally, at its founding. Moreover that change is not rare but frequent, as the repetition of “sovent” suggests (“…sovent eüe, / Sovent prise, sovent perdue”). Especially in the last couplet, Wace directly associates the name of a territory and its ruling authority, and indeed he seems to go beyond even Geoffrey in linking the two processes. In a second description of London, he reemphasises all of these claims:

Par remuemenz e par changes
Des languages as gens estranges,

²¹ Weiss, Wace’s Roman, 32. My translation.
Ki la terre unt sovent conqûise,
Sovent perdue, sovent prise,
Sunt li nun des viles changied,
U acreü u acurcied;
Mult en purreit l’on trover poi,
Si come jo entent e oi,
Qui ait tenu entierement
Le nun qu’ele out premierement. (3775-84)²²

[Through changes by the languages of foreigners, who often have conquered the land, often lost it, often taken it; the names of towns have changed, growing shorter or growing longer. One can find very few, as I hear and understand, which have kept the name which originally they had.]

Here Wace again repeats “sovent” to give the impression of constant change, as well as emphasises “foreign peoples,” territorial conquests and naming. Further, we again see the assertion of nearly exclusive change: very few places exist whose names have never been altered.

In RdB Wace largely carries place naming into contemporary times, relieving much of the deliberate archaism found in Geoffrey’s text. Chiefly, he exhibits more of a fascination with why places are called a certain name than with simply what they are called. Moreover he emphasises the cultural and linguistic changes that conquest effects. Linguistic conquest, for Wace, can only accomplish so much: the rapid change of both language and political control cast upon the

²² Weiss, Wace’s Roman, 96. My translation.
imperial project of _HRB_ a precarious shade. The ‘world view’ of Wace, it would seem, did contrast with Geoffrey’s to a fair extent; such a contrast resulted not only from external factors such as audience and patronage, but also from the language and the geography of the text itself.

* 

**Brut**

As Michael Swinton has written, La3amon’s _Brut_ “is a national and not a racial history; …the story is not of the Britons but of the land of Britain.”23 Indeed, in composing the _Brut_ La3amon compiles several accounts of British history—including especially _RdB_—into one chronicle for England. In the _Brut_, therefore, the act of naming remains prevalent.24

As far as we know, La3amon was an English priest. His identity is telling: not only is La3amon more concerned than his predecessors with having a spiritual mission (God has inspired him to write the _Brut_), but he also writes the first major medieval Brut chronicle in the English language. Two MSS of the _Brut_ have survived: Cotton Caligula A. IX and Cotton Otho C. XIII, both of which are located in the British Library. The dates of the MSS likely fall in the latter half of the thirteenth century, and neither copy is an original.25 According to Donald G. Bzdyl most scholars agree, however, that Caligula likely matches the original most closely, for which reason I will use it here.26

In the _Brut_, La3amon reproduces Wace’s conception of power (and its language) as transitory—

þus is þas bur hi-uaren; se[ð]ðen heo ærest wes a-reræd.

24 Here I discuss only London, to avoid reiteration. As with _HRB_, both _RdB_ and the _Brut_ offer copious and relevant examples of place naming.
26 Bzdyl, _Layamon’s Brut_, 8.
Thus has this city fared since it was first built. This island has passed from hand to hand so that all of the cities which Brutus build and their good names which in Brutus’ day stood have since been felled by the changing of people.

—and from this reproduction alone one might assume that the former’s treatment of London differs little from that of Wace. Significantly, however, the Brut’s account of the city contains a strikingly diminished emphasis on language and linguistic change; for La3amon, the frequent arrival of “foreigners” constitutes less a corruptive process and more an evolutionary one, precisely because those “foreigners” quickly become “natives” of the land which they have conquered. As Swanton points out, “[just] as the typical ‘Englishman’ is content to include among his forebears Boudicea, William the Conqueror, William of Orange, or a host of Hanoverian sovereigns, very soon the colonial Normans would speak of themselves as ‘English,’ even before they spoke the language.”

Thus although La3amon, like Wace, represents the frequency of change through repetition, here with the phrase “seoððen commen”—

Seo[ð]ðen com oþer tir; 7 neowe tidinde.

þat men heo clepeden Lundin; ouer al þas leode.

Seoððen comen Englisce men; 7 cleopeden heo Lundene.

Se[ð]ðen comen þa Frensca; þa mid fehte heo bi-wonnen.

27 Madden, La3amon’s Brut, I, 87. My translation.
28 Swanton, Literature Before Chaucer, 176.
mid heora leodðeawe; 7 Lundres heo hehten.²⁹

[Later another king ruled and the new custom was to call the city London; later Englishmen came and called it Lundene; later still came the French, who with their people conquered the city and called it Lundres.]

—his representation little concerns linguistic corruption as a detrimental effect of conquest.

La3amon’s ‘land’ is, after all, a pleasing place, and in the Brut he prefaces his account of London’s founding with a rhetorical description of its ideal location:

Brutos hine bi-þohte; 7 þis folc bi-heold.
bi-heold he þa muntes; feire 7 muchele.
bi-heold he þa medewan; þat weoren swiðe mære.
bi-heold he þa wateres; 7 þa wilde deor.
bi-heold he þa fisches; bi-heold he þa fu3eles.
bi-heold he þa leswa; 7 þene leofliche wode.
bi-heold he þene wode hu he bleou; bi-heold he þat corn hu hit greu.
al he iseih on leoden; þat him leof was on heorten.
Þa bi-þohte he on Troy3en.³⁰

[Brutus beheld this folk; he beheld the mountains, the meadows, the rivers, the beasts, the fish, the birds, the pastures, and the lovely forests. He saw how the wood bloomed and the grain grew;

²⁹ Madden, La3amon’s Brut, 87. My translation.
³⁰ Madden, La3amon’s Brut, 85. My translation.
all he saw in that country was dear to his heart. Then Brutus thought about Troy.]

This entire passage is entirely La3amon’s, an expansion of a mere two lines in Wace describing the suitability of Brutus’ land:

Quant il out quis leu covenable
E aaisiez e delitable… (1219-20)\textsuperscript{31}

[When he had chosen a convenient spot, suitable and delightful…]

It is, moreover, the only true expansion of its kind to be found in the Brut’s account of London, meriting its further investigation. Geoffrey of course begins HRB with an idyllic description of the island of Britain, from which La3amon may have been working. The passage from HRB indeed contains many of the details found in the Brut’s account of London:

Omni etenim genere metalli fecunda campos late pansos habet,
colles quoque prepollenti culture aprots in quius frugum
diuersitates ubertate gleve temporibus suis proueniunt. Havet
temperamenta in quibus frugum diuersibus. Havet
diuerse fructus et amplius inquis fruits diuersibus
nemora uniuersis ferarum generibus replete quorum in saltibus et
distribuunt. Habet etiam prata sub aeriis montibus ameno situ
uiresentia in quibus fonts lucidi per nitidos riuos leni murmur
manantes pignus suauis saporis in ripis accubantibus irritant. Porro
lacubus atque piscosis fluuis interrupta est…\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31} Weiss, Wace’s Roman, 32. My translation.
[It abounds in every kind of mineral and has broad fields; it has
hills which are suitable for the most intensive fanning and in which,
because of the richness of the soil, all kinds of crops are grown in
their season. It also has open woodlands which are filled with
eyery kind of game. Through its forest glades stretch pasture-lands
which provide the various feeding-stuffs needed by cattle, and
there too grow flowers of every hue which offer their honey to the
flitting bees. At the foot of its windswept mountains it has
meadows green with grass, beauty-spots where clear springs flow
into shining streams which ripple gently and murmur an assurance
of deep sleep to those lying on their banks. What is more, it is
watered by lakes and rivers full of fish….]  

Wace omits the above passage from HRB, which would either imply that La3amon had direct
access to HRB as well as RdB, or attest to the widespread popularity of the locus amoenus trope.

In any case, the latter is certain. Ernst Robert Curtis, in his study European Literature
and the Latin Middle Ages, set forward a definition of the locus amoenus which has survived
over the past sixty years: “[i]t is…a beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients
comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook.”33 It is interesting to note,
therefore, that the details which La3amon adds to Wace’s brief description of London’s
“construction site,” as it were, not only embellish but also classicize. Brutus looks around him,
beholding “wode,” “medewan” and “wateres”—i.e. the three ‘minimum ingredients’ which

33 Ernst Robert Curtis, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages (London: Routledge &
Curtis’ *locus amoenus* requires—and these natural features remind him of Troy; they reinvoke, in other words, a classical past. Brutus founds London as “New Troy”:

> He wes ihaten Brutus; þis lond he clepede Brutaine.
> 7 þa Troinisce men; þa temden hine to hærre.
> æfter Brutone; Brutuns heom cleopede.\(^{34}\)

[He was called Brutus, so this land he called Britain, and the Trjoans who took him as their leader he called Britons.]

In the *Brut* it is worth noting, above all, that it is the sight of the land which reminds Brutus of his ancestral home and which then prompts him to remember through the performative act of naming.

* 

Rauf de Boun, writing his abridged chronicle in 1309, participates in a tradition of place naming found within medieval Brut chronicles. In this essay I have examined three Brut chronicles from the long twelfth century—Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, and La3amon’s *Brut*—and have attempted to located the origins of such a tradition of place naming. As I hope to have made clear, Geoffrey neither invents Brutus nor the Trojan diaspora; one of his chief achievements in *HRB* involves, rather, the expansion of the Brutus myth to include a focus on place names and foundation. Wace, in turn, “translates” *HRB* for the Anglo-Norman court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, emphasizing within *RdB* the tendency of languages and place names to change with the influx of foreigners. Finally, La3amon re-classicizes Wace in completing his compilatory Brut chronicle, turning Britain into a *locus*

\(^{34}\) Madden, La3amon’s *Brut*, 83. My translation.
amoenus which deserves the name of Troy. All three of these chronicles exhibit an interest in place naming as well as geography.

The composition of a Brut chronicle, in attempting to locate the origins of an ethnic community, involves a consideration of cultural values. In that regard these three texts—of Geoffrey, Wace, and La3amon—institute a tradition of place naming which emphasizes territory, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, expression. Precisely what makes these two concepts so relevant to a sense of British identity, therefore, is that they persist throughout medieval Brut chronicles despite the presence of several languages and socio-political contexts. The tradition of place naming which emerges from Geoffrey, Wace, and La3amon is at once diverse and unified: it permits a large degree of individualization within a larger, British identity.
WORKS CITED


B.A. Comparative Literature; B.A. English
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Work Experience


Awards and Grants

The President’s Freshman Award. Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. 2009. For 4.00 GPA.
The President Sparks Award. Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. 2010. For 4.00 GPA.
The Evan Pugh Scholar Award (Junior). Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. 2010. For remaining in the upper 0.5 percentile of the junior class (received as sophomore).
Summer Grant. Presidential Leadership Academy. 2010. To attend a medieval congress at WMU, Kalamazoo, MI. $1,000.
International Thesis Research Grant. Schreyer Honors College/Dr. H. Kulin. For study at Oxford 2010-11. $7,000.
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Extracurricular Involvement

2008-9 The Daily Collegian. Arts Staff Writer (films, literature); Weekly Columnist.
2008-12 Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society. Member.
2008-12 Paterno Fellows Program. Inaugural Member.
2009-12 The Presidential Leadership Academy. Inaugural Member.
2010-12 Adult Literacy Tutoring Corps. Co-founder; Member.
2010-12 Centre County PAWS. Cat volunteer; public relations.
2010-11 Oxford University Cross Country Club. Member.
2011-12 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Member.
2011-12 Schreyer Honors College Global Living Program. Member/Resident.
2012 Yoga and Integral Living Club. Member.