Translating Troy
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ONE

Genealogy

TROJAN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ENGLAND

The historiographic wilderness from which alliterative romance emerges resembles the forests and marches that Gawain traverses on his way to the Green Chapel. From Virgil to Augustine to Orosius, the landscape of auctores is familiar and unseemly, pleasing and harrowing, civilized and monstrous. Behind every tree and rock is Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose genealogical model of the translatio imperii is traceable in a vast number of consequent historical and literary works, including alliterative romance. His historiographic influence has gained so much recognition that Geraldine Heng has even claimed that “[b]y giving Britain a regnal genealogy extending back to the glories of ancient Troy through Brutus . . . Geoffrey’s Historia [regum Britanniae] . . . supplies a foundational mythology irresistible to insular monarchs and virtually ensures that the Historia, issuing the foundational myth of Britain, will furnish the conditional matrix for imagining England as well.”1 While much of the English imaginary has a Galfridian heritage, many historiographers did not adhere to providential historiography or indulge fantasies of empire.

This chapter offers a challenge to the pervasiveness of the Galfridian historiography through the analysis of another popular historical tradition, that of Guido delle Colonne’s Historia destructionis Troiae. Scholars of medieval romance have acknowledged the influence of Latinate historiographies, such

1. Heng, Empire of Magic, 66.
as the biblical Augustinian-Orosian paradigm that locates an origin in the Fall and undermines the optimistic logic of the *translatio imperii*. The critical attraction to Geoffrey's text, however, has created a body of scholarship that ultimately treats Galfrian history as the singular origin of late medieval Trojan genealogy and English romance. Even the title of Helen Cooper's definitive study of the romance genre in England, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, privileges a Galfrian origin, despite the minimal treatment of Geoffrey's *Historia* in the book itself. This easily appropriated *Ur*-text, while attractive in its flexibility, does not fully account for the complexities of medieval romance and Trojan historiography after the twelfth century.

**THE BOOK OF TROY**

Over the past few decades, medieval romance has become a fruitful site for the identification of nascent perspectives of English nationhood. Central to this ongoing project has been Geoffrey's twelfth-century *Historia* because


it blurs generic boundaries of romance and history, establishes a genealogy
that connects the destruction of Troy with the birth of Rome and Britain,
and justifies the sovereignty of the English aristocracy. Through the secular
use of the *translatio imperii*, a prophetic model that promises future imperial
glory for Britain, Geoffrey’s text joins the *romans d’antiquité* in their exem-
plification of twelfth-century Norman-Angevin political ideology, which jus-
tified its nobility by claiming Roman and Trojan ancestry. This Angevin
propaganda is based on an optimistic rendering of *translatio*, a theory of
the transfer of world power that originates in ancient Greek historiography
and early biblical exegesis, in which the fall of Babylon leads to the birth
and eventual destruction of future empires such as Persia and Macedonia.
Early Jews and Christians interpreted the dream visions in *Daniel II* and VII as
the succession of world-empires that would end with the greatest of them
all, that is, Rome. By the ninth century, *translatio* began to be conceived as
political concept in papal historiography that authorized the Pope’s transfer
of the Roman Empire to the German Holy Roman Empire. The *translatio*
of Western Christendom reached its climax in the thirteenth century, when
Innocent III endowed Charlemagne with Roman *imperium*, an action that
asserted the papacy’s pivotal role in such translations of power.


however, circumvents these ecclesiastical claims in his *Historia* and locates the origin of *translatio* in the destruction of Troy, whose fall spawns both the birth of Rome and Britain. This secularization of the theory has fascinated scholars because it is discernible in a vast number of historical and literary works, including romance. Critical perspectives on the *Historia*’s legitimizing influence as providing a matrix for English romance have been useful in characterizing late medieval conceptions of historical and royal authority, but their singularity has obscured other historiographies that critique such optimistic and linear models.

This emphasis on the “happy ending,” which many romance plots provide, is by no means a feature that defines the genre. As Cooper notes, “The bulk of most romances . . . is devoted to the undergoing of hardship, and a surprising number . . . finally opt for a bleak fate over benevolent Providence.” Contributing to that “number” are the alliterative romances of this book. And while some of their critiques of providence may be traced to Geoffrey’s *Historia*, I want to suggest that their emphasis on the “bleak fate” of New Trojans originates in another “Troy Book,” Guido’s *Historia*. Guido interrogates imperial translation by condemning the martial policy that causes the destruction of Troy and its Roman and British progeny. In Guido’s *Historia*, Troy survives as a dismembered and tainted origin of Western civilization. Since Guido’s *Historia* was so popular, proven both through its manuscript circulation (at least 150 manuscripts survive) and its status as a source that was translated into English three separate times in the space of fifty years, it deserves scholarly attention to account for its effect on the English imagination in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Before proceeding further into a discussion of the nature and influence of the Guido-tradition, however, it is important to understand how Geoffrey’s *Historia* emerged as the authority for Trojan historiography. The *Historia*’s popularity among medieval readers after the twelfth century is attested not only by its manuscript circulation, but also by the wide variety of vernacular texts such as Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, and Laȝamon’s *Brut* that used it as a source for their histories of Britain. Geoffrey articulates a common twelfth-century reception of Virgilian history, which traces the providential transfer of power from Troy to Rome to London, and sets the precedent for future British writers and rulers to lay claim to Trojan and Roman origins.

in order to legitimize their ideologies and imperial designs. The *Histo-
ria* engages in a reading and elaboration of Virgil's *Aeneid* that expresses
enthusiasm for *imperium sine fine* that valorizes the Julian line and neglects
the poem's melancholic critiques of Augustan Rome. Understood this way,
Virgil becomes an imperial patsy, merely controlling the action at his emper-
or's behest. This uncomplicated interpretation of Virgilian politics prefers
the potency of imperial prophecy to the extent that the dire fates of Pallas
and Turnus are effaced and the legitimation of future empires is essentially
left unquestioned. Likewise, Virgil's dramatizations of the threat that the
Homerian Helen and her surrogates—Dido, Amata, Camilla, Juturna, and
Lavinia—pose to the creation of empire are effectively ignored and ironi-
cally sacrificed for a singular focus on the genealogical power that inheres to
Aeneas' founding of Rome. Virgil's sympathetic portrayal of Dido—which
has caused many to question an Augustan reading of the *Aeneid*—is left
unacknowledged by Geoffrey and many twelfth-century readers.

The twelfth-century *Roman d'Eneas* is a compelling example of this type
of Virgilian reception: it effectively negates Eneas' culpability in the fall of
Troy through a digression on the Judgment of Paris that blames the anger
of Pallas and Juno as the sole cause for Trojan destruction. By suppress-
ing Eneas' past and focusing on moral evaluations, the Eneas-poet reads
the Roman imperial past as an Angevin present. Geoffrey in the *Historia*

11. See Francis Ingledew, “The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History:
The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*,” *Speculum* 69.3 (1994): 665–704,
at 669; for a discussion of the 217 extant manuscripts of Geoffrey's *Historia* see Julia C. Crick, The
'Historia regum Britanniae' of Geoffrey of Monmouth, 3: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts
12. For darker reading of *Roma aeterna* in the *Aeneid*, see W. R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A
13. Michael Putnam, *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretation and Influence* (Chapel Hill: University of
University Press, 1989), 92–149.
16. Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth
Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 200–20; Desmond, *Reading
Dido*, 105–19; Lee Patterson, "Virgil and the Historical Consciousness of the Twelfth Century: The
Roman d'Eneas and Erec et Enide," *Negotiating the Past*, 170–83. For a more detailed discus-
sion, see Raymond Cormier, *One Heart One Mind: The Rebirth of Virgil's Hero in Medieval French
Romance* (University, MS: Romance Monographs, 1973).
articulates this same authority of the Trojan genealogy for Britain through the prophecy of the Roman goddess Diana, who early in the text informs the legendary founder of Britain, Brutus, that he shall discover an island which

\[
\text{fiet natis altera Troia tuis.}
\]

\[
\text{Hic de prole tua reges nascentur, et ipsis Totius terre subditus orbis erit. (9)\textsuperscript{17}}
\]

[shall be another Troy of your birth; here shall kings be born from your progeny, and through it the entire world shall be subdued.]

This vision of future subjugation of the world establishes Troy as an origin for empire and establishes worldly power that proved attractive to medieval monarchs and scholars ever since. Henry II in particular used Galfridian history as a means to bolster his own sovereignty and most likely sponsored Wace's translation of Geoffrey's \textit{Historia}.\textsuperscript{18} The court of Henry II also had a role in the production of Joseph of Exeter's \textit{Ylias}, a Trojan epic based upon the legendary eyewitness accounts of Dares and Dictys, augmenting the text in the favor of the Angevins in England.\textsuperscript{19} Such a courtly fashioning of this text may have been inspired by the ambivalence Joseph displays toward the Trojans.\textsuperscript{20} By the thirteenth century, this type of historiography based on lineage inspired the composition and circulation of the \textit{Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César}, a compilation of classical histories that begins with the Fall and continues throughout the ancient Greek, Trojan, and Roman civilizations.\textsuperscript{21} Later in medieval England, Trojan historiography still enthralled royalty and nobility; for example, Edward II's Queen Isabelle possessed a manuscript titled \textit{De bello troiano} and the youngest son of Humphrey of Bohun, Earl of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} As A. G. Rigg notes, “In an age that was usually pro-Trojan, the \textit{Ylias} is unusually neutral.” \textit{A History of Anglo-Latin Literature}, 1066–1422 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 102.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} For a discussion of the \textit{Histoire}, particularly within the context of a visual program obsessed with the death of Dido, see Desmond, \textit{Reading Dido}, 119–27.
\end{itemize}
Hereford, was named Eneas. Claims for the linguistic importance of Troy were also made in 1394 when a writer in the court of the Duke of Brittany composed the *Chronicon Briowense*, which asserts that the British language was a diluted remnant of the ancient Trojan tongue. There is no question that the glorious *Trinovantum* of Geoffrey’s history captured the imaginations of monarchs and writers who sought to legitimize British imperial designs.

Nevertheless, Geoffrey’s account has not been without its detractors. Medieval historians such as William of Malmesbury, Gerald of Wales, and William of Newburgh rejected its status as “history” based upon the assumption that Geoffrey’s claim that his account originates in a Welsh *vetustissimus liber* was fraudulent. Modern scholars have resurrected the *Historia* through the study of its manuscript circulation, its influence, and its participation in what scholars have labeled “imperial fantasies.” From this perspective, Geoffrey’s *Historia* is irresistible in its tractability and portability—it seamlessly intertwines fantasy and history in a way that future readers, both medieval and modern, can consider the text both as an origin for romance and an account of serious historical significance. One word in particular, “fantasy,” has become sovereign in a vocabulary widely employed in psychoanalytic readings of romance. Through the use of Lacan’s theory of culture that connects the establishment of historical truth with pleasure, scholars such as Ingham and Heng trace the way the *Historia* indulges fictional genealogies that legitimize Britain’s place within imperial world history. Such scholarship has been insightful in establishing the *Historia*’s importance as a histor-


25. For more on Geoffrey’s influence and the dissemination of his work, see Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Ingledew, “The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History”; Crick, *The ‘Historia regum Britannie’ of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 3; for a treatment of the *Historia* as an “imperial fantasy” see Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 2. She characterizes the *Historia* as a text in which “historical phenomena and fantasy collide and vanish, each into the other, without explanation or apology, at the precise locations where both can be readily mined to best advantage—a prime characteristic of romance that persists henceforth.”

26. Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*, 24–40. Heng does not work directly from Lacan, but uses this Lacanian conception of “fantasy” to identify the way Geoffrey’s history works as a means of “cultural rescue” (18) in the horrific aftermath of the First Crusade. See *Empire of Magic*, 1–35.
cal text, explaining the imperial imagination of late medieval Britain, and making powerful generic connections between romance and history.

**THE OTHER BOOK OF TROY**

While psychoanalytic readings of historiography cross previously restricted boundaries of “history” and expand modern understandings of medieval historicity, they have often overlooked the significance of other non-providential histories. The elevation of the Galfridian tradition resulted in scholarship that posited Geoffrey’s text not only as the origin of romance, but also as “The Book of Troy.” This reduction is convenient and often useful, but there are many romances and Trojan texts in the succeeding centuries that do not adhere to Geoffrey’s version of the Troy story. I would suggest that the other, and arguably more important, book of Troy is Guido’s *Historia*, which survives in approximately 150 manuscripts from the late thirteenth century and in three vernacular translations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even though it lacks modern scholarly attention, a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century English reader would have considered Guido’s *Historia* to be the canonical work of Trojan history.

Guido’s significance within the English historiographic landscape cannot be overstated. His vision of calamity for the inheritors of Troy, however, is markedly inconsistent with Diana’s prophecy in Geoffrey’s *Historia* and the “fantasy of the imperial origins of British monarchs.” The absence of a justification for empire in Guido’s *Historia* must give us pause since this alternative history of the fall of Troy was widely embraced by many fourteenth-century English poets, including Geoffrey Chaucer. Before analyzing the Guido-tradition further, we should first establish Guido’s place beside Geoffrey as a “British” historical authority. Since their titles and the works themselves deal with separate aspects of the Trojan heritage of Britain, we may wonder whether they should be juxtaposed at all. Whereas Guido exclusively treats the fall of Troy, Geoffrey follows Britain’s Trojan heritage from Brutus’ flight from Italy to the succession of British monarchs even after Arthur’s death. However, Geoffrey continues a Virgilian history that is inextricably linked with a Trojan origin. Even Chaucer in *The House of Fame* jux-

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taposes Guido and Geoffrey as authorities on the history of Troy. After listing the classical poets and historians, Homer, Dares, Dictys, and the enigmatic Lollius, he cites:

Guydo eke de Columpnis,
And Englysh Gaufride eke, ywis;
And ech of these, as have I joye,
Was besy for to bere up Troye. (1469–72).  

It would appear at first that the index of auctoritas is hierarchical, since Chaucer proceeds from Homer to Dares and Dictys, but he interestingly transposes Guido and Geoffrey (Gaufride), placing Guido before Geoffrey. Even if the order of authority is not purposeful, Guido and Geoffrey are clearly juxtaposed as historians who translate or “bere up Troye.” After all, the Latin meaning of translatio is “a bearing across,” which is remarkably similar to Chaucer’s characterization. In effect, Chaucer perceives both Geoffrey and Guido as Trojan translators, which reflects the inextricable nature of their relationship and establishes the likelihood that late fourteenth-century readers would have thought of Geoffrey when they thought of Guido (and vice versa) in the context of English and Trojan historiography and translation.

To understand the distinctions between the historical traditions of Geoffrey and Guido, we ought to attend to the scholarship that revived Geoffrey’s claims to history. Frances Ingledew in his seminal article, “The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae,” follows the work of Robert Hanning in arguing that Geoffrey’s Historia represents a novel understanding of insular history in the later Middle Ages, which accepted the translatio imperii as the appropriate progression of power from civilization to civilization. It was, as Ingledew describes, a “return to Virgil” that was “at odds with the biblically oriented Augustinian-Orosian paradigm, which instead of claiming birth in Troy, confessed birth in the Fall.”  

By making this claim, Ingledew establishes Troy as the widely accepted historical origin of Britain after the twelfth century and consequently reads Troy as it appears in Galfridian contexts. Ingledew concedes that the British “Book of Troy is irreducible . . . to any single work,” but contends that Geoffrey’s Historia is “exemplary” because of its assumption of genealogical history and its remarkable dissemination


across Britain and the Continent. By making this claim, Ingledew concretizes the same kind of qualified establishment of historiographic origin that Heng does with English romance.

In response, James Simpson contends that Ingledew errs, despite his qualification, in attributing the moniker “The Book of Troy” to Geoffrey’s text, since Guido’s Historia was also widely popular and known throughout Britain as the standard account of the fall of Troy. Simpson proceeds to track the influence of the Guido-tradition upon fourteenth- and fifteenth-century militaristic narratives, such as John Clerk’s Destruction of Troy, John Lydgate’s Destruction of Thebes, the alliterative Morte Arthure, Malory’s Works, and The Wars of Alexander, that convey tragic messages about conquest, which differ markedly from the fantasies of their sixteenth-century successors. While Simpson’s correction is warranted and his attention to the Guido-tradition within the genre of tragedy identifies the vast differences between their histories, I want to suggest that Guido’s Historia should also be considered a text of the Galfridian tradition. Simpson claims that Guido’s Historia is “anti-Galfridian because it makes no serious play with the genealogical potential of the Troy narrative,” which is certainly true in the large sense—Guido spares little space to describe the fate of the Trojan progeny and does not laud imperial progression—but Guido still addresses Trojan historiography in a distinctly Galfridian manner that confounds an impulse to posit Geoffrey as a straw man for Guido. Early in the Historia, Guido expresses an admiration of Alexander’s imperialism as an introduction to the origin of the fall of the first Troy, which he locates in the story of Jason and the Argonauts and their voyage to search for the Golden Fleece. On their way to Colchis, where the Fleece resides, the Argonauts stop on the shores of Troy, which inspires Guido to meditate upon the implications of their arrival at this doomed city. He begins with his poignant reference to the “plague of great destruction,” but then proceeds to the possible positive consequences of Troy’s fall. He explains:

vt ipsa Troya deleta insurexerit, causa per quam Romana vrbis, que caput est vrbium, per Troyanos exules facta extitit uel promota, per Heneam scilicet et Ascanium natum eius, dictum Iulium. Et nonnulle alie propterea prouincie perpetuum ex Troyanis receperunt incolatum. Qualis est Anglia, que a Bruto Troyano, vnde Britania dicta est, legitur habitata.

[Though Troy itself was completely destroyed, it rose again, through which cause the city of Rome, which is the chief of cities, emerged, being built and enlarged by the Trojan exiles, by Aeneas, that is, and Ascanius his son, called Julius. And therefore some other provinces received from the Trojans a lasting settlement. Such is England, which we read was settled by the Trojan, Brutus, from whence it is called Britain.] (11)34

This passage operates in two ways that confound stark distinctions between Geoffrey’s and Guido’s histories. First, it relates the translatio imperii, in which the fall of one empire leads to the settlement of the next that we read not only in Virgil’s Aeneid and Geoffrey’s Historia but also in Otto of Friesing’s The Two Cities, which may have been one of Guido’s sources. Second, the comment, “[s]uch is England, which we read was settled by the Trojan, Brutus,” indicates that Guido had read Geoffrey’s Historia, since no other writer, including Otto, relates this unique story of the origin of Britain. Guido was familiar with Geoffrey’s popular theory of history and consistent with the Galfridian tradition.

If Guido would have ended his discussion of the translatio imperii here, he may have remained among the many inheritors and promoters of Geoffrey’s prophetic emphasis on the recovery and redemption of failed empires. However, he continues his meditation upon the significance of the Argonaut’s incursion and questions providence with a pessimistic thought: “Sed si tante prodigionis causa fuerit subsequentis boni causa finalis humana mens habet in dubio” [But the human mind holds in doubt whether the cause of such a great betrayal was finally the cause of subsequent good] (12). This passage surpasses all others in its expression of Guido’s ambivalence toward the foundation of New Troys. Guido refrains from outright condemnation of the translatio imperii by using the phrase “holds in doubt,” but the word, “betrayal” (proditio) looms large and ultimately darkens the overall sense of the passage. At this point, it is unclear to which “betrayal” Guido is referring, but he hereby establishes, both in the destruction of the first Troy and in the rest of his history, that treason will be a theme that more explicitly emphasizes destruction over renewal. In fact, as we shall see, Guido’s emphasis on proditio informs the characterization of Aeneas in Sir Gawain and the

34. All quotations of Guido’s text are from Nathaniel Griffin’s edition, Guido de Columnis, Historia destructionis Troiae (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1936).
Green Knight as “Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroþ” [the man who planned the plot of treason] (3). Guido responds to Geoffrey’s Historia by suggesting that the translatio imperii may do more harm than good.

Guido’s response may have been prompted by ambivalence about the fate of the Britons that can be found within Geoffrey’s text. When Merlin offers his vision of the future to Vortigern, for example, his language is apocalyptic: “Montes itaque eius ut ualles equabuntur et flumina uallium sanguine manabunt. . . . Londonia necem .xx. milium lugebit et Tamensis in sanguine mutabitur” [For [Britain’s] mountains and valleys shall be leveled, and the streams in its valleys shall run with blood. . . . London shall mourn the death of twenty thousand and the Thames will be turned into blood] (74, 78). While Diana’s prophecy about the imperial glory of Britain looms large, Merlin’s divination punctuates the violence that will result from the inevitable territorial conflicts. As Patricia Ingham points out, these dire visions emerge from a tradition of Welsh resistance to the triumphant future of Britain that the ruling Norman nobility would claim as their own. On the one hand, a kind of Welsh optimism pervades Geoffrey’s text via the “Breton Hope,” which predicts a time when the native Britons would recover the island as their own (146). But on the other, the Bern and Harlech manuscripts include a retraction that appears to condemn this prophecy as nothing more than a fantasy of the oppressed: “Degenerati autem a Britannica nobilitate Gualenses numquam postea monarchiam insulae recuperauerunt” [The Welsh, once they had degenerated from the nobility of the Britons, never afterwards recovered authority over the island] (147). These oppositional statements not only represent the complexity of what it meant to be “British,” but also led Norman rulers to believe that the future glory could be exclusively theirs. More importantly, the recovery of Britain could then be cast into imperial time, which could take place in a distant era to come, after Geoffrey’s history had been written.

In contrast to the vaticinative nature of Geoffrey’s text, Guido questions the reliability of prophecy. Instead of hope, Guido prefers doubt (dubio) as a historiographic mode. While Guido’s skepticism may be partly located in the Galfridian tradition, it also owes more to Orosius and Augustine, who ques-

36. All citations of the works of the Gawain-poet refer to The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 2002).
38. Ibid., 42–43.
tioned providential models for secular history. In his discussion of the Trojan inheritance of Rome, Orosius condemns the actions of Aeneas by stating:

Paucis praeterea annis intervenientibus, Aeneae, Troja profugi, adventus in Italiam quae arma commoverit, qualia per triennium bella excitaverit, quantos populos implicuerit, odio excidioque affixerit, ludi litterarii disciplina nostrae quoque memoriae inustum est.

Furthermore, in the few intervening years, the arrival in Italy (Italiam) of the Trojan fugitive (Troja profugi) Aeneas, which weapons (arma) he would shake, what sort of wars he would arouse over a period of three years, how many people he would envelop in hatred and afflict with destruction, have also been burned into our memories by elementary reading instruction.

Despite his reverence for Virgilian vocabulary in these lines, echoing the opening lines of the Aeneid (Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italian fato profugus Laviniaque venit / litora), Orosius follows Augustine in tracking the negative consequences of Aeneas’ wanderings on aspiring scholastic minds. Neither Orosius nor Augustine promulgates a providential design for secular history, but they both admit the existence of a secular genealogy that reveals the failures of empire.

While Guido makes no attempt to situate the fall of Troy within a theology of history, his Historia exhibits the same adherence to imperial genealogy and pessimism about Trojan identity that we find in the works of Augustine.
and Orosius. We even discover a similar condemnation of Aeneas through the words of Hecuba:

Ha nequam proditor, vnde a te procedere potuit tante crudelitatis impietas ut regem Priamum, a quo tanta magnolia suscepisti, tanto ab eo magnificatus honore, passus fuesis interfectores eius ad eum ducere quem debuisti tua proteccione saluare? Prodisti patriam tuam et urbem in qua natus fuisti et in qua fuisti tanto tempore gloriosus, ut eius ruinam aspicias et eius incendia uidere non horreas quibus fumat.

[Ah, wicked traitor, how could you behave with such great evil and cruelty toward King Priam, from whom you have received such great possessions and by whom you have been exalted in great honor so that you could endure to guide the murderers to him, whom you should have saved by your protection? You have betrayed your country and the city in which you were born and in which you were famous for such a long time, so that you behold its ruin and you do not shrink from looking at the fires as it goes up in smoke.] (234)

Hecuba portrays Aeneas as one who not only caused the fall of Troy through treason, but also gazes upon its destruction without a scruple. Such a characterization is a far cry from the medieval idealization of Aeneas “bearing” or “carrying” the city of Troy to Rome, something that he does famously in the Aeneid, when he translates his father Anchises and his household gods away from the destruction and into Italy (2.634ff). In Guido’s Historia, he tragically fails to fulfill his responsibility for “bearing” the city to its Roman glory and ultimately merits Hecuba’s derision for his treason against the city and his sovereign in their time of need, a sentiment that epitomizes Orosius’ lamentable message about Troy. For Guido, Aeneas carries with him the treason and subsequent destruction that will come to haunt his progeny.

Given the fact that the dominant version of history before the twelfth century emerged from the Augustinian–Orosian tradition, it is not surprising that its pessimism about the Roman Empire is still present in the thirteenth-century text of Guido and the subsequent texts he influenced. What is surprising, however, is the short shrift that scholars have given to the Trojan histories that do not adhere to the Galfridian historiographic model. Ironically, Guido’s Historia suffers from the same problem that caused historians to question Geoffrey’s claim of historical authority: fraudulent source citation. Since the late nineteenth century, modern readers have known Guido’s stated intention to tell the truth in his prologue to be false because he
fails to divulge the true source for his account of the fall of Troy. He claims to have followed the accounts of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian, when he actually bases his translation on Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Le Roman de Troie*. While Benoît's twelfth-century romance exerted a considerable influence on its own, Guido's translation of the *Roman*'s French octosyllabic couplets into Latin prose transformed his text into the canonical one. The pretense of the Latin chronicle genre helped Guido's text eclipse any claims to historical veracity that Benoît's text may have obtained. It is clear, however, that Guido's historiographic method has origins in what David Rollo calls Benoît's "spirit of skeptical analysis." In his prologue, Benoît expresses admiration for Homer as a literary authority, but he eschews his account because of its historical inaccuracy.

Mais ne dist pas sis livre veir,
Quar bien savons senz nul espier
Qu'il ne fu puis de cent anz nez
Que li granz oz fu assemblez:
N'est merveille s'il i faillit
Quar onc n'i fu ne rien n'en vit. (51–56)

[But his book does not tell the truth, for we incontrovertibly know that he was not born until a hundred years after the great army was assembled. It is hardly surprising that he was inaccurate, since he was never there and saw none of what happened.]

Like most medieval readers, Benoît rejects the fantasies of Homer and prefers another Trojan *livre*, that of Dares, both a "clerc merveillous" (99) and a Trojan war correspondent who claims to have recorded events he witnessed with his own eyes. Benoît characterizes Dares’ book as authoritative, not only because it was believed to be a contemporary account, but also because it was discovered in the midst of academic research by yet another marvelous clerk named Cornelius, the nephew of the famous Roman historian Sallust (75–92). Benoît’s clerical bias and careful treatment of the Trojan “authorities” represents what Rollo sees as a “skeptical” historiographic method in

which “the study of history is itself acknowledged as a historicized product of culture and takes as its primary object the self-conscious analysis of its own modes of production.” Guido’s historiography of “doubt” follows this example, interrogating fantasies of empire as they were promulgated through an uncritical and unhistoricized belief in the redemptive power of the tras-
latio imperii.

If Guido had divulged his real source, it is possible that we would be discussing the massive influence of Benoît’s Roman upon Trojan historiography in England. Whereas medieval readers may have been forgiving of Guido’s fraudulence, modern scholars have not been as merciful. Given the fact that Benoît’s Roman is an amplification not only of Dares’ De Excidio Troiae Historia, but also Dictys’ Ephemeris Belli Troiani, both of which claim to be translations of Greek originals, to the eyes of many scholars, Guido’s Historia is simply an irresponsible abridgement of a series of translations that only retains vestiges of the original. Until 1964 only Egidio Gorra, Mary Meek, and Raffaele Chiàntera had attempted to study Guido’s text as more than evidence of medieval plagiarism. Since then, C. David Benson’s book, The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne’s Historia destructionis Troiae in Medieval England, is the one exception among a wealth of scholarship interested in either the Trojan tradition or English poetry that closely tracks the pervasive influence of Guido’s version of the fall of Troy in Britain. Even after the publication of Benson’s book, Guido still has not garnered the scholarly attention he deserves. Ingledew, for instance, pays Guido little mind, despite the fact that the text he uses to introduce the historiographic importance of the Galfridian Trojan tradition, Sir Thomas Gray’s Scalacronica, refers directly to Guido as the “gest de Troy.”

Ingledew even places Guido’s Historia within the scope of Virgilian tragic history that Augustine had rejected in his Confessions. In a discussion of medieval writers who revived Virgil, Ingledew claims, “[t]he distance traveled from Augustine in this respect is strongly apparent in Guido delle Colonne, Historia destructionis Troiae, . . . where Guido characterizes

the fall of Troy as a colossal and gratuitous misery and Troy’s supersession by Rome as a redeeming consequence.”48 As I have demonstrated above, Ingledew’s “redemptive” reading of Guido is not supportable—in fact, the opposite is the case. Guido’s perspective of Troy’s heritage as a “plague of great destruction” is consistent with Augustine’s pessimism about the fate of secular empires.

Even a monograph on the subject of Troy in England, Sylvia Federico’s New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages, only refers to Guido’s text tangentially and mischaracterizes its message and influence. While Federico acknowledges that the Historia was “extremely influential,” she treats Guido’s history as merely one of Chaucer’s authorities on Troy and the basis for John Lydgate’s Troy Book.49 She then goes on to make a broad claim: “In the Troy stories examined in this book, we have seen that although Calkas, Antenor, and Aeneas are acknowledged as traitors, Helen and Criseyde take the blame for causing the destruction of Troy.”50 While it is certainly fair to characterize the Historia as a misogynistic text that callously treats women as currency in diplomatic negotiations, it is not accurate to claim that Guido blames Helen, or Criseyde for that matter, for the fate of the Trojans. In general, Guido equivocates in his discussions of whom to blame, but he places great emphasis on “the envious succession of the fates (invidia series fatum)” (11), the inhospitality of Laomedon, and the vengeful anger of Priam as causes of “the plague of great destruction.” Given Federico’s cursory treatment of Guido, she may not have considered the Historia as one of “the Troy stories examined in this book.” Even if that is true, she provides a brief analysis of Guido’s “extremely influential” history that warrants elaboration.

THE NEW TROY AND GENEALOGICAL CLAIMS TO NOBILITY

The examples cited above are symptoms of a gap in scholarship that has far too often preferred the myth-making and fantastical Galfridian tradition to the sober and skeptical Guido-tradition in assessing the figure of New Troy in Britain in the later Middle Ages. Such invocations of Trojan origins were powerful political maneuvers, but we may call into question the notion that references to Troy were viewed as predominantly positive. As Lee Patterson has noted in Chaucer and the Subject of History, “[t]he location of historical authority in a single source naturally appealed to a medieval monarchy

50. Ibid., 145.
interested in promoting its own role as an exclusive source of political power, and the linearity of *translatio imperii* was convenient support for hereditary dynasties and genealogical claims.”51 Patterson rightly attributes much of Troy’s glory to the influence of Geoffrey’s *Historia*, and then proceeds to discuss the problems with the “linearity” that the *translatio imperii* demands. He then unapologetically declares Benoît’s *Roman* as “the central document of Trojan historiography in the Middle Ages,” a curious statement given the romance’s seemingly nonhistorical nature, but both entirely consistent with his proclivity to read romance as historiography and technically accurate when we consider its status as the source for Guido’s popular *Historia*.52 Patterson even analyzes the texts of Benoît and Guido in depth later in the book and acknowledges the fact that this historiographic tradition places inexplicable catastrophe at the center of its concerns and “run[s] counter to, or subterraneously undermine[s], the uses of Trojan descent and *translatio imperii* in the service of secular interests.”53 Even though he recognizes this more pessimistic Trojan tradition as more pervasive and resistant to imperial designs, he still considers its role as legitimizing.

I find this conclusion unwarranted, especially since not all invocations of Trojan origins emerge from historical or literary contexts that depict Troy in a glorious light. In addition to literary texts such as John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis*, which describes the fall of London as the New Troy, there is also the 1386 case of Nicholas Brembre, who was accused of having royalist ambitions, intending to rename London as “Parva Troia” or “Little Troy.”54 To Brembre’s opponents, the desire for London to become another Troy was an

52. Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 92.
53. Ibid., 123.
act of treason, not a glorious recognition of British heritage. Given the widespread influence of Benoît and Guido in late medieval England, the negative perspective of Troy by Brembre’s enemies is unsurprising.

Likewise, if we turn to the fifteenth century and Christine de Pizan’s treatments of Dido, we witness a Troy with a conflicted identity that calls into question its legitimizing authority. In Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune, Christine acknowledges the fact that the fall of Carthage was a necessary consequence for the promulgation of the Trojan imperial line (20599–606), but the destruction of Dido’s great city inspires her to lament,

Mais grant pitié fu de destruire
Tel cite, qu’on voit reluire
En toute beaulté et richece,
En force, en valour, en noblece. (20609–12)55

[But it was a great pity to destroy such a city, which could be seen to shine in complete beauty and wealth, in strength, in courage, and in nobility.]

Even though her source, the Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César, eliminates any mention of Dido in its strict adherence to an articulation of translatio imperii, Christine not only addresses the fate of Dido, but also meditates upon the negative consequence of Trojan treason. And by the time Christine composed Cité des dames, the tragic figure of Dido had developed into the central figure of her own Trojan historiography, which indicates her vested interest in expressing the darker side of empire.56 Even if Christine did not read Guido’s Historia, her treatments of Dido express ambivalence toward imperial fantasies that recognizes the victims of the elevation of the Trojan line.

Despite the acknowledged fact that the Guido-tradition had a significant influence upon the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers who addressed the subject of Troy, recent scholars have continued to read Troy as an origin of aristocratic and royal sovereignty without grappling with its fractured nature. The Galfridian tradition has therefore emerged as the authority on Troy since it was so wildly popular in the later Middle Ages and provides an attractive model in which Troy could become the inspiration for imperial fantasies.57 Since the significance of Geoffrey’s Historia in late medieval England is indisputable, recent scholars have not ventured beyond its her-

57. Heng, Empire of Magic, 66.
meneutic shadow to explore the way alternative histories such as Guido's have influenced writers' interpretations of Troy. As this book demonstrates, an analysis of this marginalized tradition both complicates and illuminates the varied constructions of “New Troy” that poets and historians in the late fourteenth century perpetuated in order to understand the past, present, and future of England.

In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate that more than any other fourteenth-century corpus of English verse, the alliterative romances of the Guido-tradition demystify cultural and textual transfers of power from East to West that are embodied in the medieval notion of the *translatio imperii*—when one empire falls, a western empire takes its place. My investigation of Troy’s status as an eastern origin for western culture and of widespread medieval obsessions with the East inform the way Troy, as a conquered figure, operates throughout these poems.\(^5\) The heroes of these romances not only travel from Greece to Troy to Rome to Britain to enact cultural and imperial shifts, but also venture into the threatening, yet tantalizing, eastern locales of Africa and Jerusalem to engage in pilgrimages and conquer pagan territories.\(^6\) Since perspectives on these geographical locations and their people vary widely, depicting Jerusalem in one text as a city of noble Jews and in another as a heathen stronghold of Christ-killers, I examine the way these alliterative romanciers theorize the East as a locus of paganism. Rome is the most complicated and compelling case: through these poems this city collectively serves as the means for Christian retribution and the father of Britain on one hand, and on the other the center of paganism and the threat of tyranny. By comparing the illustrations of Rome with those of Britain and the kingdoms of the Near East in alliterative romance, Rome emerges as an object of derision, not imitation. As Michael J. Bennett suggests, the *Gawain*-poet “wrote for a world which had been shattered,” a sentiment which aptly characterizes the alliterative romanciers' ambivalence toward their imagined ancestry.\(^6\)


\(6\) Michael J. Bennett, *Community, Class, and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society*
that attempts to assert authority through the resurrection of a moribund past only perpetuate further destruction and suffering of the innocent. Their attempts to undercut these translations of power indicate that these alliterative poets perceived early constructions of English sovereignty as fundamentally fragmented, destructive, and unjustifiable.