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Trojans Abroad: Two Thousand Years of Wandering

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Trojans Abroad:
Two Thousand Years of Wandering

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
Kristof Szabo

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Dedication

To Samama.
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# Table of Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1

The Roman Adoption of Troy ................................................................................. 8
  How the Trojans got to Italy .................................................................................. 11
  The *Aeneid* Trojans ......................................................................................... 19

The Legacy of the Brute Trojans ......................................................................... 33
  The Sources for Geoffrey .................................................................................... 36
  Lineage and Its Independence ........................................................................... 44
  Connection to Prophecy ..................................................................................... 52

The Migrations of the *Æsir Trojans* ................................................................. 59
  The Germanic Family Line ................................................................................ 62
  The Prologue to the *Prose Edda* ..................................................................... 71

Conclusion: The Decisive Destruction ............................................................... 83

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 8
ἐσσεται ἡμαρ ὅτε ἂν ποτὲ ὀλώλη Ἱλιος ὑψή
καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς ἑὔμελιὼ Πριάμου.

Homer, The Iliad, Book VI lines 448-449
**Introduction**

The Western Roman Empire was dismantled in AD 476, upon the abdication of its last emperor, Romulus Augustulus. Afterwards, the struggle for centralized authority in Western Europe was marked as the region’s “Dark Age,” with many local kingdoms beginning to spring up in order to protect former provinces of the empire. These dynasties, especially those established in former Roman provinces such as Gaul or Britain, desired a history that could further legitimize their central authority. This meant linking themselves to the old Roman Empire through adopting a narrative format the same as the empire’s greatest poet: Vergil. The *Aeneid* was an epic still universally read throughout the Middle Ages. Many medieval authors thought of the poet as a prophet who predicted Christian theology before Christ had even died upon the cross. The Fourth Eclogue, which mentions a certain *puer* that was born, had many Christian figures such as Constantine and St. Augustine theorized that this figure was Christ. This knowledge eventually led to those same authors making similar claims of ancestry as did the Romans, in order to legitimize their positions as inheritors of its empire. These new Trojans are found in both the texts of Britain and Iceland, and were thought to play a very similar role to the Trojans of the Aeneid: an ancient claim to imperial power.

As Aeneas was used by Vergil to transmit Trojan ancestry to Rome, these new Trojan refugees were guided by the same principle. As Adam Goldwyn states: “like Aeneas, [they] were forced to flee Troy after its destruction and, by divine guidance, found a new and powerful dynasty that would endure for all time” (Goldwyn 154). These claims would later be known as part of the *translatio imperii*, or “transfer of empire,” a historiographical concept that views history as a linear succession of *imperium*. The concept itself emerged in the early Middle Ages. When Charlemagne, King of the Franks, was crowned as the Holy Roman Emperor in AD 800, it
was seen as a direct transfer of imperial power from Rome to its Frankish successor. As Ernst Robert Curtius has it: “The medieval Empire took over from Rome the idea of world empire” (Curtius 29). This is furthered by medieval authors, one of whom, Adso of Montier-en-der in the tenth century, wrote of the apocalypse, stating that the world will not end until the total destruction of the Roman empire. Although, he goes on, we may view the empire as destroyed because the political institution itself was done away with, Adso believes that it survived in the Frankish Kingdom. He states that a future Frankish king will eventually reinstitute the old empire, and after accomplishing this would go to Jerusalem. Adso finishes this passage with: “This will be the end and the consummation of the Roman and Christian Empire” (Adso 91).

The concept of this *translatio* is also closely linked with the *translatio studii*, which encompasses the passing of learning through geographic movements in a similar manner. Chrétien de Troyes, a French author writing in the twelfth century, mentions this phenomenon: “Our books have taught us that chivalry and learning first flourished in Greece; then to Rome came chivalry and the sum of knowledge, which now has come to France” (Chrétien 123).

These claims of Trojan ancestry are thought of to be in much the same vein as the *translatio imperii*: an assertion of political and cultural legitimacy over the classical past, especially over the continuation of the Roman Empire. The idea that a claim of Trojan descent is can only be a part of this larger scheme of *translatio imperii*, however, does not encompass the specificity of each claim. It is my interpretation that, upon closer examination of the various nations that assert a Trojan ancestor, and the political and cultural periods in which they were made, the claim to the Trojan genealogical line is far more complex than an attempt to grab at imperial power. In fact, many of the claims stemming from the medieval authorities have their ancestral Trojan separate from the Roman, if not openly fighting the empire. Therefore, these
Trojan claims are an attempt at claiming a Trojan heritage rather than a Roman one, which many of these later medieval authors would have understood were not synonymous. It also brings into question Rome's own claim on past Trojan identity, as we will see, the empire’s choice of ancestor was not made by chance, but for a very specific purpose.

In *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, Erich Gruen traces the farthest myths and legends that led Rome to associate itself with Trojan war. In one particular section, Gruen asks why Rome, a state that existed so far from the Trojan legend, would want a basis upon such a legacy. The Trojans were, after all, the famous losers of the Trojan war against the Achaeans. No other Greek state during the early Roman Republic's time had, or even wanted, to make a claim towards this nearly forgotten race, preferring to associate itself with its Achaean ancestors, such as Alexander the Great to Achilles through his mother’s family, the Molossians. As Gruen has it, however, it was precisely that Troy was destroyed that caused the Romans to take interest in it. The Trojans were a race whose past lay in remote antiquity, but no longer had a current following, and its city was a shell of its former self. The Trojans were a people long extinct, but as Gruen points out, Troy “persisted as a symbol, not a current reality” (Gruen 31). This made it an ideal candidate for adoption by the Romans, as they had contacted the Hellenic world through its Italian neighbors to the south. They wanted to associate themselves with an ancestor of antiquity as had the other Greek states, but Troy had the added benefit of distinguishing them further from that culture. The problems associated with this past were later handled by Vergil, whose precedent set up later medieval claims on Trojan descendents, although the manner in which this is carried out is different in each text.

These other claims of Trojan ancestry, while inspired by Vergil’s work, did not, as Goldwyn claims, establish the same Vergillian thematic ideas of *imperium*. If they did so, they
would have claimed to be descendents of them: the claim of universal empire promised to the Romans was not held by their Trojan ancestors. This leaves the Trojan claim the same as it was: an ancient, empty shell. Later cultures, such as the Britons or Scandinavians, were free to establish their own histories, asserting that there were other Trojan remnants that made their way across Europe. These new Trojans, while related to the Romans through the oldest of familial lines, were not distinguished by their “Romaness,” as again, the Trojans who would become Romans were only one specific company led by Aeneas. The Trojans as a whole remained as a symbol, to which other peoples could establish ties with the ancient Trojan War. This was an important concept for these later medieval peoples in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who desired, much as the Romans did, to trace their legacy farther back into the classical tradition. But these other cultures also had distinct cultural ideas of their own that they wanted to preserve, which in turn caused each company of migrating Trojans to take on aspects of the cultures, the Britons and the Norse, that they will inevitably be absorbed into. Each one of these cultures had its own iteration of distinct Trojans, who would come to embody the later culture.

My purpose will be to discuss each one of these authorial claims on the Trojan past by looking into the circumstances of that author, including the contemporary history of the region in which we find them writing in, as well as the claim in it of itself, and its place in the wider narrative in which they are writing in. I begin with the Romans, who constitute the oldest claim for Trojan ancestry, the stem from which the other claims would arise. The history of this adoption heavily involves two of Rome’s earlier socio-political predecessors in the late fourth century: the Latins and the Greeks. In order to situate themselves within their own Italian community, the Romans had already claimed a heritage from the Latins, giving them weight as the legitimate heirs to one of ancient Italy’s most iconic states: the Latin League. This also put
them in close proximity to southern Italy, where the Greek colonies of *Magna Graecia* were. It was out of this contact that arose the Trojan ancestor narrative, which would only become more complex in the coming centuries. Finally, this origin story for the Trojans coming to Italy would be forever stamped in Western literature by the *Aeneid* of Vergil in 19 BC. The epic ties Roman foundations with both the Hellenic and native Latin elements through the vehicle of the Trojans, forever tying the two within the burgeoning empire.

This narrative goes uninterrupted for centuries, seeing the fall of the western Roman Empire and continuing into the High Middle Ages. Vergil is still being taught in Western education in provinces that were once a part of the larger empire, but were now ruled over by Germanic kingdoms. One of these provinces, the island of Britain, had inhabitants that were not a part of this migration, but were once Romano-British citizens, pushed westward by invading Saxons. These people, termed as the Welsh, were embittered by the current state of affairs, believing that they were the rightful owners of that island as descendants of its native tribe that had given the isle its name: the Britons. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a cleric of the Roman Church and a reported Welshman, wrote a history about the former kings of the island, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in AD 1136. He presents British history much in the same way as Vergil does for the Romans, as descendants of Trojans who fled the chaos of the Trojan War and left for better lands. But, as we will later explore, this supposed Roman imitation does not follow the Vergillian themes from the *Aeneid*, most importantly the nature of the settlement. Geoffrey’s focus in this Trojan narrative, encompassing all of Book I of the *Historia*, is to establish the Trojan colony as an independent kingdom that, while having a glorious heritage in antiquity, was doomed to fall in the Saxon invasion. He ends the histories, however, in a more optimistic tone, with the hope that one day the British will reclaim what was once theirs.
The *Historia* became a popular text in Western Europe in the twelfth and later thirteenth centuries, a hundred years after the Norman Conquest of England. These Northmen originally hailed from Scandinavia, a country which was outside of Roman territory, and therefore thought to be the home of the “barbarians”. Although technically linked to the Saxon and Frankish kingdoms through a shared Germanic heritage, the Scandinavians were only introduced to the wider Mediterranean world in the later twelfth century, and were known to have raided Saxon kingdoms in the earlier ninth and tenth centuries. This meant that they still retained the very same “otherness” that the Romans had personified the earlier tribes with, this image only partially dispelled when they converted to the Christian faith in the eleventh century. The adoption of Christianity spanned throughout Scandinavia, along with Iceland’s conversion in 1000 AD. This change of faith also meant the spread of Christian education in these kingdoms, with knowledge of the classical world passed down. Many Scandinavian tribes, given their only recent conversion, had difficulties in reconciling their forebears' belief and culture with both the new faith and a broader European history. In order to properly honor their Germanic heritage, while at the same time conforming to Christian theology, Snorri Sturluson, an Icelandic author and politician in the thirteenth century, provides an origin for the German race that heightened their culture to that of the Mediterranean civilizations. The Germanic *Aesir*, the supposed pantheon of their former pagan religion, now became migrating Trojans under the leadership of Odin.

I hope to prove that each of one of these claims is an assertion made by the author, made not only for a political purpose, but as a way to fit Trojan ancestors into the schematics of their individual cultures. These links, while as a whole connected the Romans, Britons, and Scandinavians to the ancient Trojan War, still provided a unique legend to those specific groups
that were not a part of a formulaic narrative. The Trojans, due to the complete destruction of their city, were now free to pursue new lands, wherever the author wished them to go.
The Roman Adoption of Troy

A Complex Italian Heritage

Troy had been a city that was destroyed, according to legend, around 1184 BC, an age that is ascribed as mythical history. The Achaeans, satisfied with their conquest, left for their respective lands, only to have their exploits later recounted in the 8th century (depending on who you ask) BC, by the poet Homer, in both his works the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These epics would themselves circulate around various Greek cities, with many families, or *gens*, attempting to establish genealogical legacies that date back to this period, Alexander the Great being a famous example through his supposed mythical ancestor, Achilles. The epics began to spread throughout the Mediterranean, especially within Greek colonies where they would eventually drift into southern Italy and Sicily. Almost eight centuries after Homer, an Italian poet of his same caliber, Vergil, would attempt a similar feat, albeit under very different circumstances and under conflicting motivations. Much of Vergil’s reasoning behind the *Aeneid* was in the shadow of his predecessor, as he attempted to create a national poem for the Romans that would rival the scale of the two older Greek ones. In order to accomplish this, Vergil draws upon Rome's most prominent ancestor that dated back to this period of mythical history, one who was ironically not a part of the victorious Greek faction, but the destroyed Trojan one.

One of the lesser known features about Vergil’s epic, however, was that the Trojan connection had already been firmly established in the Italian peninsula, as well as Rome itself, as early as the third century BC. Although the specific details of these earlier renditions were unrecognizable in the later age, much of Vergil’s work constituted constructing an epic that agreed with these prior works. Details such as the pregnant sow on the site of the future Alba Longa, Evander’s appearance as an Arcadian king, and Aeneas’ dealings with the Latin king
Latinus, were all features that had been repurposed from earlier tales in order to authenticate Vergil’s narrative. As we will see, the *Aeneid* featured Greek and native Latin elements in Vergil’s foundational origins for Rome, as they were both key to understanding the cultural upbringing of Roman society. The Greeks were longtime inhabitants of southern Italy, while the native Latins, settled in central Italy, had been there long before the colonies, and had prior dealings with the Romans. These elements are especially brought to prominence in Book VI-XII of the *Aeneid*, which I hope to look at more in depth later, as they are relevant to understanding how Vergil wanted to construct the setting of ancient Italy.

The most distinct element of this origin, however, at least in terms of the epic, was that it was in the perspective of the mythical race of the Trojans, and had their leader, Aeneas, as the titular character. The fact that it is the Trojans leading the narrative shifts our gaze from the earlier epic cycle, which had previously focused on the victors of the Trojan War, the Achaeans. As mentioned earlier, the Trojans were remembered in Greek mythology as simply the defeated race of the *Iliad*. Aeneas himself, although given a more prominent role than most, was still a minor character in this epic cycle. His only distinguishing moments in the *Iliad* include a botched rescue attempt by his divine mother, Aphrodite, and a near death experience at the hand of Achilles. All and all, it was little material to go off of, especially given other options for a Roman origin story, which will be discussed later, but the importance of Vergil’s choice must not be understated. The poet, and more importantly the Roman people themselves, had already taken up the belief in their Trojan heritage, and did not wish to use an available Greek origin. These had been accessible to them, but instead they chose a somewhat outlandish origin. It was not only lacking in structure or familiarity in greater Greek mythical history, but again, had their ancestors as an infamous race of losers in the most well-known war in antiquity. However, there
were both political as well as cultural advantages towards accepting this origin, ones that would far outshine any downsides of the Trojan reputation.
How the Trojans got to Italy

Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus, had every reason to be confident of his new campaign against the burgeoning Roman Republic, especially given his alliance with the Greek speaking colonies of southern Italy, Rome’s neighbors. These earlier settlers, whose land were called by the Romans *Magna Graecia*, or “Greater Greece”, had been harassed by their western neighbors as early as the late fourth century. This was the period when Rome had begun its greater expansion into Italy, which it had started with an earlier conquest of the Latin League, a confederation of their most immediate neighbors, as well as their victory in the Samnite Wars, ending in the early third century. Hoping to curb Roman ambitions in their territories, Greek colonies such as Tarentum sought the aid of this Epiran king Pyrrhus, who wished to expand his influence in the ongoing contest of hegemony between the other Hellenistic monarchs. To the burgeoning king, Italy only served as a foundation for a series of conquests, his hope to amass a great amount of territories and wealth. These could potentially lead his own regime to become the mightier nation amongst his other rival Hellenistic kingdoms. His ambitions on such a high scale, the thought of facing a Roman army did not weigh heavily on Pyrrhus’ mind, who, when compared to the large swath of territories occupied by the Greek people, only encompassed a small fraction of land. In fact, upon the arrival of an envoy from Tarentum, seeking his aid, the king was reminded of the capture of Troy, and, as Pausanias has it, believed this to be an omen of his coming success:

“στρατεύειν γὰρ ἐπὶ Τρώων ἀπόικους Ἀχιλλέως ὢν ἀπόγονος [for he was advancing upon a Trojan colony as a descendant of Achilles]” (Pausanias 1.12.1).

Pyrrhus later failed in his Italian campaigns, his kingdom quickly falling back into obscurity upon his death. But as a consequence of his loss, the Romans, who up until this point were ignored by a much larger Greek world, now began to make a name for themselves. Many
Greek intellectuals now sought to examine Roman origins, with the Sicilian historian Timaeus taking the forefront in the early third century BC. At this point, as already demonstrated by Pyrrhus, the idea that Rome had been founded upon a Trojan colony had become standard doctrine. But this had not always been the case, as one of the earliest of Greek authors, Hesiod, registered that the union of Odysseus and Circe had Latinus as one of their offspring. Although this may not be an exact reference to the king we meet in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, the name does point to early Greek interest in central Italy, long before the Trojan connection was established. The school of Aristotle also had a hand in this early Italian representation, endorsing a version that had the Achaean warriors being stranded in Italy, “and took up permanent residence at a site Aristotle called Latinium” (Dionysius 1.72.3-4).

These early legends paint Rome, as well as the rest of the polities of central Italy, as Greek colonies in foundation if not in actual practice. Later genealogies like those above also contained vague references to eponymous founders such as Rome, Rhomanos, and Rhomus (Gruen 11), all descendents of various Greek heroes. This is all to say that the earliest of Roman foundational myths had a definite Greek element that remained within most of its narratives. This includes the other city states that were associated with Rome such as those in the Latin League. The inclusion of Trojan migrants was also a later Greek invention, albeit appearing only from western Greek authors like Timaeus. The exact origins of those specific tales appeared to have circulated earlier, however, around the fifth century BC. Thucydides reports that after the fall of the city, Trojan refugees had crossed the Mediterranean sea and settled in Sicily, establishing the cities of Eryx and Segesta (Thucydides 6.2.3). These Trojan origins would have also transmitted to the Romans and Latins as well: the Sicilian states kept close contact with their Italian neighbors, and this being how the Trojan migrant stories began to spread. When Rome
began to expand into the Greek-speaking territories of southern Italy, as Gruen has it: “they thereby provided the impetus for foundation stories fitted into the complex web of Hellenic legend” (Gruen 15).

These Trojan legends, however, came to conflict with Rome’s indigenous tradition that explained the city’s founding, including the infamous tale of the twins Romulus and Remus. Among these issues, the most prominent one was the actual dating of these events, as the Trojan War was agreed to have happened in 1184 BC, while Romulus would not found the city until 753 BC. This gap was solved by later writers, but it brings up a fundamental question regarding the adoption of this myth: why Rome agreed to adopt this origin that would conflict with its own foundational myth. As we have seen so far, the Greeks attempted to exert their own cultural hegemony over the central Italian states, which was their standard practice when encountering a foreign people outside of their colonies. Their efforts to place these Latin states within their own mythology later worked their way into the latter’s founding myths. The Latins themselves, however, came to pick and choose what elements they wanted to adapt in order to form their own consensus. This all occurred during the Roman expansion in the late fourth century BC. It was also around the time when the cities of Lavinium and Alba Longa came to be known as both ancient Trojan colonies, as well as the parent cities of Rome, as Gruen says: “the legend of Rome’s Trojan origins as mediated by Lavinium, Alba, or both had taken hold in Latium by the early third century” (Gruen 28).

The late fourth century saw Rome defeat and disperse the Latin League, and extend its own military and political influence over the other cities of Latium, bringing the growing republic into contact with southern Italian Greek-speaking states. The relationship between Rome and its fellow Latin states was complex during this period, as there was a cultural bond
connecting the two, but it was also obvious that Rome had gained hegemony over them, which caused no small amount of tension between the conqueror and the conquered. A solution of this tension, and one that forms well within the context of founding myths, was connecting Rome to its own Trojan origins. As mentioned above, it was two prominent Latin city states, Alba Longa and Lavinium, that became the twin parent cities of Rome. Those cities had been known as, in Gruen’s words, the Latins “most ancient and renowned sites” (Gruen 29), adding both posterity to them, as well as the well-sought connection to antiquity through their history as a Trojan colony. The Latins, by advertising these cities’ connections to the Roman past, now found themselves with increased prestige and priority within an ever increasing Roman world. They could also take no small amount of credit for the cities’ current and later successes, which they would now profit from. The Romans, in turn, were lent cultural legitimacy to support its own supreme authority over the city states of Latium, as the direct descendants of its most prestigious cities. As Gruen puts it: “Rome was now heir to the region’s glorious past; not just conqueror and suzerain but cultural curator” (Gruen 29). The assimilation of these legends also began the process of validating Roman dealings with Greece, initially just the southern Italian Greek colonies, but, when they began to spread their influence even wider, the greater part of the Hellenistic world.

As hinted at earlier, Roman expansion into central Italy did not capture Greek attention, as these small territorial acquisitions in central Italy had paled in comparison to the world-shifting campaigns of Alexander the Great in the same late fourth century. At that point, the matters of a small republic on the west side of the world mattered very little to an empire that stretched as far as from Macedon to the Hindu Kush. Fifty years later, however, this dynamic shifted dramatically with the sundering of Alexander’s empire between his succeeding generals,
the Diadochi, whose rivalry Pyrrhus was involved in. One of the main reasons for his invasion of Italy was the advancement of his own prospects within this new Hellenistic system. After his defeat it’s safe to say that Greece began to take a new intellectual interest in this recent power, but still did not seek to involve themselves too much with Rome, at least on a political level. But upon the Roman victory in the Second Punic War in the late third century BC, when it was clear that Rome had become the central power in the west, the two halves of the Mediterranean became entangled in a political struggle, set to end with Roman domination. Throughout the course of this century, the ties between Troy and Rome took further precedent, as they became more involved with the matters in the Greek East. During the Hannabalic war, the cult of Magna Mater, centered in Mount Ida in the Kingdom of Pergamum, was moved to Rome and established on the Palatine hill. This action set precedents with future dealings of Greece, both politically and culturally. It solidified ties with the king of Pergamum, ruler of the Troad region, where the remains of what many at the time considered to be the site of Troy, who would become a staunch Roman ally in Greece. But more importantly the act, according to Gruen, “announced Rome’s cultural credentials to the nations of the Hellnistic world” (Gruen 47).

This continued into the Second Macedonian War in the beginning of the second century, where Rome was able to defeat Philip V and subsequently “liberated” mainland Greece from its dominion under Macedon. The Roman commander, Flaminius, was said by Plutarch to have dedicated treasures to Delphi, a common Greek practice, inscribing, “Αἰνεάδας Τίτος ὑμιν ὑπέρτατον ὤπασε δῶρον. Ἑλλήνωντεύξας παισίν ἐλευθερίαν [Titus, of Aeneas, brought to you the highest gift./He gave the sons of the Greeks freedom]” (Plutarch 12.6-7). Like the moving of Magna Mater, Flaminius’ proclamation followed a political and cultural pattern with Roman interactions within Greece. The Romans, eager to legitimize a Trojan image which they had
already begun to cultivate in the late fourth century, wished to demonstrate those roots to distant antiquity. But they also wanted it to be done in a way that proved Rome’s distinctiveness to this Hellenic world, as when it came to Hellenic tradition, Gruen believes, the Romans, “preferred to carve out their own niche within it” (Gruen 31). The Trojan background provided this important distinction between the Greeks and the Romans, and allowed them, while relating themselves to Greece’s cultural heritage to also not be beholden to it. Troy was a city that had been long destroyed in Asia Minor, and the people there, while living in the same area, were generally not thought of as the Trojans. This provided Rome with a perfect ancestral homeland to associate itself with, as they were actors within the Trojan War but not ones that the Greeks had or will have any desire to link themselves to.

The Greek states who owed Rome for its military assistance in the Macedonian wars took little issue with recognizing these Trojan claims. The Greeks, as shown above, had been the ones to impose the narrative of migrating Trojans, in a bid for fitting the Latins within their mythos centuries earlier. While the Romans had adopted it for their own use, it still was a claim that did not conflict with the Greek cultural views of the Trojan War. At the end of this period of Greek relations we see that Roman allusions to the Trojan legend, at least in political circumstances, began to cease. There is little doubt that the Romans continued with the belief in their Trojan ancestry, but it takes a backseat as the Roman gaze shifted once again to its own western conflicts in the latter half of the second century. The Trojan connection, once it had been firmly established and recognized by the eastern Mediterranean, no longer served a political purpose, and so it no longer comes into contact with the historical record. As Gruen points out: “There was no further need to reproduce the message” (Gruen 50). As we know, however, this was not
the end of the myth's popularity, and in fact it was about to experience a revival that forever rooted it in western literature.

In the age that followed Roman expansion into Greece, the Republic turned itself inside out, experiencing an era of civil and social conflict. This period of instability ended upon the conclusion of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, when Octavian, later Augustus, became the sole power left in the aftermath of his war with Marcus Antonius. One of his first acts was to commission a work from Vergil detailing the mythic origins of Rome’s past, around 27 BC. There are a vast amount of reasons as to why the emperor asked for such work: a way to recall Rome's founding in an era that was so divorced from it, or a bid to propagandize himself by placing his family, the Iulii, at the front of Rome’s founding. At this time, Vergil was a part of a close circle of poets centered around Maecenas, a friend and quasi-cultural minister to the new princeps. The poet was born in 70 BC to an equestrian family in the Roman province of Cisalpine Gaul, nowadays thought of as northern Italy. The equestrian class, it should be noted, was made up of people below the senatorial rank, mainly native born Italians from outside of Rome. Equites, as they were called, although enormously wealthy, still had less rights and privileges than that of the patricians. This dynamic began to change towards the end of the Republic, but it still had a profound effect on Vergil’s writings, especially in the Aeneid. The poet did not see himself as a Roman, but a provincial Italian, not rooted to the Eternal City.

Vergil had a lot of material to work with, which proved to be both fortuitous and also a slight inconvenience. As we have seen, Rome’s origins had been marred by the conflicts of Greek and Latin perspectives, which in turn led to various changes and reimaginations in the fifth to fourth centuries by colonial Greek Italians. This is around when the Trojan element of the founding began to rise up. This in turn clashed with the native legends of Rome’s founding, the
birth of Romulus and Remus, which, while partly resolved by the later writings of Ennius and Cato, were still only rough interpretations. Vergil not only had to resolve these issues, including the line of Alban kings, but also align a number of different legends into a cohesive narrative that could include the ever invasive Greek element that was found in epic, but also provide a unique Roman identity that set them apart from the wider Mediterranean. All of this had to be done, as well as characterizing Aeneas, who at this point remained a mysterious but ever present figure, lurking at the edge of Roman history. He had, as of yet, been given no depth other than his transmission of the Trojan element to Italy, but now had to take a central role in Vergil’s epic that bore his name.
The *Aeneid* Trojans

It was according to Servius, a grammarian in the fourth century AD, that we hear of the *Aeneid* as a work commissioned by Augustus. Servius had already produced a set of commentaries to Vergil’s work, and one of his first lines explains the *Aeneid* composition: “*ab Augusto Aeneidem propositam scripsit annis undecim* [it was from Augustus who proposed he [Vergil] wrote the *Aeneid*]” (Servius 1). These lines do not actually tell us who had originally thought of the idea to write the *Aeneid*, Vergil or Augustus, it only tells of Augustus’ desire for Vergil to write it. Certainly, there would be a desire in the Roman world for an epic to be written about its Trojan foundations, making the emperor’s wish not too far fetched. The confounding part is, if it was indeed Augustus’ original idea, it would transform how the epic’s setting and character came about. The irony of the *Aeneid* was that it was not about the literal founding of Rome, but of the Trojans' journey to Italy, how they had settled in it, and out of the mix of Trojans and Latins came the Romans. The interaction between Vergil and Augustus, then, makes it all the more vital for understanding the complexities of the Trojan intervention in Italy, at least in the confines of the *Aeneid*. The poem would straddle Vergil's perspective as a poet (the relationship between him and Homer, his predecessor) and the imperial need for an epic that ties to Rome’s past (the ties between the *Aeneid* and Rome’s history). Out of this, we can see that the Trojans themselves performed a dual function in the narrative, as former actors in the epic cycle of Homer and their new role as ancestors to what would become the Roman people. The epic’s perspective on the Trojans can then be split into two parts: as the losing side of the great Trojan War, who still suffered from its aftermath, and their later role as settlers of Latin lands. This neatly splits the narrative into two parts: the Trojan journey out of Greece and their arrival in Italy.
The first point concerns the continuity of Homer to the *Aeneid*, and is brought to our attention almost immediately in the proem. Vergil details the previous hardships borne by Aeneas and the Trojans, including their previous wandering and the savage anger of Juno, who will provide the driving antagonist force behind the poem. The second part of the proem hints at the Trojan’s greater fate: how they will bring their household gods to Italy, “*genus unde Latinum, Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae* [from here the race of Latins, the fathers of Alba, and the walls of high Rome] (Vergil 1.5-6)”.

This establishes a tangible goal of Aeneas: the establishment of the Trojan household gods, the *penates*, as the specter of Hector will describe them in Book II, on Latin soil. These *penates* play a unique role in Roman religious functions: they are meant as the embodiments of ancestral deities, that supposedly protect a specific household, or more literally the *domus*. The act of Aeneas taking the *penates* to Italy symbolizes the Trojan past moving to another home. This point will become more relevant in the Trojan settlement, but for now it serves as one of the twin goals of the poems, alongside the eventual quelling of *saevae Iunois*, or “savage Juno”. These are the two goals that serve as the focal points of the epic, the poem only ending with the resolution of the two.

*Juno’s Anger and Greek Epic*

Juno’s anger towards the Trojans represents, in divine form, the past the Trojans must face in order to settle Italy: their terrible loss in the Trojan War. This was not covered in previous iterations of Rome’s foundation, as those were histories that were only concerned with giving the Roman past an origin in antiquity. In epic poetry, however, it was not enough for Vergil to simply skip over the aftermath of the Trojan War and give Aeneas and his Trojans a “free pass” from the destruction of their city. He suggests that the Trojans had to pay for the consequences of their failure in Greek world, which while it reaffirmed their ties to antiquity, also presented a bit
of a dilemma. Vergil had to show these events, previously only coming from the Achaean perspective, and cover them under a Trojan guise. This function is served by Juno’s anger in the proem, already beginning the parallels to Greek epic: the wrath connects to the *Iliad*, and the wandering that comes about as a consequence of this anger is related to the *Odyssey*. Both of these are connected to Juno, whose motivations are explored immediately after in the first passage. Aside from her worry of Carthage, her favored city, fated to be destroyed by the descendents of the Trojans, a more older resentment plagued her. She still remembered the war against Troy, *manet alta mente repostum iudicium Paridis spretaque iniuria formae* [she kept deep in her mind the judgement put down by Paris and the injustice scorned to her form] (Vergil 1.26-27). The reference to the Judgement of Paris in particular constitutes one of the earliest events in the history of Greek epic. The decision of Paris, his desire for Helen and decision of making Venus his patron was the principal source of conflict that caused the Trojan War. Juno’s rage, then, is centrally linked to the epic cycle, manifesting as the connection between the suffering of the current Trojans to those past poems, and sets up a continuity from Homer’s work.

Juno is also the source of the various delays and hindrances of Trojan’s westward journey, occuring in Books I-VI. These events, not known to Aeneas or his brethren, now all linked to those deep seated antagonisms set in the Trojan War. Book I begins with Juno proposing that Aelous to sink the Trojan ships, an act reminiscent of Poseidon attempts to sink Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. The Homeric references do not cease there: our very first scene of the poem’s titular character, Aeneas, has the hero directly reminisce about the Trojan War, as a comparison with his current predicament: “*Mene Iliacis occumbere campis non potuisse, tuaque animam hanc effundere dextra*” [Why was I not able to die on that field, and poured out this life
by your hand]” (Vergil 1.97). It is the memory of Trojan’s past trauma, brought up by Juno’s anger, that is one of the necessary elements for the Trojan’s appearance in the Aeneid. Their involvement in the Trojan War, while on the losing end, still connects them to a wider Hellenic history. Because the Romans associated with the Trojans, this connection applied to them as well. As we explored in the previous section, those links to antiquity were one of the foremost reasons why Rome and its neighbors had adopted this Trojan narrative in the first place. Vergil’s purpose was no less influenced, especially now that he was attempting to write a Homeric inspired epic. But the fundamental difference between Vergil and his forebears lies in how these particular sets of memories are perceived by the audience. Aeneas’ memories of the war were not of glory, but of deep shame. He was not able to die on that field of battle in glory like the other characters of the Iliad, but had to undergo that harsh yoke of defeat suffered by those who lost the war, and further live to remember it.

The Aeneid’s first portrayal of the Aeneas also puts him into an altogether different category of epic hero than that of his predecessors, Odysseus and Achilles. Both of them were famous for their κλέος, the Greek word honor or glory, that they had won in their victory over Troy. Although how this κλέος is handled by either character is dealt with differently in their respective poems, the point is that both, at least at one point in time, possessed this honor. The same could not be said for Aeneas, who was only a minor character in the Iliad, one of the many companions in Hector’s army. The epic does not mark down his conduct during the war, but there is, at the same time, not much said that causes distinction other than his divine origins of Venus. Vergil would have been aware of this, and so the hero’s lament was centered on his desire to die gloriously on that divine battlefield, such as Achilles had done. Instead, Aeneas had to suffer what could be considered the utmost disgrace for an epic hero; not only witnessing the
destruction of his city but also forced to abandon it in flight. The further thought, then, of perishing in a sudden storm, all the while in an unknown land, was a final dishonor to bear for a warrior who fought in what was considered the greatest war of his age. Our first image of our hero is one of lament, a position meant to speak for the feelings of the Trojan race as it stood at this point: a desperate people on the verge of complete annihilation.

The poem is now taking place during the time period of the *Odyssey*, when most of the Greek kings had returned to their homes after their respective νόστος, or “homecoming”. One of these Greeks, Odysseus, was having a very similar period of strife to that of Aeneas, as both a wanderer and a veteran of the war. But it is here that Vergil draws a sharp comparison between the two: their leadership and past glories. Odysseus suffered from a loss of identity as the only one of his crew left, and his journey is to regain that lost κλέος by returning home. Aeneas, on the other hand, had next to no κλέος to begin with, as well as no home that he was currently returning to. This was altogether an unprecedented topic for the epic cycle: the fallout of the war from the perspective of the conquered, not the conquerors. These were a people that had seen the destruction of their homeland, and now suffered the fate of outcasts, as far as the epic saw them. As Aeneas puts it in a later passage, where he talks to a disguised Venus, “Ipse ignotus, egens, Libyae deserta peragro, /Europa atque Asia pulsus [I myself wander unknown, a stranger, deserted in Libya, expelled from both Europe and Asia]” (Vergil I. 384-5). Unlike Odysseus, Aeneas would not be returning back.

This exclusion is the point that Vergil drives home for his Trojans. They are thrown out of the Greek dominated world which they had formerly inhabited, with their only chance of survival being to flee to Italy. This is not only done out of simply fate or circumstance, although the two do play a factor, but also out of the necessity of going somewhere that had nothing to do
with the Greeks or the war, as a way to flee from past trauma. Juno, the personification of their past trauma of the Trojan War, however, would continue to hinder and remind them of it. This resolution to the epic would not come until Juno’s rage subsided, as evidenced by the storm. When Aeneas reaches Carthage, it is of no small coincidence that it is the temple of Juno that held scenes of the destruction of Troy, with emphasis placed on the deaths of the royal family of Priam, such as Hector by Achilles. Aeneas, upon looking at these images, weeps, asking his companion “‘Quis iam locus’ inquit ‘Achate,/quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?’” [“Achates, what place now,” he asks, “what region on this earth is not filled with our suffering?”] (Vergil 1.459-460). This initial question reflects the Trojan desire to flee to Italy, a location that has little to no connection with the Greek world. It is where the exiled Trojans would have a chance to, both figuratively and literally, escape. It also sets up Carthage as the antithesis of Aeneas’ goals, as Juno’s principal city that contains veiled references to the failure of Troy’s past. Dido and Aeneas’ failed romance signifies a final tether to this identity, a last ditch effort by Juno to keep the Trojans out of Italy. It is only when Aeneas departs from Carthage, leaving Dido to her suicide, that he can finally begin his arrival to Italy.

Although Vergil presents the Trojans as victims of war, he did not wholly reject the Trojan origins within the Greek world. The constant reminders of what Aeneas and his men to suffer serve both as a driving force of the narrative, but also a testament to the Trojan connection to antiquity. It was not a pleasant connection, rooted as it was in the oppression of their people; it was still important that the Trojans were conjoined to this epic cycle, however, both for the sake of the Italian claims of antiquity and Vergil’s narrative. The Aeneid does not start when Trojans arrive in Italy for precisely this reason, as it would miss key details that occur only in a Greek world. There needs to be a narrative continuity between Homer and Vergil, elsewise the Aeneid
simply does not work as a successor to the Homeric epic. The connections to the Trojan war had to be established in a place other than Italy, but Vergil did not begin in Greece, as this would undercut the Trojan rejection of the Greek world. The solution was Carthage, set up as another attempt by Juno to divert the Trojans from Italy. A pre established Phoenician colony that would work as a place of rest, but not as a destination. It is here that Aeneas divulges all of the subsequent events of the *Iliad* to Dido, encompassing Books II-III. Although she was aware of the war’s events through its fame, like the rest of the audience, it was told now from the perspective of the losers. We are meant to, like Dido does, pity the hero and his followers, but also admire the endurance of such people, who were able not only to continue after their city but embark on this journey at the behest of the gods. These events put the Trojans in a unique position, a people without a home, expelled, as Aeneas says, from both Europe and Asia. But this only further sets them apart from the rest of the Greek world. This, combined with Aeneas’ destiny to establish a colony in Latium, pushes them out of their former eastern world into the west, first into Carthage, later to Italy.

This city that was the furthest west an epic had ever gone, and where the Trojans ended in Book I. It was a place that they spent the longest time, at least in the first half of the *Aeneid*. It would also be the only named city that the Trojans stayed in for the entirety of the poem. As already mentioned, Carthage, along with Dido, was meant to remind the Trojans of their former identities as inhabitants of a Greek world, beginning with the murals that depict scenes of the Trojan War. It becomes increasingly obvious to the audience that the Trojans cannot remain there, with even Aeneas’ men becoming anxious about his delays. But the instinct to remain within the boundaries of the known Hellenic world, albeit as far as one could possibly get, proves to be a strong one for Aeneas. The decision to sail to Italy meant forsaking his fame in the
Trojan War, and the Trojan’s former identity. Dido’s love, first kindled when he related to her the sack of Troy, shows the appeal of remaining in this world they had lived in for so long. The departure to Italy, as we will see in the next section, will eventually lead to the passing of that epic past in favor of enveloping with the Latins. Aeneas, initially, is shown to be unwilling to forsake that past. But he is moved by his pietas, to his men and the gods, and leaves Dido and Carthage in the pursuit of Italy.

**Italy: The Trojan Legacy**

Before he arrives, Aeneas must take another stop at the Cumaean Sibyl, located in southern Italy, who guides him into the underworld. This passage, again, reminiscent of the *Odyssey*, is what Vergil uses to remind us, the Roman audience, where these event will lead to. Anchises, the father of Aeneas, takes this first step by showing us the history of the race that will come to rule Italy, the Romans. After a brief recount of what will be their conquests, as well as the line of Alban kings, Anchises then tells of Rome’s divine mission: “*tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;/hae tibi erunt artes* [you, Roman, remember to the nations by authority; these arts will be to you]” (Vergil 6. 851-2). These lines have confused many readers, as Anchises soon mentions that the Roman duty will also include to spare those who surrender, to humble the proud. This mandate is clearly not followed by Aeneas at the poems end, his murder of Turnus while he was prostrated before our hero. There can be a reinterpretation of these lines, however, if we both follow the model that Vergil proposes to us from the poems very start, as well the actual wording of the line. The Trojans are the ones who will fuse into the Latins, in turn producing the Roman line. This brings to light a somewhat obvious, but no less important point: the Trojans are not the Romans. Vergil makes attempts to relate Trojan actions to the later Romans, to be sure, but the proem makes clear that the Trojans found sites that
eventually lead to the foundation of Rome, not the city itself. The *Romane* in Anchises speech may not be referring to Aeneas directly, but rather just a Roman man in general. The underworld scene proves this with the inclusion of Romulus, the city’s actual founder, making Aeneas progenitor that connected the city to a larger Hellenic identity, but was not a Roman himself.

This, as it turns out, is yet another issue that will be addressed through conflict, much like the Trojan War. In fact, Book VII-XII are thought of as the Iliadic portion of the *Aeneid*. But this intertextual relationship, like in the last section, turns out to be a more complicated matter than it appears. Vergil begins with a second invocation to the Muses, specifically expressing that the second half of the epic will be a greater task: “*Maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, maius opus moveo*” [a greater order of matters is born for me, I move to a greater work] (Vergil 7.44-5). This directly announces to the audience, only hinted at beforehand, of the transition. This part, the Italian portion of the *Aeneid*, is one that Vergil considers to be the more critical of the two: now we move from establishing the Trojans in the epic cycle to the actual culmination of these efforts: the settlement of Italy. The Trojans must come to their divine purpose in their new homeland, with conflict predicted but not yet fully realized. This other invocation implies a shift in focus, but not the beginning of an entirely new format. Although the Trojans rejected their place in the epic Greek world, it also does not mean that their past identities no longer apply to them. Aeneas is still an epic hero, and the wrath of Juno, the physical manifestation of their former Greek identities, follows the Trojans to Italy, continuing her campaign against the Trojans through the stirring up of an Iliadic-like conflict.

The war in Italy, the greater theme of Vergil, surprisingly begins not with the Trojans' arrival, nor even Aeneas’ perspective, but a look at the tribe that they are destined to be connected to: the Latins. Their king, Latinus, was without any male heirs to succeed him, with
many suitors coming to engage his daughter, Lavinia. But the king received omens that foretold of a stranger that would come to his lands, at the same time that his daughter was also prophesied to win great fame, at the cost of causing war amongst her people. In order to find the truth of these matters, the king slept in the sacred groves of Albunea, apparently where many other Italian tribes sought answers to prophetic questions, relating to the oracular prophecies that had brought Aeneas to Italy. As Latinus lay down, the voice of his father, the god Faunus, spoke to him. Faunus ordered Latinus not to seek marriage with the other local tribes, “externi venient generi, qui sanguine nostrum nomen/in astra ferant” [strangers will come as sons-in-law, who by their blood would raise our name into the stars] (Vergil 7. 98-9). This refers to Aeneas, and his future marriage to Lavinia, although the wording carries with it a more subtle idea. The plural of externi specifically refers to all the Trojans, “stranger,” who Aeneas brought with him across the Mediterranean, not just the singular marriage. This will become a significant idea throughout the second half, as the union on its own is not what is at stake, but the symbolism of the unification of Trojan and Latin blood. It was from Lavinia’s name that the Trojan colony of Lavinium received its name, and the son begotten by Aeneas and Lavinia, either going by Ascanius or Iulus, founded the city of Alba Longa.

Upon landing on the banks of the Tiber river and realizing that this was indeed the land where his people were destined for, Aeneas was overjoyed, rare for the epic. He sent messengers to the local king, Latinus, expressing his desire for a share of land. It was mentioned as early as Book III by Apollo that the Trojans’ distant ancestor, Dardanus, was actually of Italian origin, quae vos a stirpe parentum/prima tulit tellus, eadem vos ubere laeto/accipiet reduces [you will be lead back to the land that first bore you, through the stem of you ancestors, the same land will receive you by her joyful breast] (Vergil 3. 94-96). This was a detail that had no basis in the
earlier renditions of the Aeneas legend, solely a creation of Vergil for the requirements of his epic poem. It brought with it a legitimate claim to a potential Trojan settlement within Italy, along with the divine destiny mandated by Jupiter himself. Aeneas’ plea for a stretch of land in Latinus’ kingdom was entirely within his and his men’s rights to ask for, as the descendants of Dardanus. Upon receiving the messengers, Latinus not only welcomed the strangers with great hospitality, but acknowledged, more importantly, from the beginning the ancestral claims on Dardanus. Latinus further responds positively to the land claim: *Non vobis rege Latino/divitis uber agri Troiaeve opulentia deerit* [it will not be absent from you, the rich breast of land nor Trojan opulence, while Latinus is king] (Vergil VII. 261-2). Here we can see that Vergil in effect adds yet another benefit to Trojan identity: the link he establishes between Dardanus and Italy. Although this claim is not based on any source prior to this, no one would find fault in Vergil for making it within the confines of his epic, It also creates a more amicable relationship, at least initially, between the Latins and the Trojans, as well as another Latin recognizing their claim of land.

The arrival of Aeneas also brought with it the fulfillment of one of the poem's stated goals: the moving of the *penates* to Italy. Upon Aeneas’ realization through a comment made by Ascanius, that this was indeed the land that was promised to him and his men, he rejoices. He specifically calls out to the gods of Troy, *O fidi Troiae salvete penates: hic domus, haec patria est* [Hail O’ faithful *penates* of Troy: this is our home, this is our fatherland] (Vergil 7. 121-2). The *penates*, as previously mentioned, were meant to be divine representations of a specific family, usually shown through physical idols placed in the inner *domus*. They were a part of a larger pantheon of household gods that were thought of as ancestral spirits, protecting their future descendents. The specific idols that Aeneas brought with him, however, have certain
ramifications for Roman religious rites. They will later be brought to Lavinium, eventually to be worshipped as the *Penates Publici Populi Romani*, or the Public Penates of the Roman People, when it is ascribed that Lavinium was their paternal town. The *penates* of Aeneas would be a physical, and therefore portable, symbol of the Trojan royal genealogical line, extending as far back as Dardanus, the mythical founder of Troy. Through his transfer of these idols, Aeneas returns the Trojan line back to its ancestral roots in Italy, which is, as Vergil has it, their original homeland. Italy could now be once again thought of to Aeneas and his men as their *domus*.

To the mind of Trojans, then, this is where their quest ends. They were now in the lands that they were destined to live in, and had successfully signed an agreement of cohabitation with the natives. There was no need for them to ask for anything more than territory where their people could peacefully coexist with Latins. The next part, then, the start of the war in Italy, is the pivotal moment when Vergil makes clear that this epic is for the establishment of Rome, not the survival of the Trojan race. Included in his offer of territory, Latinus offers Aeneas marriage to his daughter Lavinia, on the basis of that earlier prophecy, which claimed that out of this union would come a race that rules the world, the Romans. This pleased the aristocratic Roman audience: the marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia represents the start of their own origins as a Latin-speaking people of Trojan descent. But as for the Trojans themselves, this singular event marked the beginning of their final demise: the absorption of their people into the dominant Latins, until their name is extinguished among them. It is telling that, after the offer of the marriage alliance, Aeneas is not even given time to respond to it before Juno begins to stir up war with the other Italian tribes, introducing us to the character of Turnus. At this point, we as a Roman audience already are secure in the knowledge that the union will occur, the ancestry of Romulus is secured. The Trojan perspective on the matter is no longer a relevant factor. Aeneas, as a
character, had shown to always bend to the will of the gods for the common good of his men, and from here shows less and less agency, as he is fully guided by the predestined Roman fate. Likewise, Latinus’ refusal of Turnus as a potential suitor, in favor of Aeneas, was the only necessary prerequisite for a war with other Italians, not an affirmative Trojan response.

The war would not be resolved until the death of Turnus at the hands of Aeneas, whose savage blow closes the epic. This is not a victory for the Trojans, however, as their fate had really been decided a few hundred lines earlier, through a council of the gods. Jupiter orders Juno to cease her war-mongering in Italy, to finally make peace with Fate. Juno, in a surprising turnaround, agrees, giving her consent to the wedding of Aeneas and Lavinia. But the stipulation is, upon the consummation of these two peoples that the Latin people supplant the Trojans in name forever. The progeny of Aeneas, the Alban kings, would forever be known as from out of Latium, and that the power of Rome be *Itala virtute*, or “from Italian virtue”. As for the Trojans, she argues that their city had already fallen, so let the name die out as well, *occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia* [it fell, allow Troy to fall with the name] (Vergil 12. 828). It is this chilling sentiment that underscores the final scene of Aeneas’ duel with Turnus, whose death will secure the fate of Aeneas’ people. As Juno stipulates, the integration that gives birth to the Romans, the race that will dominate the world, comes at the price of the Trojans' own death. Jupiter agrees, decreeing that the Trojans will be only allowed to mix their blood with the Latins, but their own culture will be lost to the Latin’s own.
Conclusion

Even after all of his own efforts in the war and constant loyalty to the gods, Aeneas’ victory over Turnus still carries with it the harsh reality that he also ensures the death of the Trojan race. The wrath of Juno, now fully realized, in a sense achieved her goal of erasing the Trojans for their past transgressions. The death of the Trojans, however, would have been seen in Rome as a necessary sacrifice for the founding of the city. In their mind, the Trojans had to lie at the very center of Rome’s origins, but could not themselves have taken part in the founding of the city. Rome already had a historical foundation that was set in 753 BC, one that was already stepped in their interactions with their Latin neighbors. The Trojan legend, coming out of their later interactions with their Greek counterparts in the south and Sicily, had to work within the boundaries of Rome’s origins. It was inevitable in the Aeneid that the Latins supplanted the Trojans, who themselves eventually were ruled by the Romans. Aeneas was not a Roman, his last, and first act of cruelty committed against Turnus went directly against the divine mission of the Anchises: humble the proud, but spare those who surrendered. The act was necessary for Rome’s foundation: it secured the integration of Trojans and Latins through the death of Lavinia’s last potential suitor, and it clearly divided Aeneas and his Trojans from the direct founding of Rome. This did not mean that the Trojans were entirely forgotten, however, or else Vergil’s epic would have had no material. The saving grace for the Trojans came with the adoption of their penates, brought over by Aeneas from the very halls of Troy itself. The genealogy of Rome, one that was connected by blood to Latin states, was found from an ancient city, once destroyed.
The Legacy of the Brute Trojans

A Claim of Roman Kinship

Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1095-c. 1155) was a British cleric writing during a period of complex political turmoil. Britannia, formerly a Roman province abandoned by the ailing Empire, had been invaded by the Anglo-Saxons in the early fifth century. These Germanic tribes were the progenitors of the English people, and set about dividing the south-eastern region of the island into petty kingdoms, ruled by independent kings. This period, from the fifth century to the eighth century was known to historians collectively as the Heptarchy, but the name itself is misleading as political power in these kingdoms tended to shift, and there were never at any one time exactly seven kingdoms. The Saxons would eventually unify under Alfred the Great in the ninth century, mainly due to the raids of the invading Danes. The rule of this part of the isle was heavily contested in the succeeding tenth century, authority changing hands between the two rivaling factions. Eventually the Saxons were able to reclaim their former sovereignty, but this would be, as later recorded, short-lived.

The famous Norman invasion of 1066 headed by William the Conqueror ousted the ruling Saxon family and established Norman rule in what was now England during Geoffrey’s lifetime. While all of this was happening, the western half of the isle had an entirely distinct history. It was occupied by a group of kingdoms known collectively as the Welsh. These were the people who were made up of the remnants of the previously mentioned Roman province of Britannia, which was governed by the empire until its fall. Unlike their eastern counterparts, the native Welshmen were able to resist the Anglo-Saxons hegemony, but yet suffered from their own civil strife. In an ironically similar fashion to their invaders, the Welsh had formed small, independent kingdoms that would never unify under a single system of government, except in
the case of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, who was king for a brief period amid the eleventh century. After his death, the kingdom immediately fragmented once again into separate kingdoms, which continued independently until the reign of Edward I, who conquered Wales in 1283.

Geoffrey’s origins are difficult to trace, but modern historians agree his family line likely stems from Wales. There are small indications of this, such as his moniker “of Monmouth”, a small town located in what was a part of the region of Wales, as well as his familiarity with the Brittonic tongue. Geoffrey himself claims to have translated the Historia Regum Britanniae from an earlier work, which had been written in the Brittonic language and he rewrote into to Latin, although many now dispute these claims. He was a consecrated bishop, meaning that there was a definite Christian influence to his work, including that his close confidant was Walter, an Archdeacon at Oxford, who had supposedly given him this earlier British text. His other sources appear to be Christian as well, such as Gildas, a sixth century British monk writing about the Roman departure from Britain, and the Venerable Bede, known as “The Father of English History”. But he also appears to have taken inspiration from Nennius, the author of the Historia Brittonum, who although was a Christian monk still appeared to have liberties with British history.

The difference, however, between Geoffrey and all of these other authors of British history is that he attempted to write a detailed foundational legend for the Britons, more specifically for their line of kings. The subject matter for Geoffrey himself is most peculiar, being that in his time the Britons were an already long defeated people. The Anglo-Saxon settlements had scattered much of the island's earlier native inhabitants, and Wales, although still technically independent, had been consistently weakened through civil strife and power struggles. Despite this, Geoffrey not only gives a coherent narrative to British rule, but also gives
them a glorious foundation through Trojan ancestors, which would have seemed to elevate them towards the former glory of the past Roman empire.
The Sources for Geoffrey

Geoffrey’s view of this British past would come to be complex: although he favors them (perhaps in part due to his familial line) he does not hesitate in admitting their failures. At the same time that he writes of their glorious foundations in the Trojan past, he also seeks to sow the seeds of their future destruction through prophecy, as we will see later. This compromising position was the product of the sources he was working closely with, given both his stances and the information that is used. Out of these sources, two in particular stand out as having juxtaposing attitudes when it comes to the Britons: Gildas Sapiens (c. 500-c. 570), a British monk, and Nennius, a Welsh monk, who had supposedly written in the ninth century. Geoffrey appears to have taken most of the earlier parts of his narrative from Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum,* a text which accounts for Brutus and the Trojan origins of the British, although the latter writer is able to give more depth to this legend. The centuries that Geoffrey covers in Late Antiquity (roughly around the fifth century) take much of their inspiration from Gildas’ *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae,* “On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain”, detailing the last days of Roman rule on the island, and the subsequent invasions of the Anglo-Saxons.

The two texts fundamentally disagree when it comes to the role the Britons play in their own history. Nennius is largely concerned with establishing the historical record of the Britons, rather than focusing on any specific narrative, although that does not mean he lacks his own biases. Gildas, on the other hand, is completely entrenched in his notion of Roman superiority over the Britons, and sets out to demonstrate how the failure of the inhabitants came from their apparent impiety towards the empire. Perhaps, in part due to these conflicting approaches the two rarely agree on precise chronology or characters instead operating for their own interpretations, with one notable exception: Ambrosius Aurelianus. This character features prominently in both
works, with several stories being attributed to him in each, most importantly, in the push back against the Anglo-Saxons. This would later influence Geoffrey’s own narrative, as he distributes many of Ambrosius’ roles to other characters such as Arthur and Merlin. Although he is featured independently in Geoffrey, becoming the connection between the British line of kings and the Roman aristocracy.

The *Historia Regum Britanniae* relies heavily on Nennius for the foundational myth concerning the Trojan migration. Nennius begins with a digression of biblical history, spanning thousands of years through Adam, Jesus, and finally to Edmund, King of the Angles, born in 956 AD (Nennius 4). It is here that Nennius talks of the British past in earnest, with a topography of the island as well as a catalogue of the four main races inhabiting the isle at this point: the Scots, the Picts, the Saxons, and the ancient Britons (Nennius 7). This follows in much of the same pattern as Geoffrey’s first chapter, although the Normans are not mentioned, as they will not invade until almost 100 years after Nennius. Much of section 10 is devoted to a genealogy of Brutus’ family, starting from Dardanus in Troy and ending with Ascanius in Italy. Nennius then gives a brief account of Brutus’ journey: Brutus’ parricide, his subsequent exile, and finishing with the settlement of Britain. All of this is covered in Geoffrey, here taking the form of a rough outline which will be expanded on by the later author. Another important detail to note is in the last section where he includes the timelines of the kings of Alba Longa: Aeneas, Ascanius, Silvius, and Posthumus, the latter whom he adds is a brother to Brutus. He also notes that biblically this was the time when the prophet Eli was high-priest in Israel, when the ark of the covenant was taken by “foreign people”.

It is clear that much of Geoffrey’s inspiration for Book I comes from Nennius’ account, what with the genealogy, the parricide, and the expedition into Gaul, with both agreeing on the
small matter of the founding of Tours by Brutus. But many of the larger sections covered in Geoffrey’s text, such as the rebellion in Greece or the war with the giants, are not found in Nennius’ text, and thus must be assumed to be of Geoffrey’s own invention. Geoffrey invested himself in creating a historical narrative, specifically in Book 1 the characters of Brutus and his Trojans. The inclusion of these later details served as development towards that goal. Although he clearly wanted to record an origin for the Britons, Nennius did not seem interested in following thematic ideas or the like as Geoffrey does. His focus directly stems to the island and its people, which does not limit him to linger on any particular period of time. This is why as he finishes his brief account of Brutus, he moves rapidly to the movements of the Picts, the Scots, the Saxons, and circles back to another genealogy of Brutus, although this appears to have been a later addition, perhaps not even by Nennius himself.

This second genealogical table was based on the Frankish Table of Nations, an early medieval Latin text that gives the supposed relationship between thirteen nations descended from three biblical brothers. These nations included the Britons, who were said to have descended from a certain Hiscion which the table traces all the way back to Noah and his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japeth. Although the details are not too important for the current discussion, it is of note that on this same table the Latins and the Britons were said to have been born from Hiscion, meaning that there was a close fraternal bond between these two races, according to Nennius, before even Brutus. Another important idea to keep in mind is Geoffrey’s omission of this table, as it does not make an appearance in any part of the Historia Regum Britanniae, nor is it ever mentioned that Brutus is a descendant of Noah in any capacity. This may point to a lack of interest in Geoffrey’s part of any biblical connections to the British kings. There seems to be a
lack of Catholicism in general within Geoffrey’s narrative, which puts him at odds with both Nennius and Gildas especially.

Out of all of the authors encountered so far, Gildas is the only one that can claim to be actually British, writing in the sixth century AD during the era of Anglo-Saxon invasions. Despite his lineage, or perhaps because of it, he is highly critical of the British race, “This island, stiff-necked and stubborn minded” (Gildas 4). The defining trait of the Britons, as he continues, is rebelliousness: constantly fighting not only against God, but against each other. He states: “For what can there either be, or committed, more disgraceful or more unrighteous in human affairs, than to refuse to show fear to God or affection to one’s countrymen?” The independent idealism of the Britons, covered more in Geoffrey, is contemptuous by Gildas, who holds it out as a degradation of morals. Furthering this differentiation, Gildas in his introduction decides not to record his country’s history, “before Christ came in the flesh”, and promises only to record the evils which Britain suffered during the time of the Roman emperors and beyond. This is done again out of spite for his countrymen, who he accuses, as before, of performing the worship of “diabolical idols”. His introduction also states that he will withhold any praise for “mountains, fountains, or hills, or upon rivers”, which he sees now as subservient to men, but were once paid false worship. This seems to have later been revised by Nennius and Geoffrey, as both their introductions pay particular attention to the landscape of the island.

Although Gildas appears to have a lack of sympathy for his fellow countrymen, there is something to be said about his unique perspective of the Britons. Geoffrey and Nennius were writing about events that were around five hundred years before their time, and their perspectives about the former people could be viewed in a sense of nostalgia. Gildas had not only lived with the Britons while they were still alive, but during what can be argued as their absolute worst
period: the invasions of the Saxons. These hard times, as was argued by Geoffrey, were brought upon by an inherent weakness within the Britons, their independent spirit. It was this very same nature that Geoffrey will credit towards the creation of their kingdom: Brutus seeking to journey away from his homeland and free his enslaved people. But independence breeds further independence, and the constant decentralization of political authority can weaken a state as a whole, especially one which has enemies closing in at all sides.

This is why Gildas, who resented the Britons’ for this apparent weakness, favored the era when the Romans had occupied the island. In the case of Boudicea’s famous uprising, Gildas calls her “that deceitful lioness”, and describes the Roman retribution as a one-sided slaughter, with his last jab being “that the Britons are neither brave in war nor faithful in time of peace” (Gildas 6). In the aftermath, when he describes the Roman “taskmasters” that began to subjugate the Britons, he justifies it as a way “to chastise the crafty race [Britons]” (Gildas 7). The text reaches its climax with the Saxon Invasions, after the Romans had already left their former province due to their own weakened position. In what later historians would call “The Groans of the Britons”, the Britons begged a Roman consul, Aetius, to return and assist them in their defense. Although Aetius refuses, Gildas writes of another Roman who remained on the island, Ambrosius Aurelianus, who “by the goodness of our Lord obtained the victory” (Gildas 25).

A correlation exists in Gildas between submitting to the Romans and piety, as he views the Britons as sinful when they refuse to come under Roman influence. The instance where the Britons do submit their loyalty to Rome, however, “entreating in piteous terms the assistance of an armed band to protect them” (Gildas 15), is when they are able to throw off the yoke of the Saxons. This nostalgia for the former Roman state appears to have been a commonly felt trait during the early medieval period, as after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD there was a
massive decentralization that enveloped Europe as a whole, not just the splitting of various 
Germanic kingdoms but also of local authority. To the province of Brittania, which had received 
all of its political structures, military, and economic benefits from Rome, the savior-like figure of 
Ambrosius could be seen as a living remnant of that former collective power, a rare form of 
legitimacy in such a disorganized political era. Even Geoffrey, who would come to disagree on 
both Gildas’ distaste for British independence as well as his idolization of the Roman Empire, 
still felt it necessary to keep much of what Ambrosius meant, if not in the exact form as Gildas. 

There was much between the three authors that was disagreed upon due to their own 
conflicting narratives. But there was one figure that found universal representation in all three of 
the British accounts, who, perhaps somewhat ironically, was not thought of as a natively Briton. 
The character of Ambrosius was first recorded by Gildas, and was defined by the Latin term 
_Ultimus Romanorum_, or the Last of the Romans. A person with this epitet was thought to 
embody all of the traits and values reminiscent of the Roman civilization. Naturally, this can be a 
very broad term that could encompass a number of historical personalities, both from actual 
Romans to people from our modern time. Because of this, it would be more fitting to define the 
term through what the author interprets it as, rather than assign it a general meaning. For Gildas, 
Ambrosius inspired a more literal interpretation, as he depicted him as the only Roman left on 
the island, the son of parents “who for their merit were adorned with the purple” (Gildas 25). 
Although there is an ongoing argument about what exactly this line entails, it is generally agreed 
on that it is meant to signify Ambrosius’ ties to Rome, perhaps that his parents were a part of the 
aristocracy. Gildas wanted to illustrate that the key to British salvation was tied intrinsically with 
this idea of piety, and he had already linked this virtue to loyalty to the Roman state. After 
experiencing a lack of leadership among their fellow countrymen, such as Guthrigern
(Vortigern), who Gildas lays the blame for the entire Anglo-Saxon invasion (Gildas 23), the Britons then place their faith in this Roman general. This aligns with the bulk of Gildas’ themes, that the Britons need to place their faith in a higher power, both on the political and theological levels, in order to achieve military victory over the Saxons.

Nennius follows the basic model of Gildas’ Ambrosius, as the embodiment of Roman authority through vague ancestral rights, but adds another perplexing dimension to the character: prophetic wisdom. Vortigern again appears, but in Nennius’ account has direct interactions with Ambrosius. The British leader is given a prediction by his high priests to build and fortify a city on the boundaries of his kingdom, in order to protect against potential Saxon attacks. Vortigern obeys their instructions, but, unable to build the fortress due to magical incursions, asks the priests once again why this was happening. The priests tell the king that the fortress must be consecrated through the act of putting to death a fatherless child (Nennius 40). Upon finding the child, a boy, they take him to the citadel to be sacrificed. But the boy, in turn, reveals to them a pool that contains two dragons within it, one white and one red. As the two dragons wrestle with each other, the boy divines that they are meant to represent the opposing forces: the Saxons and the British. The white dragon that currently had the upper hand over the red dragon symbolizes the Saxons, while the red dragon the Britons. He continues that the red dragon will eventually defeat the white dragon, just as the Britons will push back the invaders (Nennius 42). The boy finishes by claiming that the fortress, which was to be Dinas Emrys, was meant to be his, and that the king must seek other places to build his own citadel. The king agreeing to this then asks who he was and what his origins were, to which the boy replies he was Ambrose and his father was a Roman consul.
The interactions between Vortigern and Ambrosius would be later reproduced by Geoffrey, although under very different circumstances. Nennius’ story was meant to introduce the warrior king Ambrosius, who would go on to earn recognition from fighting the Saxons, much like in Gildas. Geoffrey’s version, however, would attribute the entire red and white dragon fable to Merlin instead, including the prophecies between the Britons/Saxons. The warrior king who would be the one to actually turn the tides against the invaders would be King Arthur. Thus Merlin and Arthur together are meant to represent in Geoffrey the two sides of the Nennian Ambrosius: the prophetic versus warrior side. The two working together produce a third element that stabilizes the entire narrative: political legitimacy. Ambrosius himself occupies too much in both Nennius and Gildas to be considered a realistic character: he is a Roman and a Briton, a warrior and a prophet. Geoffrey decides to make the decision to split the character into multiple parts, in order for them to embody their distinctive role. At the end of Geoffrey’s narrative we see this play out, when the Angelic Voice appears to Cadwallader. It advises him to not make the attack to reclaim the island from the Saxons: “nolebat enim Deus Britones in insulam Britanniae diutius regnare antequam tempus illud uenisset quod Merlinus Arturo prophetauerat [For God was not wanting the Britons to rule on the island of Britain longer before the time came that Merlin had prophesied to Arthur]” (Book 11. 205). Merlin, the prophetic voice, is advising Arthur, the king, that he should attack at that specific time. This epitomizes Ambrosius’ character as the savior of the Britons: it is assured both through the natural and the supernatural worlds that the Britons will succeed.
Lineage and Its Independence

Geoffrey begins with an account regarding the island’s legendary founding, that should sound quite familiar. A Trojan exile, with a loyal band of Trojan followers, travels across the Mediterranean and arrives at a foreign land on the basis of a prophetic vision. Brutus, our apparent Aeneas substitute in this narrative, was the leader of this supposed expedition and afterward renamed both the island and its new occupants after himself. The people were called the Britones (Britons), and the island Britannia (Britain). With all his talk of Trojans, foundations, and prophecies, there is a preliminary temptation to dismiss Geoffrey’s tale as a simple imitation of the more well-known Aeneid legend. Certainly, there are key elements that the medieval author could have only obtained from the Vergilian epic: Brutus and his people being Trojans, the myth as an origin of a distinct people, and the divine purpose of Brutus’ mission. All these features can be traced back to Vergil, or at the very least, other ancient Roman sources. These texts were still taught often as part of noble education, to which Geoffrey would have been introduced. This view of basic imitation would ignore, however, the intentions of Geoffrey himself, as his stated goal is to cover the entirety of British history, specifically that of its kings. The narrative then goes far beyond the scope of any foundational myth, and for this reason it goes far beyond Vergil's own corpus, at least anything that was covered in the Aeneid. Our inquiry then has to shift to interrogate the purpose that this Trojan background is meant to play, if it is not intended to be a straightforward copy of the Roman original. Two concepts would emerge from this reading, that would concern the purpose for including Trojans in a British line of kings: the Trojan lineage and its own independence, and a connection with prophetic visions.
The details concerning Brutus’ exile from his native land are somewhat glossed over, moving Geoffrey’s account quickly from Italy to Greece (Book 1.6-7). But it is in the brief Italy anecdote where we can begin to see a pattern in the character that will later be developed further: Brutus’s striving for independence. By introducing Brutus in the language of being exulatus, or exiled, he becomes an isolated figure, albeit with a prestigious familial background. The accidental killing of both his mother and father did not cause him to lose this of his heritage, which is further evidenced by his almost immediate acceptance by the remaining Trojans in Greece. These Trojans are unique and are mentioned in the same section as Brutus’ exile. They were once followers of Helenus, the prophetic twin of Cassandra, who in the Aeneid was attempting to rebuild a new Troy within Greece. The attempt is not discussed in this narrative, but it should be noted that this desire for a remake of Troy would manifest itself in Brutus, who would later go on to consecrate what would become London as Nova Troia.

The Trojans who are introduced in Greece are shown to have been reduced to slavery by the Greek king Pandrasus. The lower status felt by the Trojans is especially manifested in the case of the Greek youth Assaracus. Despite his father having given him inherited lands he was currently in a dispute with his half-brother. This brother boasted of Greek parentage on both sides, and persuaded other Greek lords with this claim, since Assaracus had a Trojan mother (Book 1.7). Brutus’ prowess and virtue inspired a following within this marginalized Trojan community, and they quickly began to flock toward him. The Trojans then began to express a desire to cast off their oppression under the Greeks, specifically asking for Brutus’ aide in this endeavor. Complying, Brutus has his new followers assemble within the forests and woodlands of Greece, and sends a Pandrasus a message: either give the Trojans lands to settle or allow them to depart for foreign territories (Book 1.8). The Trojans, deprived of their original homeland, and
now also their former enslaved identity, began to undergo a significant change that will eventually lead to them becoming the Britons. As they are not technically Britons until they arrive at the island, however, I will refer to them as “Brute Trojans”, or to shorten it, “Brutes”, to signify that they are under the jurisdiction of Brutus, their dux, but not yet their own distinct people.

Brutus reasons in his letter that the Brutes are the descendants of the famous Dardanus, and thus lay claim to a certain nobility. Despite this, the Greeks' treatment of them was indignum, or unworthy. The Trojans would prefer the “ferino ritu [the rites of wild animals]”, rather than to be deprived of what they believed was their inherited libertate. They would take to living in the forest, trading the “iugo seruitutis [the yoke of slavery]” for this harsher existence, but with their ancestral rights intact. The image of hiding within the forest and woodlands is joined with this struggle for independence, and it is used quite extensively by Geoffrey as characterization of the later Britons. Brutus also gives the justification for this call to independence. He begins his opening with a quia, grammatically used for determining reason, thus giving his case a more judicial appeal rather than a simple plea for freedom. Brutus is not only concerned with the morality of his people’s enslavement, but more importantly the fact that it was happening to such a people as the Trojans. It appears that Geoffrey’s conception of independence is that one can claim it due to a certain birthright. Brutus cites his, and also the Brute Trojan’s, own lineage as a justification for their sovereignty.

**Lineage**

The uniqueness of Brutus’ bloodline is brought up repeatedly, usually in the context of independence. As already mentioned, Brutus’ rebellion against Pandrasus was largely instigated by the Greeks' disrespect for the Trojan’s lineage through their enslavement. After the war, the
maiores, a conglomeration of Trojan noblemen, convened to ponder over the fate of captured Pandrasus, as he would concede with any request they put forward to save his own life. Their discussion ultimately arrives at two options: to stay in Greece and ask Pandrasus for a portion of land to live on or to depart for foreign territory. This council would become the most consequential political event for the Brute Trojan’s history, as it sets up the reasoning behind their journey for another Troy. An address is given by a certain Mempricius, who argues that staying in Greece would be a mistake as the relatives and later descendants of the Greeks would never forgive the Trojans for the slaughter of their kinsmen (Book I.14). Here there is a notion of lineage working against them, as it is their past deeds that prevent them from settling in that area.

There also appears to be an eminence for Greek lineage as well, as Mempricius further advises that Brutus should seek Pandrasus’ daughter, Innogin, as his wife. In the very next scene when Pandrasus is brought before the Brute Trojans, the king is “in cathedra celsior ceteris positus [put in a throne higher than the rest] (Book I.15)”. After being told of the Brute Trojan’s demands and threatened with death upon refusal, he concedes. He does this while complimenting Brutus’ lineage, claiming that no one but a descendent of Priam and Anchises could have freed the Trojans from their enslavement, given their weaker numbers.

Pandrasus’ admiration of Brutus’ ancestry gives us yet another distinction to be made between that of Brutus and the Brute Trojans who followed him. Geoffrey’s purpose was to record the deeds of the British kings, who appear in his narrative to be further subdivided from the Britons they had authority over. Brutus, although technically still seen as a Trojan, enjoys a degree of distinction due to him being Aeneas’ great-grandson, who’s own descent can be followed back to the kings of old Troy. This detail would be less relevant for Aeneas himself, at least in the context of the Aeneid. Vergil’s purpose was to provide an epic background through
Rome’s Trojan lineage: Vergil only needed the Trojans to arrive in Italy and establish the marriage to Lavinia. The specific details of the Alban kings were already known to the Roman audience, he needed no further explanation. Geoffrey, on the other hand, was intent on establishing a royal bloodline of Britonnic kings beginning with Brutus of Troy. Pandrasus, already a royal figure, not only comments on Brutus’ lineage but additionally gives his daughter to him in marriage. It is no coincidence that Pandrasus is seen as seated on the highest throne, as a decree from such an elevated figure cements Brutus’ own authority to rule his independent kingdom.

By refusing to stay in Greece and setting out to find their own country, they are also refusing the opportunity to reconcile with their defeated foes. This refusal of cohabitation is where Geoffrey truly begins to diverge from the Roman model, as a major thematic idea within the *Aeneid* is that the Trojans, although the conquering party, eventually became infused with the very people they had fought against. In a complete reversal of this idea, the Brute Trojans refused to settle in both Greece and later Gaul due to the hostility they were faced with by the native populations and left for a completely uninhabited island. This means that, unlike the *Aeneid* Trojans, the Brute Trojans did not ethnically change, but rather were renamed to the Britons post their arrival on the island. Geoffrey makes this abundantly clear in the text, and it is an important detail that sets the two types of Trojans apart. Nevertheless, the renaming still reflects a change in cultural identity, but unlike the Roman version, which consisted of ethnic fusion (Trojan and Latin), Geoffrey has as the arbiter of this change be the king himself.

*Independence and the Fear of Enslavement*

For Geoffrey, this distinctiveness regarding Brute Trojan heritage developed into a belief in their independence, to which the later Britons acclimated a certain pride within their identity.
The term “independence”, however, requires further examination, as the word in our modern context had an entirely different connotation than it did for Geoffrey and his contemporaries. If anything, it was the reversal of our concept: while it is remembered today as seeking self-government, past independence was the ability to be ruled over by a native-born king, and not paying homage to a foreign entity. Although this may cause some confusion, it would be helpful to remember the period in which Geoffrey wrote. Since the fall of Rome, Britain had been in the midst of what was constant territorial conflict between rivaling factions, including the Saxons, Welsh, and more recently to his time, the Danes. Because of this, none of the inhabitants from the island had known one central authority, and the constant political turmoil must have been extremely destabilizing as the various factions vied for power. To Geoffrey, and most residents of Britain at that time, a single kingdom that paid no homage to any foreign entity, nor had to constantly worry about rivaling factions, would have seemed liberating, and thus, the people could be termed as “independent”, despite still having to bow to their own king.

This fierce passion for liberty that characterizes the Brutes and their British descendants seems to stem from, according to Geoffrey at least, a phobia of enslavement. Before Brutus’ arrival in Greece, the Brutes had been slaves to the Greeks in the aftermath of the Trojan War. This already is a far cry from the Aeneid Trojans: these were men and women who never experienced the full brunt of Greek hegemony. Brutus’ speech makes it a point that the Brutes would rather live a harsh life in the woods than to continue living in Greek serfdom. Over the course of this Greek struggle we examine what lengths the Brutes were willing to go to preserve this freedom, which would hint at their immense fear of losing it. Brutus had emerged as the dux of the Brutes, leading them to victory through a variety of what are called callido, or shrewd, stratagems by Geoffrey. The dux first leads the Brutes in a surprise attack against the Greek
forces near the fortress of Sparatinum. While the Greek forces are broken, “quos diffugientes Brutus infestat [Brutus attacks those fleeing]”(Book 1.9). Geoffrey further uses the word miserandum to describe the slaughter of Greek troops, and details how the enemy were mostly unarmed and pushed towards the river Akalon. Despite these conditions, the Brute Trojans kill almost all of them.

Even by the standards of Geoffrey’s medieval audience, what the Brutes did would have been considered the equivalent of a war-crime. This is especially the case in not only the actions taken, but the language used to describe them. Brutus’ later tactics would also further call the Brutes’ stratagem into question. Two enemy hostages are taken at the end of the battle, and after threatening one with death Brutus is able to secure a way into the enemy camp. This plan has Brutus and company sneak in at the dead of night where he uses the hostage, Ancleatus, to lure the guards out of the siege camp, where they are promptly killed. Dividing his small band into three separate companies, Brutus gives orders to not begin the attack until he is able to reach the king’s tent. The scene that occurs afterward is communicated through Geoffrey’s only metaphor in the entire reading: “laniatoribus velut oves ex improviso a lupis occupatae stupefacti fiunt [they were made stupefied as sheep torn apart by wolves]”. The Brutes’ bloodshed provides a surprisingly sympathetic image towards the Greeks, and paints Geoffrey’s protagonists in an almost incriminating light. The willingness to participate in nighttime raids, as well as forcing a betrayal of a prisoner of war does not make this portrayal any better; especially since these are the actions that would end the war, depriving the Brutes of any validation from an honorable standpoint.

With all of this said, there must be an examination of the Brutes’ position. Geoffrey often reminds the reader that the Brutes’ consistently operate under low numbers, the war in Gaul
being the primary example, where the Brutes had to fight against twelve different Gallic tribes. Even Pandrasus comments upon this, believing it impossible that the Brutes’ could have achieved this victory unless they had a leader like Brutus. The near impossibility of a successful rebellion leads to a subtle desperation in the Brutes’ actions, and prompts them to commit to such severe measures as guerilla warfare and night raids. A “campestre proelium [level battle]”, is thrown out of the question at the start of Brutus’ strategy. They occupy an area where there is only a small possibility of victory, but losing would spell enslavement. There is an overwhelming anxiety of becoming enslaved once again, and the Brutes see it as imperative that they adopt a controversial military approach.

In this, Geoffrey gives Brutus far more agency than the rest of Brute Trojans, having him dole out these orders to the rest of the troop. There is a clear separation between the Brutes and their dux: Brutus orders the attack, but the Trojans are then referred to distinctly as “Troas” or “Troes” as the battle continues. Brutus then orders the castles near Sparatinum to be garrisoned, and returns to the forest “ubi Troiana plebs praesidium illius expectabat [where the Trojan people were awaiting his guard]”. This interaction, albeit a minor one, harbors significant implications as to the relationship that was growing between Brutus and his followers. The Brutes relied on their dux for protection by his leadership. In the independent kingdom that would come about from the result of this relationship, it is important to keep in mind that out of the two groups, Geoffrey saw the king as indispensable to maintaining British autonomy. It is no coincidence that when Cadwallader died, who was the last of the Britons’ king, Geoffrey’s narrative ends and the British are irreversibly shattered.
Connection to Prophecy

Although the death of Cadwallader is not reached until the end of the narrative, prophecy in Geoffrey’s account repeatedly connects the Brutes to these later events. The importance that Geoffrey places on divine messages cannot be overstated, given that Book I is first concerned with the foretelling of Brutus’ parricide. Prophecy is also the Brutes’ vehicle to Britain, guided to the distant island by Diana after visiting her temple in the north of Greece. Later divinations made by the prophet Merlin also mention Brutus, regarding the Britons’ eventual return to prominence in Britain, which is a major focal point of the text. This restoration would be further hinted at by Cadwallader’s directive, reportedly from an angel. All of this is to say that the Brute Trojans’ role in the British history does not cease at a foundational legend, but likewise establishes the future British position within prophecy. It plays into the narrative’s cyclical nature as well: prophecies in the past predict future events, and those events would refer to the Brutes’ own journeys. Because of this, Book I occupies a unique position within the histories, as the beginning of the Brutes’ would be a reflection of the Britons waning.

The first prophecy that is encountered in Geoffrey concerns the origins of Brutus’ exile. The king of Alba Longa, Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, had gone to the vates, or soothsayers, as to the fate for his unborn grandson. The vates answered that the boy would kill his mother and father, wander in exile, “ad summum tandem culmen honoris perueniret [and finally would come to the greatest height of honor] (Book I.3)” The latter part of the prophecy refers to Brutus’ claim of Britain, while the former prediction would quickly come to fruition: his mother passes during his birth and his father through a fatal hunting accident. The prediction is deceivingly straightforward, as it resolves quickly and the narrative rapidly moves Brutus to the Greek theatre. But, as mentioned before, these events hide a much larger meaning. The tragedy turns
out to be the catalyst that pushes Brutus away from his homeland and toward the enslaved Trojans. The core of this entire narrative, then, rests on the outcome of one prophecy, with Geoffrey placing an enormous emphasis on one prediction.

It also has particular implications for the British identity, as it proves that they were once a part of the *Aeneid* branch of Trojans, at the very least symbolically, through their kings. This would resurface when the Britons meet the Romans, the offspring of the *Aeneid* Trojans and native Italians. Julius Caesar acknowledges the shared bloodline, but ultimately still claims Roman authority over the Britons via taxation to the Senate (Book 2.1). Cassivelaunus, the current British king, takes it as an attempt to rule over him and his people, despite their kinship, and argues that Caesar should have come forward with friendship rather than enslavement. This is the first indication of the complex relationship between the Britons and their Roman counterparts, and the differences in their respective rules. The Romans had prided themselves with the “*imperium sine fine* [empire without end]”, a conglomeration of various cultures under the rule of one acting authority. The Britons, on the other hand, had struggled with authority over their island and people. They endeavored to preserve this unique identity: Trojans who would not strive to conquer or be conquered, and the king who was seen as responsible for preserving this sovereignty.

The Prophecy of Diana later confirms this British independence as much as it complicates it. This augury came about after the Brutes departed from Greece and made landfall at an island in the north of Greece. After sending scouts they discover an abandoned city, which contained within it a temple dedicated to the goddess of the hunt, Diana. The scouts then suggest that Brutus offer sacrifices to the goddess, as a way of determining the lands they should inhabit. Complying, the *dux* travels to the temple, accompanied by a collection of thirteen other priests
(Geoffrey actually names one of these, Gerio, signifying the importance of the event). All enter the temple and commit to a ceremony in honor of the goddess, with the dux making a direct prayer to the altar, pleading for Diana to prophesy a home for them “qua tibi virgineis templae dicabo choris [where I will name to you temples and choirs of virgins]” (Book I.7). They then rest in the temple, whereby Brutus dreams of what appears to be the goddess herself standing over him. The apparition then orders that the dux and his followers sail to the island of Britain: “Hanc pete; namque tibi erit ill perhennis / Hic fiet natis altera Troia tuis [Sail there; for it will be a home to you perpetually / This other Troy will be made from your children]”.

Several characteristics of the Brutes’ identity are revealed as this scene unfolds, foremost in the goddess with whom they choose to associate. Diana was the Roman name for the Greek goddess Artemis, who was the patroness of the forests and woodlands, as well as virgin women. Affiliating the Brutes with a former Romano-Greco deity would have been considered strange for the Roman-Catholic dominant era Geoffrey was writing in, if not for the ambiguity of the interaction. The goddess in question was also said to have been a twin of Apollo, which also creates a mythic dichotomy between the Aeneid Trojans and the Brute Trojans. While the Aeneid Trojans are driven to Italy through various prophecies attributed to Apollo, the Brutes are, on the other hand, led by Diana. That being the case the two tribes are then set against each other by the opposing gods, at least in the terms of Geoffrey’s narrative. It also furthers the Brutes’ connection to that specific type of woodland landscape, which had already begun to be shaped in Greece. The synonymous relationship between the Britons and forests is a repeated theme throughout, and it has long-lasting impacts for the later Welsh, who would come to occupy much of the British frontier to the west. By inserting Diana as the patron of the Brutes, Geoffrey makes this forest connection through early mythic, as well as historic foundations.
The underlying message, however, about the interaction lies in what the goddess actually states as the Brutes’ destiny. Diana’s prophecy describes Britain as “insula in oceano est habitata gigantibus olim [an island on the ocean once inhabited by giants]”, but was now deserted. Unfortunately for the Brutes they discover that the island is inhabited by giants, who they promptly drive off to the mountains and caves (Book I.21). There is then a wrestling match held between another Trojan refugee Corineus, and the giant king Goemagog, with the latter ultimately winning the conflict. The former was then thrown off a cliff, which would come to be later known as “Goemagog’s Leap”. The giants themselves present a fantastical problem in this legend, as they are one of the few encounters in Book I that can be classified as definitively supernatural. Prophecy can be ambiguous in dreams and visions, such as the one Brutus had where the voice was never identified as the goddess herself. The mere presence of giants, however, grants a physical appearance that is much harder to dismiss. Although their appearance is not too far outside the Christian imagination given the existence of biblical giants, it seems strange to include them in this supposed historical narrative. Geoffrey seemed to want opposition to the Brutes’ expedition, but could not have it be by an actual determined people, as that would not only have taken away from the Britons’ native element, but also introduced the prospect of cultural fusion, such as the case was for the Aeneid Trojans. The giants were a race that was not seen as having a functional society on par with humans, meaning that there was no possibility for cohabitation. It also gives the Brutes an opportunity to overcome an obstacle in the claiming of their island, which would be important in justifying their claim to it. Nonetheless, the existence of giants also presents another dilemma in the actual wording of the prophecy, as Diana claims that although the island once had giants, it was “nunc derserta quidem, gentibus apta tuis [Now is in fact deserted, ready for your race]” (Book I.16).
The “giant” problem demonstrates the dubiousness of the prophecy: not all of what is said can be taken at face value, which becomes clear with the word *perennnis*. This is a medieval spelling of the adjective *perennis*, which comes from the Latin words *per* and *annus*, or “through” and “year”. While it could be taken literally as “forever”, the connotation could also mean “through the years”, implying that it would not be an eternal *sedes*. This was Geoffrey’s intent, as he chose an ambiguous word rather than using a more definitive adjective such as *aeturnus* to establish the permanency of the British occupation. The specific wording also comes into play when examining a former line above: *Hic fiet natis altera Troia tuis*. Brutus would go on to build this city in the likes of old Troy, even going as far to call it “*Troiam Novam* [the New Troy] (Book 1.24)”. *Nova Troia* came to be corrupted into *Trinovantum*, later becoming London in honor of King Lud. The *Aeneid* Trojans, by contrast, explicitly wanted to escape the idea of rebuilding Troy. The most poignant illustration of this comes in Book III, where Aeneas meets with other exiled Trojans in Greece and refuses to settle in their physical copy of the old city. Thematically, this was meant to represent Aeneas’ divine destiny, symbolically showing that the *Aeneid* Trojans would not follow in their predecessors' failures, but create something entirely new and distinct. In almost blatant mockery of this, Brutus would go on to establish a literal “*altera Troia* [another Troy]”. Diana references this with the allusion, as it explains what occurs in the latter part of the histories: the Britons end with either being pushed off their island or becoming an unrecognizable people: the Welsh.

This parallel defines the division between the two texts: the *Aeneid* alludes to the eventual supremacy of Rome, while the *Historia Regum Britanniae* dreads the downfall of the Britons. But the final line in Diana’s prophecy references an event which could potentially reimagine the entire narrative’s outlook: “*Hic de prole tua reges nascentur, et ipsis / tocius*
terrae subditus orbis erit [From here your offspring will beget kings / and themselves will have subdued the whole of the earth]”. This line in particular is reminiscent of the Aeneid’s own driving prophecy in Book I, where Jupiter promises that the Romans will gain empire without end. The departure from this comes with the inclusion of the line of kings and how they are vital to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Unlike the Roman version it is not the Britons themselves who will become the masters of the world, but the offspring of Brutus as the goddess singles him out with tua. This British line that begins with the dux, now rex, will be the subject for the rest of the narrative, culminating in the reign of King Arthur.
Conclusion

It is important to remember that Ambrosius is still a character within Geoffrey’s narrative, although he loses much of his previous characteristics as a result of this iteration. Ambrosius is deprived much of his role as both a warrior king who repels the Saxons, which get moved to Arthur, and his prophetic divinations, which get attributed to Merlin. In the end, however, he still contributes to the British line of kings, to whom Geoffrey is most concerned with. As previously mentioned, this line was thought to be integral to the continuation of the Britons as a whole, as they ultimately derive claim to the island from Brutus and his Trojans. It is their founding of Britain that drives these later events into motion, and it is their motivations that transfer to the Britons: the preservation of their distinct lineage, which in turn contributes to their value of independence. Geoffrey ultimately derives values from this struggle, as he consistently follows the British line from its mythic beginnings to the last king Cadwalder. But he cannot find the same values in the latter Welsh, who are meant to be the descendents of these Britons. This may seem at first callous, but in the end does not contradict Geoffrey’s former beliefs. The cleric seeks a stable British government that is both founded upon ancient authority as well as being capable of defending its current citizens, which the Welsh nor the Saxons were capable of providing. Geoffrey wishes to formulate the past into a narrative that provides a utopian future: where the Britons are able to reunite under their “once and future king”, who will be capable of restoring their former rights and privileges as the descendants of Brutus and his Trojans.
The Migrations of the Æsir Trojans

A Germanic Complication

Germania\textsuperscript{1}, a nation which spent much of its early history on the outskirts of what many would term as “the civilized world” of the Roman empire, could be treated as one of the most famous bearers of the term “barbarian”. The various tribes that attempted to migrate out of that northern land, in what is now known as the Migration Period (375-568 AD), would come to have a number of accusations leveled against them by both the Romans and their constituents. This is including and not limited to: raiding and pillaging across the border, the destruction of a variety of famous cities, and all together one of the largest reasons for the western empire’s downfall. The sack of Rome in 410 AD, the most infamous scene in Late Antiquity, was at the behest of Alaric, a Visigothic king, from one of the many tribes that had crossed the border at the river Rhine. Former provinces of the empire came to be split off and separated by other Germanic tribes, such as the Franks in Gaul, the Saxons in England, and the Vandals in North Africa. This event, to many historians, ended the ancient world and began what modern historiography terms as the middle ages, with various smaller Germanic kingdoms forming and claiming local dominance in their respective regions.

Although historians formerly saw this age in Western Europe immediately after the fall of Rome as the “Dark Ages”, many today try to have a more nuanced understanding of this period. As an offset of this, many have changed their opinion regarding these “barbarian” tribes that inhabited the former empire, terming their period as one of decentralization rather than a simple deterioration from the more glorified classical age. Many Germanic tribes consolidated

\textsuperscript{1} When referring to those who are “Germanic”, I mean to talk about the broader definition that includes the various tribes before they migrated into Roman territory, thus the Saxons and Franks are included with the other Scandinavian peoples across the northern sea, such as the Danes. Norweigians, Swedes, etc.
themselves quickly in their respective territories, creating kingdoms that were under the authority of a single monarchy. As an effect of this consolidation, every one of these German kings, at least on a cultural level, would have been in an awkward position, especially the emperor Charlemagne, who united much of Western Europe during the ninth century. Unlike the Britons, who already had a connection to the former Roman government through their provincial relationship, these newcomers had no actual background in this wider European world. For centuries they had been seen as the outsiders and the colloquial “other”, not even having a recorded history other than what classical sources had said about them, which were not very flattering to say the least. Now they found themselves ruling vast kingdoms that were once provinces in the Roman empire, over a disparate people that were unused to centralized authority. These new kings needed a banner that they could use to unite their disparate tribes, which would eventually lead them to adopting the faith of the Roman Church, which had already been introduced as the state religion in the former empire.

These tribes, it should be noted, had only converted to the Nicene Creed after the Roman Empire had fallen. Centuries earlier, in around the fourth century AD, the Germanic tribes had converted to Arianism by the missionary Ulfilas. This was another Christian doctrine that differed from the mainstream Church through their belief that Christ, the Son, was not co-eternal and therefore subordinate to God, the Father. This caused an extreme divide between the two doctrines, eventually leading to Arianism being deemed as heretical. The Germanic tribes had converted to this faith relatively early before their settlements into Christian territory, making their beliefs, although technically heretical, at least related to those of the Church. This also meant, relative to their Scandinavian neighbors, these Germanic tribes converted from their past paganism early on in their history. The bridge to cross from Arianism to the mainstream Roman
Church was much shorter for them, and they did not experience the same sudden shift in culture from their pagan beliefs as would the later Scandinavians.

Ironically, these migrated Germans had turned to the vestiges of an empire they themselves had destroyed centuries earlier, the Catholic Church’s pope deriving his authority from the former pagan Roman office of pontifex maximus. One of the more well-known events in this period was of Charlemagne crowned as Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day by Pope Leo III, and this set the precedent which many of these new kingdoms followed. Although the pope could nominally grant these kings the authority they desired, the intellectual problem of these former tribes still plagued them. Many of these people, especially those who became a part of the clergy, wanted to identify themselves on the basis of a wider European history, which they had not been able to participate in for centuries. This includes Anglo-Saxon England, who, sharing a border with those who did have access to this larger cultural tradition, were in a particular rush to identify themselves. This etymological defining moment would lead to long standing consequences for other peoples east of the Northern Sea, who were now also found themselves accused of a similar barbarity as the earlier migrated Germans. The Scandinavians\(^2\) would come to not only adopt the same practice of explaining their origins through a shared European identity, but would come to even further link themselves to the classical past themselves with genealogical connection to what most considered at this time the oldest of migrating peoples: the Trojans.

\(^2\) When speaking of the people as a whole, I will be using “Scandinavians” as a collective term, but will refer to the distinct countries by their individual names when it is best suited (these being the Danes, Swedes, Norweigians and Icelandics). When referring to the texts, no matter where or when they were written, I will refer to them by the language they were written in, that being Norse.
The Germanic Family Line

The Britons could comfort themselves with salvation through their future king, but the Saxons\(^3\) invading them possessed none such expectations. Geoffrey of Monmouth was only one of the many authors that saw the two pitted against each other in a struggle for Britain in the fifth century, in a series of invasions which were said to have begun by the legendary twin brothers Heingst and Horsa. The brothers had been invited to the island previously at the behest of Vortigern, one of the last of the British monarchs, and one who gained infamy for his friendly relations with these “barbarians”. The actual history of these invasions are, as it turns out, a much more complicated affair, but these two names in particular would become central to the Germanic culture that came to dominate the eastern half of Britain: the Saxon Heptarchy. Later Saxons kings would claim to be the descendants of this invasion in the eighth and ninth centuries. Although Vortigern had intended to bring them over only as a means of dealing with domestic threats, it appeared that the guests intended to say. The act would later come under harsh criticism, with many chroniclers labeling Vortigern as a villain and a tyrannical usurper. Despite this picture, it is still an early example of a Christian monarch attempting a peaceful reconciliation between both those under Christian and pagan faiths, an idea that would grow to be more crucial for his successors.

In a grand scheme of events, the invasion of the Heingst brothers encompassed only a small, but early, beginning of invasions across the Northern Sea, if indeed it did happen. But the critical aspect of this invasion was the contact between the pagans, embodied by the Saxons, and the Romano-British Christian culture of the later fifth century. The lasting consequences of this

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\(^3\) For the sake of clarity, I refer to those ruling under the Heptarchy collectively as the “Saxons”, although many do call them the English at this time, including Bede. My reference to them as Saxons is mainly to reinforce the wider Germanic connection between them and their later counterparts, the Scandinvians.
interaction would culminate in the later centuries, when a later generation of Saxon monarchs, recently converted to Christianity, wished to connect themselves to the historical framework of the wider Western European world. The Venerable Bede, a Benedictine Saxon monk in the eighth century, set about filling in these gaps, in his most well-known work the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. This title was meant to cover the succeeding centuries after the establishment of the Saxon kingdoms, in which the kingdom slowly adopted more Christian practices. It also gives a short history of their former invasion, including a genealogy that lays out the origins of its kingdoms like those of Kent, Mercia, and Northumbria. Bede, incorporates the twin brothers as heading the invasion, citing Heingst as the ancestor of the kings of Kent, which Geoffrey will also later do. A detail not added by Geoffrey, however, was that the brothers had an even more ancient lineage that connected them to all later English monarchs: “They were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vitta, son of Vecta, son of Woden; from whose stock the royal race of many provinces trace their descent” (Bede XV).

This genealogical connection to Woden is critical when examining the adoption of Christian religion by the pagan Saxons. As a god, Woden, more recognizable to Germanic mythology as Odin, presented a direct threat to Christianity as a pagan deity formerly worshipped by the Saxons, as well as their Scandinavian counterparts east of the North Sea. But, as the human progenitor of various “royal races” ruling under a divine guise, Odin came as a welcome opportunity to integrate the northern Germanic “barbarians” into the Christianity. This task proved to be monumental as Germanic culture had been a marginalized community for much of its history within mainland Europe. This specific northern cycle of conversion, beginning with the Saxons in the seventh century and ending in Scandinavia around the twelfth century, would be centered around the figure of Odin. One of the more basic methods adopted by
the Christians, the same which they had implemented for the Greco-Roman myths, was to transform earlier gods into human kings. This process is known as euhemerization, whereby these theologians interpret myths as true historical events that were only later falsely reported as the happenings of gods. In the Germanic world, however, this process would also become a method of introducing the Germanic past as a part of the greater European history that had already been recorded by the Church.

The Saxons began with genealogically recreating their old gods as early kings, mainly with Woden as their progenitor, Bede’s history dated to around the eighth century. The most comprehensive account, however, would be the so-called Anglian Collection from the tenth century, which traces the houses of Deira, Kent and Wessex, from Odin to a figure named Se Scaef. These writings coincided with a new challenge arising in the Saxon’s east: the Viking raids from Scandinavia. In an ironic twist of fate, the Saxons, who had come to the island as conquerors in centuries past, were now themselves placed under siege by this new pagan threat. But these peoples, unlike the Saxons, all hailed from the different tribes of northern Germany: the Danes, Norweigians, and the Swedish. They also did not have an invested interest in supplanting the English rule. Although there were still many contestations over who would dominantly rule the island, the Scandinavians eventually came to give up on their conquest. The consequences of this invasion were the first recorded contacts between these Scandinavian newcomers and the Christian faith, which they also came to adopt. The process of their conversion, much like the Saxons, would appear to have heavily featured Odin, as both a genealogical figure and a false god. Odin, interestingly enough, does not appear to have been a popular god in the Scandinavian world until these later centuries, with the Scandinavian communities each having their own god to represent their tribe. This has led many to speculate
that the Scandinavians had been influenced by these earlier Saxon genealogies into supplanting their other gods in favor of the more recognizable Odin. As Anthony Faulkes, author of *Descent from the Gods* explains, “for in Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies he is the most prominent progenitor among the gods” (Faulkes 6).

The euhemerized version of Odin must have also taken hold in this period. Following the Norse tradition from the late twelfth century, when Christianity became the dominant religion in Scandinavia, sagas were made of its three chief ruling houses, the Ynglings, the Skjöldungs, and the Hlaðajalar (royal families of the Swedes, the Danes, and the Norweigians respectively), as Faulkes has it, “tracing the line back to names of Norse gods” (Faulkes 9). The three royal genealogies were later patched together into a single familial line beginning with Odin, much like the Saxon version. The *Langfeðgatal*, an Icelandic genealogical list of Scandinavian kings, traces the descent of Odin further back eleven generations. Odin is also described as a descendant of a certain Seskef, whose name is a misunderstanding, according to Faulkes, of the Old English *Se Sceaf*, which Alexander M. Bruce identified as located in the *West-Saxon Regnal List from 494 to Reign of Aethelred*, and who was found in the *Anglian Collection* (Bruce 58).

This is also a text where we finally encounter one of the main sources of Norse literature during this period: Iceland. Settled in the earlier ninth century, Icelandic government was founded as a Commonwealth in around 930 AD, one of the only ones of its kind in the medieval world. The government ran as a parliament, with prominent leaders (*godar*) assembling as an outdoor assembly (known colloquially as the *Alþingi*, or just simply “the Thing”). There were no technical government positions, except for a Lawspeaker whose job was to recite the past laws. Through this assembly, it was one of the first Scandinavian countries to formally adopt Christianity in 1000 AD. The island, therefore, had access to Christian education earlier than
other Scandinavian countries, who appear to have adopted the new religion at a much slower pace in the coming centuries. This can also be stated as one of the reasons why much of Norse literature in this period stemmed from the island, its system of writing developed earlier as well.

Earlier contact with Christianity also gave the Icelanders access to older works of classical culture, which in turn caused a surprising development to take place in the Langfeðgatal. Unlike the Saxons, whose genealogy usually ended with Odin (or Woden) as their oldest predecessor, the list further attests that Odin was related to Priam, the famous king of Troy in the Iliad, through a daughter that had married Odin’s earliest ancestor, Memnon. In order to provide an explanation for this Trojan reference, we must first look towards contemporary Germanic literature, to trace when this ancient material could have been available. The Saxons had already been in consistent contact with Christian monasteries, having access to this material as evidenced by Bede, who references Julius Caesar’s invasions of Britain. Nennius, not long after, had already begun to write about the Briton’s Trojan ancestors as early as the ninth century. When the Scandinavians set up contact between themselves and these monasteries in the eleventh century (coinciding with the conversion), there emerged a series of Icelandic sagas that detail key events of the epic cycle. The Trójumanna Saga, an Icelandic text from around AD 1200, was based principally on Dares Phrygius’ De Exidio Trojae, and a Latin version of the Iliad by an author known as Pindarus Thebanus. There was also an Icelandic version of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s work, the Breta sogur, written around the same time.

These works reveal the spread of classical literature to the Scandinavian world. But they also are unique texts unto themselves. Although they are inspired by the original material, they are transmitted differently to Icelandic audiences. The differences introduced in these texts could be as changes in the language, such as heroes having slightly different titles, like Aeneas the
Kind as opposed to his usual heroic trait of *pius*, or Hercules the Strong. But this can stretch into other categories as well, such as in the *Trójumanna Saga*, when describing the rebuilding of Troy after the initial invasion of Hercules, the author description of the new city has it that “Priam had a great temple built in the city, and consecrated it to Thor” (Eldevik 214). Further in the text the same sentiment is expressed, Priam killed by Neoptolemus on the altar of Thor, instead of Apollo as it is in most interpretations. The idea of pagan gods or goddesses going under different guises depending on the culture was a well founded one: as early as Herodotus, who records the Egyptian gods as identical to the Greek deities, Zeus to Ra, Osiris to Dionysius, and so on. This rendition, however, although similar to that of Herodotus, is made all the more surprising when the spread of Christian is taken into account. These authors, despite writing a Chirstian dominated setting, still felt that it was necessary to choose a Germanic version when referring to past gods, as if the audience would be confused otherwise. It is a deliberate choice by the author, shown by how Apollo is referred to by name at another point in the passage. The author wanted this Priam to honor a Germanic god, which already begins to indicate the greater relationship between Trojans and Norse culture.

The *Breta sogur* has much the same idea as the *Trójumanna Saga*: an Old Norse translation of an earlier Latin work. It also features the same pagan methodology: with the Germanic gods replacing the more well known Greeco-Roman originals. One of the major differences was that this account, unlike the *Trójumanna Saga*, had come from the recent *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which was dealt with in the earlier chapter. This may contribute to this work’s inclination to add details to the former, as the *Breta sogur* attempts to inform the audience of events outside of Britain that had happened prior in the epic cycle. The inclusion of Aeneas’ journey, as well as his victory over Turnus, is proof of this need to explain certain
events. It stresses the importance that the *Aeneid* had in the European world, and how the Scandinavians essentially picked up such literature. This tendency to reference recent events is also reflected in a unique portrayal of an original passage: the taunting of Ascanius. Although this same incident takes place in the *Aeneid*, the specific taunt used by an unnamed soldier of Turnus identified himself as a Saxon, which, of course, is not found in the *Aeneid*: “You understand well that no tribe is harder than the Saxons, for because of this, that they are called, ‘stone’” (Black 9). Not only is this used for the mentioned purpose of contextualization, with the etymological association between the Latin word *saxum* (stone) and the Saxon people mentioned in the *Etymologies* of St. Isidore, but it also appears to inform us of another complexity of Germanic culture. The idea that the Saxons, a Germanic people, are associated with the apparent antagonists of the *Aeneid*, the Italians under Turnus’ banner, reveals a concept that will resurface in these later Icelandic works. A clear line is drawn between the Romans, represented by Aeneas, and the Germanic culture that will inevitably come into conflict with his descendents: the Romans.

These works encompass a period of the early Icelandic literature, and show that the stories of the Trojans' various journeys had already made its way across the Northern Sea, as early as the 1200s. Given the model set by our two former peoples, the Britons and the Romans, it should come as no surprise that the Scandinavians would also want a part of the shared European identity, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Quoting C. Scott Littleton, “The newly Christian Norse, like the Romans before them, were eager to establish ties with the ancient and prestigious civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean” (Bruce 59). This not only set a precedent for the later *Langfēðgatal*, which will link the genealogy of the Scandinavian houses to this classical past, but also for the *Prose Edda*, written by Snorri Sturluson in the early thirteenth
century. This monumental work, considered to be the greatest contribution to our modern understanding of Norse mythology, also details in its prologue a complex narrative of early Trojan migration from Thrace to Scandinavia, either inspiring the *Langfedgatað* or inspired by it, the two dating to around the same time period.

Before we can begin to examine Snorri’s text, however, we must first revisit the history of his contemporary period, as the author played a vital role in its development. Iceland had announced its conversion to Christianity in 1000 AD. Even before, this Christian education began to spread across Scandinavia (through Saxon contacts), including missionaries sent to Iceland. Enter Snorri Sturluson, born into the prominent Sturlungar clan in AD 1179, who controlled much of the island’s western territory. Because of an incident involving another clan, Snorri was offered a unique opportunity to be raised under the care of Jon Loftsson, a relative to the royal family of Norway through his maternal side. This is where many suspect he received his classical education from, leading to some even hypothesizing he knew Latin, although there is no evidence supporting this. Regardless, Snorri began to work his way up the political ladder until he became the Lawspeaker of the *Alþingi* in 121. Upon serving his term of three years, he sailed to Norway at the invitation of King Haakon Hakonarson. Integrating himself to the incumbent king, Snorri took the position of *skutilsvein*, basically a knight, and came under the service of the king, who also had political designs in Iceland that he wanted to see Snorri take up. Becoming Lawspeaker once again in 1222, Sturluson spoke of the unification of Iceland and Norway under Haadkon, a sentiment which created enmities with the other *goðar*. Eventually, Sturlson had to flee Iceland in 1237 due to conflicts with these opponents, and went back to Norway. This caused him to fall out of favour with Haakon, who no longer saw him as a reliable agent, which eventually led to his assassination on the orders of the king in 1241. Twenty years
later, in 1262, Haakon was able to formally consolidate his control, by having the *Alþingi* ratify royal Norweigian authority in Iceland.

Examining the past of the Scandinavian world up to this point in time is critical to understanding *The Prose Edda*, as it informs the context in which this work was written in. The Germans, as a whole, had been for centuries a disparate community from the rest of Europe, but the fall of Rome and the conquests of such tribes as the Saxons and Franks opened the door for this distinct culture to be introduced to the wider western world. Christian presence at this edge of the world explored the Germanic past, as their history began to be written down instead of passed orally, although stripped of its context through a Christian lense. The genealogy of these Saxon houses, recorded by Christian monks, held a vital connection between them and their later invaders: the Scandinavians, who were now also under the process of conversion. Just as the earlier Saxons had done in the wake of the early middle ages, the Scandinavians had to identify themselves on this larger European basis. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, classical learning also began to spread to this Norse world through Christian education, which, when combined with genealogical tables pre-recorded by the Saxons, inspired an even earlier connection between the oldest of Germanic history, and the epic cycle. Given the greater consolidation of power in Scandinavian countries under the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, as well as their consistent contact with the other European powers such as England, the motivation for a distinct national past is furthered still. Finally, we come to Iceland, already preeminent for its recording of royal sagas, writing genealogical tables that include within them details of classical learning, ending with Snorri Sturluson’s *Prose Edda*. The *Æsir*, the former pantheon of Germanic mythology, now became migrating Trojans.
The Prologue to the Prose Edda

Written in the early 13th century, The Prose Edda is our most comprehensive account of Germanic mythology in the modern day, and is the only medieval treatise that deals with this mythos. The consensus by scholars is that the work was written, or at the very least compiled, by Snorri Sturluson, and for the purpose, of this paper I will treat him as such, although I would like to mention that this is still contested. There is also a note to be made on the specific manuscript: there are at least seven of them, all dating to different periods. But most agree that the Codex Regius is the closest to the original, the one that I will be working with. Within this text, the Trojans are mentioned in three different capacities: the Prologue, an account of the Æsir’s migration, the Gylfaginning, literally “The Deluding of Gylfi”, where we get the actual account of Germanic mythology, and finally the Skáldskaparmál, which continues the format seen in the latter while also giving a history of kennings, along with a few examples. Out of these three, the Prologue gives the most extensive background of the connection between the Æsir and the Trojans, and also is the model for Snorri’s inclusion of the gods. The model serves both a religious and historical function, as religious justification for Snorri to include his Germanic mythological account, while not offending the Roman Church. It also, more importantly I would argue, provided a unique classical heritage that Germanic culture had lacked for so long in its history on the European scale.

One of the most compromising parts of the work was the religious tension between pagans and Christians. Although at this point in time Iceland had been fully Christianized for over two centuries, there still existed a definite awkwardness in their Icelandic conversion. Compared to the vast amount of other Christian kingdoms, Iceland had only become one very
recently, and even afterwards still honored pagan forefathers through their sagas. In order to even begin to talk about his mythic material, Snorri felt the need to unpack the religious issues that came with the discussion, covered in the *Prologue*. Faulke mentions in *Pagan Sympathy* that the chief use of the introduction was to: “avoid the criticism that his stories were dangerous to orthodoxy” (Faulkes 3). Snorri’s intent was not to simply placate his audience, however: he was also a Christian, and would have his own problems with the pagan material as well. This was why the beginning of the *Prologue* began as a very Genesis-like introduction sequence, God creating the heavens and the earth and then proceeding to Noah’s Flood. Snorri then goes over how God’s name was forgotten, how earlier mankind began to ignore Him and refused to worship Him due to their earthly greed, leaving their children to never know the true faith. The idea that mankind just simply forgot the name of God is found in other Christian sources, as Faulkes mentions, such as in Gregory’s *Moralia*: “Pagans were enchained by sin inasmuch as they lacked knowledge of their creator” (Faulkes 7). We can see Snorri’s sympathetic attitude towards these early pagans, not able to worship God through no fault of their own. After the early men began to refuse to mention God, Snorri asks his audience directly, “Who was there then to tell their children of the mysteries of God?” (Snorri 1). This is one of the rare times when Snorri singles out the reader by asking a question in the first person, indicating that this idea in particular should be examined thoroughly before placing a judgment on these early pagan. The rhetorical question frames how these earlier pagan beliefs are viewed by him: an error that came out of ignorance, not evil.

He goes on to state that God nevertheless, “granted them earthly blessings, wealth and prosperity for them to enjoy in the world”. This is another one of the important counters to the idea that pagan beliefs should be wholly disregarded: the difference between earthly wisdom and
spiritual wisdom. Like many Christian authors before him, such as Augustine, whose work, *City of God*, features the separation of the earthly and spiritual city, Snorri also believes in the same separation between spiritual and earthly wisdom. As an example, Snorri has the primitive men observe the earth’s characteristics, such as the earth being a living organism, and that there was “some controller of the heavenly bodies” (Snorri 2). But, “they did not know where his kingdom was”, and confused the nature of God with the naming of this natural phenomena, basically the divine aspects of the Æsir. As it is told in the *Prologue*, “They understood everything with earthly understanding, for they were not granted spiritual wisdom”. As much as early men could discover the Earth around them, they could not arrive at true spiritual enlightenment, or, to phrase it more biblically, revelation. Snorri views this former belief in many gods as an attempt by his forefathers “to understand the nature of existence” (Faulkes 25), which, as misguided as it was, still had merit. According to Faulkes, Snorri’s position on paganism directly corresponds to the general attitude to Christian philosophers in the twelfth century, at least by those in universities. This is also a point in the text where the “naming” of things is shown to have drastic power, a repeated idea throughout the *Edda*.

This attitude, the belief in the “noble pagan”, is what Snorri broached with the beginning of his *Prologue*. He uses biblical history to explain why and how the true belief, that is, Christianity, got lost with the passing of time, and how men began to believe in false gods. This process, although technically due to humanities’ earliest ancestors who refused to mention God, should not be used to hold those ancestor’s offspring accountable, since they had no way to worship God, without knowledge of who “He” is. The *Prologue* also applies the language of the “earthly” and “spiritual” natures to gently, but firmly, divide the beliefs of his ancestors and his current faith, as the earthly falls under that of spiritual wisdom. Again, he accomplishes this in a
way that does not oust the ancients, as they were simply using the “portion of wisdom” given to them by God, without the benefit of revelation, which would only come upon the resurrection of Christ. This is vital towards understanding the genealogical aspect of the Prologue, as it is the idea that his ancestors were not entirely wrong that leads to Snorri explaining how their, that is, the Germanic religious error, came about.

After the initial biblical introduction, Snorri describes the splitting of the world; how it has three distinct regions: Africa, Europe, and Asia. Although this was a common medieval model of the known world, Snorri also mentions that Europe has another name, that of Enea. This is in reference to Aeneas, the titular character of Vergil’s Aeneid, and Snorri’s allusion to him as a potential eponym of Europe is one not commonly found in European literature. Not only does this confirm that Snorri had an awareness of the Vergilian material, but at this point in the passage it also indicates the distinctness between the previously mentioned Aeneid Trojans, and the specific group of Trojans that Snorri will be talking about. Europe had been to Snorri, and the other Scandinavian peoples for that matter, a separate entity, that they had only recently begun to communicate with. The connection that Snorri makes with Europe and Aeneas furthers the tension of that relationship. Aeneas was supposed to be the ancestor of the Romans through his connection with the Alban kings, with the Britons having also latched onto the same line through Brutus. Although, as we saw, the Britons still saw themselves as a separate entity, ones with kingship to the Romans but not beholden to them. Thus Europe, according to Tatjana Jackson, could be said to bear the name of Aeneas, “because the European nations, the Romans and the Britons, traced themselves from him” (Jackson 123). This is unlike the Germans, who are only linked to those groups through their shared origins in Asia.
Unlike the other two continents, those of Africa and Europe, Snorri describes the eastern world as “all beauty and splendour and wealth of earthly produce, gold and jewels”. Just as this part of the world had this apparent prosperity, mankind there too was also seen as similarly endowed with great power and wisdom. Thus, near the middle of the world “was constructed that building and dwelling which has been the most splendid ever, which was called Troy” (Snorri 3). One of the most distinctive features of Snorri’s account, unlike any we have seen thus far that deal with Trojan origins, is that it directly covers a description of the actual city of Troy. Both the accounts of Vergil and Geoffrey fail to mention anything of the city’s physical appearance, mainly concerned with the actual movement of the Trojans to Italy. Even in the *Aeneid* the only time we get to see the actual city was as it burned to the ground during Book II, and after only dealing with it in second hand reference. Troy, as it is is described here, was larger than other cities due to its vast source of wealth, and as having twelve separate kingdoms that were loyal to one high king, all of whom “were superior to other people who have lived in the world in all human qualities”. The governing of the city is unique to this particular Trojan setting as well, which, unlike our other sources, gives it a system of governance. The closest we get with the other texts is a vague reference in Geoffrey of Brutus establishing similar laws and customs to his *Troia Nova*, as were the forms of the old Troy. These forms, at least in Snorri, were that of what appears to be a feudal monarchy, with an emphasis on twelve kings who were seen as subservient to one high king.

It is on one of these kings, Mennon, that Snorri’s account focuses on, married the daughter of the current high king, Priam. This, once again, creates an interesting parallel with that of Aeneas, who, according to most accounts, also married one Priam’s daughter, Creusa. Out of Mennon’s union came the Tror, who is mentioned by Snorri as a confusion with the god Thor.
This figure in particular stands out for Snorri, next to that of Odin, who will be brought up later. In the *Prologue*, Tror grows up in the court of the duke Loricus, ruler of Thrace. This sets in motion early westward movement, which is repeated for the rest of the *Prologue*. Tror would remain in Thrace, and, after abruptly murdering his apparent foster father, establishes his rule in what is later called Thurdheim. From here he appears to take precedent from his mythological counterpart, travelling through many northern countries and “defeated unaided all berserkers and giants and one of the greatest dragons and many wild animals.” He then marries the Sibyl, who is also called Sif, a prophetess from an unknown family, who is vaguely from “the northern part” of the world.

Tror is meant to embody the mythic hero archetype, an important concept for both Germanic and Classical mythology alike. He also acts as a necessary gesture in the *Prologue* to the Trojan War. Although this may not appear to be the case at first glance, with the *Prologue* not even mentioning the epic conflict, Snorri makes it apparent later in the *Prose Edda* proper. The Trojan Tror had both qualities and physical feats that resemble him to an epic hero, along with him contemporary to a similar time to when Priam was high king. Thor, the Germanic god, is later mentioned in the *Skáldskaparmál*, where the Trojan war is merged with the infamous Germanic doomsday prophecy of Ragnarok. In this section of the Snorri introduces the audience to the skaldic poetry, including that of a *kenning*, a poetical method of using an attitude or deed to represent a god or a hero. One of the many purposes of *The Prose Edda*, in its summarizing of Germanic myth, was the preservation of this specific form of writing, since the mythology was deeply ingrained within the literature. But Snorri makes clear that these poetical skills only be used for scholarly inquiry or entertainment, as Christians cannot believe in heathen gods. Essentially, Snorri relegates that his earlier ancestors simply believed these poetic devices, which
in turn were supposed to be based on true historical events, like the Trojan War was for Christians at the time. As an example, he uses the mythological account of Thor pulling up the Midgard Serpent with the head of an ox. This, according to Snorri, is a mistaken allusion to Hector, how he “killed the splendid hero Volucrontes while the great Achilles was looking on” (Snorri 65). The death of the hero was meant to lure Achilles to Hector, much the same way that Thor was seen as luring the serpent. Snorri defused a potential Christian accusation of blasphemy by repackaging the tales of these type of tale in Germanic mythology in conversation with the Trojan War. It also had the added effect of putting Thor, or Tror, in a position which relegates him to the epic cycle.

Besides this participation in the war, Tror also, as mentioned, married a prophetess of the northern world, the Sibyl. The text does not go into much detail about this arrangement, but the inclusion of the Sibyl is of note, as the prophetess held a very unique position in Christianity. Although most pagan ideas were wholly disregarded by Christian teachers, the Sibyls of Greco-Roman mythology remained as an exception to this rule. St. Isidore of Seville in the seventh century writes: “Songs by all of them [Sibyls] are published in which they are attested to have written many things most clearly even for the pagans about God and Christ” (Isidore 140). It is not too far to speculate that this attitude also transferred to Iceland in the thirteenth century, given the ease with which it was mentioned. This also allows an early reference to the prophetic vision, which, if Geoffrey and Vergil are any indication, was considered as vital to any Trojan story. The marriage, as can be expected, had progeny, forming the basis of a family tree not unlike the Alban kings, the purpose of connecting these mythic events to historical reality. It is apparent that Snorri followed this model: even the number of rulers between Tror and Odin almost matches identically the gap between Alban kings and Romulus. This brings us to Odin,
mentioned by Snorri as “an outstanding person for wisdom and all kinds of accomplishments.”

His gift for prophecy was also mentioned, alongside his wife, Frigg, and from this he learned that upon migrating to the northern part of the world his name would be honored above all kings.

The parallel drawn between Odin and Brutus should not go unnoticed: they are prophesied to journey to northern lands, one the promise of undying fame. A distinct aspect of Odin’s migration, however, is that not only will his fame be remembered but that specifically his name would be “honoured above all kings”. Considering the later developments, the fact Odin was honoured above even royalty has an added meaning. As the Æsir Trojans passed through other countries on their way north, they are honored with great glory due to their immense wealth, “so that they seemed more like gods than men” (Snorri 4). This is the first specific mention of the euhemerization of the Germanic pantheon, whereby they were mistaken for false gods as a consequence of their coming from Asia, which Snorri repeatedly refers to as an extremely rich land. The underlying religious tone shift that the migration takes is totally unlike Geoffrey’s, whose own account is focused on the national identity of the British people. The Roman account, however, does share this religious significance, although under a slightly different context. One of the main driving forces behind Aeneas’ migration is the moving of the household gods to Italy, the penates, whose worship is taken up by the Romans.

Although not sharing a religious tone, Geoffrey and Snorri share a united interest in connecting their Trojan characters to other medieval dynastic lines. This comes not as surprise for writings in the middle ages, where genealogical descent was of paramount importance, especially when concerned with royalty. Where they differ, however, is the multiplicity of those lines begotten by the Trojan progenitors. While Brutus was focused on his island of Brittania, Odin and the rest of the Æsir Trojans held greater ambitions according to Snorri. The Æsir’s first
journey is to what is called Saxony or Saxland, an ill-defined area of Germania which simply means “the land of the Saxons.” Germania itself was defined by Isiodore as bordering the Rhine in the west and the Danube river in the east (Isidore 289). Nevertheless, Odin would stay in this land for a while, and gained possession of large portions of the territory, which he left in the care of three of his sons (a common Germanic custom, partible inheritance). These sons in turn began dynastic lines that sprung multiple famous Germanic kings in turn, including Hengist in East Saxony, who, as already mentioned, invaded Britannia. Snorri also traces the ruling house of the Volsungs, who had never before connected to the euhemerized version of Odin in any earlier writings. He then proceeds further north, where he establishes, as in the Langfēdgatal, the multiple Scandinavian ruling houses of the Ynglings, the Skjöldungs, and the Hlaðajalar.

This genealogy is utterly unlike any we have seen thus far, as both the Aeneid and the Historia focus on fixed destinations for their own royal progeny: Italy and Britannia respectively. Although as Odin establishes a capital at Sigtunir, his legacy, as far as this genealogy goes, stretches the entirety of what would become the Germanic territory. Snorri had a precise reason for arranging it so: Odin and the Æsir had a pairing with Aeneas and his Trojans: the transmission of Trojan ancestry to a native people through a dynastic line of kings. Unlike Aeneas’ conquest of Italy, however, which had him fight in an armed conflict with the native population, Odin’s travels appeared to be under peaceful circumstances, as the men established in these various regions welcomed the newcomers. The motion as well is different, with the Æsir only briefly stopping in many of these territories, only to move further along north. The movement of the Æsir Trojans, I think, should be thought more of as a mass migration, ironically in a similar fashion to what their descendents would do in the later third century, although they came to settle Roman territory violently. The peacefulness of this migration was ascribed to all
the native men believing that wherever the travelers went “there was then prosperity and good there”. This would add to the false belief that these men were in fact not men, but gods.

The establishing of the various genealogical Germanic lines by the Æsir Trojans is a complete reversal of the accusation leveled against these tribes for centuries: that they were an “other” to European culture, foreign. Norse literature up until this point had received and recorded classical myth and history through its sagas, but never attempted to connect themselves to these myths at a deeper level, other than the translation of this material. Now, Snorri not only connected Germanic mythology to classical history, but at a genealogical level gave every Germanic tribe the same prestige that Roman culture had, despite the latter discounting them as too “barbarian” or foreign. This background drastically shifts the perception of Germanic culture, before as inferior compared to the foundations of the Roman past. Rather than attempting to imitate Roman culture as many of his Germanic predecessors had: the Franks simulating the title of Holy Roman Emperor or the Saxons gaining the Roman Church’s authority for monarchy, Snorri strengthens the very concept of Germanic identity itself through use of an origin in the classical past that is equivalent to the Roman’s own histories.

This was not the end of the Æsir’s migration, however. After arriving in Sweden, they were introduced to a king named Gylfi, who freely offered the Trojans as much of his realm as they wished for. Odin, finding the country favorable, selected it as the site for a new city. He appointed twelve chiefs (probably the other Æsir), and “established all the legal system as it had been in Troy ”. These lines are almost identical to how Brutus founded Nova Troia, the proto London in Geoffrey, although again the appointment of the twelve chieftains is only found in the Icelandic source. It is important for Snorri to continue this idea of Trojans settling in a new fixed capital, although, as previously hinted at, this was not the main purpose of the migration. Indeed,
we are immediately taken from this static location back on a final journey to Norway, where he founded a line that would eventually lead to the Norweigin line. This final departure, only to inevitably return back to Sweden, symbolizes the true purpose of the Æsir’s migrations: the spreading of Trojan ancestry to each Germanic tribe before the Migration Period, giving them access to the same Trojan status as their Roman and British counterparts. This has a genealogical purpose of adding prestige to the other Scandinvian, giving them access to the same amount of legitimacy as was enjoyed by other European powers. But it also works at a deeper literary level as well: Germanic language, literally the language of the “barbarians”, placed at a lower rung than, at least intellectually, than that of Latin or ancient Greek. Now, as the Prologue ends, the men of Asia (the Æsir) spread their language throughout their territories, “so that their language, that of the men of Asia, became the mother tongue over all these lands” (Snorri 5). This idea appears to be distinct for Icelandic literature, as the focus of the origins of language played an important role in this particular culture. The Skáldskaparmál’s purpose, and thus part of the Prose Edda’s, was the preservation of this particular poetical language, especially in its devices. Now this literature, deemed before as unworthy of remembrance by Roman perspective, was now preserved as an equivalent to the greatest of classical works.
Conclusion

The preservation of Norse mythology would not have been possible without Snorri’s Prologue, which establishes the claim that it had just as much value as any work in classical literature. The basis for this claim could not have happened in previous centuries when Germanic culture, Post Migration Period, was attempting to claim a form of legitimacy for centralized government, in order to better protect the territories that they were now settled in. This in turn led to unification of disparate tribes within Visigothic Spain, Frankish Gaul, and Saxon England. Eventually each one of these tribes turned to, in their own time, the Roman Catholic Church to derive their authority for monarchy, which the Church gave in return for conversion. The same process would repeat itself at the end of the Viking Age; Scandinavian countries also converted to Christian doctrine. But unlike the previous Germanic conversions during the Migration, happening during a period of chaos in the wake of the collapse of the Western Empire, as well as to tribes that had already converted to Aranism in previous centuries, this Northern Germanic conversion was distinct. The Scandinavians had earlier contact with the Saxons during their invasions in the eighth to ninth centuries, and thus were aware of a classical past at an earlier time than their other Germanic kinsmen. Thus upon their conversion, it is plausible they had more of a desire to preserve their own distinct heritage, due to their previously held pagan belief, which, as compared to the earlier Germanic cultures, they had held far more recently. This was especially the case in Iceland, where many sagas produced the history of both Germanic and classical history. It is not surprising that this led to the development of a Germanic past that stretched as far back as to the events of that famous war: the Trojan War. Now the past barbarians were no longer the “other” of European culture, as defined by the Romans in the Classical Period: they were the descendants of Trojans, just the same as Rome.
Conclusion: The Decisive Destruction

Each one of these Trojan claims, as demonstrated, were a unique adaptation of the ancient people that would apply to the circumstances of a culture’s own history. The separate bands of exiled Trojans established the foundations of these three cultures, the Romans, Britons, and Germans. The Trojan companies that are presented each took a distinctive identity unto themselves, until they became unrecognizable to one another. This in of itself had the potential for conflict, and, most likely to the authors of these disparate works, would be seen as the reason why these later peoples all came to clash at one point or another. The Romans were in conflict with both the Britons and the Germans at the height of their empire, and later the Saxons, a Germanic race, had been the ones to conquer the Briton, pushing them westward. These cultures had their own historical reasons for warring against the others, whether it was political, cultural, or economic reasons. But as each came to the belief that they needed a foundational legend, one that stretched far beyond their own, all came to adopt the Trojans as their progenitors. As we saw, the narratives that came about as a response to this adoption had their conflicts as well, with the author’s conflicting motivations, Vergil, Roman imperialism, Geoffrey, Briton independence, and Sturluson, Germanic literature. The differences propagated by these cultures are what caused the Trojans to appear differently in these distinct narratives.

Despite all of these disagreements, however, there was one concept that each of these people, if brought together, would unanimously agree on: Troy was dead. The very same people that had, to their collective minds, begotten their own race, were long extinct, with no trace, besides blood to be found in any of them. There was no longer a Trojan state, its complete destruction in the *Iliad* was irreversible. The texts of each later culture: the Romans, Britons, and Germans, in fact each present an attempt at reconstructing the Trojans as a race, only for the
inevitable conclusion to come, repeatedly. Vergil, in Book III of the *Aeneid*, presents Helenus' recreation of the city, only to have Aeneas reject it for his own destiny in Italy. In Geoffrey’s *Historia*, Brutus does recreate an *altera Troia*, but makes clear that his people were not Trojans themselves, and the city’s name too is meant to set the Britons up for their eventual fall to the Saxon invasion. Odin’s own Troy-like city, Sigtunir, was to be eclipsed by the grandeur of his own travels, never to be made relevant again by Snorri’s *Prose Edda*. The message in each one is clear: while the cultures traced their lineage back to the Trojans, they understood that they were not the same as those who had appeared in the *Iliad*. That city, the centerpiece of the epic world, would never come again.

And yet, it is precisely due to its destruction that Troy had the possibility to be connected to all of these later cultures. The Achaeans already had an established people that came after them. All of those heroes would be related to the later city-states that they hailed from: Menelaus to Sparta, Achilles to the Molossians, Nestor to Pylos. These heroes, because of their conquest and later return, were now stuck on mainland Greece: there was no possibility of their movement after the epic cycle. But Troy’s destruction, while shown to have negative repercussions for them initially, is exactly what freed the Trojans to become whatever a newer people wanted them to be. The Trojans could now be Romans, Britons, or Germans simultaneously and those cultures would be free to adapt them however it fit best for them. The utter raze of Troy, while it was the most dangerous event for its people, also presented its greatest chance of survival: a journey to a new land without the restrictions of their past failures. The image of a Trojan, as each of these later cultures presented it, was one of resilience and adaptability, a people fully committed to, after facing annihilation, the willingness to move forward.
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