

Recent Work on the Origins of the Arthurian Legend: A Comment

o. j. padel

I have been asked to comment on four of the articles appearing in the present number of *Arthuriana*. It is unusual for articles to be reviewed simultaneously with their appearance; yet Arthurian studies are so much a matter of opinion, with the same material being treated many times over with different interpretations, that it may nevertheless be helpful for readers to have a second opinion upon four stimulating articles.

For many people the question 'Did Arthur exist?' is the central issue concerning the legend. The debate, or something similar to it, existed already in the 1120s, before the appearance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*, and thus has continued for almost eight centuries at least. It can be claimed, indeed doubtless has been claimed, that this debate is intrinsic to the figure himself: Arthur is one of whom that very question is a key attribute. It is open to doubt whether anyone truly takes a dispassionate view of this matter: those who deny his existence, and even more those who proclaim it, are all open to the charge of arriving at their conclusions first, and then finding arguments to justify them.

Second only to that question is the one of Geoffrey of Monmouth's role in the development of the legend. This has several aspects. One is the problem of his sources: on the one hand, his claimed source, the 'liber vetustissimus' in a Brittonic language; and, on the other, the known works that he drew upon, and his treatment of them. Another aspect is Geoffrey's purpose in writing his work, and its overall structure: is it primarily about Arthur, although he occupies only the final portion of the work; or was it intended as an overall history of Britain, with Arthur merely its high point? A third aspect is the reception and effect of Geoffrey's work. His *History* was immediately, and widely, popular on the Continent, as well as among the Anglo-Normans for whom it was purportedly written. Indeed, our earliest knowledge of the work is the copy that Henry of Huntingdon was astounded to find ('stupens inveni') at Bec, in Normandy.¹ Yet there are hints that interest in Arthur had been growing on the Continent *before* Geoffrey's *History* appeared. To what extent did Geoffrey create the Continental Arthurian industry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, or did he (by luck or judgement) produce a work which satisfied an already-growing

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need? And (an even harder question) to what extent was the later industry, particular that of the vernacular romances, influenced primarily by his work, or was there also a parallel, unwritten, tradition of Arthur, which first becomes clearly visible in the romances of Chrétien?²

What is certain is Geoffrey's subtlety and the complexity of his work: the gravest error that we students can commit is to underestimate it. The more one learns about his work, the more one feels that Geoffrey was always one step ahead of his twentieth-century readers: anything that we may establish, by dint of hard work and detailed scholarship, is open to revision by some future discovery. All four of the articles under consideration are, for one reason or another, closely concerned with Geoffrey and the material that he drew upon.

Two of the articles, 'From Alexander of Macedonia to Arthur of Britain' (Furtado) and 'The Origins of the Arthurian Legend' (Ashe), are concerned with the origins of Geoffrey's Arthur himself, and a third, 'Some Notes on Merlin' (Littleton and Malcor), is similarly concerned with his Merlin. The fourth, 'The Literary Context of Geoffrey of Monmouth' (Howlett), applies techniques which its author has used fruitfully in studying other texts to the examination of Geoffrey's famous preface, which contains his equally-famous claim concerning his source.

Furtado's article suggests that Geoffrey's portrayal of Arthur was based on the figure of Alexander, which by Geoffrey's time was already the centre of a body of Latin legend of growing popularity. The suggestion is very reasonable; and it is not new. Tatlock, in 1950, judiciously reviewed the hypothesis, which goes back at least to 1916, in his vigorously-written and wide-ranging survey of Geoffrey's *History*.³ His conclusion, 'it is hard to doubt that Geoffrey held in mind the silhouette of Alexander's career in sketching the silhouette of Arthur's', is unlikely to be challenged. It gains much further support from the fact, not mentioned here by Furtado, that texts of Geoffrey's *History* circulated along with texts of Alexander-material. Sixteen manuscripts of Geoffrey's *History* (some of them as early as the mid-twelfth century) also contain copies of the *Gesta Alexandri*; and other manuscripts contain additional Alexander-material.⁴ Another text which, for obvious reasons, is often found with Geoffrey's *History* is a Latin translation of Dares Phrygius's *Historia de excidio Troiae*, and six manuscripts contain both these works alongside Geoffrey's.⁵ The three texts complemented one another.

In its method, Furtado's discussion could usefully be more rigorous. Considerable work has been done on Geoffrey's sources and reading. Rather than stating broadly that Geoffrey probably knew Classical authors, specific reference could be made to Geoffrey's knowledge of Virgil and Statius.⁶ Much valuable work has also been done, particularly by Wright, on other texts known

to Geoffrey.⁷ So, on the one hand, Furtado's speculation is amply justified. But, on the other hand, his implication that Geoffrey could have had direct knowledge of the Greek authors Plutarch and Diodorus is not acceptable. It is good to have our attention redirected to Geoffrey's use of the Alexander-legend, and the topic deserves further study, building upon Tatlock's judicious remarks and Cary's study of that legend;⁸ but such study needs to be grounded upon the solid scholarly foundations that are already available. If possible, it would be desirable to establish precisely which Alexander-texts Geoffrey had in mind.

As Tatlock made clear, and Furtado endorses, Geoffrey's use of the Alexander-legend does not mean that it was a primary source for his figure of Arthur: merely that his portrayal of Arthur was coloured by the career of the Greek hero. Geoffrey obtained the figure of Arthur itself from Brittonic legend (Welsh, Cornish or Breton), and there is ample evidence of the importance of Arthur in legend among those peoples before Geoffrey's time.⁹ Geoffrey's use of Brittonic sources, particularly Welsh vernacular ones, has still not been fully investigated, partly because of the difficulty of using and dating those sources: important editions have only recently become available, or in some cases have yet to appear.¹⁰

The second article to be considered is concerned with the origins of Geoffrey of Monmouth's figure of Merlin. Whether or not Arthur was of international interest before Geoffrey's time, in Merlin's case there is no doubt but that it was Geoffrey who launched him on his international literary career. In view of this, and of Geoffrey's known use of Brittonic legends and literary material, it is strange to claim that 'there is no general agreement among Arthurian scholars' as to the source of Merlin. Myrddin was a prophet cited in Welsh poetry as early as the tenth century, and other poetic prophecies attributed to him have much in common with those of Geoffrey's Merlin.¹¹ So there is no need to look further afield for an origin for this figure. Even stranger is the lack of references, in this article, to the detailed and thorough work done by Jarman on the Celtic origins of the Merlin-legend. These works have been available, in English, for many years, and any discussion of the topic is starting from the wrong place if it does not first take them into account.¹² A reference to the secondary discussion by Markale is not sufficient; and anyway, if Markale actually says what Littleton and Malcor claim that he says, then he appears to have misunderstood Jarman's argument.¹³

There is scope for disagreement, or for further discussion, on some points within Jarman's scheme; but no plausible alternative has yet been proposed. One area of doubt is whether Myrddin actually existed or not. The idea most widely accepted is that he was invented from the Welsh place-name Caerfyrdin (Carmarthen). This name could be understood by Welsh-speakers as 'fort of [a

man] Myrddin', although the second part of the name is actually derived from the Romano-British place-name *Moridunum*, 'sea-fort'. This derivation was no longer recognised when the prefix *Caer-* was added, opening the way for the invention of 'Myrddin'. However, some scholars, notably Count Tolstoy, have continued to propose that Myrddin was a historical early Welsh poet.¹⁴

Another fruitful line of inquiry concerns the relationship between Geoffrey's 'Prophecies of Merlin' and the similar Welsh prophetic tradition. In addition to one mentioned in the tenth-century *Armes Prydein*, 'The Prophecy of Britain', there are other Welsh prophecies attributed to Myrddin; since these occur (as does *Armes Prydein* itself) only in manuscripts later than Geoffrey's time, there is the possibility of cross-fertilization, in both directions, between Geoffrey's *History* and the older Welsh vernacular tradition. This richly deserves further study.¹⁵ There is also the tantalizing question of a Brittonic (Welsh, Cornish or Breton) original for Geoffrey's Prophecies. The 'Prophecy of Merlin with Commentary' by John of Cornwall (mid-twelfth century) appears to be independent of Geoffrey's Prophecies, at least in part, and his commentary cites some Brittonic phrases (Cornish or Breton) which could represent scraps of an original text, similar to that which Geoffrey claims to have used.¹⁶ In view of recent suggestions that Welsh poetry was written down much earlier than had previously been thought likely, the possibility of a written source (or, better, inspiration) for Geoffrey's Prophecies of Merlin becomes more plausible.¹⁷ This, in turn, places in a new light his claim about the 'very ancient book' in a Brittonic language, lent to him by Walter the Archdeacon, which he claimed as his source for the *History*, though that claim still cannot be true in a literal sense.

One final problem within Jarman's scheme for the development of Merlin remains the discrepancy between Geoffrey's two portrayals of him – that in his *History*, and that found (harmonized, yet quite different) in his *Life of Merlin*, completed about fifteen years after the *History*.¹⁸ The discrepancy is curious, for each figure is, in a different way, close to the Welsh Myrddin. The latter was both a prophet and a Celtic wild man, living in the Caledonian forest, conversing with Taliesin, and associated with various other figures of early north-British history and legend. The Merlin of Geoffrey's *History* is a prophet, like Myrddin, but not a wild man of the forest; but the Merlin of the *Life* is a Celtic wild man, sharing many details of his story with the Welsh Myrddin. Since it would have been difficult for Geoffrey to have been ignorant of these other attributes of the Welsh Myrddin when writing his *History*, it remains an enigma why he failed to make use of them; but also why, having done so, he did later use them in writing the *Life*. Howlett's article on 'The Literary Context of Geoffrey of Monmouth' offers a possibility of an explanation, when he raises the question

of Geoffrey's reaction to Geoffrey Gaimar's outrageous claim to have used the very same ancient book as Geoffrey himself claimed to have used. Could Geoffrey's decision to write another account of Merlin, following the existing Welsh legend much more closely, have been an indirect result of this claim by Geoffrey Gaimar?

Howlett's article is of particular interest for a number of other reasons. It provides a new method of judging the various dedications found in different manuscripts of Geoffrey's *History*.¹⁹ The detailed study given here makes it likely that the original dedication was the single one to Earl Robert of Gloucester (which is also the commonest), since that is the one which best shows the complex word-patterns analysed by Howlett. It also enables Howlett to make some interesting suggestions about how the various dedications of the *History* arose.

Howlett also examines the 'Nennian' preface to some versions of the *Historia Brittonum*, the earliest Arthurian text. This preface was compellingly shown by Dumville twenty years ago to be spurious, forged in the mid-eleventh century.²⁰ It alone is responsible for the attribution of that work to 'Nennius', and its spurious nature is the reason why scholars now refer to the text by the less convenient title of *Historia Brittonum* instead. Howlett endorses Dumville's date for this preface, but it would be welcome to know whether his study could add any dimensions, either to its dating, or to the circumstances of its composition. (The dating of this forged preface does not, of course, affect Dumville's dating of the *Historia Brittonum* itself to 829–30.)

In addition, Howlett's article provides a possible explanation for another major problem within Galfridian studies. This is the fact that Henry of Huntingdon was apparently ignorant of Geoffrey's work until he was shown a copy of it by Robert of Torigni at Bec early in 1139. Henry and Geoffrey lived within the same diocese in England, and they moved in the same circles; they even addressed the same person, Alexander Bishop of Lincoln (1123–48), in their respective works; and from at least as early as 1129 Geoffrey had been locally known as 'Geoffrey Arthur' (not as 'Geoffrey of Monmouth', which as far as I know was used only by himself), presumably because of his notorious interest in the figure of Arthur.²¹ How, then, could Henry have been ignorant that Geoffrey was at work on his *History*, or (once it was completed) how could he not have heard of it before being shown a copy at Bec? This problem has been raised, though not solved, by Wright in his recent, very useful, edition and discussion of Henry's letter.²² Howlett here suggests a speculative reason as to how it could have arisen: the Bec copy was left there by Robert Earl of Gloucester, the first dedicatee of Geoffrey's *History*, and it may be that the work was first circulated privately to him and a few others. This is possible; but

even so Henry's apparent ignorance remains something of a problem, especially if Geoffrey Gaimar had already used the *History* in 1136-37.

The final article to be considered here is Ashe's 'The Origins of the Arthurian Legend', a masterly survey by one of the world's leading Arthurian writers, with many books and articles to his credit. As one would expect, there are many valuable nuggets embedded within it. As the most substantial and wide-ranging of the four pieces, and also the one whose approach is closest to my own, it will receive the most detailed discussion here. Its main argument repeats, in matured form, the proposal of an earlier article of his which suggests that one, and perhaps the main, origin of Geoffrey's Arthur is the man whom we should call Riotamus, a fifth-century battle-leader of the Britons on the Continent.²³ Among the valuable observations is the fact that there can be no simple answer to the question, 'Did Arthur exist?', since either reply is liable to misinterpretation by the ordinary inquirer (though it is not clear to me why the answer 'No' cannot be maintained, apparently because the romancers themselves would not have accepted it); also the reminder that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* is much more than an account of King Arthur, even though that is what most modern readers turn to it for; the observation that recent books claiming to be about the 'historical' Arthur are mutually contradictory, or worse; and the excellent methodological point that the quest for the source of the legend is essentially a literary rather than a historical problem, a question of how the legend originated and developed in a period for which there are, in Britain, almost no historical sources.

In writing the article, Ashe was not able to take into account an article of mine on the legend, since that appeared too recently.²⁴ I am pleased to find myself in his company concerning both the nature of the problem and the approach required. However, my own opinion is that his enthusiasm for Riotamus carries Ashe too far. In the first place, it is incorrect to claim that *Riotamus* was a title, and not a proper name; and it is special pleading to suggest that Riotamus was also called Arthur. It was to be hoped that the idea of fifth-century names as titles had been conclusively dismissed by Jackson in his thorough discussion of the name *Vortigern*, claimed by Ashe as a parallel for his theory of *Riotamus*.²⁵ Like *Vortigern*, *Riotamus* belongs with a variety of other personal names containing the same elements. *Rigo-hene* and *Cuno-tami* are two from about the same period as Riotamus²⁶; others of later date include *Riadaf*, *Cawrdaf*, *Gwyndaf* and others, all containing Welsh *-daf* from *-tamos*, and *Riguallaun*, *Rigeneu* and others containing Welsh *Rhi-* from *Rigo*.²⁷ *Riotamus* was a personal name and nothing else; it follows that the person bearing it was called that, and not Arthur; and there is no reason at all to suppose that he did have another name.

All this does not affect Ashe's main thesis, of course, and it is a pity that he was tempted to spoil it with this unacceptable and unnecessary embellishment. But even the main thesis is open to question, in the form in which it is given. On the one hand, the suggestion that Riotamus's military expedition to the Continent could somehow have been the inspiration for the Continental campaigns which Geoffrey ascribes to Arthur is very plausible, and Ashe has performed a great service in drawing this to our attention and pointing out the similarities between Riotamus's actual campaign and Arthur's fictional one. But it is a long way from this to supposing that Riotamus was the actual prototype of the legendary Arthur. As already mentioned, Arthur was famed in Brittonic folklore and local legend before Geoffrey wrote, and was the inspiration for his figure. My article has (following the example of Jackson and Thomas Jones) collected and discussed those references to Arthur in Brittonic legend which can certainly or probably be dated earlier than Geoffrey, and which therefore give us a close idea of the nature of that legend before it was altered by his *History*.²⁸

What this evidence from the twelfth century and earlier indicates is that Arthur was a pan-Brittonic figure of folklore, a hero of local wonder-tales and toponymic legends, very similar to the figure of Fionn in Irish and Scottish legend (whom nobody would seriously suggest to have been a historic figure). The two different mentions of him in the earliest text, the *Historia Brittonum*, portray him both as a battle-leader against the English and as the protagonist of such local legends. Instead of supposing, as has generally been done, that this shows us the historical Arthur already becoming a figure of legend, it is equally likely that it shows the legendary Arthur already being historicized, a process which also happened to Fionn and to other figures of legend in Ireland. (The parallel between Arthur and Fionn has often been drawn; but it has not generally been observed that the similarities extend to the historicizing process.)

What these pre-Geoffrey sources do not show is a figure who has anything in common with Riotamus. In general the early Welsh sources do not show Arthur as a battle-campaigner, but rather as a leader against giants, monsters and other supernatural opponents. Almost the only Welsh text which could be claimed to show anything in common between Arthur and Riotamus is the prose tale *Culhwch and Olwen*, where, among the exaggerated claims made for Arthur, there is a passing mention of campaigns that he had conducted in India, Europe (including Scandinavia, Corsica and Greece) and Africa.²⁹ The difficulty lies in knowing how far this text is independent of Geoffrey's *History*. This is a problem which is still to be tackled by Welsh scholars; since a modern edition of the tale appeared only in 1988 (English version in 1992), the study of its relationship with Geoffrey's *History* may now progress on a sounder basis

than was previously possible. The editors suggest that the tale 'in a form approaching that in which we now have it' was redacted in 'the last decades of the eleventh century, perhaps the turn of the century, c.1100'; however, they also point to various instances where the tale seems to show influence from the Galfridian tradition.³⁰ The Continental campaigns may be one such example. Even if they are earlier than Geoffrey, they could very well be, not the primary attribute of the original Arthur, as Ashe's theory would imply, but a natural development of other heroic conquests in exotic locations attributed to Arthur in the Welsh tradition, such as his fight against dog-headed monsters in Edinburgh, and his overseas expedition to a fairy-fortress to rescue a prisoner and acquire a magic cauldron.³¹ At any rate the main point is that the Arthur portrayed in pre-Galfridian Brittonic sources is not a suitable intermediate figure between the historical Riotamus and Geoffrey's Arthur. It is much more likely that Geoffrey took the legendary Brittonic Arthur and, as part of the historicizing process, added the Continental campaigns, drawn partly from those of Riotamus, to his achievements. This would still acknowledge the importance of Riotamus in the make-up of Geoffrey's Arthur (similar to that of the legendary Alexander as well, as Furtado has emphasised), but not as the original of the pre-Galfridian Arthur, since the two have so little in common, even their names being different.

I wish to close by examining three minor arguments deployed by Ashe in favour of his historical Arthur, or against those who deny the necessity of such a person. The first is the argument that the 'Return of the King' motif is found attached only to historical persons, and therefore its attachment to Arthur, from before Geoffrey wrote,³² argues for his historicity. The refutation of this argument is provided by Ashe himself, when he states that the earliest occurrence of the motif is one described by Plutarch. It is located in an island off Britain, and Plutarch says that the god Cronos (presumably a Celtic god, interpreted as the Greek Cronos by Plutarch or his supposed informant Demetrius) lies there in bonds of sleep, guarded by the giant Briareus and surrounded by many other spirits and servants.³³ Although not quite the 'Return of the King', it is certainly close enough to form a useful parallel, especially as it is located in the British Isles. Since this god is unlikely to have been a historical person, it is clearly untrue that the motif is only attached to real people, though that has indeed been its commonest use in medieval and modern times. But another unreal person to whom it has been attached is the Irish Fionn. There is a strong hint that this had occurred by the twelfth century, though unequivocal evidence of it appears only in the nineteenth.³⁴ It is no defence to argue that it was borrowed from Arthur to Fionn, for this still represents an attachment to an

unreal person, and it could similarly have been borrowed from another real person to be attached to an unreal Arthur.

Second is Ashe's useful summary of three places in south-west England with Arthurian associations where archaeological investigations have been carried out. In all three cases, the excavations have produced evidence for fifth- or sixth-century activity; but it is rather misleading to suggest that this represents a 'three-out-of-three' score. The associations with Arthur are of very different kinds, all are literary rather than folkloric (and one is as late as the sixteenth century), and, most important, there are many other places associated with Arthur, from the ninth century on, which have not yet shown any such Dark-Age dimensions. I am thinking of places such as 'Arthur's seat', a hill in the Brecon Beacons known by that name as early as c.1190, 'Arthur's bower', recorded in Carlisle in the 1170s, 'Arthur's oven' in both Devon or Cornwall and Scotland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and many others. Most of these have a much better claim to represent genuine local traditions than the three excavated sites. The argument in favour of a historical Arthur is achieved by unconsciously selecting the more historically-orientated pieces of evidence, and examining those, at the expense of other, less suitable, items of evidence. What the excavations may show is that local folklore concerning Dark-Age activity survived, perhaps at all three sites; this could easily then have attracted the name of Arthur, the best-known Dark-Age figure, to the sites. (The association of Arthur with Tintagel and Glastonbury is likely to be no older than the twelfth century; and that with South Cadbury goes back no further than the sixteenth.)³⁵

Finally there is Ashe's closing threat, that if we do not accept Riotamus, we cannot have a historical Arthur at all. I would like tentatively to dispute this too. Although he cannot be disproved, I do not think that a historical Arthur is necessary to explain the literary industry; Ashe's challenge to explain the legendary phenomenon can be met by considering the widespread Brittonic legend, and the international currency which it was given by Geoffrey of Monmouth (and possibly a little before his time, consequent upon the Norman conquest of England). However, the strongest argument in favour of a historical Arthur may be his name. This is agreed to be derived from the name *Artorius*, which was in well-attested use in the Roman empire in the early centuries of our era. Although Latin-derived personal names were in common use among the Brittonic-speaking peoples in the centuries following the Roman occupation of Britain (and presumably earlier, during that occupation, though there is less evidence for that period), yet it seems strange that such a native-looking phenomenon as the widespread legend that I am invoking should have had at

its centre a person with a Latin-derived, non-native, name. Not impossible; but suggestive. If this is taken to show that we *should* seek a historical prototype, then logically it must be one bearing that name. There is one, Lucius Artorius Castus, a Roman centurion of the late second or the third century who, like Riotamus, led an army from Britain to the Continent.³⁶ Little more is known of him. He is subject to the same objections as Riotamus, in that he serves as a prototype more for Geoffrey's Arthur than for the earlier Brittonic Arthur; and I put him forward here, not as a cogent suggestion, but merely as a better candidate than Riotamus (particularly because of having the right name), if the latter is claimed as the original of the legendary Brittonic Arthur. However, whether or not this is accepted, it would not invalidate Ashe's point that the campaign of Riotamus may have influenced that of Geoffrey's Arthur.

university of cambridge

O.J. Padel (ojp10@cam.ac.uk) is Lecturer in Celtic Languages and Literature in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Cornish Place-Name Elements* (1985) and *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (1988) and editor of *Nomina. Journal of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland*.

notes

- 1 Neil Wright, 'The Place of Henry of Huntingdon's *Epistola ad Warinum* in the Text-History of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*: a Preliminary Investigation', in *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Essays by Members of Girton College, Cambridge, in Memory of Ruth Morgan*, edited by Gillian Jondorf and D. N. Dumville (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 71–113. See also, more generally, Julia C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, IV, Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991).
- 2 Compare Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth. Dissemination and Reception*, pp. 212–13.
- 3 J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley, 1950), pp. 311–20.
- 4 Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth. Dissemination and Reception*, pp. 22–29 and 219–21.
- 5 Crick, *Dissemination and Reception*, pp. 37–39.
- 6 E. G. H. Tausendfreund, *Vergil und Gottfried von Monmouth* (Halle a. S., 1913); Edmond Faral, *La Légende arthurienne. Études et documents*, 3 vols (Paris, 1929), II, 134.
- 7 Neil Wright, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas', *Arthurian Literature*, 2 (1982), 1–40; 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas Revisited', *Arthurian Literature*, 4 (1984), 155–63; and 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Bede', *Arthurian Literature*, 6 (1986), 27–59.
- 8 George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, edited by David J. A. Ross (Cambridge, 1956).

- 9 O. J. Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 8 (Winter, 1984), 1–28; and 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (Summer, 1994), 1–31.
- 10 Note particularly Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and others (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33–71; *Culhwch and Olwen. An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1992); and Marged Haycock, "'Preiddeu Annwn" and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983–84), 52–78. Much important material, particularly concerning Myrddin, is available only in Welsh editions: *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin, gyda Rhagymadrodd, Nodiadau Testunol a Geirfa* ['The Black Book of Carmarthen, with introduction, textual notes and glossary'], edited by A. O. H. Jarman (Cardiff, 1982).
- 11 *Armes Prydein. The Prophecy of Britain, from the Book of Taliesin*, edited by Ifor Williams, English version by Rachel Bromwich (Dublin, 1972); see line 17 and p. 25. See also David N. Dumville, 'Brittany and "Armes Prydein Vawr"', *Études celtiques*, 20 (1983), 145–59. It has often been observed that there would have been good reason for Geoffrey to change the *-dd-* to *-l-* in Latinizing the name *Myrddin*.
- 12 A. O. H. Jarman, 'The Welsh Myrddin Poems', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, edited by Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford, 1959), pp. 20–30; *The Legend of Merlin* (Cardiff, 1970); 'Early Stages in the Development of the Myrddin Legend', in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd. Studies in Old Welsh Poetry, Cyflwynedig i Syr Idris Foster*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and R. Brinley Jones (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 326–49; 'The Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy', in *Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Bromwich and others, pp. 117–45.
- 13 Merlin's 'prototype' was not Ambrosius, but the Welsh prophet Myrddin, to whom Geoffrey attached the ninth-century legend of Ambrosius found in the *Historia Brittonum*. There may be fuller reference to Jarman's discussion in their book to which Littleton and Malcor refer; but it is Jarman's own detailed arguments which need to be cited here if an alternative is to be considered.
- 14 Nikolai Tolstoy, "'Merlinus Redivivus"', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983–84), 11–29; *The Quest for Merlin* (London, 1985). See also Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads*, 2nd edition (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 559–60.
- 15 Compare Michael J. Curley, 'Gerallt Gymro a Siôn o Gernyw fel Cyfieithwyr Proffwydoliaethau Myrddin' ['Gerald of Wales and John of Cornwall as translators of the Prophecies of Myrddin'], *Llên Cymru*, 15 (1984–86), 23–33.
- 16 See the fine edition and discussion by Michael J. Curley, 'A New Edition of John of Cornwall's *Prophetia Merlini*', *Speculum*, 57 (1982), 217–49. A French translation of the Prophecy (though not of the Commentary) and a discussion of the Brittonic phrases appear in P. Flobert, 'La "Prophetia Merlini" de Jean de Cornwall', *Études celtiques*, 14 (1974), 31–41, and L. Fleuriot, 'Les fragments du texte brittonique de la "Prophetia Merlini"', *ibid.*, pp. 43–56.
- 17 J. T. Koch, 'When was Welsh Literature First Written Down?', *Studia Celtica*, 20/21 (1985–86), 43–66; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Emergence of Old Welsh, Cornish and Breton Orthography, 600–800: the Evidence of Archaic Old Welsh',

- Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 38 (1991), 20–86 (especially pp. 78–79).
- 18 *Life of Merlin. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Vita Merlini*, edited by Basil Clarke (Cardiff, 1973). A new edition is in preparation by Neil Wright, taking account of an additional manuscript newly discovered.
- 19 Previous discussion of this problem is found in *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, I, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568, edited by Neil Wright (Cambridge, 1984), pp. xii–xvi; and Crick, *Geoffrey of Monmouth. Dissemination and Reception*, pp. 113–20.
- 20 David N. Dumville, “‘Nennius’ and the *Historia Brittonum*”, *Studia Celtica*, 10/11 (1975–76), 78–95.
- 21 Padel, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall’, pp. 1–4; ‘Arthur’ here is certainly not a patronym, as is sometimes claimed.
- 22 Wright, ‘Henry of Huntingdon’s *Epistola ad Warinum*’, pp. 71–72 and n. 11.
- 23 Geoffrey Ashe, “‘A Certain Very Ancient Book’”. Traces of an Arthurian Source in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History*’, *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 301–23. The form with *-h-*, *Riothamus*, is merely a medieval spelling, and is worth eschewing, partly to avoid any supposed similarity to the name of Arthur.
- 24 Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’ (1994). One important recent article on the topic which should be mentioned here is Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘The Arthur of History’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Bromwich and others, pp. 15–32.
- 25 Kenneth Jackson, ‘Gildas and the Names of the British Princes’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 3 (Summer, 1982), 30–40 (at pp. 36–40); ‘generalissimo’ is one of the former renderings of *Vortigern* which Jackson specifically rejects.
- 26 V. E. Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950), pp. 170 and 213.
- 27 These names all occur in P. C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966); there are other examples and other names to be found elsewhere. See also Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), for discussion of the names.
- 28 Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’.
- 29 *Culhwch and Olwen*, edited by Bromwich and Evans, p. 5 (lines 118–25); *The Mabinogion*, translated by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London, 1949), p. 98.
- 30 *Culhwch and Olwen*, edited by Bromwich and Evans (1992), pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii.
- 31 Sims-Williams, ‘Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, pp. 41–42 and 54–55.
- 32 Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, pp. 8–12.
- 33 Plutarch, *De Defectu Oraculorum*, chapter 18.
- 34 Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, pp. 21–22 and 30–31.
- 35 O. J. Padel, ‘Some South-Western Sites with Arthurian Associations’, in *Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Bromwich, pp. 229–48 (especially pp. 234 and 240); Antonia Gransden, ‘The Growth of the Glastonbury Traditions and Legends in the Twelfth Century’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 337–58 (pp. 352–54).
- 36 Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, p. 31, for references.