



1957

The Use of Sources in the Variant and Vulgate Versions of the Historia Regum Britanniae and the Question of the Order of the Versions

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Recommended Citation

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THE USE OF SOURCES IN THE VARIANT AND VULGATE VERSIONS OF THE
HISTORIA REGUM BRITANNIAE AND THE QUESTION OF THE ORDER OF THE
VERSIONS.

In a ~~paper presented to~~ ^{communication at} the Fourth Arthurian Congress at Rennes in 1954, since published in Speculum, I presented evidence showing that Wace, in his Roman de Brut, used bot^h the Variant Version of the Historia Regum Britanniae, published by Hammer in 1951, and the Vulgate, the text familiar to scholars in, for example, the editions by ~~Fr~~^aal and Griscom. As Wace completed his work in 1155, the year in which Geoffrey of Monmouth died, the Variant must have been in circulation during Geoffrey's lifetime and cannot be the late recension which Parry, who first called attention to it in an article in the Kastner Memorial Volume, and Hammer, who edited it, considered it. As one of these versions was quite deliberately ^{rewritten from the other} and as Hammer seems ^{right} to have certainly been ~~wrote~~ in his belief that they could not both be by the same writer, the question of their order is important in the study of the Historia. I wish today to point out ~~some~~ differences between the two versions in the way they use certain sources, differences suggesting that the Variant is the earlier version from which the Vulgate was derived.

If one of the two versions of a work shows greater verbal fidelity to the sources than the other, the fact is, I believe, usually taken as evidence of the priority of that version. Accepting Hammer's statement that the Variant shows a greater fondness for Biblical phraseology than the Vulgate, I used it in 1954 as a reason for suggesting that the Variant was the earlier. Today I am not so sure of the fact as stated by Hammer, ~~though it is possible that~~ Exactness in such matters is impossible.

One cannot be sure that he has spotted all the bits that might be considered echoes of the Bible; and I am not ^{fully} convinced that all the bits Hammer has referred to the Bible, or to classical writers, are significant echoes. With this qualification, certain points can be made. Of the passages in the Variant which Hammer refers ^{to} to the Bible, I have noted fifteen that are peculiar to the Variant (that is, to the text as found in manuscripts Panton 37, Exeter, Dublin, and Harley 6358, folios 2^r to 41^v), or which are so differently worded in the Vulgate as to minimize the similarity to the Bible. Of the sixty-nine passages discussed by Hammer in his article, "Geoffrey of Monmouth's Use of the Bible in the 'Historia Regum Britanniae'", published in volume thirty of the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, the Variant is closer in two, the Vulgate is closer in twenty-seven—the Variant frequently omits the passage altogether—and there is no difference in forty. On the face of it, this would seem to indicate a slightly greater fondness for Biblical phraseology on the part of the Vulgate. On the other hand, there is a little reason for believing that the Variant has more echoes from the classics. Of those passages which Hammer, in his edition of the Variant, refers to classical authors, I have noted twenty-two in the Variant ^{that are} ~~but~~ not in the corresponding passage of the Vulgate. I should add that I have not counted some passages Hammer noted, because the echo seemed too slight to be significant of anything beyond a knowledge of the vocabulary of ^{Latin} ~~Roman~~ poetry. Little in the way of a conclusion can be drawn from these facts.

~~The main difference between the two versions, in their use of sources, is that the Variant more consistently, though not exclusively, uses earlier sources than does the Vulgate. The Variant perhaps lifts a little less directly from Nennius, ^{and certainly} it ~~certainly~~ makes less direct use of Gildas, ^{the only} ~~certainly British historians on record~~ Where the same material is available in both Bede and Orosius, it has~~

a definite tendency to give only what Bede himself took from Orosius, leaving out what is peculiar to Bede. And it makes greater use of the of Landolfus Sagax, Historia Miscella, much of which is identical with what is found in earlier writers, than does the Vulgate.

The Variant opens, not with a dedicatory preface as does the Vulgate, but with a description of Britain which corresponds only in part to that in the Vulgate. The dedicatory preface naming Robert of Gloucester, ^{and including the ancient} does look, occur in the Exeter manuscript, but its absence from the other Variant manuscripts and the circumstances under which it occurs in Exeter--it is dissociated from the Variant, although it immediately precedes it--show that it is no true part of the Variant. The description of Britain in the Variant makes no use of Gildas and Nennius, as does the Vulgate description; it is, indeed, ^{no more than} an almost literal transcript of parts of Bede's description of the island. The first sentence of the Variant reads, for example (I translate): "Britain, the best of islands^s was formerly called Albion, situated in the western ocean between Gaul and Ireland, containing eight hundred miles in length, two hundred indeed in breadth" ("Britannia, insularum optima, quodam Albion nuncupata est, in occidentali oceano inter Galliam et Hiberniam sita, octingenta milia passuum in longum, ducenta verum in latum continens"). Bede (I omit bits not taken over into the Variant) reads: "ⁱⁿBritannia, an island in the ocean, which formerly had the name Albion, is located between the north and the west . . . eight hundred miles long to the north, [it] has two hundred miles in width . . ." ("Britannia Oceani insula, cui quondam Albion nomen fuit, inter septentrionem et occidentem locata est . . . Quae per milia passuum DCCC [octingenta] in Boream longa, latitudinis habet milia CC [ducenta] . . ."). To what is found in Bede, the Variant adds the words "best of islands" ("insularum optima"), easily suggested by Bede's account of ^{the islands} its resources, and the statement that Britain is "situated between Gaul and Ireland" ("inter

Galliam et Hiberniam sita"). Bede does not mention Ireland, but a little beyond the passage I have already quoted, he says that Britain "Has Belgic Gaul on the south" ("Habet a meridie Galliam Belgicam"). The Vulgate description opens: "Britain, the best of islands^d, situated in the western ocean between Gaul and Ireland, containing eight hundred miles in length, two hundred indeed in breadth" ("Britannia insularum optima in occidentali oceano inter galliam & hiberniam sita. octingenta milia in longum. ducento uerum in latum continens . . ."). So far as the mechanics of the change are concerned, it would have been rather easier to work from the Variant to the Vulgate. All that would have been necessary would have been to omit "was formerly called Albion" ("quodam Albion nuncupata est"), ^{the word} and passuum. To get from the Vulgate to the Variant, it would have been necessary to go back to Bede, for no apparent reason, and pick up these omitted words. Aside from the mechanics involved in the change, there was perhaps good reason for the Vulgate's omission of "was formerly called Albion." Although Albion is given as the name of the island in both versions when Brutus arrives there (I.xv), no use is made of it, and in the description it is impertinent to the history which is being introduced. An original compiler, perhaps not altogether sure of where he was going or how he was going to get there, could easily have picked it up with the other material from Bede; a reviser, with the work before him in all its details, would have had reason to leave it out at this point, ^{even though he} ~~might have~~ inadvertently kept it later on.

The description in the Vulgate combines with the material from Bede further details taken, as is well known, from Nennius and Gildas. It would have been easy enough, from even a casual reading, to get these details and add them to ~~the Vulgate~~ what is given in the Variant. It would have taken close observation and an exact comparison of four texts--Vulgate, Bede, Nennius, and Gildas--to reduce the Vulgate text to that found

in the Variant--unless, of course, the Vulgate had here been scrapped entirely and a complete new start made from Bede. It is difficult to believe that that was done, for the Vulgate description with its material from Gildas and Nennius, in particular the disposition of the three noble rivers, Thames, Severn, and Humber, in the island, and the twenty-eight cities with their churches, better sets the scene for the narrative that is to follow. A motive for the change from Variant to Vulgate is easy to find, but not for the change in the other direction.

The Variant, following Bede closely, though not literally or in every detail, says: "This island received the Britons, Picts, and Scots as inhabitants. The Britons, however, from whom it took its name, who it is said arrived in Britain from the shore of Armorica, first settled the entire island from sea to sea" ("Insula haec Britones et Pictos et Scottos incolae recepit. Britones autem, a quibus nomen accepit, in primis a mari usque ad mare totam insulam insederunt, qui de tractu Armoricano, ut fertur, advecti sunt Brittania"). The corresponding part of the Vulgate reads: "Afterwards it was inhabited by five people, Normans, to wit, as well as Britons, Saxons, Picts, and Scots, of whom the Britons, before the others, formerly settled it from sea to sea until, overcome by divine vengeance because of their pride, they gave way to the Picts and Saxons" ("Postremo quinque inhabitatur populis normannis uidelicet atque britannis. saxonibus. pictis. & scotis. Ex quibus britones olim ante ceteros a mari usque ad mare insederunt. donec ultione diuina propter ipsorum superbiam superueniente. pictis. & saxonibus cesserunt"). The Vulgate with its mention of the Normans brings the ethnographic detail up to date for the time of writing, and introduces the conflicts with the Picts and Saxons, the ultimate decline of the Britons, which occupy Books VI and VIII-XII of the Historia, something more than half the work. The

The last sentence of the description suggests that it was not thought of as part of the most ancient book.

Vulgate description is also better fitted to the Historia in at least two other ways. As the Historia gives the ostensibly veracious, and certainly definite, account of how Britain was first settled by the people later to be known, from the name of their leader, as Britons, the Variant's "as it is said" ("ut fertur") is really out of place, inconsistent with what follows. And the text of the Historia does not say, as does this passage in the Variant, that the Britons came "from the shore of Armorica" ("de tractu Armoricano"). It says that they sailed from the mouth of the Loire in Aquitaine, a slight difference, perhaps, but nonetheless a real one. The contemporary audience was familiar with the geography involved; ^{so} there was good reason for omitting the phrase from the Vulgate.

The Historia Brittonum of Nennius, frequently included in manuscripts under the name of Gildas, is of course central to the conception of the Historia Regum Britanniae regardless of which version is considered. ~~As Nennius is a~~ ~~John the British historian, a work translated from an ancient work in the British tongue might~~ Neither Gildas, ^{or} Nennius is used, as I noted a moment ago, in the Variant. ^{to show familiarity with the Vulgate and to agree with them.} description of Britain; both are used in the Vulgate. Likewise in the text itself there is somewhat more evidence of their use in the Vulgate than in the Variant. For example, I find five explicit references to Gildas in the Vulgate. Only two of these are also in the Variant, which has none peculiar to itself. Of the two explicit references found in both versions, one, that to the account of the acts of Dubiamus and Faganus, who first converted Britain, is much briefer in the Variant, and the work of Gildas referred to ~~xxx~~ is not identified, as it is in the Vulgate, as the book "concerning the victories of Aurelius Ambrosius" ("de uictoria aurelii ambrosii"). There are also little details and bits of wording taken from Gildas in the Vulgate, but not in the Variant, which I shall not take time to enumerate.

In Book V, the Vulgate gives an account of the persecution of the

Christians under Diocletian, and of the martyrdoms of Saints Albanus, Iulius, and Aaron in Brit^{tan}, which may have been drawn in part from Bede, but in which use was also certainly made ~~use~~ of Gildas, the source of St. Amphibalus. There is no mention of this persecution and of these martyrdoms in the Exeter manuscript of the Variant. In the Dublin manuscript, an abbreviated account is given on the lower margin of folio sixteen, by a second hand, which Hammer calls later than that of the original scribe. ~~The~~ same abbreviated account is also found in the text of the Harleian manuscript. This ~~abbreviated~~ account has St. Amphibalus, but omits other material drawn from Gildas that is in the Vulgate. There may be evidence here of the process of revision from Variant to Vulgate, Harley having got an addition missed by the first hand of Dublin but picked up by the later corrector. Other explanations are possible, however, and not enough is yet known of the textual relationships of the Variant manuscripts, to say nothing of the Vulgate, to choose between them. The point ^{could not} ~~cannot~~ safely be used ^{by itself} as evidence for the direction of the revision, but I may add that there seems to be more reason on literary and stylistic grounds for adding what is found in the Vulgate than for omitting it.

Turning to the use of Nennius, the Vulgate ^{draws} ~~has~~ more little details from the Historia Brittonum than does ~~the~~ Variant, and it is rather consistently closer verbally, for example in the birth and exile of Brutus, in the Hengist and Ronwen stories, and at other points. I have time to examine in detail only ~~two~~ ^{two} passages. In the first, the Vulgate not only has more verbal echoes from Nennius than does the Variant, but also seems to use other, later, sources. Recounting the birth of Brutus and the fulfillment of the first of the prophecies made concerning him, the Variant says: "Their prophecy did not fail. For when the day of birth arrived, the woman brought forth a boy and died in parturition. The boy,

however, was turned over to be nursed [ad nutriendum] and called Brutus."

("Nec fefellit eos vaticinⁱum suum. Nam ut dies partus advenit, edidit mulier puerum et mortua est pariendo. Traditur autem puer ad nutriendum et vocatur Brutus.") The Vulgate: "Their prophecy did not fail. For when

the day of her delivery arrived, the woman brought forth a boy and died in his birth. The boy, however, was turned over to the midwives, and he was called Brutus." ("Nec fefellit eos vaticinium suum. Nam ut dies partus

sui accessit. edidit mulier puerum & in natiuitate eius mortua est. Traditur autem puer ille obsetrici; ~~et~~ & vocatur brutus.") The Variant's "Traditur

autem puer ad nutriendum" is a little closer to the Nennian "et nutritus est filius" than is the Vulgate's "Traditur autem puer ille obsetrici."

But the Vulgate's "mulier . . . in natituitate eius mortua est" is closer to Nennius's "in nativitate illius mulier mortua est" than is the

Variant's "mulier . . . mortua est pariendo." And a little later, the

Vulgate's statement about Brutus, "explusus est ab italia" is again closer to Nennius's "explusus est ab Italia" than is the Variant's "in exilium

pulsus est." In this account of the mother's death, it seems to me that the Variant is the kind of summary a man gathering his materials might

make, the Vulgate the smoother, more fully developed narrative. The

difference is slight, and may be illusory. But consider this, which immediately follows.

By telling how Brutus killed his father

Nennius reads: "After a considerable interval, in accordance with the

prophecy of the soothsayer, when he ~~[that is, Brutus]~~ was playing with others, with the stroke of an arrow he killed his father, not of intent,

but by accident." ("Post multum intervallum, juxta vaticinationem magi, dum ipse ludebat cum aliis, ictu sagittae, occidit patrem suum, non de

industria, sed casu.") The Variant has: "When he was fifteen years old, he accompanied his father in hunting and, shooting an arrow at the hinds,

by an unfortunate stroke of the arrow, killed his father." ("Et cum esset quindecim annorum comitabatur patri in venatu sagittamque in cervos dirigens, inopino ictu sagittae patrem interfecit.") The Vulgate: "Afterwards when he was fifteen years old, he accompanied his father hunting and killed him by an unfortunate stroke of an arrow. For when the servants were driving the hinds towards them, trying to send an arrow at them, he he pierced his father under the breast." ("Postremo cum ter quini anni emensi essent. comitabatur iuuenis patrem in uenando; ipsumque inopino ictu sagite interfecit. Nam dum famuli ceruos in occursum eorum ducerent brutus telum in ipsos dirigere affectans. geniterem sub pectore percussit.")

The Variant account, obviously a great improvement over Nennius, is still annalistic, almost cryptic in its brevity. The Vulgate is a fully developed, ~~story which is much more realized than the Variant account~~ concretely realized story. The Variant is what a compiler might put together in the process of compilation. The Vulgate is what a writer interested in literary effectiveness, a man trying to be a historian rather than a mere annalist ^{or} ~~or~~ chronicler might make of the Variant. ^{The Vulgate} It also seems to contain realistic detail from later sources. Henry of Huntingdon's account of the death of William Rufus is reflected in both ^{versions} ~~accounts~~. The cervo intendens of his "Walterus Tyrel cum sagitta, cervo intendens, regem percussus inscius" ("Walter Tyrel with an arrow, shooting at a hind, unwittingly struck the king") clearly lies behind both the Variant's "in cervos dirigens" and, with less verbal similarity, the Vulgate's "in ipsos dirigere affectans." Some of the elaborated detail of the Vulgate, however, would seem to have been suggested by the death of ~~the~~ Richard, son of Duke Robert, at Rogationtide in 1100. Here is what Orderic ~~us~~ Vitalis has to say: "When the king's knights were occupied in hunting and were trying to wound the fallow deer

A Vag. used D.V.,
it is after 1 Dec.,
1136? check
D.V. dates.
Tidlock, 14. 49-20.

or hinds with crossbow bolts, a certain knight, as he wished to wound a wild beast, let loose an arrow and accidentally struck the excellent young Richard, son of Duke Robert." ("Dum regii milites venatu exercerentur, et damulas vel cervos catapultis sauciare molirentur, quidam miles sagittam, ut agrestem feram vulneraret, emisit, egregiumque juvenum Richardum, Rodberti ducis filium, casu percussit.") In a passage like this, the probability is, I submit, that the revision was from the Variant to the Vulgate. The similarity of the Vulgate story to events within living memory would serve to give a desirable verisimilitude to the fiction.

The second passage does not, in the strictest^t sense, involve material in the text of Nennius, but rather material that is associated with that text, the Welsh genealogies. In the account of Arthur's great ^EPentecostal crown-wearing in Book XI, after listing the kings and earls in attendance, the Vulgate goes on, "In addition to the aforementioned earls, there came heroes of no less dignity" ("Preter predictos consules; uenerunt non minores dignitatis heroes"), ~~gives a list of Welsh names~~, gives a list of Welsh names, most of which ~~at least~~ are to be found in the genealogies of the Annales Cambriae as printed by Faral, and concludes, "and also many others whose names it would take long to enumerate" ("Plures alii quoque quorum nomina longum est enumerare.") The Variant ^{Does not have} ~~omits~~ this list, ^{but} saying merely, "In addition there came many heroes of great dignity, whom it would take long to enumerate or name" ("Praeterea convenerunt magnae dignitatis heroes multi quos longum est enumerare vel nominare"). The matter-of-fact particularity of the Vulgate's list, prolix and tedious though it is, is the kind of thing that makes a fiction convincing.

The effective suggestion for the story of Brutus, the Roman history, and the Arthur story is to be found in the Historia Brittonum of Nennius. The story is filled out with details drawn from the writer's imagination, no doubt, and from other histories. As I have already stated, there are

noticeable differences in the sources, and the use of the sources, employed for this elaboration. Specifically, The Variant at certain points makes greater use of the Historia Miscella of Landolfus Sagax, and perhaps of his forerunners, than does the Vulgate; the Vulgate draws details from Bede that are not to be found in the Variant.

In Nennius, Aeneas comes to Italy, builds Alba Longa, and begets Silvius on Lavinia. When Silvius marries, Aeneas sends to Ascanius, telling him to inquire from the soothsayers about the sex of the child Silvius has begotten. Ascanius has the soothsayer ^{put to death} ~~asked~~ because of his ^{that the boy} prophecy ^{will} kill his mother and his father. The Variant adds to this account and changes it—I almost said corrects it—so as to make it less likely to be questioned by a reader with some knowledge of early Roman history; it ~~states that the soothsayer, who~~ adds information which, being impertinent to the later history of Rome, could well have been omitted from a Roman history. Aeneas, fleeing Troy with his son Ascanius, comes to Italy by ship. There, received by Latinus, he fights with Turnus, son ^{of} ~~to~~ Daunus king of the Tuscans, and kills him. He ^{wins} ~~gets~~ the kingdom of Italy and Lavinia, daughter to Latinus. He names the city which he builds Lavinium, after his wife, and reigns there for four years. When Aeneas dies, his son Ascanius, also known as Iulius, whom Aeneas had begotten at Troy on his wife Creusa, daughter of king Priam, and brought to Italy with him, takes over the kingdom. Ascanius builds Alba Longa and transfers to it from Lavinium the household gods of his father. The images at once return to Lavinium; brought back to Alba Longa, they again return. Ascanius rears Silvius Postumus, his half-brother born of Lavinia, and when he has reigned thirty-four years, leaves Silvius ~~xxx~~ as heir.

Many different sources might have provided parts of this material; Landolfus, and Landolfus alone of those I have consulted, has all of it. To clinch the matter, the Variant takes over almost the exact wording of

Landolfus in, for example, this sentence: "Who dying [that is, Aeneas], Ascanius, who was also called Iulius, whom Aeneas had begotten at Troy on his wife Creusa, daughter of king Priam, and coming to Italy had brought with him, succeeded to the kingdom" ("Quo discedente regnum suscepit Ascanius, qui et Iulius, eiusdem filius, dictus erat, quem apud Troiam ex Creusa, filia regis Priami, genuerat et secum in Italiam veniens adduxerat") ^{which} is almost exactly Landolfus's "Who [that is, Aeneas] laying down his life, Ascanius, or Iulus, son of that same Aeneas, who had begotten him at Troy on his wife Creusa, daughter of king Priam, and who coming to Italy had brought him with him, succeeded to the ~~kingdom~~ kingdom" ("Quo vita decedente regnum suscepit Ascanius, qui et Iulus, eiusdem Aeneae filius, quem apud Troiam ex Creusa coniuge (filia Priami regis) genuerat et secum in Italiam ueniens adduxerat."). The Variant differs only in having ~~discedente~~ discedente for ~~discedente~~ discedente uita decedente, adding dictus erat, ^{writing Iulium for Iulum,} ~~which though not given by Crevelius, was I suspect~~ ~~in the manuscript of Landolfus,~~ and omitting Aeneae and coniuge. It is possible that Landolfus is responsible for suggesting another change from Nennius, a change that could be called a correction designed to satisfy the reader with some knowledge of Roman history. In Nennius, it is Aeneas's son Silvius who is the father of Brutus. In the Variant, after saying that Ascanius reigned thirty-four years and left his half-brother Silvius Postumus as heir, the writer backs up and says, "And Ascanius when he was fifteen years old had a son, whom he called Silvius after his postumus brother" ("Et Ascanius cum quindecim esset annorum, genuerat filium quem vocavit Silvium, a Silvio, fratre suo postumo"), and thus obviates some difficulties. It is this Silvius, otherwise unknown to history, who begets ~~thus~~ the innocent patricide Brutus on a niece of Lavinia. When the pregnancy is announced to him, Ascanius reasonably enough, for he is

Silvius's father, consults the soothsayer. Immediately after his account of the returning household gods, Landolfus says that Ascanius begot Iulum filium, and it may well have been this that suggested to the Variant writer his improvement on Nennius.

The Vulgate agrees with the Variant in its working out of the ancestry of Brutus; but it is better organized, it simplifies and clarifies, as well as rewording to get rid of the verbatim reproduction of Landolfus.

It omits the redundancy of saying that Aeneas came to Italy by ship, the irrelevant identification of Turnus, the identification of Ascanius as son ~~the works of Silvius Postumus, and~~ of Creusa, ~~the building of Lavinium and return of the household gods, and Silvius Postumus.~~ Some of these omitted bits are interesting enough in themselves, but they contribute nothing to the history of Britain which is the business in hand. One can easily see why a reviser would omit them if ~~a~~ working from the Variant, but not why he would add them to the Vulgate.

The Variant, as I have already said, carries Ascanius through his reign, then backs up to make him the father of Silvius--the kind of thing that is likely to happen in a first draft. Contrast the Vulgate: "Finally, Aeneas's last day having come, Ascanius, elevated to the regal power, built Alba on Tiber and begot a son whose name was Silvius. He, secretly indulging in venery, had intercourse with a certain niece of Lavinia and made her pregnant" ("Denique suprema die ipsius [Aeneas] superueniente. ascanius regia potestate sullimatus. condidit albam super tyberim. genuitque filium cuius nomen erat siluius. Hic furtive ueneri indulgens. nupsit quidam nepti lauinie. eamque fecit pregnantem"). Further argument on this point seems unnecessary.

Skipping over the wholly fabulous history ~~xx~~ of pre-Roman Britain, I come to the invasion of Julius Caesar. Book IV opens in both Variant and Vulgate, "Meanwhile, it came about, as is discovered in the Roman histories" ("Interea contigit, ut in Romanis reperitur historiis . . .").

The reference to Roman histories is somewhat more accurate in the Variant than in the Vulgate, which here makes more use of Bede than does the Variant, and which ~~does~~ does not have some details from Landolfus that are in the Variant. The Variant continues (I translate loosely):

"Julius Caesar, having subjugated Gaul, crossed into Britain; for it is thus written that in the year six hundred and ninety-three after the founding of the City, in the year sixty before the Incarnation of the Lord, Julius Caesar was the first of the Romans who struck the Britons in war, having arrived in about eighty cargo ships and men-of-war. For when he had come to the coast of the Ruteni and had seen Britain, he asked those about him what country it was and what people inhabited it." Here again, as in the account of Silvius, father of Brutus, the time sequence is awkwardly worked out: Caesar is brought to Britain, then the writer backs up and explains his coming. All of ^{the details} ~~this~~, except the dating by the year of the Incarnation, could have come from either Landolfus or Bede; the wording is close to Landolfus. The ~~short~~ Christian date, more familiar to a twelfth-century audience, is Bede's. The Vulgate says that ~~Julius~~ Julius Caesar, having subjugated Gaul, came to the coast of the Ruteni. It sacrifices detail, but it does not in effect, as does the Variant, get Caesar to Britain before telling why he came, before bringing him to the coast of the Ruteni, where he asks about the Britons and sends his letter to Cassibellaurnus demanding tribute. This letter is suggested by Nennius, who has the Romans send legates to the Britons demanding hostages and tribute. The legates are sent back with contempt; whereupon Caesar crosses with sixty, not eighty, ships. ~~The Romans suffer heavily at the Thames; but they are reorganized by Caesar, fight at Trinovantum, and are victorious~~

~~Unsuccessful~~ Unsuccessful on his first attempt, he returns, in Nennius, in three years with three hundred ships. The Romans suffer heavily at the Thames; but they are ^{rallied} ~~reorganized~~ by Caesar, fight at Trinovantum, and are victorious

in ~~what~~^{is} is specifically designated as a third battle. It ^{is} here that the germ of the idea in the Historia Regum Britanniae of having Caesar, quite unhistorically, fight three campaigns, is probably to be found. Both Variant and Vulgate make Caesar wait two years before his second invasion, perhaps a compromise between the three years of Nennius and the one year (he returned primo vere) of Bede and Orosius.

In its account of the second invasion, the Variant so far as I have been able to trace the source, follows Orosius, and without reference to Bede. Caesar with his six hundred ships--the number is not given in the Vulgate--is made to sail up the Thames to Trinovantum. The Variant then tells of the iron-bound stakes (piles ferreis) which the forewarned Britons (Britones praemoniti) had placed in the Thames. His ships wrecked on the stakes, Caesar lands. Cassibellaunus attacks, and Caesar, ^{his forces} outnumbered, ~~reembarks and returns to Gaul~~ reembarks and returns to Gaul.

The additional details in the Vulgate, that the stakes were plumbatis as well as ferreis, and that they were as large as a man's thigh are from Bede, who adds the information, not carried over into the Vulgate, that their remains were still visible. The further detail in the Vulgate, but not in the Variant, that Cassibellaunus, "watching from the bank on which he was, rejoiced at the danger of those submerged, but was sad at the safety of the others," seems, except for the words "from the shore on which he was," to be peculiar to the Vulgate. Orosius, and therefore Bede who follows him, has the words "from the shore on which he was" ("ex ripa qua aderat"), but says nothing of Cassibellaunus's emotions.

What I have just presented can be summed up something like this. A writer starting out to make from the Roman histories an improved account of Caesar's invasion--he makes it a conquest in the end, but only by the help of the British leader Androgeus--~~might well~~ might well have made use of Orosius and Landolfus. He would have had no occasion to use Bede, who

of Gratian at Rome. The Vulgate (V.xvi, p.353) omits Aquilea altogether and keeps the second account, having him killed at Rome by the friends of Gratian, as was ¹~~indeed~~ Petronius Maximus, who after the assassination of Valentinian, for which he was responsible, became emperor, and was killed by the mob as he fled the City on the arrival of Genseric. ~~Extrix~~

I think we can see what happened. The compiler of the Variant paused after giving the death of Maximianus at Aquilea to tell how Conanus consolidated his position in Armorica and sent for maidens from Britain to provide wives for his British followers. Then he told the tragic story of how the maidens fell into the savage hands of Gwanias and Melga. Gwanias and Melga, and their followers, killed the maidens, who ^{had} repulsed their unwelcome advances, and went on to lay waste to Britain. Continuing his fabrication the compiler had the news brought to Maximianus at Rome. Maximianus sent Gratian, whose name could have been suggested by the Gratian in Landolfus's account of Petronius Maximus, to Britain to punish Gwanias and Melga. Following his source too closely and forgetting what he had written earlier (an easy thing to do, as I discover whenever I sit down to write), ~~therefore~~ the compiler followed on with the death of Petronius Maximus in his source and had his Maximianus killed the second time at Rome. The reviser, who might be expected to have paid attention to the text he was reworking, caught the duplication, but mistakenly removed the correct account ~~22~~ of the death at Aquilea, left in the wrong account of the death at Rome. Such an explanation will account for the facts presented by the two texts. It is difficult to see how a reviser could have introduced the duplication.

More examples could be adduced, but time is running short. I must, however, consider one difference between the Variant and the Vulgate which might at first sight be considered to point in the other direction. In telling of St. Augustine's mission, the Variant (11.120-24) says,

"Augustine, therefore, coming into Kent, was graciously received by king Aethelbriht; and by Aethelbriht's permission, he preached the word of God to the English people and sealed them with the sign of the faith. Then, not long afterwards, king Aethelbriht himself, ~~baptized with them~~ with the others who had been baptized, received the ~~sacramentum~~ sacrament.

Christianity having been, therefore, received in Kent by the English, the faith of Jesus Christ was spread throughout all Loegria, even to the marches of the Britons." ("Veniens itaque Augustinus in Cantiam susceptus

est a rege Athelbricto gratanter et, eo permittente et concedente, verbum ~~dei~~ Dei genti praedicavit Anglorum et signo fidei eos insignavit. Deinde, non multo post Athelbrictus rex ipse cum ceteris baptismatis sacramentum consecutus est. Suscepta igitur in Cantia ab ~~Angli~~ Anglis Christianitate, diffusa est per totam Loegriam fides Iesu Christi usque ad fines Britonum.")

The Vulgate leaves all this out, proceeding at once from Augustine's arrival to his being snubbed by the Britons and to the massacre of the Bangor monks by Ethelfrid of Northumbria, urged to the deed by Aethelbriht. By omitting Aethelbriht's conversion, the Vulgate fails to explain why he was willing to intervene so effectively on Augustine's behalf against the Britons. The Vulgate does, however, do a better job of laying the ground in other ways, explaining the division of ~~Angles and Saxons~~ Saxons into several kingdoms and telling why they were pagans even though the ^{Britons} were, and ~~had long~~ been, Christians. I would not urge the point unduly, but it can be argued that the Vulgate here more clearly and consistently maintains the British point of view. The Variant, here following Bede more closely, takes over too much of his English point of view. A reason can be found for revision from the Variant to the Vulgate, even here.

~~In any event, ~~this~~ this one point cannot, I think, be held to~~

~~count heavily against the other evidence I have presented and the evidence~~
~~of a different kind ~~presented~~ in a paper prepared for the meeting of the~~
brought forward presented at the Madison Meeting of the
More examples could be adduced, but time is running short.
What I have given here, and the evidence of a somewhat different
kind presented at the Madison meeting of the Modern Language

Association 1957

Sources

Modern Language Association of America in September, ^{1957, suggest¹⁹ very} ~~which there has not~~
~~strongly that the Vulgate is a very thorough re-writing of the Variant.~~
~~been time to consider here.~~ I have tried to account for the differences

between the two versions as I went along, giving possible reasons for changing what is found in the Variant to what is found in the Vulgate. There is one other point which ~~may be held~~ ^{to} tie together all of my argument from the use of the sources. The Variant, which, as I have already pointed out, begins with a description of Britain, does not have the dedicatory preface found in the Vulgate with an explicit statement about the source used and the plan to be followed. Instead, the description in the Variant ends, "Wherefore, it remains to tell truly with the pen whence and where ~~they~~ they [the Britons] arrived, following the old histories [I call attention to the plural], which relate the acts of ~~all~~ everyone from Brutus ^{to} ~~and Cadwaladrus~~ Cadwaladrus, son of Cadwalonis, continuously and in order."

("Qualiter vero et unde, vel ubi applicuerunt, restat calamo perarare, sequendo veterum historias, qui a Bruto usque Cadwaladrum, filium Cadwalonis, actus omnium continue et ex ordine texuerunt.")

In the Vulgate this statement of method and purpose is transferred to the dedicatory preface. Gildas and Bede, of whom more use is made in the Vulgate, are ^(as I pointed out earlier) mentioned with surprise because they said nothing of the kings of the British before the Incarnation, or of Arthur and his successors after it. Instead of a promise to follow old histories, of which a trace remains in the opening of Book IV, we are given that "most ancient book" ("librum uetustissimum") provided by archdeacon Walter of Oxford. I submit that what I have pointed out ^{concerning} ~~about~~ the Variant's sources and its use of them is consistent with its statement of method and purpose, that the Vulgate's ~~statement is inconsistent with its method~~ sources and use of them are consistent with its statement of method and purpose. Given the brilliant ^{and audacious} fiction of the ancient book, it is easy to see how and why the Variant

was changed into the Vulgate. It is not easy to see why anyone would go to such lengths as would have been necessary to get rid of that fiction once it had been thought of.

Gaimar, writing before Wace, tells us that he had two books. One, which came by way of Walter Espec from Robert of Gloucester, must have been the Vulgate with its dedication to Robert. The other was either the property of, or was made by, Walter archdeacon of Oxford. I do not know that this second book was the Variant; but it could have been, and I know of nothing else that it could have been. We may yet have to reconsider Ward's suggestion (Catalogue of Romances, I, 214) "that archdeacon Walter made a rough cast of the work, which he handed over to Geoffrey to elaborate; and that the latter then applied to Gloucester for his patronage."