



**'Of Albions glorious Ile the Wonders...I write'<sup>1</sup>  
How important is the land in early modern  
depictions of national identity?**

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In 1536 the Act of Union physically altered the English landscape and its boundaries. With the act's abolishment of the Welsh Marches there was no longer a hinterland between England and Wales who were unified into an multiple nation state. English rule, rights and laws were extended across into Wales making Welsh citizens equal to their English counterparts.<sup>2</sup> When in 1603, James VI inherited the English throne bringing Scotland into the union, an expanding England created what Andrew Hadfield describes as a 'concomitant fear<sup>3</sup>' of a 'disunified and fragmented'<sup>4</sup> nation. Although the fabled Britannia was now 'reunited', there was no such reunification of national identity. In fact the association of being British<sup>5</sup>, which had previously been a synonym for Welsh,<sup>6</sup> had now altered too. As the borders and boundaries were changing so was the concept of what it meant to be British.

Edward I's conquest of Wales in 1282 was believed to be so effective<sup>7</sup> that Wales was often dismissed as a docile<sup>8</sup> and invisible<sup>9</sup> nation. William Camden does not distinguish Wales from England in his *Britannia* and neither does Raphael Holinshed in his *Chronicles*.<sup>10</sup> It appeared Wales had been subsumed into England. However, to consider Wales only in this pejorative and stereotyped form found in 'taffy' genre poetry where Welshman roamed craggy landscapes dotted with thistles and goats,<sup>11</sup> is to disregard the importance of British history and mythology in the evolution of national identity. With the arrival of the Tudor dynasty to the English throne British mythology was appropriated like the Welsh landscape itself and became a crucial apparatus in supporting Henry VII in his usurpation of Richard III. It evoked a heritage dating back to antiquity and laid the framework for the unification of Britain.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Drayton, *The Works of Michael Drayton Vol. IV Poly-Olbion*, edit. J. William Hebel (Oxford; Shakespeare Head Press, 1933) p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Peter Roberts, 'Tudor Wales, national identity and British Inheritance' in *British consciousness and identity*, ed. by Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c. 1998), pp. 8-42 (p.23)

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 137

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> To clarify my use of the term 'British' refers to the OED definition the 'peoples originally inhabiting all of Britain south of the Firth of Forth before and during the Roman occupation.'

<sup>6</sup> V.S., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23462>> [Accessed on 18/01/11]; Philip Jenkins, 'Seventeenth-century Wales: definition and identity', in Bradshaw and Roberts, pp. 213-235 (p.220)

<sup>7</sup> Michael Prestwich, 'Edward I', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8517>>. [Accessed 18/01/11]

<sup>8</sup> Claire McEachern, 'The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 189-90, quoted in Hadfield p. 144

<sup>9</sup> Hadfield, p.7

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.60

<sup>11</sup> Jenkins, p. 228

By evoking mythological national identities in order to lay claims to land, the Tudors embellished on their descent from Owen Tudor and his weak royal Welsh heritage.<sup>12</sup> Using British mythology in this way allowed them to hail themselves as the rightful rulers of England and to establish them on a usurped throne. It also depicted the Tudors as the restoration of British royalty with Henry VII as the prophesised 'rex Britannicus redividius'.<sup>13</sup> This provided the Tudors with a claim that their ascension was divinely fated and a restoration of an ancient race. Whilst Wales itself may have been overlooked the importance of its mythology and history were not.

This appropriation of British mythology was very useful to the last Tudor, Elizabeth I, who was considered as illegitimate by Catholic Europe.<sup>14</sup> To secure her position Elizabeth utilised British mythology not only to justify her claim to the throne but also to create her own personal iconography and mysticism as a monarch. She promoted the image of a divinely appointed queen descended from antiquity and fulfilling ancient prophecies. She also manipulated her gender to play the role of mother or lover to the nation, genealogically and matrimonially binding herself to the landscape. Her motto 'eadam semper' endorsed the idea of constancy and agelessness in the relationship between the landscape and the monarchy as an institution. In order to explore the importance of the land in regards to national identity I will consider the iconography of Elizabeth's reign and her exploitation of British mythology. I will examine depictions of strong, female and British figures in contemporary literature to explore her influence on the Elizabethan author Edmund Spenser and his 'disciple'<sup>15</sup> Michael Drayton.

Spenser openly acknowledges his twofold Elizabethan influence in his preface and dedication to *the Faerie Queene*. Elizabeth is both inspiration for his female characters '[...] [I]n particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome Faery land'<sup>16</sup> and is his idealised reader to whom the work is flatteringly dedicated, 'THE MOST HIGH MIGHTIE And MAGNIFICENT EMPRESSE'.<sup>17</sup> As Bradshaw notes 'Elizabeth is represented as a Briton queen herself and it is up to her to discover her identity through reading the poem'<sup>18</sup> which suggests Spenser's moral allegory is not merely philosophical but rather loaded with didactic doctrines. There are too many 'avatars'<sup>19</sup> of Elizabeth in Spenser's moral allegory to explore in this essay. My focus will be on Britomart, the knight of chastity, in the passages where she discovers her destiny and Spenser depicts clear moral and marital messages to his monarch as well as engaging with Elizabethan iconography and British mythology. Both passages are from the 1590 edition of poem although '[Spenser's] works were often written a long time before they were published'.<sup>20</sup>

Britomart is equal to her male counterparts in 'military exploits, judgement and courage'<sup>21</sup> but Spenser makes it clear that her destiny is different from merely 'jousting,

<sup>12</sup> A.D. Carr, 'Tudor Family, forebears of', *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/60240/8509>> [Accessed 18/01/11]

<sup>13</sup> Brendan Bradshaw 'The English Reformation and identity formation in Wales and Ireland', in Bradshaw and Roberts, pp. 43-111 (p.85)

<sup>14</sup> Hadfield, p.133

<sup>15</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, 'Michael Drayton', *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8042>> [Accessed 18/01/11]

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1987), p. 16

<sup>17</sup> Spenser, p. 38

<sup>18</sup> Hadfield, 'From English to British literature: John Lyly's *Euphues* and Edmund Spenser's *the Faerie Queene*, in Bradshaw and Roberts, p. 153

<sup>19</sup> This term I have taken from Doran and Freeman's *The Myth of Elizabeth*, p.15

<sup>20</sup> Hadfield, 'Edmund Spenser', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26145>> [Accessed on 19/01/11]

<sup>21</sup> Stevie Davies, *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature The Feminine Reclaimed*, (Brighton; The Harvester Press, 1986), p. 34

riddling and quarrelling'.<sup>22</sup> Spenser's depiction of Britain is chaotic, if not apocalyptic, with both internal and external threats. 'All *Britanie* doth burne in armes bright' in defending itself from 'the 'forrein foe, that comes from farre' and it is Britomart's destiny alone to bring the 'vniuersal peace' that will 'compound all civill iarre.' However, Britomart's great weapons will not be 'the dreadful spear and shield' but rather are 'the faithfull band' with which she must 'firmely bound' her husband and her 'wombe' and its 'fruitfull Ofspring' that 'shall their conquests through all lands extend'. Not only is this 'eternall vnion' needed as the only salvation but also Britomart must succeed in her quest in order for Elizabeth, 'the royall virgin' to be born. Whilst Britomart may be a 'mayd Martiall' Spenser still frames her roles as a wife and mother as having the utmost importance. Spenser too overtly figures Britomart, not only as mother figure, but also as a natural mother earth that places her within natural order and is deeply connected to the landscape. Britomart is a 'cleare Carnation' and like the dawn 'rising hastily'. She is described in terms of her chastity that reiterate her youth and innocence -with epithets like 'faire Infant'- Britomart is not only sexually, but also naturally, chaste and pure.

Another way in which Spenser highlights Britomart's natural purity is through her fertility. From her womb 'a famous Progenie/ Shall spring' and 'reuiue [the] sleeping memorie' of her ancestors. Spenser frames the image of Britomart's lineage literally as a family tree that will be 'enrooted deepe' and will be bountiful with 'embodied branches', filled with scores of descendants. Britomart is a revivifying and rejuvenating force and Spenser's lexical choice of the word 'revive', from the Latin 'vivere' to live and prefixed with 're-' meaning again, could allude her to her ability to resurrect ancient ancestors in her descendents and an almost divine power. Spenser's reference to her '*Troian* blood' who were of 'heauens brood' as well as metaphorically comparing her to Aurora the goddess of the dawn, more explicitly figures her as having a divine or supernatural heritage. Also Spenser's appellation of Britomart implies a divine heritage as Britomartis was a Cretan nymph,<sup>23</sup> although her name connotes a British heritage and martiality. Britomart's divinity is intensified by her destiny that 'the fates are firm' she must fulfil and her association with the 'Prophet' Merlin. Britomart's close figuring with the Greek pantheon and the fates confirms her strong, natural and life-giving framing.

Even Spenser's form of an epic poem connotes the mythical. Epic poems handle 'the deeds of warriors and heroes... incorporating myth, legend [... and] often are of national significance.'<sup>24</sup> Spenser clearly had such aspirations as can be seen in references to other great epic writers in his preface such as Virgil and Homer.<sup>25</sup> Indeed Britomart does connote the divine and incorporates myth and legend in a way that is nationally significant as she is an avatar of Elizabeth. Spenser too evokes the iconography of Elizabeth as a natural goddess, epithetized as Diana as the goddess of the hunt and the moon.<sup>26</sup> Spenser also compares Britomart to two autonomous British queens '[t]he bold Bunduca' and 'stout Guendolen'. These women are described by Spenser as a 'paragone of proudest men' suggesting that these warrior women are equivalent to their male counterparts. However this does not wholly contradict Spenser's clear overarching argument that successful female rule involves marriage and procreation. Britomart is affiliated as well to a heroine of Spenser's own invention<sup>27</sup> - Angela 'a *Saxon* Virgin' who he fabricates as the etymological root of the Angles placing her in direct opposition to the British. However, rather than focus on Britomart and Angela's ethnicities, Britomart obtains Angela's armour that is 'goodly well

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.; <<http://www.maicar.com/GML/WATERS.html>>, [Accessed 18/01/11]

<sup>24</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Chatham: Andre Deutsch, 1975), p. 225

<sup>25</sup> Spenser, p. 15

<sup>26</sup> E.C. Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, (St. Ives: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2006), p. 320

<sup>27</sup> Spenser, p. 1148

beseene' and through wearing it she unifies the British and the English peoples, much like Elizabeth's mixed ancestry, and provides a hopeful image that ethnic and historic differences can be overcome.

Whilst Robin Headlam Wells argues that 'Elizabeth's marriage to England could be seen as the fulfilment of Britomart's quest'<sup>28</sup> it seems flimsy to dismiss the emphasis placed on Britomart's framing as a maternal life force and the prominence of Britomart's genealogy and heritage that stretches from the sixteenth-century back to Mount Olympus. The parallels between Elizabeth and Britomart are clear, as well as Spenser's bold implication that the failure of concord in Spenser's Britain is dependent on the chastity and the marriage of its warrior princess. If we take Headlam Wells' view then *the Faerie Queene* promotes a triumph in the real world with Elizabeth's marriage to England but when the ending of Book VI is considered, with the failure to restore peace to Ireland,<sup>29</sup> this seems unlikely. Whilst this is all speculative as Spenser died before his epic poem was completed,<sup>30</sup> it could also be argued that if these passages were composed earlier than 1590 then they may reflect a period when a marriage for Elizabeth may have been feasible. Spenser's seems to exemplify the unattained marriage as a harbinger for unpreventable chaos and although Elizabeth deemed Spenser's work praiseworthy enough to give him a small pension,<sup>31</sup> Peter McCullough argues, 'Elizabeth...[was] prepared to tolerate quite significant criticism on her policies, as long as certain fundamental boundaries were not crossed.'<sup>32</sup> Spenser's depiction of Elizabeth in many ways plays off her various iconographies and flatters them accordingly. However the strong moralistic tone that warns of instability and turmoil to come cannot be ignored.

Hadfield has argued that '[i]f Spenser's vision of Britain was fractured by actual and potential conflicts, then his disciple Michael Drayton brought those to a head'<sup>33</sup> in his topographical poem the *Poly-Olbion*. Drayton had begun the poem in the last years of Elizabeth's reign but it was not published until nine years into the reign of James I,<sup>34</sup> making it a transitional piece of work between the end of one reign and the beginning of another. Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* is described as '[a] chorographical description of all the tracts, rivers, mountaines, forests,...'<sup>35</sup> and is a text primarily concerned with the mythologized landscape of Britain. Drayton's work is centred around physical landforms and their personification as nymphs but not with human settlements.<sup>36</sup> Its form is not of an epic poem but rather celebrates the landscape and the identities of Britannia. My extracts focus on the role of Sabrina or the River Severn, a nymph closely figured with the British landscape as an anthropomorphised river but also with her heritage as the granddaughter of Brutus.<sup>37</sup>

Sabrina is figured and framed in a similar way to Spenser's heroine and utilises much of the iconography associated with Elizabeth. Sabrina, like Britomart and her descendant Elizabeth, has a clear British ancestry, is pure and natural and a maternal earthly figure who must solve the chaotic disputes of landscape fuelled by concomitant national identities. Drayton use the semantic field of water to describe not only Sabrina's imagery as a river but also to reflect her judgement and impartiality. Drayton's use of such imagery is not dissimilar to Spenser's description of Britomart's chastity. In appearance Sabrina is 'miraculously

<sup>28</sup> Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth*, (Guildford; Croom Helm Ltd, 1983), p. 106

<sup>29</sup> Hadfield, p. 155

<sup>30</sup> Hadfield in 'Edmund Spenser'

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Peter McCullough quoted in Doran and Freeman, p. 59

<sup>33</sup> Hadfield, p. 143

<sup>34</sup> Lake Prescott in 'Michael Drayton'

<sup>35</sup> Drayton, p. i

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Klein 'Imaginary Journeys: Spenser, Drayton and the Poetics of National Space' in *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, edit by Andrew Gordon and Klein (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 204-223 (p.212)

<sup>37</sup> Brewer, p. 970

faire' and her throne is a 'Emperiall Chaire of Crystal'. Not only is she pure as her natural river form but also she is clear in judgement and is swayed by argument not passion. Sabrina is not convinced by her nymphs being 'full of spleene' but rather her verdict is based upon 'Arguments and Lawes'. Sabrina is described as having a 'countenance grave and stout' '[l]ike some great learned Judge and is educated by Nereus, a prophet who is 'the most profoundly wise'. Unlike Britomart she does not need to seek mystical aid as she has already been amalgamated into the Grecian sea god lineage, nor use physical force as 'silence so she wanne' through her status as a adjudicator. Sabrina's tools are her 'constant brow' and her rhetoric that she must use to reclaim Wales like her nymphs did during the quarrel for Lundy rather than martial accomplishments. Neptune even permits 'himself to sit' in her throne, suggesting she is to some extent an equal whose seat he may share. Sabrina too, like Britomart, must wear her uniform of duty. Her 'watchet weeds given to her by Amphitrite places her into the hierachy of sea mythology where she too must perform her duties like Britomart in Angela's armour.

Whilst Sabrina may not be as chaste like Britomart and 'prefers her Lundy best' to all the isles '[t]hat bathe their amorous breasts within her secret Deepes', this does not diminish her eminence but rather shows that Drayton's mythological influence comes from antiquity and is less influenced by Christian morals. Drayton draws far more heavily from mythology than Spenser and seems to be influenced by the sexual freedom of Greek and Roman mythology. Sabrina too must face the challenges of subduing chaos, like Britomart and Elizabeth, from her restless court where 'strong factions strangely grew' that even Neptune the sea-god cannot 'disswade.' Drayton's chaotic disorder is purely an internal one with a dispute over the Isle of Lundy that acknowledges the problem of resolving national identities of a multiple nation state. A problem he plainly acknowledges in the title of his work, where the prefix refers to the multitude of identities in it.<sup>38</sup> Wales demands to be 'redresse[d] for that her ancient wrong' of the invasion of Britain but Drayton too acknowledges that the weaker Wales was 'borne-out by *Englands* might'. Drayton uses a similarly unifying image to Britomart in Angela's armour in the form of Sabrina who is a neutral river with one bank in Wales and the other England, '[s]ith this contention sprang from Countries like ally'd/That shee would not be found t'incline to either side'. Yet, despite her neutral unifying image, Drayton does not resolve the issue between the two competing claims or histories but rather Sabrina's resolution in the Fifth Song is that '*Lundy* like ally'd to *Wales* and *England* is' on the grounds of the prophecy that 'three sever'd Realmes in one shall firmlie stand.' Drayton's Sabrina makes no attempt to address the real issue here of which nation has the better claim; instead she masks it in a somewhat successful new unifying national identity that '[e]ach part most highlie pleas'd' but still to is an extent forced as Sabrina orders '*Cornwall*, for that thou no longer shalt contend/But to old *Cambria* cleave, as to thy ancient friend,'. Drayton clearly depicts here that national identities formed by unifying the landscape do not form simply and smoothly.

Sabrina may use her authority to force unified identities through a new Anglo-British national identity but this role is one that Drayton will contradict later in his poem in the Eighth Song where Sabrina is explicitly depicted as discontented and still profoundly aware of the boundaries between England and Wales. Sabrina feels ashamed and mournful of the loss of 'her deere childrens right' to the land up to the Severn and 'her disgrace' at such a loss. Drayton's Sabrina has evolved as the poem has topographically travelled nearer the source to the ancient dispute of whether the Severn is the boundary between England and Wales as Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed<sup>39</sup>, a boundary that would exist in Drayton's mythologized Britain where the Tudors have not yet risen to power. Despite her neutrality in

<sup>38</sup> McEachern in Hadfield, p. 145

<sup>39</sup> Philip Schwyzer 'A Map of Greater Cambria' in Gordon and Klein, pp. 35-45 (p. 35)

the dispute of Lundy, Sabrina now champions the right of the first inhabitants as ‘the Hills and Rivers neere [...] commaunding them to heare’. Sabrina’s disunified homeland is not consoled by the promise of future reunification but instead Sabrina, as the River Severn, uses the network of nymphs that make up the tributaries to pay homage to her ‘[t]o find their severall Springs; and bad them get them out./ And in their fullness waite upon their soveraigne Flood.’<sup>40</sup> Drayton unifies his landscape through the waterways rather than possession of land. He does not address widespread problems of nation identity but examines specific localised examples. Unlike Spenser, Drayton does not appear to be imploring a didactic doctrine and to a certain extent seems to be embracing the fragmented national identities and seems to be compensating rather than addressing the losses of the past.

Raphael Falco argues that if readers consider Drayton’s text with regards to J.H. Elliott’s notion of composite monarchies<sup>41</sup>, then the poem is not quite so disharmoniously bleak. Falco argues that whilst Drayton’s mythologized Britain is both ‘perilous and precarious’<sup>42</sup> it and ‘manages to rule itself’<sup>43</sup> and ‘that Drayton’s poem reflects British reality.’<sup>44</sup> Whilst the national identities of seventeenth century Britain may have been fragmented and disunified Drayton’s depiction of Britain is not the quite catastrophe Spenser predicted. Although Drayton’s use of strong female figures and genealogies may reflect ‘a nostalgia for a time before the increasingly absolutist threat of the Stuart dynasty’<sup>45</sup> as we can see through Sabrina’s Elizabethan influence, Drayton seems to also accept that the nation is evolving and new identities will develop.

To conclude, as I have established through my exploration of these two texts, the relationship between the land and national identity is pivotal. The unification of England, Wales and Scotland forced their three pre-existing identities into a modern British one. As I have argued, Elizabeth’s successful iconographies show both herself and her influence in each text. Her iconography was so strong that it survived beyond her lifespan into James I’s reign when her cult was at its strongest.<sup>46</sup> The Ditchley Portrait, which shows Elizabeth standing on a map of her realm and almost surpassing it in the folds of her skirt, shows how important the land was in her influence to national identities<sup>47</sup>. By associating herself and the eternal role of a monarch so strongly with the landscape she maintained her autocratic control over it. Meanwhile, James I far less successfully unified his lands by trying to force a new modern British identity that including Scotland, which the English regarded as a threat.<sup>48</sup> James I’s attempts to shift his English subjects into a new perception of themselves’,<sup>49</sup> a perception that can be seen in the work of Drayton whose text seems tolerant of a unified whole. Drayton rather than salve old wounds forges new ties. However, unfortunately for James, the English parliament were harder to convince than Drayton who declared any union ‘impossible to achieve.’<sup>50</sup> Whilst James I may have been regarded with hostility and as a foreign king associated and bound to any land and another national identity, there was still hope for the future. This can be seen in Drayton’s dedication to *the Poly-Olbion* that

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<sup>40</sup> Drayton, p. 149

<sup>41</sup> J.H. Elliott in Raphael Falco, ‘Women, Genealogy and Composite Monarchy in Michael Drayton’s Poly-Olbion’, *English Literary Renaissance*, (Vol. 40: Issue 2, Spring 2010), 237-271, (p.252)

<sup>42</sup> Raphael Falco, p. 254

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Rhoda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern Britain – A Sense of Place*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.18

<sup>48</sup> Jenny Wormald ‘James VI and I’, *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14592>> [Accessed 18/01/11]

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

addresses the Prince of Wales, tied to a safer and more British landscape and named after the Tudor Dynasty 'TO THE HIGH AND MIGHTIE, HENRIE, PRINCE OF WALES.'<sup>51</sup>

Whilst Spenser threatens impending doom towards the end of Elizabeth's era, mourning the loss of English identity into a unified Britannia, Drayton acknowledges in 1612 the disjointed state of national identities in England and Wales but also accepts the potential for national identities to alter and evolve into a more unified form through the next King – a hope that would falter with the Prince's unexpected death later that year. Both Spenser and Drayton explore the complex link between the problem of national identity and the landscape but unlike Spenser, Drayton is tentatively optimistic about the future of his nation.

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<sup>51</sup> Drayton, p. iii

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## Appendix

### From *the Faerie Queen*, Book III Canto III 20-23

20 The doubtfull Mayd, seeing her selfe descryde,  
 Was all abasht, and her pure yuory  
 Into a cleare Carnation suddeine dyde; As faire Aurora rising hastily,  
 Doth by her blushing tell, that she did lye All night in old Tithonus frosen bed,  
 Whereof she seemes ashamed inwardly.  
 But her old Nourse was nought dishartened,  
 But vauntage made of that, which Merlin had ared.

21 And sayd, Sith then thou knowest all our grieffe, (For what doest not thou know?) of  
 grace I pray,  
 Pitty our plaint, and yield vs meet reliefe.  
 With that the Prophet still awhile did stay, And then his spirite thus gan forth display; Most  
 noble Virgin, that by fatall lore  
 Hast learn'd to loue, let no whit thee dismay  
 The hard begin, that meets thee in the dote,  
 And with sharpe fits thy tender hart oppresseth sore.

22 For so must all things excellent begin,  
 And eke enrooted deepe must be that Tree,  
 Whose big embodied braunches shall not lin, Till they to heauens hight forth stretched bee.  
 For from thy wombe a famous Progenie Shall spring, out of the auncient Trojan blood,  
 Which shall reuiue the sleeping memorie  
 Of those same antique Peres, the heauens brood.  
 Which Greeke and Asian riuers stained with their blood.

23 Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours,  
 Thy fruitfull Ofspring, shall from thee descend;  
 Braue Captaines, and most mighty warriours,  
 That shall their conquests through all lands extend,  
 And their decayed kingdomes shall amend:  
 The feeble Britons, broken with long warre,  
 They shall vpreare, and mightily defend  
 Against their forrein foe, that comes from farre,  
 Till vniuersall peace compound all ciuill iarre.

24 It was not, Britomart, thy wandring eye,  
 Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas,  
 But the straight course of heauenly descent,  
 Led with eternall prouidence, that has  
 Guided thy glaunce, to bring his will to pas:  
 Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill  
 To loue the prowest knight, that euer was.  
 Therefore submit thy ways vnto his will,  
 And do by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfil.

25 But read (said Glauce) thou Magitian  
 What meanes shall she out seeke, or what wayes take?  
 How shall she know, how shall she find the man?

Or what needs her to toyle, sith fates can make  
 Way for themselues, their purpose to partake?  
 Then Merlin thus; Indeed the fates are firm,  
 And may not shrinck, though all the world do shake:  
 Yet ought mens good endeouours them confirme,  
 And guide the heauenly causes to their constant terme.

26      The man whom heuens haue ordaynd to bee  
 The spouse of Britomart, is Arthegall: He wonneth in the land of Fayeree,  
 Yet is no Fary borne, ne sib at all  
 To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall,  
 And whilome by false Furies stolne away,  
 Whiles yet in infant cradle he did crall;  
 Ne other to himselfe is knowne this day,  
 But that he by an Elfe was gotten of a Fay.

Book III, Canto III, 49-58

49      Thenceforth eternall vnion shall be made  
 Betweene the nations different afore,  
 And sacred Peace shall louingly perswade  
 The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,  
 And ciuile armes to exercise no more:  
 Then shall a royall virgin raine, which shall  
 Stretch her white rod ouer the *Belgicke* shore,  
 And the great Castle smite so sore with all,  
 That it shall make him shake, and shortly learne to fall.

50      But yet the end is not. There *Merlin* stayd,  
 As ouercomen of the spirits powre,  
 Or other ghastly spectacle dismayed,  
 That secretly he saw, yet note discouse:  
 Which suddein fit, and halfe extatick stoure  
 When the two fearfull women saw, they grew  
 Greatly confused in behavioure;  
 At last they fury past, to former hew  
 Hee turnd againe, and chearefull looks as earst did shew.

51      Then, when them selues they well instructed had  
 Of all, that needed them to be inquired,  
 They both conceiuing hope of comfort glad,  
 With lighter hearts vnto their home retird;  
 Where they in secret counsell close conspird,  
 How to effect so hard an enterprize,  
 And to possesse the purpose they desird:  
 Now this, now that twixt them they did deuise,  
 And diuerse plots did frame, to maske in strange disguise.

52      At last the Nourse in her foolhardy wit  
 Conceiu'd a bold deuise, and thus bespake;

Daughter, I deeme that counsell aye most fit,  
 That of the time doth dew aduantage take;  
 Ye see that good king *Vther* now doth make  
 Strong warre vpon the Paynim brethren, hight  
*Octa* and *Oza*, whom he lately brake  
 Beside *Cayr Verolame*, in victorious fight,  
 That now all *Britanie* doth burne in armes bright.

53 That therefore nought our passage may empeach,  
 Let vs in feigned armes our selues disguise,  
 And our weake hands (whom need new strength shall teach)  
 The dreadful speare and shield to exercize:  
 Ne certes daughter that same warlike wize  
 I weene, would you misseeme; for ye bene tall,  
 And large of limbe, t'atchieue an hard emprize,  
 Ne ought ye want, but skill, which practize small  
 Will bring, and shortly make you a mayd Martiall.

54 And sooth, it ought your courage much inflame,  
 To heare so often, in that royall hous,  
 From whence to none inferior ye came:  
 Bards tell of many women valorous  
 Which haue full many feats aduenturous  
 Performd, in paragone of proudest men:  
 The bold *Bundaca*, whose victorious  
 Exploits made *Rome* to quake, stout *Guendolen*,  
 Renowned *Martia*, and redoubted *Emmilen*.

55 And that, which more then all the rest may sway,  
 Late dayes ensample, which these eyes beheld,  
 In the last field before *Meneuia*  
 Which *Vther* with those forrein Pagans held,  
 I saw a *Saxon* Virgin, the which feld  
 Great *Vlfin* thrise vpon the bloody plaine,  
 And had not *Carados* her hand withheld  
 From rash reuenge, she had him surely slaine,  
 Yet *Carados* himselfe from her escapt with paine.

56 Ah read, (quoth *Britomart*) how is she hight?  
 Faire *Angela* (quoth she) men do her call,  
 No whit lesse faire, then terrible in fight:  
 She hath the leading of a Martiall  
 And mighty people, dreaded more than all  
 The other *Saxons*, which do for her sake  
 And loue, themselues of her name *Angles* call.  
 Therefore faire Infant her ensample make  
 Vnto thyselue, and equall courage to thee take.

57 Her harty words so deepe into the mynd  
 Of the young Damzell sunke, that great desire

Of warlike armes in her forthwith they tynd,  
 And generous stout courage did inspire,  
 That she resolu'd, vnweeting to her Sire,  
 Aduent'rous knighthood on her selfe to don,  
 And cousel'd with her Nourse, her Maides attire  
 To turne into a massy habergeon,  
 And bad her all things put in readinesse anon.  
 58 Th'old woman nought, that needed, did omit;  
 But all things did conueniently purauay:  
 It fortun'd (so time their turne did fit)  
 A band of Britons ryding on forray  
 Few dayes before, had gotten a great pray  
 Of Saxon goods, emongst the which was seene  
 A goodly Armour, and full rich aray,  
 Which long'd to *Angela*, the Saxon Queene,  
 All fretted round with gold and goodly well beseene.

*The Poly-Olbion, The Fourth Song l. 1-40*

THIS while in *Sabrin's* Court strong factions strangely grew,  
 Since *Cornwall* for her owne, and as her proper due,  
 Claim'd *Lundy*, which was said to *Cambria* to belong,  
 Who oft had sought redresse for that her ancient wrong:  
 But her inveterate Foe, borne-out by *Englands* might,  
 O're-swaies her weaker power; that (now in eithers right)  
 As *Severne* finds no Flood so great, nor poorelie meane,  
 But that the naturall Spring (her force which doth maintaine)  
 From this or that shee takes; so from this Faction free  
 (Begun about this Ile) not one was like to bee.

This *Lundy* is an Nymph to idle toyes inclin'd;  
 And, all on pleasure set, doth whollie give her mind  
 To see upon her shores her Fowle and Conies fed,  
 And wantonlie to hatch the Birds of *Ganimed*.  
 Of trafique or returne shee never taketh care:  
 Not provident of pelfe, as many Ilands are:  
 A lustie black-brow'd Girle, with foirhead broad and hie,  
 That often had bewicht the Sea-gods with her eye.  
 Of all the In-laid Iles her Soveraign *Severne* keepes,  
 That bathe their amorous breasts within her sevret Deepes  
 (To love her *Barry* much and *Silly* though shee seeme,  
 The *Flat Holme* and the *Steepe* as likewise to esteeme)  
 This noblest *British* Nymph yet likes her *Lundy* best,  
 And to great *Neptunes* grace preferres before the rest.

Thus, *Cambria* to her right that would her selfe restore  
 And rather then to lose *Loëgria*, lookes for more;  
 The Nymphs of either part, whom passion doth invade,  
 To triall straight will goe, though *Neptune* should dissuade:  
 But of the weaker sex, the most part full of spleene,  
 And onely wanting strength to wreake their angry teene,  
 For skill their challenge make, which everie one profest,

And in the learned Arts (of knowledges the best,  
 And to th'heroic spirit most pleasing under skie)  
 Sweet Musick, rightlie matcht with heavenlie Poësie,  
 In which they all exceed: and in this kind alone  
 They Conquerrers vow to be, or lastile overthrowne.  
 Which when faire *Sabrina* saw (as shee is wondrous wise)  
 And that it were in vaine them better to advise,  
 Sith this contention sprang from Countries like alli'd,  
 That shee would not be found t'incline to either side,

The Fifth Song ll. 1-81

NOW *Sabrina*, as a Queene, miraculously faire,  
 Is absolutelie plac't in her Emperiall Chaire  
 Of Crystall richlie wrought, that gloriously did shine,  
 Her Grace becoming well, a creature so Divine:  
 And as her God-like selfe, so glorious was her Throne,  
 In which himselfe to sit great *Neptune* had been known;  
 Whereon there were ingrav'd those Nymphs the God had woo'd,  
 And every severall shape wherein for love he su'd;  
 Each daughter, her estate and beautie, every sonne;  
 What Nations he had rul'd, what Countries he had wonne.  
 No Fish in this wide waste but with exceeding cost  
 Was there in Antique worke most curiously imbost.  
 Shee, in a watchet weed, with manie a curious wave,  
 Which as a princelie gift great *Amphitrite* gave;  
 Whose skirts were to the knee, with Corall fring'd belowe  
 To grace her goodly steppes. And where she meant to goe,  
 The path was strew'd with Pearle: which though they Orient were,  
 Yet scarce knowne from her feet, they were so wondrous cleere:  
 To whom the Mermaids hold her Glasse, that she may see  
 Before all other Floods how farre her beauties bee:  
 Who was be *Nereus* taught, the most profoundly wise,  
 That learned her skill of hidden Prophecies,  
 By *Thetis* speciall care; as *Chiron* earst had done  
 To that proud bane of Troy, her god-resembling sonne.  
 For her wise censure now, whilst everie listning Flood  
 (When reason some-what coold their late distempred mood)  
 Inclosed *Severne* in; before this mightie rout,  
 Shee sitting well prepar'd, with countenance grave and stout,  
 Like some great learned Judge, to end a waightie Cause,  
 Well furnisht with the force of Arguments and Lawes,  
 And everie speciall prooffe that justlie may be brought;  
 Now with a constant brow, a firme and settled thought,  
 And at the point to give the last and finall doome:  
 The people crowding neere within the pestred roome,  
 A slowe, soft murmuring moves amongst the wondring throng,  
 As though with open eares they would devoure his tongue:  
 So *Severne* bare her selfe, and silence so she wanne,  
 When to th'assembly thus shee seriouslie began;

My neere and loved Nymphs, good hap yee both betide:  
 Well *Britans* have yee sung; you *English*, well repli'd:  
 Which to succeeding times shall memorize your stories  
 To either Countries praise, as both your endlesse glories,  
 And from your listning eares, sith vaine it were to hold  
 What all-appointing Heaven will plainlie shall be told,  
 Both gladlie be you pleas'd: for thus the Powers reveale,  
 That when the *Norman* Line in strength shall lastlie faile  
 (Fate limiting the time) th'ancient *Britan* race  
 Shall come againe to sit upon the soveraigne place.  
 A branch sprung out of *Brute*, the'imperiall top shall get,  
 Which grafted in the stock of great *Plantaginet*,  
 The Stem shall strongly wax, as still the Trunk doth wither:  
 That power which bare it thence, again shall bring it thither  
 By *Tudor*; with faire winds from little *Britaine* driven,  
 To whom the goodlie Bay of *Milford* shall be given;  
 As thy wise Prophetsm *Wales*, fore-told his wisht arrive,  
 And how *Lewellins* Line in him should doubly thrive,  
 For from his issue sent to *Albany* before,  
 Where his neglected blood, his vertue did restore,  
 Hee first unto himselfe in faire succession gain'd  
 The *Stewards* nobler name; and afterward attain'd  
 The royall *Scottish* wreath, upholding it in state.  
 This Stem, to *Tudors* joyn'd (which thing all-powerfull Fate  
 So happily produc't out of that prosperous Bed,  
 Whose mariages conjoyned the White-rose and the Red)  
 Suppressing every Plant, shall spred it selfe so wide,  
 As in his armes shall clip the Ile on every side.  
 By whom three sever'd Realmes in one shall firmlie stand,  
 As *Britain*-founding *Brute* first Monarchiz'd the Land:  
 And *Cornwall*, for that thou no longer shalt contend,  
 But to old *Cambria* cleave, as to thy ancient friend,  
 Acknowledge thou thy Broode, of *Brutes* high blood to bee:  
 And what hat hapt to her, the like t'have chanc't to thee;  
 The *Britains* to receive, when Heaven on them did lowre,  
*Loegria* forc't to leave; who from the *Saxons* powre  
 Themselves in Deserts, Creeks, and Mount'nous wasts bestow'd,  
 Or where the fruitlesse Rocks could promise them aboad:  
 Why strive yee then for that, in little time that shall  
 (As you are all made one) be one unto you all;  
 Then take my finall doome pronounced lastlie, this;  
 That *Lundy* like ally'd to *Wales* and *England* is.

Each part most highlie pleas'd, then up the Session brake:

The Eighth Song ll. 1-42

TO SALOP when her selfe cleere *Sabrina* comes to showe,  
 And wisely her bethinks the way shee had to goe,  
 South-west-ward casts her course; & with an amorous eye  
 Those Countries whence shee came, survayeth (passing by)

Those Lands in Ancient times old *Cambria* claym'd der due,  
 For refuge when to her th'oppressed *Britans* flew;  
 By *England* now usurp't, who (past the wonted Meeres,  
 Her sure and soveraigne banks) had taken sundry Sheeres,  
 Which shee her Marches made: whereby those Hills of fame  
 And Rivers stood disgrac't; accounting it in their shame,  
 That all without that Mound which *Mercian Offa* cast  
 To runne from North to South, athwart the *Cambrian* wast,  
 Could *England* not suffice, but that the stragling *Wye*,  
 Which in the heart of *Wales* was some-time said to lye,  
 Now onely for her bound proud *England* did prefer.  
 That *Severne*, when shee sees the wrong thus offred her,  
 Though by injurious Time deprived of that place  
 Which anciently shee held: yet loth that her disgrace  
 Should on the *Britains* light, the Hills and Rivers neere  
 Austerely to her calls, commaunding them to heare  
 In her deere childrens right (their Ancesters of yore,  
 Now thrust betwixt her selfe, and the *Virginian* shore,  
 Who drave the Giants hence that of the Earth were bred,  
 And of the spacious Ile became the soveraigne head)  
 What from autentique bookes shee liberally could say.  
 Of which whilst shee bethoyut her; West-ward every way,  
 The Mountaines, Floods and Meeres, to silence them betakes,  
 When *Severne* lowting lowe, thus gravely them bespake;  
     How mightie was that man, and honoured still to bee,  
 That gave this Ile his name, and to his children three,  
 Three Kingdoms in the same? Which, time doth nowe denie,  
 With his arivall heere, and primer Monarchy.  
     *Loëgrie*, though thou canst thy *Lochrine* easily lose,  
 Yet *Cambria*, him, whom Fate her ancient Founder chose,  
 In no wise will forgoe; nay, should *Albania* leave  
 Her *Albanact* for ayde, and to the *Scythian* cleave.  
 And though remorselesse *Rome*, which first did us enthrall,  
 As barbarous but esteem'dm and stickt not so to call;  
 The ancient *Britains* yet a sceptred King obey'd  
 Three hundred yeeres before *Romes* great foundation laid;  
 And had a thousand yeeres an Empire strongly stood.  
 Ere *Cæsar* to her shores here stemd the circling Flood;