

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Viewing the Changing ‘shape or pourtraicture of Britain’ in William Camden’s *Britannia*, 1586–1610

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William Camden’s chorographical narratives of nationhood have long been lauded as exemplary texts due to their breadth and depth of learning. They are also exemplary in that they show us how chorography, as a relatively recent import from Europe, was used by the likes of Camden to work through the interactions between: words and images; history and antiquarian study; time and space; and Britain and Continental Europe. This article will investigate these various interactions with a consideration of the continental influences on Camden’s writing. In doing so, this article will argue that these influences had a special influence on the typography and use of images in Camden’s narratives. Much has been written about Camden as historian, antiquarian, and herald and these studies have made valuable contributions to our understanding of him and his writings. Here we will consider these aspects of Camden’s work alongside his career as school master at Westminster in order to support the argument for the influence of European humanism on Camden’s professional life.

Writing about ‘Camden’s *Britannia*’ as a discrete entity is problematic as it presents the various editions as interchangeable and essentially identical. Here it is more rewarding to discuss Camden’s *Britannias* and to consider the importance of the editorial alterations of the successive versions of the narrative. This article will focus primarily on the first vernacular edition, *Britain* (1610), with reference to the earlier Latin editions to provide a comparative study where necessary. The seven editions of *Britannia* produced in Camden’s own lifetime were all printed at the Press at Eliot’s Court, first by Ralph Newbery and later by George Bishop and John Norton, and this continuity allows a comparison of the enlarged and altered texts, paying particular attention to the visual representations of Britain. By focusing on three aspects of the representation of Britain — namely the personification and representation of Britannia on the

frontispiece, the differing visual representations of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, and the typographical complexities of representing Britain's linguistic history — this article hopes to show how the narrative of a nation was so profoundly influenced by the world it tried to differentiate itself from.

Before dealing with the various representations of Britain it is best to consider what a 'chorographically description' might be. The key text that fuelled Renaissance interest in topographical sciences was Ptolemy's *Geographia*, which had been reintroduced to western thought in the fifteenth century. Lucia Nuti claims that as a result of this rediscovery '[a] host of questions concerning chorography tantalized the sixteenth-century editors of the *Geographia*, given that Ptolemy, restricting his work to geography, had not proceeded any further, after his initial definition, in tackling the problem of chorographic representation'.¹ As the discipline of chorography evolved it became interested in describing a region with respect to its history of human settlement. According to Kenneth Olwig chorography was 'concerned with describing self-contained bodies, analogous to the head, whereas topography was concerned with parts of the whole, such as the ear or eye'. Olwig goes on to claim that the 'chorographic approach thus lent itself to a perception of Britain as the geographical embodiment of the British body politic'.²

It is from this distinction between geography and chorography that Camden draws his motivation for writing the *Britannia*; he is not just delineating the landscapes of Britain on a county by county basis, but also writing the histories of peoples within these landscapes. To accomplish this task the *Britannia* had to be carefully structured, with Camden choosing to place history before topography '[turning] on its head the medieval model *Holinshed's Chronicles* had adopted'.³ William Rockett suggests that by organising his material in this way:

Camden had seized upon a structural arrangement that would enable him to integrate history and topography in a work designed to encompass three objectives: to portray the history of the most ancient Britons, to disclose the origin of the English people, and to seek out and identify the

¹ Lucia Nuti, 'Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance' in Denis Cosgrove, ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 90–108 (pp. 90–91).

² Kenneth Robert Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p. 64.

³ Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 143.

British cities mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography, the Antonine Itinerary, and other ancient geographical guides.⁴

It would appear that the *Britannia* has a very strong historical bias, yet it is not a history of the islands. Daniel Woolf writes that 'If Camden's *Britannia* [...] makes one thing clear, it is that its author believed that he was not a historian'; at least not within the context of the publication.⁵ Rather, it appears that for Camden, history is one of the many tools available to the chorographer and is thus subsumed under the title of chorography. The same can be said of the relationship between geography and chorography within Camden's writing. *Britannia* is thus generically flexible due to its compendious approach to knowledge. As Patrick Collinson suggests, 'whatever Camden might want us to think, there is much that we should regard as history in *Britannia*, and even a greater care in the deployment of sound historical method'.⁶ Woolf elsewhere claims that it was due to the fact that the 'increase in published historical literature that began under the early Tudors had turned by Elizabeth's reign into a proliferation of genres' that writers such as Camden felt a 'degree of classificatory anxiety'.⁷ It is in this state of generic flexibility and classificatory anxiety that Britain is variously represented, and it is to the first of these representations we now turn.

The first appearance of an engraved frontispiece occurs in the 1600 edition of the *Britannia*, which was completed by William Rogers. Presumably the design was completed according to the instruction of Camden as Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown suggest that in the majority of cases in this period 'the designer [of the frontispiece] was certainly the author'.⁸ The 1600 edition is also the first to include the large collection of coin engravings. It is conceivable that texts such as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593) stimulated in Camden and other antiquarians a greater focus on the emblematic representation of Britain as seen on Roman coins.⁹ Indeed the image of Britannia sitting on the rocks at the top of the frontispiece is taken from one of these coins (see Image 1). We see Britannia holding a spear in her left arm, which is resting on top of a shield; in her right she holds a sceptre. The head of the spear is pointing up

⁴ William Rockett, 'The Structural Plan of Camden's Britannia', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 26:4 (1995), 829–41 (p. 831).

⁵ Daniel R. Woolf, 'Erudition and the Idea of History in Renaissance England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 40:1 (1987), 11–48 (p. 24).

⁶ Patrick Collinson, 'One of us? William Camden and the making of history "The Camden Society Centenary Lecture"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 8 (1998), 139–63 (p. 144).

⁷ Daniel R. Woolf, 'From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500–1700' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68:1–2 (2005), 33–70 (p. 61).

⁸ Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England 1550-1660* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 35.

⁹ Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece*, pp. 26–27.

towards the sky. This version of the frontispiece was used only for the 1600 edition and was replaced by William Hole's engraving in the 1607 and 1610 editions. Hole's frontispiece is clearly based on Rogers's work, the significant difference being the spear resting in Britannia's arm. In this later engraving the head of the spear is pointing downwards (see Image 2). It has been suggested that this is to show that the islands of Britain had reached some sort of peace due to the unification of the kingdoms of Scotland and England under the reign of King James VI and I. Given that this change in Britannia's spear is the only truly significant alteration in the overall design of the frontispiece from 1600 to 1607 it is clear that the personification of Britannia was thought to be integral to the understanding of Camden's project; but it is not the only representation offered to us.

The frontispiece combines a number of allegorical images which provide, in combination, a pictorial representation of Camden's great scholarly project. To the right of the central image of the map stands Ceres on a plinth, grasping a sickle in her right hand and holding ears of corn in her left. Hanging above her head is a collection of fruits, vegetables, flowers and leaves. One ear of corn is lying on the plinth by her feet and more cereal crops are growing around the base of the structure. Ceres' plinth is decorated with the image of a church, complete with flying buttresses and a dominant square tower. To the left is Neptune, grasping his trident in his right hand and accompanied on the plinth by a fish. Above his head we can see a lobster, some fish and a scallop shell. His plinth is decorated with the image of a galleon flying the cross of St George; bulrushes grow in the foreground, surrounding his plinth. These two Roman deities emphasise the fertility of Britain's land and its surrounding waters, and the decoration of the plinths suggests that the strength of the British people is founded on the power of its navy and the fervour and sanctity of its religious institutions. In the lower central portion of the frontispiece we can see a composite landscape, detailing the ancient construction of Stonehenge alongside the Roman spas at Bath. Here geographical accuracy is sacrificed in order to display the long history of settlement in Britain: the combination of these images stresses the importance of the entire historical narrative of Britain, including the time before the Roman occupation.

The map is, in itself, a truly fascinating section of the frontispiece. It is labelled with the Latin names for some of the major settlements such as Londinum (London) and Eboracum (York), as well as the Latin names for the seas surrounding the islands: Oceanus Hibernicus (The Irish Sea), Oceanus Germanicus (The North Sea). The map also bears the names of a number of the ancient tribes and kingdoms of the Britons, such as the Brigantes, Iceni and Trinobantes. Again we are reminded in this map not only of the Roman occupation of the islands and the enduring influence this had on

British culture, but also that there was a long history of occupation prior to the Roman invasion. We can see then that the frontispiece, when read as a whole, reflects Camden's desire to accomplish his tasks as Rockett outlined above: 'to portray the history of the most ancient Britons, to disclose the origin of the English people, and to seek out and identify the British cities mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography, the Antonine Itinerary, and other ancient geographical guides'.¹⁰

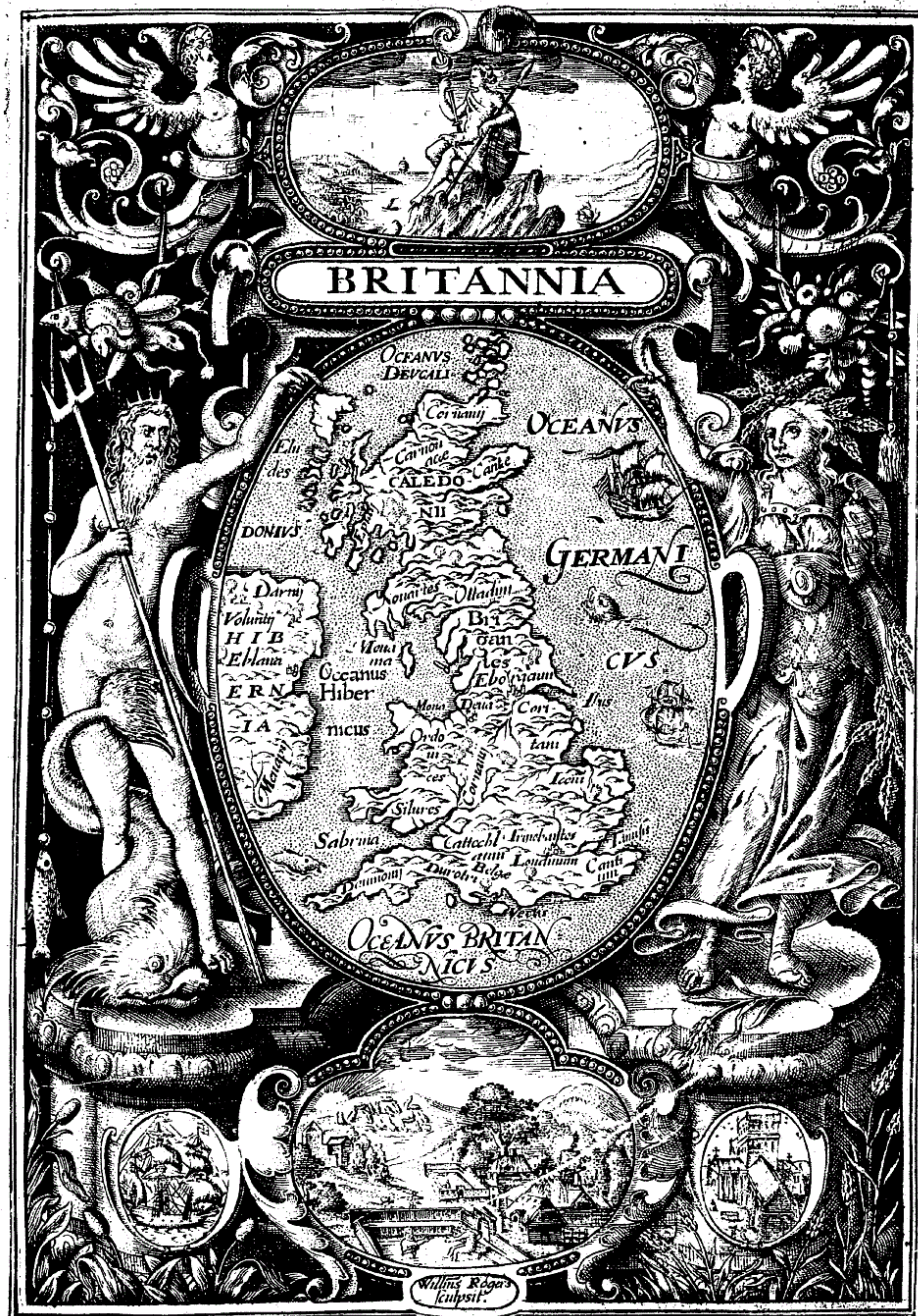


Image 1: Frontispiece to Camden's *Britannia* (1600). RB 97070, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹⁰ William Rockett, 'The Structural Plan of Camden's *Britannia*', p. 831.



Image 2: Frontispiece to Camden's *Britain* (1610). W/G-5-16, Canterbury Cathedral Library. Reproduced with kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury.

Camden addresses his purpose and his inspiration in the opening letter from the author to the reader. In this he writes that:

Abraham Ortelius *the worthy restorer of Ancient Geographie arriuing heere in England, aboue thirty foure yeares past, dealt earnestly with me that I would illustrate this Ile of BRITAINE, or (as he said) that I would restore antiquity to Britaine, and Britain to **his** antiquity.*¹¹

This passage is perhaps one of the most often quoted in writing on Camden, yet few have questioned the implications of the gendering of this passage, even when it contradicts everything we have seen so far with regard to the personification of Britain. The 1610 edition was of course translated into English by Philemon Holland and there has been some debate over Camden's involvement in this act of translation. Recently Angus Vine has argued persuasively that Camden played an active role in the production of the translated edition. Vine suggests that 'Camden himself [...] had a hand in the translation', citing evidence from a letter written by Holland thanking Camden for proofing his translation and asking for further help (BL, MS Cotton Julius C. V, f.106^r). Vine also cites Thomas Fuller's *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662), in which Fuller suggests that Holland's translation was conducted 'not onely with [Camden's] knowledge and consent, but also, no doubt by his desire and help' (iii.128).¹² This would fit the pattern of collaboration that allowed the *Britannia* to come into existence in the first place, Camden having worked within a network of chorographers to combine and organise their source material into an overall narrative. The phrase is cryptic in the original Latin, but it is interesting to note that this translation could have passed under Camden's gaze without comment. Camden goes on to explain his understanding of Ortelius' instructions in the following manner:

*which was as I understood, that I would renew ancientrie, enlighten obscuritie, cleare doubts, and recall home Veritie by way of recovery, which the negligence of writers and credulitie of the common sort had in a manner proscribed and utterly banished from amongst us.*¹³

Ortelius then had a profound influence on the content and direction of the *Britannia* and his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* with its sequence of maps, each having its own companion text, provided a model from which Camden could work. Likewise Camden would have been familiar with the work of Sebastian Münster in his *Cosmographia* (1544) and, closer to home, William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent* (1576) and

¹¹ William Camden, *Britain*, 7th edition, trans. by Philémon Holland (London: George Bishop and John Norton, 1610), sig. *4^r, my emphasis.

¹² Angus Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 80–81n.

¹³ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), sig. *4^r.

could have used these as further examples of how to structure and organise his *Britannia*.

In the address to the reader Camden further stresses the importance of the visual to his study of Britain when he says that:

*Many haue found a defect in this worke that Mappes were not adioined, which doe allure the eies by pleasant portraiture, and are the best directions in Geographicall studies, especially when the light of learning is adioined to the speechlesse delineations. Yet my ability could not compasse it, which by the meanes and cost of George Bishop, and Iohn Norton is now performed out of the labours of Christopher Saxton, and Iohn Norden most skilfull Chorographers.*¹⁴

Favouring the eyes over the other senses in this way is what Walter Ong suggests was at the heart of ‘how the Ramist reworking of dialectic and rhetoric furthered the elimination of sound and voice from man’s understanding of the intellectual world and helped create within the human spirit itself the silences of a spatialized universe’.¹⁵ It is this aspect of Ramist thought, the spatializing of knowledge and how one might represent knowledge visually, that I believe is most apparent in Camden’s writing along with the Ramist concept that one can continually divide and subdivide all types of knowledge to create hierarchies of understanding.

We see further instances of the language of visual artwork in the main body of the text too. Having passed through the frontispiece and the paratextual material that prefaces Camden’s work we find ourselves transported,

For Nature tooke a pleasure in the framing thereof, and seemeth to have made [Britain] as a second world, sequestred from the other, to delight mankind withall, yea and curiously depainted it of purpose as it were a certaine portraict, to represent a singular beautie.¹⁶

Camden’s modesty and deference to Nature in this passage reflects his adherence to the tenets of chorography; especially that the narrative should be guided by the land and its natural features. Furthermore the layering of references to portraiture and painting

¹⁴ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), ‘The Author to the Reader’.

¹⁵ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 318.

¹⁶ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), I.4.

imbue the text with a sense of artistry, highlighting the tensions between the visual and verbal representations of Britain that play out between the covers of Camden's work.

We are given further evidence linking the personification of Britannia to the art of numismatics in a later discussion of the image of Britannia seated on a rock. Camden writes:

For environed [Britain] is with white rocks, which Cicero termeth
Mirificas moles, that is, wonderous Piles: and hereof it is that upon the
coined peeces bearing the stampe of Antoninus Pius and Severus,
Britaine is pourtraied sitting upon rocks in womans habit. And the British
Poets themselves name it *Inis wen*, that is, *The white Ile*.¹⁷

This section of the text is accompanied by the marginal note: 'The shape or pourtraicture of Britain', from which this article derives its title. It is a phrase that reminds us of the different impulses of geography, history and chorography, and displays Camden's manoeuvring between these arts with a focus on the visual. The marginal note merges the various representations of the main text under one heading; the geological structure of the land influences the emblematic personification of Britain and also the names used to describe the land. Again we see that the land is the stimulus for the historical representation. These representations have all, in part, insisted upon an awareness of the pull between history and geography, time and space. 'Just as historical events were grounded in space, so their geographical setting served as a backdrop to the timescale of history'.¹⁸

Denis Cosgrove discusses how '[Ortelius]' maps served as emblems — objects of contemplation through the assistance of which the individual could rise above the mundane'.¹⁹ Ortelius' influence on Camden is well documented and the above examples illustrate the indebtedness of the *Britannia* to the European cartographic movement. Thus far we have looked mainly at emblematic representations of Britain in Camden's work and how the decisions to include these images were derived from his shifting relationship between different generic styles of writing. Daniel Woolf, in his consideration of historical writing, argues that:

¹⁷ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), I.24.

¹⁸ Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*, p. 87.

¹⁹ Denis Cosgrove, 'Globalism and Tolerance in Early Modern Geography', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93:4 (2003), 852–870 (pp. 865–66).

mainstream secular humanist thought about the past as a whole, whether Britannic or Continental, did not differ remarkably from its medieval theological precursor in certain of its mental habits; but it considerably broadened the field of *comparanda*, expanded the moral contexts within which analogy was useful, and adumbrated a sophisticated language of prophecy, iconography, allegory, and typology that suffuses Renaissance poetry, history, and visual art.²⁰

We have seen the iconography and allegory in the images of Britannia on the frontispiece and in the ancient coins, and Camden's text contains many prophetic statements and mythological discussions of the genesis of Britain and the British. Our focus will now move to a more detailed discussion of the influences of Ramism on Camden's narrative.

As mentioned above, considering Camden's role as an educator can provide us with a new insight into the influences of Ramism on his pedagogical practice as well as his method for the acquisition of sources and their arrangement in his narrative. This follows from Peter Burke's suggestion that a 'history of the antiquarian movement, were one to be written, might profitably investigate the influence of the occupations of antiquaries on their attitude to visual evidence'.²¹ Following a discussion of this role we will move onto Camden's historicised representations of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy and explore the potential influences Ramus' writings had not only on Camden, but on early modern academic literature.

Camden spent twenty-two years at Westminster, a school that was 'emerging as academically one of the most prestigious in the kingdom, taking the place once held by St Paul's. He contributed significantly to its distinction, first as second master for eighteen years, with a yearly salary of £10, and then as headmaster from 1593 to 1597, with a salary of £20'.²² Hugh Trevor-Roper suggested that we should consider Camden and his writing separately from his contemporaries because '*Britannia* was the vacation work of an active London schoolmaster. For Camden was not, like so many of the Elizabethan antiquaries, a gentleman amateur of scholarship: he was a professional, an

²⁰ Daniel R. Woolf, 'From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500–1700', p. 45.

²¹ Peter Burke, 'Images as Evidence in Seventeenth-Century Europe', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64:2 (2003), 273–93 (p. 293).

²² Wyman H. Herendeen, 'William Camden', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., Jan 2008 < <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4431> >, accessed 2 Oct 2015.

academic'.²³ Indeed, there appears to be a consensus among modern scholars that Camden should be recognised as being ahead of his time. Wyman Herendeen writes that 'Camden's polish and professionalism, and the comparative absence of spontaneity, then, are the product of his methodology and design, not a deficiency of style or perspicacity. Ironically, his methods are largely those of the modern historian'.²⁴ The focus of Herendeen and others on Camden's 'method' and 'methodology' is caused by Camden's own self-conscious discussions of the same. Camden is quick to defend his method in his address to the reader, in which he says

*There are some peradventure which apprehend it disdainfully and
offensiuey that I have not remembred this or that family, when as it was
not my purpose to mention any but such as were more notable, nor all
them truly (for their names would fill whole volumes) but such as
happened in my way **according to the methode I proposed to my selfe**.*²⁵

Camden's previous editions of the *Britannia* had been criticised especially by Ralph Brooke and it is perhaps for this reason that he is so forthright in the 1610 edition with his discussion of his methods. Another reason could be the spreading influence of the writings of Peter Ramus on scholarly writing across Europe. That is not to say that the intellectual exchange was unidirectional; Camden was famed across Europe for his scholarly integrity and Herendeen describes how 'Scholars from across Europe, both protestant and Roman Catholic, included a meeting with Camden on their itinerary when they came to England'.²⁶ This placed Camden in a position of almost unrivalled access to continental European scholarship and he was always a willing recipient of new approaches to scholarly endeavours.

A visual-verbal representation of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy was included in every version of the *Britannia* from 1586 to 1610. The earliest version (see Image 3) pays little attention to presenting a unified image of the heptarchy. The two sections were printed on the recto and verso of the same folio and so could not have been viewed simultaneously as a unified representation of Britain. The representation of Britain remained like this until the edition of 1594 (see Image 4).

²³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Queen Elizabeth's First Historian: William Camden and the Beginnings of English 'Civil History'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 6.

²⁴ Wyman H. Herendeen, 'William Camden: Historian, Herald, and Antiquary', *Studies in Philology*, 85:2 (1988), 192–210 (p. 200).

²⁵ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), 'The Author to the Reader', my emphasis.

²⁶ Wyman H. Herendeen, 'William Camden', *ODNB*, < <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4431> >, accessed 2 Oct 2015.

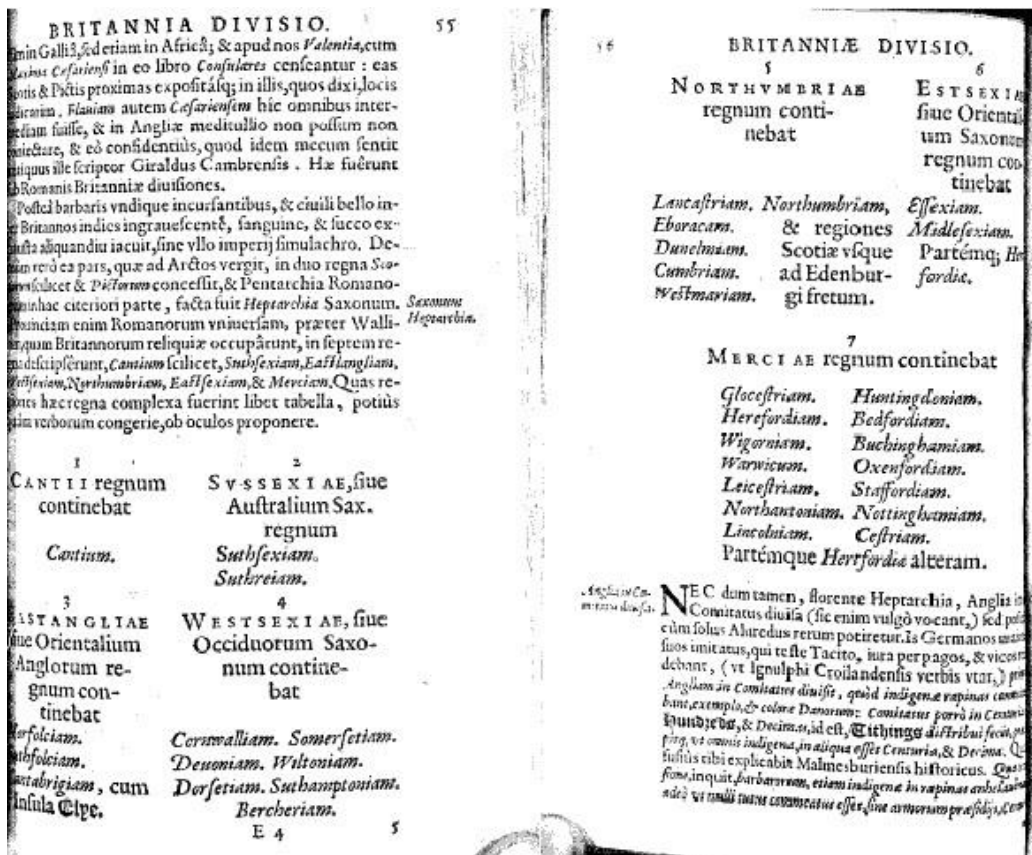


Image 3: Representation of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy in Camden's *Britannia* (1586), I.55-56. © The British Library Board, General Reference Collection RB.23.a.8878.

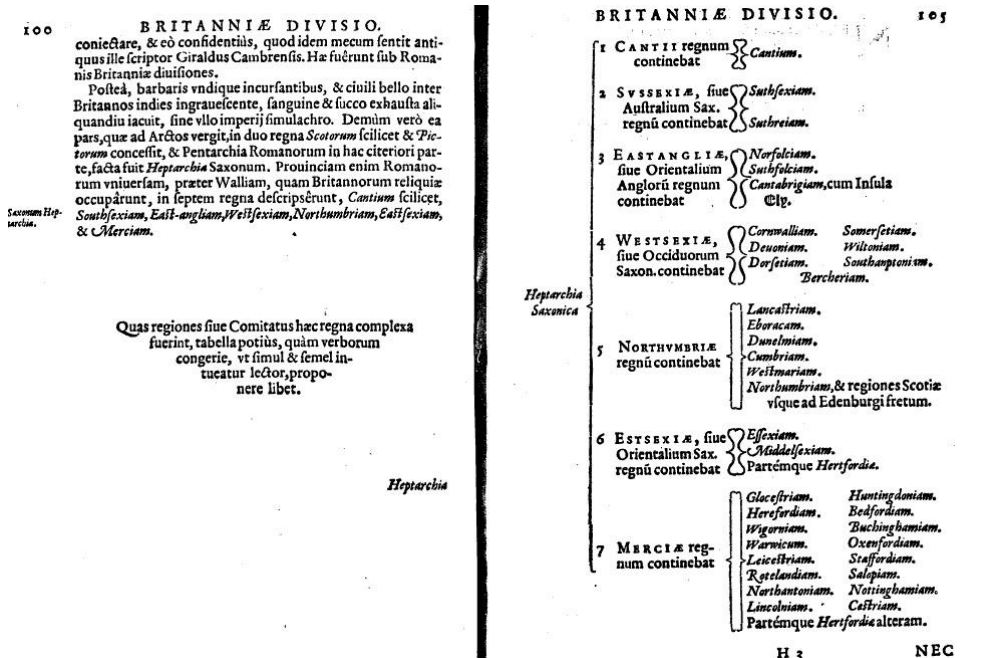


Image 4: Representation of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy in Camden's *Britannia* (1594), I.100-101. RB 97071, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

From the 1594 edition onwards we begin to see a unified diagrammatic representation of the heptarchy as a powerful visual-verbal object, reminiscent of the ‘bracketed dichotomies’ popularised by Ramus’ publications on logic and rhetoric. Camden also represents the counties of the provinces of Ireland in a similar manner.²⁷ In both cases there is no geographical logic to the organisation of the kingdoms or provinces, rather the spatial element has been abstracted and all that remains is the underlying relationships between the names of areas of land. It was not just the land that Camden chose to represent in this manner, but also the organisational structure of the Irish Church (see Image 5).

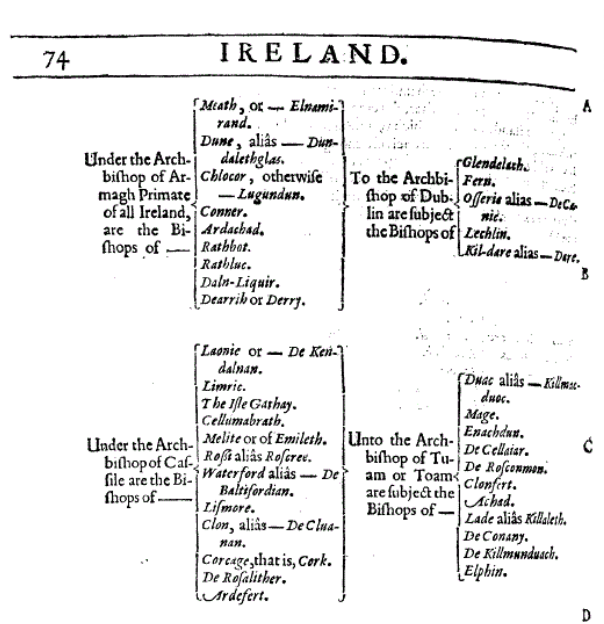


Image 5: Representation of the Church Government of Ireland in Camden’s, *Britain* (1610), II.74. Ede +610C, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

This diagram of the organisational structure of the Irish Church serves an important purpose here as it shows how Camden treats these different types of knowledge. All information seems to be able to be organised into hierarchies using these bifurcating brackets, this diagrammatic logic. Walter Ong describes the ‘fad for a diagrammatic logic’ as an epiphenomenon of ‘Western man’s gradual revision of his attitude towards space’ and further suggests that ‘Spatial constructs and models were becoming increasingly critical in intellectual development’.²⁸

²⁷ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), p. II.73.

²⁸ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, p. 83.

Intellectual development would have been at the forefront of Camden's mind both as an antiquarian/historian and as a pedagogue. Ong claims that 'Ramism has been commonly regarded as "more a pedagogical than a philosophical reform."' The implication is that pedagogy and philosophy are quite separate human activities. This does not hold true in Ramus' world' says Ong, and nor does it in Camden's.²⁹ This intellectual development was fuelled by literature and Richard DeMolen's survey of Camden's library suggests that the majority of his books '(340 or 56 percent) were published on the continent while 265 titles or 44 percent were printed in Great Britain'.³⁰ With this combination of insular and continental books at his disposal Camden was perfectly poised as a member of the 'Late Tudor literate culture' that 'embraced a mature humanism that borrowed not just from the classicism of the European Renaissance but also from other Continental currents, notably the attention to "method" and "order" in enumerating and describing literary genres and their boundaries'.³¹ Camden provides another marginal note that is concerned precisely with these issues. He describes how the county by county chorography of the second section will work as the 'order or Method of the worke ensuing'.³² Purposefully discussing methodology in this manner is perhaps due to the Ramist influence on rhetoric and logic in the latter sixteenth century. We also return again to the preoccupation with generic clarity that Camden so fervently asserts in his address to the reader, yet fails to uphold. Herendeen argues that 'As with most aspects of intellectual growth during the English Renaissance, the early interest in antiquities as a branch of history came to England through France from Italy, where the distinction between the forms was somewhat clearer'.³³

The 1610 edition offers the diagrammatic heptarchy in English (see image 6), with the following title justifying its own existence:

Considering that in a Chorographicall Table or Map, by reason of so narrow a roome, those Regions or Countries which *these Kingdomes contained, could not well and handsomely be described: In this other Table here, rather than by heaping many words together, I think good to propose, and set downe the same, that the Reader may once for all have a view of them.*³⁴

²⁹ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, p. 149.

³⁰ Richard L. DeMolen, 'The Library of William Camden', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 128:4 (1984), 326–409 (p. 335).

³¹ Daniel R. Woolf, 'From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500–1700', p. 61.

³² William Camden, *Britain* (1610), p. 182.

³³ Wyman H. Herendeen, 'William Camden: Historian, Herald, and Antiquary', p. 195.

³⁴ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), I.157.

Division of Britaine.

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A Considering that in a Chorographicaall Table or Map, by reason of so narrow a roome, those Regions or Counties which these Kingdomes contained, could not well and handsomely be described: In this other Table here, rather than by heaping many words together, I think good to propose, and set downe the same, that the Reader may once for all have a view of them.

1 The Kingdom of KENT contained	the Counties of Kent.	
2 The Kingdom of SUSSEX, or Southern Saxons, contained	the Counties of Southsex.	
3 The Kingdom of EAST-ENGLAND, or East-Angles, contained	the Counties of Norfolk, Southfolke, (Ile of Ely, Cambridge shire, with the	
C	Cornwall.	
	Devon shire.	
	Dorset shire.	
	Somerset shire.	
	Wiltshire.	
4 The Kingdom of WEST-SSEX, or West-Angles, contained	the Counties of Southampton, Berkshire.	
D	Lancaster.	
	York.	
	Durham.	
	Cumberland.	
	Westmorland.	
5 The Kingdom of NORTHUMB-ERLAND, contained	the Counties of Northumberland, and the Countreys of Scotland to Edenburgh-frith.	
E	6 The Kingdom of ESSEX, or East-Saxons, contained	the Counties of Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire.
	F	Glocester shire.
Hereford shire.		
Worcester shire.		
Warwick shire.		
Leicester shire.		
Roland shire.		
Northampton shire.		
Lincolne shire.		
Huntingdon shire.		
Bedford shire.		
Buckingham shire.		
Oxenford shire.		
Stafford shire.		
Derbie shire.		
Salop or Shropshire.		
Nottingham shire.		
Chester, or Cheshire. (shire.		
The other part of Hertford		

Yet

Image 6: Representation of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy in Camden's *Britain* (1610), I.157. q C 610.CAM, Special Collections & Archives, University of Kent.

The physical dimensions of the page posed a problem to Camden and his solution was an elegant and ordered one, rather than a heap of words. Again the language of the potential map was one of description rather than depiction, blurring the lines between the visual and the verbal, the cartographer and the narrator. We should put this justification under further scrutiny once we see that a 'traditional map' displaying the same heptarchy appears thirty pages before the diagrammatic one (see image 7).



Image 7: Map of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy in Camden's *Britain* (1610), insert I.126-7. Ede +610C, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Comparing these two very different versions of the same geographical space is particularly pertinent for this article as they show within the space of one book how varied approaches to the issue of visual representation can be. It is perhaps worth noting here as well that Camden refers to a 'Reader' in the above quotation; in studying Camden in detail we begin to see why we speak about the practice of 'reading a map' rather than looking at one. Walter Ong writes that 'While the invention of printing has been discussed conventionally in terms of its value for spreading ideas, its even greater contribution is its furthering of the long-developing shift in the relationship between space and discourse', and I would argue that these representations of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy are an excellent example of both aspects of print that Ong is discussing.³⁵

We will turn our attention now to another of Camden's key concerns in the editions of the *Britannia*: languages, typography and etymology. The very first page of the 1610 edition begins with the following: 'BRITAINE or BRITANNIE, which also is ALBION, named in Greeke BPETANIA, BPETANIKH, ΠΙΡΕΤΑΝΙΣ, ΑΛΒΙΩΝ, ΑΛΟΥΙΩΝ, the most famous Iland, without comparison, of the whole world; severed from the continent of Europe, by the interflowing of the Ocean.'³⁶ This linguistic

³⁵ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, p. 307.

³⁶ William Camden, *Britain* (1610), p. 1.

fumbling is evidence of Camden's method of attempting to fill the book with as much knowledge as possible and portrays his predilection for languages. Within the first lines of the main text Britain, rather than being unified in the discourse, is represented in eight linguistically and typographically distinct versions. This multitude of representations works in the same way as the frontispiece does, attempting to convey the entire history of the nation in a visually striking way. Being so concerned with logic and rhetoric, we find that 'in practically all the countries where Ramism was known, it was at the forefront of the vernacular movements' and here in the first vernacular edition of the *Britannia* we see the Ramist influence.³⁷ My argument here is that these words, and the words in Anglo-Saxon, can be read as both word and image. Camden provides his reader with a visually stunning table 'For the easier reading of the English-Saxon' (see image 8).

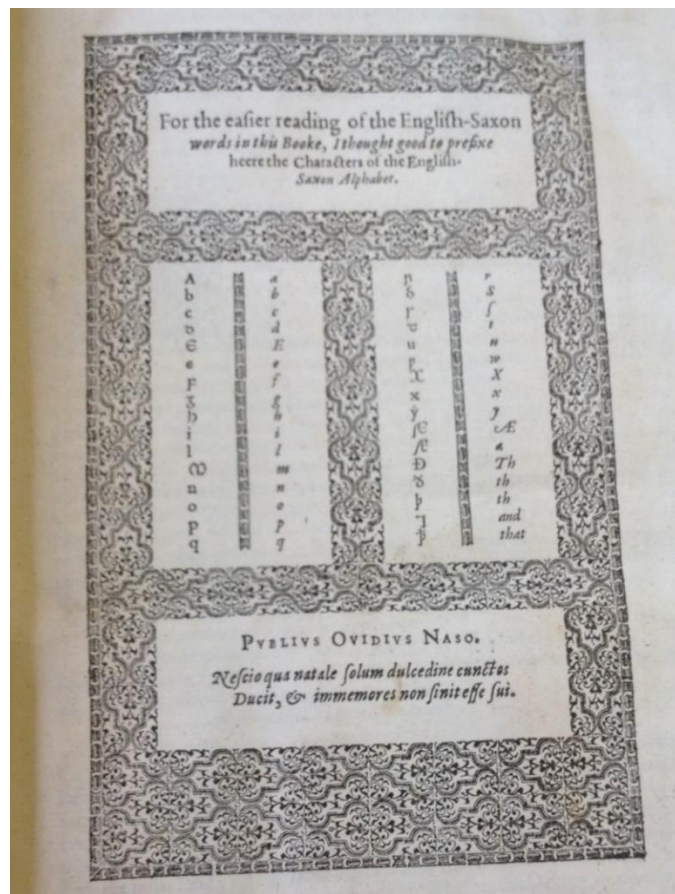


Image 8: Table of Anglo-Saxon and Latin Alphabets in Camden's *Britain* (1610). q C 610.CAM, Special Collections & Archives, University of Kent.

³⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason*, p. 305.

The embellishments of the visual aesthetic of this table encourage us, as readers, to consider the shape and structure of each letter as we would any of the maps. The Greek letters create the sense of antiquity that Camden strives for and his etymological discussions of Britain expound on the primacy of language, and linguistic change, as a tool for discovering the truth. Camden writes later, ‘Now are we come to the language, in which lieth the maine strength of this disputation and the surest prooffe of peoples originall’.³⁸ This statement problematizes the discussions of this article by supporting language as the prime means of understanding, and yet Camden implicitly invites us to read the different languages as a series of images representing the different stages of Britain’s history. Camden wrote elsewhere that:

I shall esteem myself fully recompensed for my Labour, if by my ready Willingness to preserve the Memory of Things, to relate the Truth, and to train up the Minds of men to Honesty and Wisdom, I may thereby find a Place amongst petty Writers of great Matters.³⁹

In his continued revision of the *Britannia* from its first edition onwards, Camden certainly accomplished these goals; goals which corresponded very much to his commitment to humanism and pedagogy.

The *Britannia*, then, is an amorphous conceptual project yet with a very clear structure, evolving over time and avoiding the generic stability its author so desperately claims of it. Within the pages of each edition we see the tensions between words and images played out, in turn influencing the reader’s understanding of the relationship between the visual and the verbal, history and geography, and language and identity. It demands the attention of its readers and contains within it complex representations suggesting a sense of unity, but on closer inspection these representations are revealed to be disparate and sometimes contradictory. If ‘Ortelius used geography in order to practise philosophy’ and ‘His world map, placed at the front of the volume, was a manifesto of his moral and religious thoughts’ then Camden used geography in order to practice all the arts of Renaissance humanism and his *Britannia* was equally a manifesto of his attitude to education and knowledge.⁴⁰ Herendeen writes that ‘the *Britannia* itself was a response to the call by European scholars for an account of ancient Britain, and it evolved from other efforts to create a universal topographical history of Europe’ and

³⁸ William Camden, *Britain*, (1610), I.16.

³⁹ William Camden, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth Late Queen of England*, ed. by Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 8.

⁴⁰ Lucia Nuti, ‘The World Map as an Emblem: Abraham Ortelius and the Stoic Contemplation’, *Imago Mundi*, 55 (2003), 38–55 (p. 51).

this article has shown how the relationship between words and images, influenced by the very European scholars who called for the account, was central to this response.⁴¹

⁴¹ Wyman H. Herendeen, 'William Camden: Historian, Herald, and Antiquary', p. 202.