LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

'An Ancient City Is a Glorious View': Urban Identity and Antiquarian Visions of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century

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Abstract:
Henri Lefebvre suggests in *The Production of Space* that a study of human interaction with a given place should have an excavating dimension, drawing attention to the importance of examining records that bring to light historical layers which, over the course of time, have been buried beneath the present configurations of a given place. In this respect, he has something in common with, for example, the practice of Deep Mapping. Following this line of thought, this article looks to show how, during the first half of the eighteenth century, the buried past of the city of Bristol, United Kingdom became a site of contestation. The article focuses on two texts: William Goldwin's poem *A Poetical Description of Bristol* (1712) and the first published history of the city, Andrew Hooke's *A Dissertation on the Antiquity of Bristol* (1748). To varying degrees, both texts look back to Bristol's foundation, suggesting, more or less explicitly, that the city was several thousand years older than otherwise believed and intimately linked to the mythical foundation of Britain. Reading the two texts in conjunction, I argue that both Goldwin and Hooke were trying to use this knowledge of Bristol's foundation – its buried past – to bolster its urban identity. I also argue that both were supported in their work by Bristol's authorities, suggesting that they were part of an official push to strengthen the city's status. Beyond thus showing how literary and cultural texts can evoke and engage with the buried past of a specific urban environment, the article also looks to further our knowledge of the kind of cultural texts produced in Bristol during a period when Britain's urban landscape was rapidly changing.

Keywords: urban identity; eighteenth-century literature; Bristol; William Goldwin; Andrew Hooke; antiquarianism.

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Introduction

In the final chapter of his influential *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes:

> The initial basis or foundation of social space is nature – natural or physical space. Upon this basis are superimposed – in ways that transform, supplant or even threaten to destroy it – successive stratified and tangled networks which, though always material in form, nevertheless have an existence beyond their materiality […]. Theory has shown that no space disappears completely, or is utterly abolished in the course of the process of social development – not even the natural place where that process began. 'Something' always survives or endures – 'something' that is not a *thing*. […] Each network or sequence of links […] is *produced* – and serves a purpose; and each wears out or is consumed, sometimes unproductively, sometimes productively. (Lefebvre 2001: 402-03)

As I understand Lefebvre, his point here is not simply that places change in appearance over time.[1] Rather, he emphasizes the permanency and vitality of each layer of development in any given place. Even if it is not possible to observe with the naked eye the remains of a particular stratum, there will always be some extant immaterial record – ''something' that is not a *thing*' – that outlives physical objects. An example of one such record would be a literary text; as would, for instance, a painting, a photo, a video, a historical account and other similar cultural productions.

Lefebvre's analytical model – and, here, I am thinking primarily of his spatial triad (2001: 229-33, 245-46) – does not explicitly point in that direction, but the passage above suggests that he imagined an examination of human relations in a given place to have an archaeological dimension. Each stratum is intrinsically connected with the others that have been created in that place, before and after, and for that reason a study of human interaction there must be of an excavatory kind; a digging down into the past, identifying relevant layers (material and immaterial), separating and comparing them to reach a satisfying analysis. In this sense, Lefebvre appears to have something in common with, for example, the practice of Deep Mapping. This sub-field of spatial humanities is, in the words of Les Roberts, 'as much a process of *archaeology* as it is cartography' (2016: 3). By this he means that, in its investigations, Deep Mapping is focused on '*verticality*'; on 'excavat[ing] that which is hidden or buried' and '[t]he temporal configurations that anchor places in turf' (2-3). The present article takes inspiration from Lefebvre as well as Deep Mapping and, in particular, how both kinds of enquiry draw attention to the importance of examining records that bring to light historical layers which, over the course of time, have been buried beneath the present configurations of a given place. Focusing on a specific place at a specific moment in history, the article will consider how, in literature and other cultural texts, such hidden strata can become sites of contestation and evoked for civic purposes.

More specifically, the place is the city of Bristol in the United Kingdom. The time is the first half of the eighteenth century. The temporal and spatial framework is complicated, however, since I am primarily interested in examining how eighteenth-century Bristolians

looked back to and engaged with the city's foundation. This event was the cause of some intense debates during the period as antiquarians sought to establish precisely how old Bristol was. The focus will be on two texts written and produced in the city: *A Poetical Description of Bristol* (1712) by the grammar school teacher and clergyman William Goldwin and the first printed history of the city (Sweet 1997: 128), *A Dissertation on the Antiquity of Bristol* (1748), by the printer and antiquarian Andrew Hooke. The analysis will begin by examining the different historical layers Goldwin highlights in his poem. His perspective is almost entirely visual – the places mentioned are nearly all such that could be seen and observed with the naked eye – but there is good reason to think that, at key points, he used a vocabulary which, to his contemporary readers, would have hinted at a deeper, less visible historical past, at the Bristol buried beneath the eighteenth-century city. The discussion will evolve around Goldwin's varied use of the word 'ancient' and, here, Hooke's *Dissertation* is brought in to illustrate what connotations it had in relation to Bristol during the first half of the eighteenth century. In the final part, the *Dissertation* will be used differently and I will explore the possibility of reading it alongside Goldwin's *Poetical Description* (and, especially, the republication of that poem in 1751) as part of the same communal enterprise. I venture to suggest that these texts can be understood to have worked in conjunction to shape Bristol's identity, working to boost its image by furthering the idea that, contrary to the beliefs of the most revered authorities, it had been a historically significant city for almost as long as there was anything that could be called Britain.

Beyond showing how literary and cultural texts can evoke and engage with the buried past of a specific urban environment, the article has other aims. First, I intend to draw attention to and deepen our understanding of the *Poetical Description* and the *Dissertation*. So far, both have received only scarce critical attention.[2] I also wish to increase our knowledge of the kind of texts produced in Bristol during the first half of the eighteenth century. In spite of the critical neglect, both works are interesting partly because they were published during a period when, in the words of P. J. Corfield, 'England's urban world was becoming notably multi-centred rather than focused upon a single city' (qtd. in Borsay 1989: 20). This shift towards a more varied urban landscape is not only detectable in the explosive growth of provincial cities such as Bristol, but, as for example Peter Borsay (1989) and John Brewer (1997) have shown, also in an increase in the range and diversity of the cultural commodities being produced in cities outside London. Both the *Poetical Description* and the *Dissertation* are examples of the kind of cultural texts being written in provincial cities at a time when these were beginning to explore and develop their cultural and literary identities. Second, over the past fifty years or so, the tendency has been for scholars interested in the connection between literature and the city during this period to focus heavily on London (e.g. Williams 1973; Rogers 1980; Sussman 2012) while provincial urban literature has been left relatively unexplored. There are signs that this is changing, however, and, in various ways, scholars such as Brean Hammond (2001: 96-100) and John Brewer (1997: 493-601) have drawn attention to the existence of a more diverse literary urban landscape. Likewise, there is a growing body of work on Bristol literature which, primarily, is focused on the city's literary golden age at the end of the eighteenth century, starting with Thomas Chatterton and stretching into the Romantic period (e.g. Mulvey-Roberts 2015). It is the

aim of this article to contribute to such scholarship by studying a poem written in one of England's largest provincial cities immediately prior to its literary bloom, showing in the process how it can be seen to have interacted with other cultural productions.

'Ancient in Priviledge, in Politeness New': Historical Layers in the *Poetical Description*

William Goldwin's *Poetical Description* belongs to the genre of prospect poetry. In the preface, Goldwin openly acknowledges his indebtedness to John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642), the poem which is generally thought to have started this specific poetic tradition.[3] As is characteristic of such poems, readers are invited to survey a landscape (usually including a river) from some elevated point. In this case, it is St Michael's Hill, immediately north of Bristol's city centre, from where we are presented with a kind of guided tour of selected parts of the city and its perimeters that is readily represented cartographically (Figure 1). As I have argued elsewhere, Goldwin appears to have been mainly concerned with showing Bristol to be an attractive modern urban environment (Borch 2017). The best example of this is, arguably, his description of Queen Square:

> What can't Inventress Art and Labour do?
> This handsome Square from heaps of Rubbish grew;
> And, tho' past Years the marshy Bottom saw
> Thick drizling Fogs from steaming Nature draw,
> No vap'rish Humours left, but only those
> Which Ladies sickly Fancies discompose:
> Where Level-walks delightful Lanes display,
> There wat'ry Mud in deep Confusion lay.
> […]
> So *Holland*'s Province built on boggy Lands
> Consummate Neatness, and a Beauty stands:
> Thus (since the Objects Similies provoke)
> The whole Creation from a *Chaos* broke. (18)

Constructed between 1700 and 1727, Queen Square was the first of many squares to be established in English provincial cities during the first half of the eighteenth century.[4] Modelled on London squares such as Bloomsbury and St James's, these provincial counterparts were intended to create more elegant and convenient urban environments and hence they also exemplified the modern, civilized city (Borsay 1989: 74-79). This is what Goldwin wished to accentuate, but, as the passage further illustrates, he was not only interested in giving his readers a taste of state-of-the-art Bristol. He stressed the process of development which had taken place and the geological and historical foundations on which this particular part of the city rested. In this sense, the passage is somewhat unusual. Such explicit before-and-after images are not found elsewhere and the poem does not provide similar descriptions of how areas of the city had been transformed over time. That said, looking at the poem as a whole, it is clear that Goldwin was interested in conveying to his

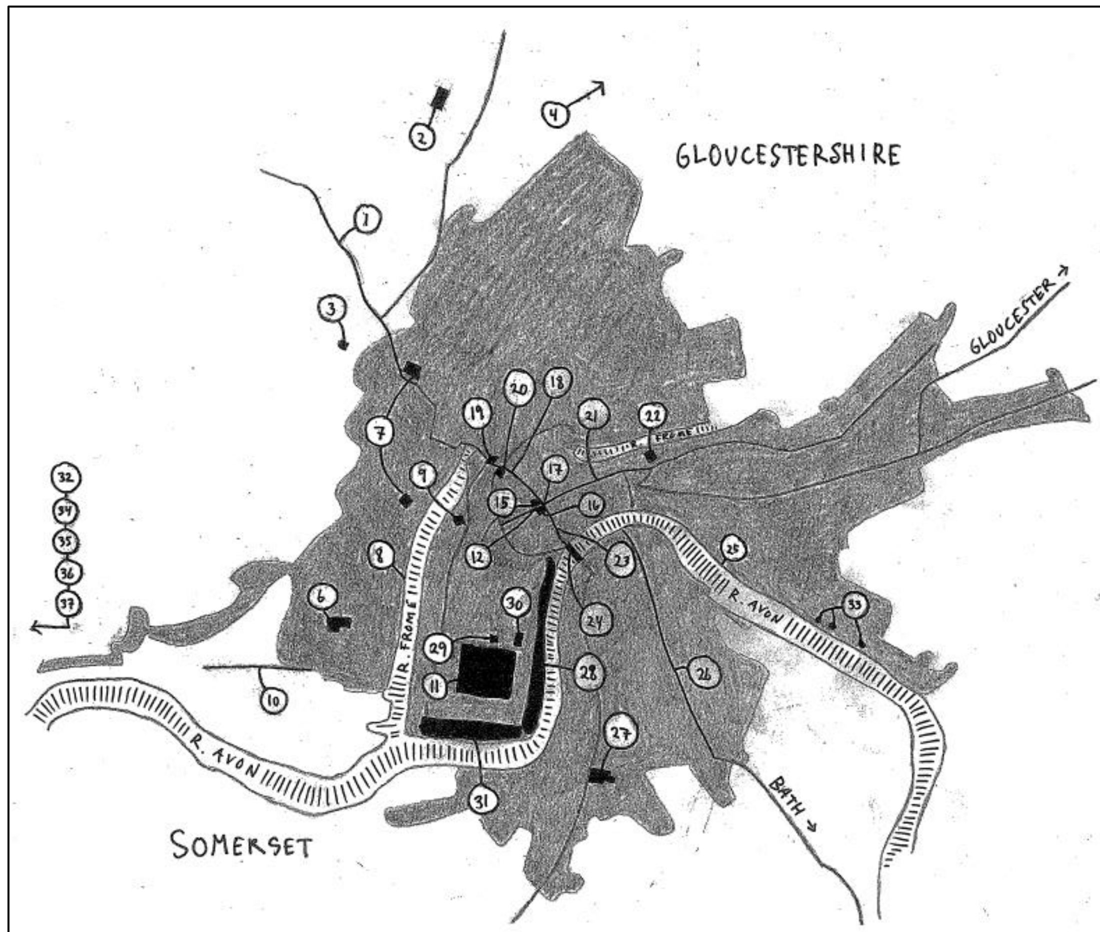

Figure 1. Sketch-map of Bristol by the author, showing places mentioned in the *Poetical Description*, numbered chronologically as they appear in the poem. Drawn from John Rocque's map of 1747. (NB. It has not been possible to locate with accuracy the places marked with an asterisk and these are not included.) 1. St Michael's Hill; 2. Cotham's Lodge; 3. The Royal Fort; 4. Kingswood; *5. 'Aurelia's Farm'; 6. The Cathedral; 7. Edward Colston's Hospital and Alms House; 8. River Frome and Key; 9. St Stephen's Church; 10. Roper's Walk; 11. Queen Square; 12. The Tolzey; *13. A coffee house; *14. Insurance office; 15. Council House; 16. All Saints' Church; 17. High Cross; 18. Broad Street; 19. Church of St John the Baptist; 20. Guildhall; 21. Wine Street; 22. Newgate Prison; 23. High Street; 24. Bridge across the Avon; 25. The Avon; 26. Temple Street; 27. St Mary Redcliffe; 28. St Nicholas Back; 29. Custom House; 30. Mansion House; 31. 'New Plantation' (later the Grove); 32. In the preface to In the preface to Clifton; 33. The Glass Pyramids (i.e. factories); 34. St Vincent's Rocks; 35. The Hot Well; 36. Confluence of the Avon and the Severn; 37. Steep Holm and Flat Holm.

readers that early eighteenth-century Bristol was a diverse and multi-layered city, made up of buildings and structures from many different historical periods.

Take this passage, for instance, which appears early in the poem:

> What Scenes of Wealth! What Heaps of Wonder rise!
> What new and ancient Fabricks crou'd the Skies!
> Here Monuments of *Living Founders* Praise,
> There sacred Piles a serious Pleasure raide;
> While Sets of private Buildings seem to vye
> With publick Domes, the rival Objects try,
> Like airy Dames, to meet the coming Eye.
> Each lofty Mansion is an ample Theme,
> Stor'd with Ideas for a Poets Scheme;
> And, tho' divided Views the Fancy break,
> And incoherent Starts in Method make;
> The whole Collection shall my Numbers grace,
> And grateful Lines a fair Description trace. (2)

From this, it is evident that Goldwin sees Bristol as a coherent unity even if, from a poetical perspective, he finds it difficult to form cohesive links between its manifold individual parts. Furthermore, he is keen to highlight that this diversity has a distinct temporal dimension: Bristol's skyline is a vista of historical layers; of buildings constructed at different moments in the city's history.

Reading these lines, one easily comes to think of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's two prospects of the city. These were published in 1734, twenty-two years after Goldwin's poem, and present us with views of Bristol from hills southeast and northwest of the city rather than from St Michael's Hill (Figures 2 and 3). As will be discussed later, it is not out of place to compare the *Poetical Description* with the Bucks' prospect paintings. For now, however, I simply wish to point out that Goldwin is less encompassing than the Buck brothers when he zooms in on the city's structures. For instance, the Bucks highlight nineteen different churches in the notes to their engravings, but Goldwin only draws attention to five: the Cathedral, St Stephen's, All Saints', St John the Baptist and St Mary Redcliffe. Yet these particular churches do give a good indication of the range of historical layers entailed in the *Poetical Description* – what 'new and ancient' actually means in this context.

Founded first as an abbey in 1142, the Cathedral structure had been built between then and the early sixteenth century. St Mary Redcliffe consisted of parts dating from the thirteenth through to the fifteenth centuries while St John the Baptist was from the fourteenth and St Stephen's from the middle of the fifteenth century. All Saint's is interesting because, although stemming from the fifteenth century, a new tower was being added at the time Goldwin was writing the *Poetical Description*, a work he complained was being hampered by 'jarring Schemes' (13).[5] The churches illustrate that Goldwin wanted his readers to notice structures ranging from the not-yet completed to the medieval. At least on the surface, this spectrum seems to be representative for the poem as a whole. As discussed, the construction of Queen Square had been started in 1700 and, although it was not a building site in 1712, work on it would continue until 1727. The Council House and the Custom House had both been built during the preceding decade around which time Edward Colston had also established his hospital (in fact, a boys' school) in a sixteenth

Figure 2. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. "The North West Prospect of the City of Bristol" (1734a). ©British Library.

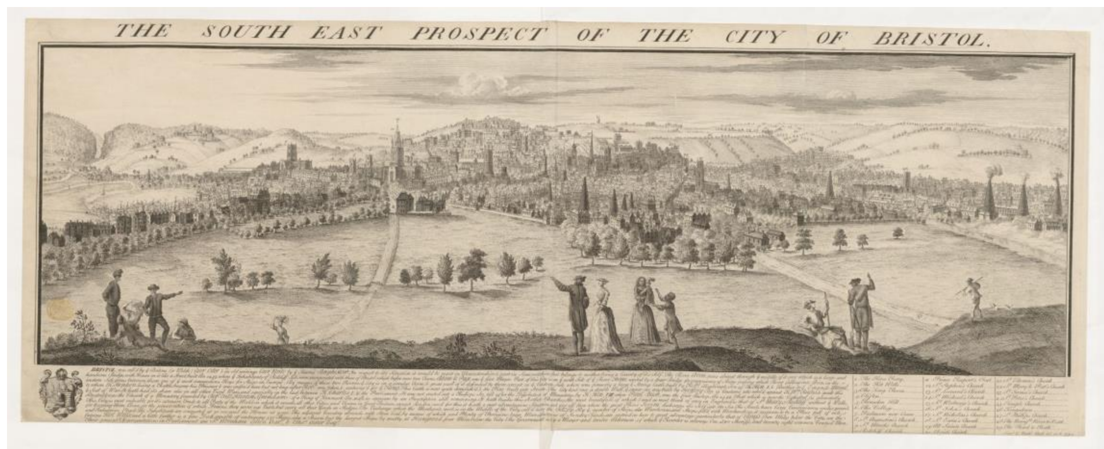

Figure 3. Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. "The South East Prospect of the City of Bristol" (1734b). ©British Library.

century building. Colston's Alms House stemmed from 1691 and the Royal Fort from the Civil War. The city's Tolzey had been there since the middle of the sixteenth century, while both the Guildhall and the High Cross were from the middle of the fourteenth century.[6] Finally, the ornate stone bridge which crossed the Avon had been built in the thirteenth century. It has not been possible to date with certainty all the buildings mentioned by Goldwin, but it is safe to assume that they all fall within these temporal perimeters.

As mentioned, it is possible to use the Bucks' prospect paintings to create a visual image of the *Poetical Description*. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prospect poems (whether focused on an urban or a rural scene) are characterized by a strong visual perspective and, as scholars have shown, the inspiration for this seems partly to have stemmed from developments in painting (especially the influence of Claude Lorraine), partly from gardening, and partly from the burgeoning sciences of surveying and topography (Foster 1975-1976; Brownlow 1978). In the words of John Wilson Foster, for instance, the influence of the latter led to the eye becoming 'a physical instrument' making 'perspective […] physically credible instead of ideal and unrealistic', and 'the poet […] an observer instead of an omnipresent witness' (1975-1976: 233). The *Poetical Description*

appears to be no exception in this respect. When, in the passage above, Goldwin describes the buildings of Bristol as competing '[l]ike airy Dames, to meet the coming Eye', it is merely one example out of many in which he emphasizes that sight is the main faculty through which the city is experienced; he does this either by specifically saying so – for instance, 'Nature's Landskip fills the wandering Eyes' (3) and 'My roving, Eye by filial Duty led' (5) – or by using words that entail a distinctly visual component: for example, 'An ancient City is a glorious View' (1) and 'If wilder Draughts, and ruder Prospects please' (4). In short, Goldwin shows himself to be keenly interested in the different historical layers of Bristol, but he largely restricts himself to what could be seen from the top of St Michael's Hill or by taking a stroll through the city. Or, at least, so it seems on the surface.

Goldwin used the word 'ancient' in the above passage to describe a range of structures in Bristol which had been built between the Middle Ages and up and until the time he wrote the *Poetical Description*. A closer examination of his use of that particular word elsewhere in the poem suggests, however, that he may also have utilized its temporal vagueness to hint at a deeper, less visible historical past, at a buried Bristol. Take, for example, the following lines from the very beginning of the poem:

> THO' Muses court the shady Groves and Greens,
> And finest Fancies rise in Sylvan Scenes,
> Where purling Streams in gentle Smoothness go,
> And teach Poetic Numbers how to flow;
> Yet, great Directress of the *tuneful Nine*,
> Suspend your Joys, your rural Seats resign;
> A nobler Theme in grander Thoughts pursue,
> An ancient City is a glorious View,
> Ancient in Priviledge, in Politeness new; (1)

On the one hand, 'ancient' can easily be understood to refer to the sort of time frame outlined before: the emphasis on visual appearance ('a glorious View') indicating a focus on what is apparent to the naked eye and the 'Ancient in Priviledge' as referring to the special county status the city had been granted by Edward III in 1373 (Pevsner 1958: 355). On the other, it is important to bear in mind that the word 'ancient' had (and still has) historical resonances that stretch further back in time and which these opening lines are not specific enough to quell.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives as the primary definition of 'ancient' that of 'belonging to time past, former, earlier, bygone', but it also states that it can be '[s]pecifically applied to the period of history before the fall of the Western Roman Empire' in which case it is 'contrasted with *modern*, and *mediæval*'. In other words, 'ancient' bears connotations which point further back in time than the Middle Ages, to Classical Antiquity. Such alternate meanings were no less forceful in the eighteenth century. In a *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson did not give the adjective form of the word that particular temporal meaning, but the plural noun, 'ancients', he defined as 'opposed to moderns', supporting his definition with a passage from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711) in which the word is clearly used to refer to writers from Classical Antiquity. The

quote from Pope's famous poem also points to the fact that the era's perhaps most important and pervasive intellectual debate was known as 'The Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns', a debate in which those on the part of the Ancients were advocating for the supremacy of classical learning over modern erudition. With a degree from King's College, Cambridge, Goldwin would have been well aware of all this, and in the *Poetical Description* there are instances where he uses the word to refer specifically to Classical Antiquity: in the poem, for example, he talks of 'ancient *Rome*' (16) and in the preface he uses the noun to describe poets such as Horace, Virgil and Ovid. The opening of the poem might also have implied that Bristol was graced with the kind of socio-cultural privilege which came from having historical roots that reached deep into Classical Antiquity.

This might sound implausible given what we know now of Bristol's history. However, unlike today, when most historians and archaeologists agree that it was not until the late Saxon period that something like an urban environment developed on the site of the current city's centre (Pevsner 1958: 355; Baker, Brett and Jones 2018: Ch.4), the question of Bristol's origins was a matter of intense debate in the eighteenth century.[7]

'Upwards of 2000 Years Old': Eighteenth-Century Perspectives on Bristol's Foundation

Northwest of Bristol's city centre, where one end of Broad Street makes a sharp ninety-degree turn and becomes Bell Lane, one can see the only extant passage through Bristol's medieval wall, St. John's Gateway, beneath the church tower of St John the Baptist. Above its central arch, on either side of Charles II's Royal Coat of Arms, are two statues depicting the brothers Belinus and Brennus, who lived in the fourth century BC.[8] In 1479, Bristol's town clerk, Robert Ricart began writing a chronicle of the city in which, among other things, he would relate that Belinus and Brennus were direct descendants of Brute (and thus of Trojan descent), ruling Britain about twelve generations after him, its legendary first king (1872: 8-9). In addition, Ricart noted that, towards the end of his life, Brennus 'first founded and billed this worshipfull Towne of Bristut that nowe is Bristowe' (1872: 10). This myth of Bristol's origins, for which Ricart is not the only medieval source, held that the city had been established long before the Romans arrived on the British Isles and that it was closely linked to the mythical foundations of the nation, and indeed Western civilization. Today, this might seem like an apocryphal tale, but in the eighteenth century the story had more clout and the two figures above St John's Gateway would have provided passing citizens with a daily reminder that their city had been a national stronghold for millennia.

In his *Dissertation*, Andrew Hooke draws attention to the two statues, arguing in his conclusive remarks that although they are 'not […] proper Evidence, that Brennus was the Founder of BRISTOL', they 'ought to be admitted as an intestible Proof of the Antiquity of that *Tradition*' (1748: 52). Hooke's point here is that, despite not having been able to verify the story itself, his meticulous examination of Bristol's age and origins have led him so far back in time – in fact, 'ninety-two Years beyond the Age of *Brennus*' (1748: 51) – that there was good reason to at least hint at the possibility it might be true.

Hooke's aim with the *Dissertation* was not to prove the validity of the myth, but rather 'to trace it [Bristol] through all its Gradations, minutely to note the several Steps of the Progression' and, thereby, 'to prove, by rational and historical Evidence, that BRISTOL is ancienter, by many Centuries, than some very learned Gentlemen, in their Writings, allow it to be' (1748: 2-3). The most important of these 'learned Gentlemen' was the antiquarian William Camden (1551-1623), who, along with John Leland (c.1506-1552), is considered something of a founding father for British antiquarianism, his *opus magnum*, *Britannia*, 'a milestone in the genesis of local historical studies' and 'the starting point for any antiquarian or topographical work in the following centuries' (Sweet 1997: 38).[9] A county by county description of Britain and Ireland, the *Britannia* had aimed 'to restore Britain to its Antiquities, and its Antiquities to Britain' (Camden 1695) with a particular focus on its Roman past (Levine 1987: 93).[10] When it came to Bristol, however, Camden did not find sufficient evidence to persuade him that the city was more than six hundred years old:

> At what time, and by whom it was built, is hard to say: but it seems to be of a late date, since in all the Danish plunders, it is not so much as mention'd in our Histories. For my part, I am of opinion it rose in the decline of the Saxon government, since it is not taken notice of before the year of our Lord 1063 […]. (Camden 1695: 74)

As reasonable as this might sound today, Hooke was adamant that Camden was wrong in his assessment and he constructed the *Dissertation* specifically around a critique of the *Britannia*, claiming that Camden had reached his erroneous conclusion because, primarily, he had built his argument on negative evidence and a misinterpretation of the etymology of the city's name. For the present purpose, we need not delve deeper into the specifics of Hooke's argument, but simply draw attention to his conclusion –

> […] BRISTOL was an eminent City of the Britains in the Beginning of the second century; so that, with the Allowance of one Postulatum, founded on the natural Growth of Cities, as before, it appears, upon strict and positive Testimony, that BRISTOL is upwards of 2000 Years old. (Hooke 1748: 54)

– which, as mentioned, suggested to him that the Brennus-myth had some validity.

Hooke's *Dissertation* was printed the year after Goldwin's death and thirty-six years after the publication of the *Poetical Description*. It might therefore seem somewhat out of place to suggest that it can help us better understand the depth of meaning entailed in Goldwin's use the word 'ancient'. However, by trying to prove that Bristol had existed before it was first mentioned in the chronicles, Hooke had addressed one of the single most important questions for eighteenth-century antiquarians interested in the history and development of Bristol (Barry 1991: 213). Towards the end of the century, for example, the surgeon and antiquarian William Barrett dedicated the first chapter of his voluminous *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol* (1789) to the same question. His conclusions, which were similar to Hooke's, continued to circulate through more popular publications such as George Heath's *The New Bristol Guide* (1799) and Joseph Mathews' *Bristol Guide* which by 1825 was being printed in its sixth edition. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that

Hooke should have come up with his theory of Bristol's ancient origins out of a vacuum. As Jonathan Barry (1991: 212) has stressed, there was 'a vigorous tradition of annals-keeping in Bristol', but the majority of these were not printed and when assessing a work such as, for example, *The History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol,* it is necessary to understand that it was 'the product of more than a hundred years of scholarly effort by various individuals and groups in the city, whose work was passed down and built upon until brought to fruition by Barrett'. It seems probable that Hooke also recorded scholarly ideas which, despite Camden's authority, had been gestating for some time.

To what extent Hooke's contemporaries supported his view of Bristol's foundation is not clear. The myth of Brute as Britain's founding father (to which Hooke's account was linked) had already been questioned for some time and Barrett refused both lines of thought, dubbing them 'fabulous' (1789: 30n). In the *Bristol Guide*, however, we still find the Brennus-myth being entertained, although Mathews suggests that the city was founded even earlier (1825: 9-10). As concerns Goldwin, we can only guess what he thought. Still, it is reasonable to think that, in using the word 'ancient', he hinted towards a more widely accepted idea which maintained that Bristol was more than two thousand years old.

'An Ancient City Is a Glorious View': Promoting Bristol Through Its Past

Soon after Hooke published his *Dissertation*, the *Poetical Description* appears to have had something of a renaissance. In 1751, the poem was reissued posthumously by one Isaac Smart. Unlike the 1712 version, which was only published in one edition, this went into three. On the title page, it stated that the poem had been 'Revised, with large Additions' and, although a collation with the 1712 poem shows this to be an exaggeration, a few of these changes are interesting in light of the current discussion.[11] Most important is the new title: *A Poetical Description of Bristol* was replaced with *A Description of the Antient and Famous City of Bristol. A Poem*. This modification seems to suggest that Smart was interested in putting further emphasis to what the poem was already implying about the city's buried past, a tendency which can also be spotted in the change he made to the line 'An ancient City is a glorious View' where the indefinite article 'an' is replaced with the demonstrative determiner 'this' (7). What motivated the reissuing of the *Poetical Description*, and the few changes made to it, is not clear. However, I will venture to suggest here that the publication of the revised poem can be understood to have worked in conjunction with the recent publication of Hooke's *Dissertation* as a way of promoting Bristol's public image. In other words, Hooke's treatise is not only useful for shedding light on the meaning of the word 'ancient'. By considering the circumstances under which it was produced, a sense develops of a broader communal enterprise at work in eighteenth-century Bristol which looked to boost the city's image by furthering the idea that it was as old as the nation itself. In this enterprise, Hooke's *Dissertation* would seem to have played a part as did Goldwin and Smart's (1751) versions of the *Poetical Description*.

Before considering more closely what the benefits were of promoting Bristol as an ancient city and why there appears to have been a wish to do so, it is necessary discuss how it is possible to see Hooke's *Dissertation* and the versions of the *Poetical Description* as part of the same communal effort. When Goldwin first issued his poem, he appears to have been

working with the support of a group of highly influential Bristolians. He '[h]umbly dedicated' his poem 'to the Right Worshipful the Mayor, the Aldermen, and Common Council, and other Inhabitants of the City of *Bristol*', adding a slightly modified quote from one of Propertius' elegies as a further tribute to the mayor.[11] This came after the preface to the poem in which Goldwin had stated that he would not have published the *Poetical Description* if, among other things, it was not for

> *[…] a Readiness to do this City any Honour in Acknowledgment of some additional Favours for the Encouragement of the School, a Request of a valuable Friend, and that Bristol, which is a Sort of second London in every Thing but Vitiousness, may have something of its own Growth, without taking up with their stale Pieces, as we do with their Fashions […].*

When Smart reissued the poem, he removed the preface and the four lines from Propertius.[12] He quoted the rest of the dedication almost *verbatim*, however, signing it with his own name. It seems reasonable to think, therefore, that both Goldwin and Smart were working with explicit backing from the city authorities and it is through them that a more tangible connection seems to form between the *Dissertation* and the *Poetical Description*.

In the preface to the *Dissertation*, Hooke also addresses the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs and 'the rest of the Commonality of the City of Bristol', taking the opportunity to thank the city officials for their support:

> THE following Dissertation on the Antiquity of Bristol, over which you so worthily preside, has not only a natural Claim to your Patronage, but I am under a moral Obligation to address your WORSHIPS, on this Occasion, that I may discharge Debt, in which the Publick is interested, by an open Acknowledgment of the Readiness and Unanimity, with which you granted my Request of having free Recourse to the *City Archives*. (Hooke 1748: iii-iv)

Elsewhere Hooke complained of a lack of financial support for his studies which would suggest that he did not receive any monetary backing, but gaining access to the city's archives was itself a privilege not easily obtained (Barry 1991: 213, 215). Like Goldwin and Smart, then, he appears to have been working in accordance with the will of Bristol's political and administrative establishment.

There are obvious differences in the relationships presented in the three works. First, it is noteworthy that Goldwin suggests that the *Poetical Description* was part of a transaction where the poem was written partly because it would ensure the city's grammar school benefits of some kind. Hooke's *Dissertation* does not seem to have been the result of such a *quid pro quo* arrangement and, as pointed out, when Smart republished the *Poetical Description*, he did not find the transaction important enough to mention. Second, the three works were largely dedicated to different people: apart from Isaac Baugh who served as sheriff in both 1748 and 1751, the mayor and sheriffs were not the same in the years the texts were published (Barrett 1789: 697-700). Despite these differences, however, a pattern seems to emerge. Bristol's council (also referred to as the 'Corporation') was a notoriously tightknit group (Hanham 2002) – in his *Tour Through England and Wales* (1724-1727) Daniel

Defoe described it as a 'corporation-tyranny' (1959: II, 37) – and Barrett's list of mayors and sheriffs shows that there was a tendency for these posts to circulate among the same people during, at least, the first half of the eighteenth century (Barrett 1789: 697-701). Although there are no obvious connections between the holders of the council's central posts in the 1710s and those of the late 1740s and early 1750s, it would seem that there was at least a continuity of political will in the kind of cultural productions they supported: Goldwin's *Poetical Description* and Smart's reissue present an overwhelmingly positive image of Bristol while Hooke framed his research in a language which suggests he looked to defend the city against the degradations of outsiders and restore it to its proper status.

Hooke's research appears to have been conducted in the spirit of local patriotism. There is nothing unusual about that, but the manner in which he describes his project does raise an eyebrow. In the preface, he addresses the city officials in the following manner:

> HARD, Gentlemen, very hard indeed, would be the Fate of *Bristol*, if, after having thus happily escaped the strokes of *real Power*, it should at last fall Victim under the Lashes of *imaginary Authority*; and yet hitherto, alas! this has been pretty much the Case: Its *Eminence* has been tamely given up, in Compliment to a great Name, and its *Antiquity* foolishly sacrificed to the groundless Conceit of a popular *Idol*. (Hooke 1748: v)

The 'great Name' and 'popular *Idol*' is Camden, of course. What is interesting about this passage is the language in which Hooke couches his challenge to Camden's assessment of Bristol's origins. Just prior to this passage, Hooke has praised the Bristolians for their ability to ensure the city's prosperity and high status during periods of intense political turmoil (1748: iv-v). This process he describes with a vocabulary which has violent, subjugating undertones ('escaped the strokes of *real Power*') before, seamlessly, moving on to using the same imagery to describe Camden's work ('fall Victim under the Lashes of *imaginary Authority*'). This is no coincidence. In the preface, Hooke consistently talks of his project in the language of warfare, saying, for instance, that, although 'raw and unpractis'd […] in the Art of War', he has 'ventur'd, in Defence of [his] *Native Place*, to take the Field against this *Goliah* [sic] of the Antiquaries' (vii). The embattled tone implies that Camden had deliberately presented a conclusion he knew to be false with the sole aim of damaging Bristol's reputation. Hooke does not give any reason as to why Camden would have wanted to do that and there is no evidence to suggest that Camden had an axe to grind. Hooke's choice of imagery appears to say more about his own project than Camden's *Britannia*. The impassioned language of the preface to the *Dissertation* signals that his outrage was not only of a scientific nature. Rather than reflecting objective, disinterested enquiry, it suggests a high level of emotional involvement. Bristol, his native city, had suffered a gross injustice and this is his personal attempt to set things right, to restore it to its proper status. Despite the large amount of scholarly work and paraphernalia, this makes the *Dissertation* come across as a piece of civic propaganda. It is different in form and content from the *Poetical Description* but similar in spirit and aim.

Why, then, was Hooke so outraged by Camden's conclusions that he perceived them to be an attack on Bristol? 'An ancient City is a glorious View' (1) wrote Goldwin in the

Poetical Description and, generally speaking, this was a statement his contemporaries would have agreed with. However trivial it might sound, in eighteenth-century Britain, a distinguished past equalled prestige. Still, much depended on the historical resonances of that adjective, 'ancient'. The deeper it reached, the better. As Rosemary Sweet says, the antiquarian research which lay behind the many urban histories published during the period was motivated by the didactic powers of history as well as an awareness that

> […] antiquity commanded respect and conferred status. By tracing back the lineage of the town to antique origins, one could establish a link with the ancient history of Britain, the world of classical antiquity or the Bible. When urban history reached back this far into the past, the history of the town became subsumed into that of the nation. (Sweet 1997: 2)

A long urban history could help to bolster a city's identity and strengthen its status within the nation's urban hierarchy. It was 'an expression of civic feeling and identity' which, as Sweet underlines, also 'had a mediating function in presenting the town to a wider public' (1997: 100). It is arguably in this light that Hooke's preface should be read. Not only did he have problems with the scientific validity of Camden's conclusions, which, recently, had been given a renewed impetus with the publication of Edmund Gibson's revised translations (1695, 1722), he was also moved by the detrimental effects they had on Bristol's image and status. Late Saxon origins were not distinguished enough for his home town.

In light of this, one can surmise that Bristol's council supported a reissuing of Goldwin's poem, because, with a slightly rejigged title, it could be made to capitalize on Hooke's recent findings to further an image of Bristol as not only a modern, civilized city but also a truly ancient one. On the one hand, such self-promotion would have had a value in itself. As Sweet says, the publication of an urban history could help promote the city to a wider public and a poem such as Goldwin's *Poetical Description* can easily be imagined to have been composed with a similar aim in view, especially when we consider the support it received from city officials. In this respect, it is also worth noticing that, although it is not clear whether Hooke's *Dissertation* was distributed outside of Bristol, it would appear from the title pages of both versions of the *Poetical Description* that it was sold in London as well as Bristol, and Smart's in Bath too.

On the other, as Sweet (1997: 127) also points out, Bristol did not have the most favourable of reputations. It was not until the second half of the century that the abolitionist movement gained real momentum (Morgan 2007: 148-49) and before the 1750s visitors and outsiders were more likely to express an annoyance with the mercantile habits of the Bristolians than criticize their involvement in the slave trade. Defoe, for example, expressed his admiration for the city's wealth and trade, but, as noted, he was also heavily critical of the city's Corporation and what he described as 'the tenacious folly of its inhabitants' which he thought hampered the city's growth by placing unnecessary restrictions on trade (1959: II, 36-37). In this respect, Defoe is fairly representative. Visitors acknowledged the mercantile success of the Bristolians, but, as John Macky highlighted in his *Journey Through England*, for example, it was accompanied by some irritating character

traits: there 'is nothing but Hurry […] and People running about with cloudy Looks and busy Faces' and even '[t]he very Parsons […] talk of nothing but Trade, and how to turn the Penny' (1724: 124-26). And, actually, such criticism was fairly mild in comparison with the satiric broadside the city received by the poet Richard Savage in his posthumously published poem *London and Bristol Delineated* (1744). In other words, there existed a prevalent public discourse which did not present Bristol and its inhabitants in a particularly sympathetic light. The *Poetical Description* as well as its republication can be read alongside the *Dissertation* as attempts to counter such negative publicity which not only represented the will of Goldwin, Smart and Hooke, but also that of a larger Bristolian community as represented by the city officials. One line in their defence – or might we say counterattack – was to make sure the wider public was aware that Bristol had been a significant urban stronghold for almost as long as there was anything that could be called Britain. In the *Poetical Description* this was much less pronounced than in the *Dissertation*, but read in conjunction with Hooke's work, there is reason to think that Goldwin's poem implicitly fed into this idea of Bristol's ancient origins, something which became only more apparent when Smart reissued the poem.

Conclusion

As I understand him, Lefebvre suggests in *The Production of Space* that a study of human interaction with a given place should have an excavating dimension. In this respect, he appears to have something in common with Deep Mapping's focus on archaeological verticality in its perspective of place. Following this line of thought, the present article has looked to show how, during the first half of the eighteenth century, Bristol's buried past was a site of contestation and evoked for civic purposes. More specifically, I have ventured to suggest that, despite being seemingly unrelated, Goldwin's *Poetical Description* (and its posthumous republication) can be read alongside Hooke's antiquarian *Dissertation* as part of a communal enterprise. The backing both authors received from the political establishment link them and together they create a sense that, at this time, there was a general wish in Bristol to improve the city's reputation and status with the creation of cultural texts. Among other things, these stressed that Bristol had been an important urban centre for almost as long as the nation had existed. In this communal drive, one could say that the *Dissertation* created the scientific foundations for cashing in on the prestige it generated to be known as an ancient city. A more popular and easily digestible text, the *Poetical Description* (in both its forms) could with subtle hints help strengthen the idea in the public imagination. Moreover, literary and antiquarian texts would in themselves signal to the rest of the world that the Bristolians were not only great businessmen but also learned and cultivated. On the one hand, one senses an almost boasting self-confidence behind these texts, but, on the other, they also seem imbued with a degree of provincial insecurity. The emotionally charged need to establish the city's ancient roots that we find in Hooke's *Dissertation* and the ostentatious manner in which Goldwin urges his readers to see Bristol as both a modern, civilized city as well as a historically significant one, feel somewhat over the top. It creates a sense that the city's position within the national urban hierarchy was anything but secure and perhaps that was the case. Britain's urban landscape was

undergoing serious reconfiguration during this period and traditional hierarchies and networks were challenged. Although Bristol was one of Britain's largest and most wealthy cities throughout the eighteenth century – it was often described as the nation's 'second' city – the explosive growth of urban centres elsewhere in the country contested traditional structures, economical as well as cultural.

It is hard to say to what extent it is a characteristic feature of cultural texts produced in provincial cities to show a heightened concern or awareness of the national urban network. Certainly, this only comes out implicitly in the *Poetical Description* and the *Dissertation*. Apart from London, neither Goldwin nor Hooke show any marked interest in other cities in Britain. That said, if you wish to draw attention to a specific city at the expense of certain others, it is no doubt a good strategy to ignore the others altogether. More certain is it that, in the particular kind of provincialism these texts represent, it was of the upmost significance that the city in question was intimately linked with the foundation of the nation as a whole. In other words, Goldwin, Smart, Hooke and the Bristolian authorities were keen to connect Bristol to a broader discourse about the creation of the nation and hence its place in the world.

Notes

[1] As Elden (2004: 186) notes, Lefebvre's use of the French word *espace* has a broader meaning than its direct translation, 'space', including meanings close to the English 'area', 'zone' and 'place'. In the current discussion, I use this broad understanding of the term 'space'.

[2] Of the two, Hooke's *Dissertation* is the one that has received most attention. It is often mentioned briefly in studies of antiquarianism in the eighteenth century, but its most thorough treatment is still Barry (1991). Goldwin's *Poetical Description* has been given even less notice and apart from my own article (2017) I have no knowledge of previous studies.

[3] The text used for this article is an electronic facsimile from *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, where the four pages of the preface are unnumbered and the pages of the poem are numbered 1-21 (without line numbers). In referring to the preface, I will not include any page numbers while I will refer to the poem with the use of the original page numbers.

[4] For an overview of squares established in provincial cities during the eighteenth century, see Appendix 1 in Borsay (1989).

[5] The construction of the tower was started in 1711-12, but was not completed before 1716.

[6] Like elsewhere in Britain, the word 'Tolzey' was used in different ways in Bristol. In 1550, a new Council House was constructed. Outside, against the wall of the building, was a covered walk known as the mayor's or the civic Tolzey. This was a judicial structure. Soon after a similar walk was built opposite, running along the wall of All Saint's, this was the merchant's Tolzey. Until John Wood's new Exchange was completed in 1743, this was the place where Bristol's merchants would meet to conduct their business. It is this latter place which Goldwin refers to in the *Poetical Description*.

[7] For an overview of early settlements in the larger Bristol area, see chapters four and five in Baker, Brett and Jones (2018).

[8] One online source states that the statues are as old as the church (www.about-bristol.co.uk), but it has not been possible to ascertain within any certainty the truthfulness of this claim. For the present purpose, however, it will suffice to know (as the discussion will reveal) that the statues were in place by at least the middle of the eighteenth century.
[9] The *Britannia* was first published in Latin in 1586. A further four editions were published in Camden's lifetime as was an English translation. Additional translations (including revisions to the original) were published by the antiquarians Edmund Gibson (1695, 1722) and Richard Gough (1789).
[10] The *Britannia*-quote comes from Camden's Preface. In this edition, the pages of the preface are unnumbered.
[11] In referring to passages from the 1751 version of the poem, the same method is used as for the 1712 version. Little is known of Smart other than what is stated on the title page of the reissued poem, namely that he held an 'A.M.' degree. Beyond what is mentioned above, Smart's changes mainly amounted to minor historical updates such as, for example, replacing the Tolzey with the new Exchange which had been finished in 1743 (26) and describing All Saint's as complete rather than under construction (27).
[12] The quote is from the fourth book of Propertius's Elegies, lines 57-60. The change is made to line 60 which Goldwin altered from 'fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae.' to '*Fluxerit, hoc*, Prætor, *serviat omne tibi*.' Thus changing the meaning from 'the whole of it shall be given to the service of my country' (Propertius 1990) to 'the whole, Mayor, is given to your service'. I am grateful to Tommi Alho for translating Goldwin's modification.

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