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The Audiences of Medieval Chronicles and of Cotton Caligula A. ix

John Scahill

Many medieval English manuscripts contain chronicle texts, and the question of who read them deserves to be addressed. This investigation focuses on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, between the very different cultural worlds that disseminated the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or the late medieval chronicles, which survived into the age of printing. Conclusions about the milieus of the chronicles can then be applied to manuscript compilations of which they often form part, and here they will be used to cast light on the British Library manuscript Cotton Caligula A. ix (hereafter C), an important and puzzling collection of Early Middle English texts.

C contains *The Owl and the Nightingale*, a number of short religious poems in English, three long Anglo-Norman poems by Chardri, Laȝamon's *Brut* and a prose Anglo-Norman chronicle, *Li rei de Engleterre*. Of enormous value for understanding the origins of C is another collection, Oxford, Jesus College 29, which contains the same elements as C — in textually close versions — except for the last two listed, with numerous additions. As it is the two chronicles that C has added to the common core, they are a key to the audience of the collection.

It might be objected that the two chronicles could equally well have been omitted by the maker of the Jesus collection, but this is unlikely.

As *Li rei de Engleterre* comes at the end of a quire and is followed by the only blank in C other than the one at the end of the *Brut*, it appears to have been added where it is for space-filling reasons. The *Brut* itself is codicologically and paleographically rather separate from the rest of C. Its scribe or scribes[1] do not appear in the rest of the manuscript, which has one scribe for the English texts and another for the French. In fact it has been suggested that the combination of the *Brut* occurred long after the copying of the texts, perhaps during rebinding undertaken by Sir Robert Cotton, though N. R. Ker judges that 'the similarities of script, layout and number of lines suggest strongly that ff. 195-261 [the non-Laȝamon part of the manuscript] belonged from the first with the "Historia brutonum"' (Ker 1963, ix).[2]

Though Laȝamon's *Brut* constitutes 75% of C, and is therefore central to the question of the manuscript's milieu, there is only one other manuscript — for whose context there is far less evidence even than for C[3] — and no similar work in Early Middle English. It is more useful to start with the widely circulating *Li rei de Engleterre*, particularly as its subject-matter is largely the same as the *Brut*, though in a far briefer form. In the thirteenth century the Caligula text and others closely related to it constitute virtually the entire genre[4]; and there is nothing closely comparable in English. Thus, of the limited range of vernacular historical texts that were available, two have been copied into C.

The only accounts in print of these texts and manuscripts (Vising 1923, Clark 1954, Foltys 1962), though useful, are far from complete, and inconsistent with each other. I am very much indebted to Ruth Dean for sending me sections from a draft (as of 20. 5. 87) of her planned replacement of Vising's handbook. The following list of texts and manuscripts is largely based on this personal communication.

MANUSCRIPT	*Brutus*	*Li rei de Engleterre*	*Le livere de reis de Engleterre*
C	–	*	–
Cambridge. U. L. Ee. i. 1	–[5]	*	–
"Corpus Christi Coll. 50	*	*	–
"Corpus Christi Coll. 53	*	*	–
"Trinity Coll. R. 4. 26	*	*	–
"Trinity Coll. R. 7. 23	*	*	–
"Trinity Coll. R. 14. 7	*	–	*[6]
"Mass. Harvard Law School 1	*	*	–
"Mass. Harvard Law School 59	–	*	–
Cologny-Geneva Bibl. Bodmeriana 67	*	*	–
London BL Additional 8101	*	–	–
"BL Cott. Caligula A. iii	–	*	–
"BL Cott. Galba E. iii	–	*	–
"BL Cott. Vespasian B. xiv	–	*	–
"BL Royal 20 C. vi	*	*	–
"Publ. Record Office, Exchecq. 164/24	*	*	–
Manchester Univ. & John Rylands Libr. French 64	–	–	*
Oxford Bodl. Douce 115	*	*	–
"Bodl. Laud misc. 636	*	*	–
"Bodl. Rawlinson D. 329	–	*[7]	–
"Bodl. Selden supra 74	*	*	–
"Bodl. Tanner 195	*	*	–
"All Souls Coll. 39	–	*	–
"Corpus Christi Coll. B 491	–	* (fragment)	–
Vatican City Apost. Vatic. Barb. lat. 3528	–	–	*[8]

(*Brutus* and *Li rei de Engleterre* are collectively referred to as *Le livere de reis de Brittanie* — hereafter abbreviated as LRB. *Le livere de reis de engleterre* is hereafter abbreviated as LRE.)

Of the manuscripts containing any part of LRB six are of known provenance, and two more can be traced with some probability. Ker (1964) localises Corpus Christi 50 to St Augustine's Canterbury ; Galba E. iii to Christ Church Canterbury ; Corpus Christi 53[9] and Laud 636 to Peterborough ; University Library Ee. i. 1 to Luffield (Northamptonshire) ; and Trinity College R. 14. 7 to Norwich. (All six are dated to the second half of the thirteenth century or the first half of the four-

teenth.) Moreover, as Exchequer 164 is the cartulary of Malmesbury Abbey, its copy of LRB was held and most likely made there. Harvard Law School 1 should probably be added to the list of monastic copies: Seymour de Ricci (1935, I, 1022) traces it to Worcester, and this may well mean the cathedral priory, particularly in view of the general similarity of its contents to a collection such as Galba E. iii. In other words, the copies of traceable origin are Benedictine. This impression is corroborated but also broadened by the provenance in the Gilbertine house at Sempringham, Lincolnshire, of a copy of *Le livere de reis de Engleterre*, Barberini 3528 (Ker 1987, 62). In content, each of the non-localised manuscripts containing LRB is reasonably close in content to at least one of the localised ones, with the possible exception of Royal 20. C. vi, whose other items are a French *Lancelot, Quête* and *Morte Arthur*. This is a handsome volume with illuminated initials, which might be aristocratic in destination, though the adding of ten lines on later events at the end of the chronicle is most likely to have taken place in an institution.

Moreover, the mutual affiliations of these texts indicate that some proximate ancestor of C's text was also a close ancestor of the Laud text, copied at Peterborough Abbey.[10] Some pattern of circulation between monasteries is corroborated by the case of Corpus 53; according to Clark (1954, 42 fn. 22) its LRB text comes from Peterborough, but the Psalter and Calendar that constitute the main and original part of the manuscript were probably copied in Norwich Cathedral Priory.

A set of texts that are related to LRB are what Wright called the 'feudal manuals' (1872, x). Dean describes their contents as follows: 'Description, usually with a circular diagram, of England under the Heptarchy, followed by the pedigree of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings to Henry II in roundels, sometimes with portraits,

accompanied by historical notices of varying length, drawn from such chronicles as LRB, LRE and Brut' (personal communication). She finds nineteen manuscripts (mostly rolls) containing texts of this type, the earliest dated to the second half of the thirteenth century.[11]

The 'feudal manuals' need not share the generally monastic provenance of chronicles such as LRB, however. In Dean's view, '[t]he preparation of such rolls for manorial family use, as suggested by the editor [Wright 1871, ix-x], is supported by what is found on the dorse of some: the romance on Mayer's roll and illustrated chess problems, in French verse, on College of Arms 20/26' (personal communication). There is a significant nexus here, in that rolls of manorial use owe their material to manuscripts that are monastic, where we can trace them. Cecily Clark's connecting of the Laud-Caligula grouping of texts of *Li rei de Engleterre* with the 'genealogies' confirms the ultimate monastic source of such 'feudal manuals'; for not only are they textually closely related to these monastic manuscripts, but the Egmont Roll itself may have belonged in the early fourteenth century to a Peterborough monk (Clark 1954, 42, n. 21).

Of the remaining Anglo-Norman prose chronicles, only BL Additional 14252 has been localised. Ker (1964, 124) traces it to the library of the London Guildhall, and Woledge and Clive state that its first part contains collections of laws, 'le reste du ms. étant occupé par une série de courts morceaux latins et français susceptibles d'intéresser un homme de loi vivant à Londres sous le regne de Jean sans Terre' (1964, 104). At a rather early date, then, such a chronicle is found in a manuscript for pragmatic, professional (rather than aristocratic or baronial) lay use; despite differences in weighting there is a resemblance in content to a largely legal monastic manuscript such as Galba E. iii.

With these monastic-manorial associations in mind, it is now possible to consider further the milieu of Laȝamon's *Brut* and of C as a whole. The only other firm knowledge we have of the *Brut's* circulation is its use in the 'Robert of Gloucester' *Chronicle* (Wright 1887, xxxiii-xxxvii and Pearsall 1981, 8-10), at any rate in a version produced in the 1320s, which is in dialect South-Western rather than West Midland, though connection with Gloucester itself is unproven (Bennett & Smithers 1968, 158 & 349, and Hudson 1963).[12] Pearsall argues that this chronicle is monastic in origin, for the writing of such a work necessitated a monastery's resources, though it was intended, 'being in English, for a wider audience than the cloister'.

There are two separate points here. There is the general propensity of monastic houses to record and preserve historical texts. Pearsall does not explicitly mention this, though it is perhaps implicit in his argument; but the point is established elsewhere, for example by J. S. Beddie (1929, 18) — significantly, he adds that the circulation of histories *outside* the monasteries tended to be quite limited. The Peterborough Chronicle shows a monastery producing a vernacular chronicle in the mid-twelfth century. Secondly, there is the hypothesis 'that there is a lost corpus of historical alliterative poems. The texts of these poems [were] preserved in monastic houses, along with Laȝamon...'. And Robert of Gloucester is cited as evidence to support this hypothesis (Pearsall 1981, 12).

Pearsall's theory is confessedly based on rather scanty evidence, and concerns a form (alliterative verse) rather than a genre (chronicle). Nevertheless, he gives reasons for regarding an association between substantial (verse) chronicles and monasteries as probable at this period in this part of England — at least in their composition, though his evidence of monasteries providing entertainment for secular mag-

nates suggests another possible *destination* for a chronicle in the vernacular.

Does this indicate a monastic provenance for any copy of Laȝamon? That historical texts were being produced and copied in English monasteries is beyond dispute, and at least at Peterborough they could be in English. But is there any probability of a non-monastic provenance? It should be pointed out that Pearsall explicitly includes the Augustinians among the 'monastic houses'. He is thinking of possible milieus for the preservation of a tradition of alliterative verse, but there are other signs that an Augustinian house might have preserved a work such as the *Brut*. There is plenty of evidence that Augustinian libraries held historical works. An example close in place and time is the copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* dating from around the end of the thirteenth century from the library of Lanthony, Gloucestershire, now Lambeth Palace 379 (Ker 1987, 43). And Pearsall himself observes that Augustinians certainly composed and copied texts in English. Other connections with writing in English may be proposed for Lanthony in particular : Oxford, Corpus Christi College 59, a manuscript containing English religious lyrics, was made by a chaplain attached to Lanthony (Brown 1928a) ; Thorlac Turville-Petre (1974, 252) has advanced authorship by one of its canons as the less likely of two possibilities for *William of Palerne* ; and Hill (1977, 109) observes that E. J. Dobson has twice stated that Lambeth Palace Library 487 possibly came from there, though without giving reasons. There seems to be no case of an *English* historical work in a contemporary Augustinian manuscript, but such texts are scarce anyway. Bearing in mind that the Gilbertines not only had, as mentioned above, a library with a copy of *Le livere de reis de Engleterre* but also produced Robert Mannyng, author of the Chronicle, and that the Premonstratensian house at Titchfield had numerous

vernacular works including a '*Hystoria Britonum*'[13], it appears that the pertinent category is houses of monks and regular canons generally.[14]

Nevertheless, Laȝamon's *Brut* was *composed* by a secular cleric, and he records that he was translating a work dedicated to 'Ælienor / Þe was Henries quene'. The Otho text states in line 3 that the author lived at Areley 'wid Þan gode cniȝte' (for the C text's 'at æðelen are chirechen'). The Otho variant is unexpectedly circumstantial, and Barron and Weinberg (1995, 840) think that it perhaps refers to 'some local landowner whom he served, concurrently or consecutively, as domestic chaplain, and a possible patron for his vast literary project'. Rosamund Allen (1994, 135) also points out the need for such patronage, though arguing that 'the text ... hints at a more humdrum world than the metafictional construct of scholarly and priestly author writing a learned compilation for a culturally advantaged reader' (129), and concludes from 'the demands of the text' that the actual audience 'must have been a small audience, like the occupants of an average manor-house or small house of religion. But it was surely a mixed audience in terms of age, sex, and even social class' (134-5).

Some support for tracing such chronicles to an intersection of monastic and manorial environments can be found in the circulation of Laȝamon's source, the *Brut* of Wace. Of the three securely attributed manuscripts of English provenance from before the middle of the fourteenth century, two come from Canterbury Benedictine houses - BL Additional 45103 from Christ Church, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 50 from St Augustine's. Both these are dated to late in the thirteenth century.[15] The contents give useful indications of what might be found in such a monastic manuscript of the time. Both contain some Latin but are predominantly in French. Apart from chronicle material, the Additional manuscript contains Dares Phrygius, 'Les

estatus le Roy Edward', *La Petite Philosophie* - a poem of general knowledge for an educated but Latinless member of thirteenth-century society (Trethewey 1939, i) - and some religious items; the Corpus manuscript has two French romances, a fabliau and a religious allegory.[16] Thus even large and respected Benedictine houses could produce manuscripts that were predominantly vernacular in language and secular in content; one might suppose that the monks produced them not for their own benefit, but of those to whom they had duties of hospitality and education. The third such English manuscript of Wace is Vitellius A. x, traced by Ker (1964, 88) to the Cistercians at Fountains, and dated by Ivor Arnold (1938, I, vii) to the end of the thirteenth century. Besides chronicles it contains some Latin goliardic verses on clerical marriage.

However, two further manuscripts of Wace contain items that suggest the education of well-born laity. Phillipps 4156 is all in French and dated to early in the thirteenth century; besides Wace it has a bestiary, Prester John's letter to the Emperor of Constantinople, two poems giving a father's advice to his son and a number of religious texts. The relevant section of Royal 13 A xxi consists of Wace, Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* and the encyclopedic *Imago Mundi*. Direct evidence of provenance is wanting in the relevant section of College of Arms, Arundel xiv; but its inclusion of the Anglo-Norman *Haveloc* and Chrestien's *Perceval* suggests an aristocratic destination.[17]

As Wace's *Brut*, like Laȝamon's, was composed in a secular environment, Pearsall's assumption that the writing of a chronicle such as Robert of Gloucester's required a monastery's resources is open to question. However, his argument that at this date only a house of regular clergy could have had the motivation and human resources for the copying of a long chronicle is another matter, and several aspects

of the text and script of C indicate production in something like a scriptorium. Ker (1963, xvi) describes the hand of the scribe of the English poems other than the *Brut* as ' "professional", a skilled close gothic of the mannered kind...' and the script of the *Brut*, with its decorated capitals and single historiated initial, is of the same kind. The signs of early proof-reading also suggest a professional production. Luhmann (1906, 20) points out that another hand has filled lacunae in the *Brut* text evidently by reference to an exemplar ; Frederic Madden had previously observed that this second hand had worked before the rubricator, revising the text with corrections and erasures. 'In some few instances a third and later hand has noted errors and supplied words' (Madden 1847, xxxv). Likewise, of the text of *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Ker (1963, xix) says : 'Emendations are fairly numerous in places, but inconspicuous. All of them were probably made not long after the manuscript was written. The majority may be in one hand ...'. Such collaboration confirms that C was produced in some kind of monastic (in a broad sense) scriptorium : it shows the activity of at least three[18] (probably more, to judge from the corrections) professional scribes, who were not particularly concerned with the sense of what they were copying,[19] and Luhmann (1906, 61) sees the C text of Laȝamon as 'bestellte Arbeit'. The verbatim copying habits derive at least ultimately from monastic scriptoria (Smith 1992, 583).

C was copied, then, in an institution willing and able to organise and support a large piece of work by a group of professional scribes, apparently a house of regular clergy, monks or canons. It is pertinent that Betty Hill (1975) finds reason for connecting C (and Jesus 29) with the Premonstratensian Abbey at Halesowen (now on the southwestern outskirts of Birmingham). Neil Cartlidge (1997) surveys their various local connections, and shows how the accumulated evidence suggests

origin in a religious house of some kind. Further, Titchfield Abbey, whose library, as mentioned above, held items strikingly reminiscent of C, J and therefore of their common ancestor, was a daughter house of Halesowen. As it is the chronicle material in C that differentiates it from the common ancestor — and for that matter from Jesus 29, which contains nothing similar — it is here that we are most likely to find evidence for anything distinctive in the milieu of this manuscript.

The weight of evidence for the copying of the relevant vernacular chronicles, both extended and summary, favours monastic houses, in Pearsall's looser sense that would include regular canons, and this agrees with the professional production of the manuscript. Moreover, Lesley Johnson (1991) argues that as C's copy of Laȝamon has marginal Latin glosses that form an integral part of the narrative and were copied and rubricated by the same hands, it was 'designed for a rather more lettered milieu' than Le Saux and Barron & Weinberg have recently suggested. This suggests an audience as well as a provenance, but does not exhaust the possible audiences of the manuscript. For the magnitude of the task of carefully copying Laȝamon's *Brut* alone argues patronage or commissioning, for example by lay magnates, something characteristic of extended versions of the Matter of Britain in this period : Salter (1988, 5) observes that of the 90 manuscripts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, 48 can be dated to the twelfth century, and 'their circulation among the Anglo-Norman magnates of England charted with some precision'. Further, the *composition* of such texts is not typically monastic : Wace and Laȝamon worked in the same secular world as their audiences, which was the world also of the feudal manuals and some copies of the short Anglo-Norman prose chronicles.

Some such element in the audience of C, though less socially elevated than Wace's, is likely, and the entertainment and instruction of patrons

or visitors is a function compatible with the entire makeup of the C collection, from the witty and literate *Owl and the Nightingale* through the Chardri poems with their partly secular, partly religious themes, to the short devotional poems. The undifferentiated mixture of English and Anglo-Norman is natural with such an audience, rather than with the less socially elevated audience implicit in the categorisation of C (like Jesus 29) as a 'friar's miscellany'.[20] The monastic-manorial nexus argued for above is not a mere juxtaposition or straddling of two possibilities for the origin of C; the evidence of the circulation of chronicle texts suggests that it belongs precisely in the overlap between those two milieux.

Notes

(1) The customary ascription of the *Brut* to two (if not more) scribes is queried by Laing (1993, 70), citing Angus McIntosh in support, but reaffirmed by Jane Roberts (1994, 7-8).

(2) However, Elizabeth J. Bryan (1999, 186) finds signs that the *Brut* was read and glossed before it was trimmed, and thus perhaps before it was bound with the rest of the present manuscript.

(3) There are no other texts in the fire-damaged Otho manuscript, and Smith's pre-conflagration catalogue (Tite 1984, 73) gives no further information.

(4) Summary lists of British and English kings are found in London, College of Arms, Arundel XIV and Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College 43. London, British Library Additional 14252 has a similar chronicle based on introductory material in Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* (q. v. Woledge & Clive 1964, 105). On late medieval works, see footnote 14 below.

(5) This has a variant prologue, beginning with Edward the Confessor. There is an edition in Tyson 1975.

(6) This has a continuation giving an account of the reign of Edward I.

(7) This is an extensively altered redaction with a marked Scottish cast. It also contains a section from *Le livere de reis de Engleterre* on the

reign of Richard I, as does BL Cotton Cleopatra D. vii.

(8) This has an appendix recounting events from 1280 to 1326. Vising (1923, 66 and 98) indicates that Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Nouv. acq. 4532 contains LRB, but this is an error, as pointed out by Clark (1954, 40).

(9) On the Peterborough origins of which see further Clark 1954, 42 fn. 22.

(10) Two discussions are available : Clark 1954, 39-43 and Foltys 1962, 21-43. Foltys bases his conclusions on a thorough analysis of nine manuscripts ; Clark considers twelve, but her analysis is brief. Foltys (1962, 43) concludes that C and Corpus 53 form a single grouping, with a line of descent from the archetype separate from the remaining manuscripts examined. Clark's discussion does not conflict with this grouping, but adds some further connections. Within the group, she sees Caligula A. iii as nearest the archetype : 'Thus, the tradition which produced Laud seems to be represented at its best by Caligula A III, and then, with successive degrees of corruption, by Caligula A IX, then by the archetype of the genealogies [BL Royal 13 A xvii, Royal Roll 14 B v and the Egmont Roll, Additional 47170], then by Laud [636] then by Corpus [53] copied from Laud' (Clark 1954, 43).

(11) Among them might be singled out The Hague, Konink. Bibl. 75 A 2/2, roll and London, BL, Cotton Roll XV. 7, which begin like *Brutus*, and London, BL, Additional 8101, roll, which on the dorse contains the *Brutus*, as indicated above. Wright also prints (1-37) a text from a manuscript in the possession of Joseph Mayer of Liverpool, which has not been identified. Vising indicates that BL Lansdowne 1117 also contains this text, but this is an error, perhaps for Lansdowne Ch. Rot. 3. Generically similar but textually different is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 98, known as the 'Adam and Eve roll'.

(12) Hudson 1963 discusses the manuscripts of Robert of Gloucester ; only one of them is dated to appreciably before 1400, and little is known about their institutional provenances.

Influences of Laȝamon on other writings can be traced (McNelis 1994), but none of them gives useful indications about the milieu of C.

(13) Probably a Latin work, in the view of Wilson (1940, 159) and Bell (1992, 190).

(14) In English, there are no prose historical works between the *Peterborough Chronicle* and the fifteenth-century writings surveyed by Matheson (1984). In verse, apart from the works of 'Robert of Gloucester' and Robert Mannyng already mentioned, there are *Castleford's Chronicle* and the *Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*. According to its editor, *Castleford's Chronicle* may have been composed soon after 1327, but the sole extant manuscript is fifteenth-century (Eckhardt 1996, I, xi) ; it seems to contain no evidence of milieu except for its frugality. As for the *Metrical Chronicle*, of the manuscripts whose origins are known, British Library Royal 12. C. xii was assembled by a baronial chaplain (Revard 2000, 69-74 ; see also Hathaway et al. 1975, xxxvii-liii) ; the Auchinleck manuscript is bourgeois (Pearsall and Cunningham 1977, viii) ; the fifteenth-century Cambridge University Library Dd. xiv. 2 similarly seems to have belonged to a townsman of Oxford, though it also shows interests in history, land-holdings, the university and Oseney Abbey (Zettl 1935, xviii). Cambridge University Library Ff. v. 48, also of the fifteenth century, is a modest compilation combining vernacular edification and entertainment : gentle lay ownership seems likely. Finally, a single manuscript, Cambridge, University Library Gg. i. 1, contains a French translation of this chronicle. This vast collection, described by Meyer (1886), seems by its contents to have been made for a male religious house. (In any event, it is of Irish provenance.) The *Short English Metrical Chronicle*, then, bears out the pattern of mixed monastic-gentle ownership, though with gravitation down the social scale by the fifteenth century.

(15) On the dating of the former, see Jenkins et al. 1943 and Flower 1938. In a personal communication Ruth Dean dates the latter to the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century.

(16) Flower 1938, 43 suggests that Additional 45103 originally formed part of the same manuscript as Galba E. iii, mentioned above as containing legal texts and the LRB. This would change the balance of the whole, but not introduce any fundamentally new kinds of item.

(17) There are further English manuscripts of Wace (see for example Bell, 1960), but none that bear clear indications of institutional provenance, as far as I am aware.

(18) Cf. footnote 1 above.

(19) The co-occurrence of mechanical copying and a substantial number of scribes need not be accidental. Görlach (1974, 57) : 'the high standard of copying suggests a large scriptorium' ; it is evident from the context that by a high standard he means exceptional faithfulness, including 'nonsensical readings resulting from mechanical copying' (238, fn. 193).

(20) For a brief survey of the history of this view, see Scahill 1992, 8, fn. 15 and the references there.

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