

Texts and Contexts: A Study of Aristocratic Influence on Latin and
Vernacular Historical Narratives in Twelfth Century England

by

Louisa Taylor

A thesis submitted to The University of Birmingham

for the degree of Master of Philosophy

Department of Medieval History

School of History and Cultures

College of Arts and Law

The University of Birmingham

September 2010

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the claims of some historians that we cannot consider histories composed in Latin and the vernacular Anglo-Norman as part of one corpus of historical narratives, due to their linguistic differences. Historians often perceive Latin histories to be scholarly and religious, seeing vernacular histories as more influenced by lay aristocratic culture. This study investigates if this separation is justified. To do this, it compares three vernacular histories and three Latin histories composed in twelfth century England. It focuses specifically on the patronage of these histories and the literary trend for 'courtly' writing which some scholars have seen as reflecting lay aristocratic culture. This comparison demonstrates that these histories were influenced by networks of both lay and religious aristocrats. It discusses how so called 'courtly elements' in vernacular histories, which are seen as the result of lay aristocratic influence, were also present in Latin histories. Vernacular histories could also include classical references, pious asides, and an extensive use of Latin source material. They are thus the product of many influences, including the historian's education, their piety and the way in which they intend to use the past. They cannot be defined by the language they are composed in.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Joseph Daniel Pomeroy.

1987-2009

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Simon Yarrow, for all his support and help during the writing of this thesis. I am grateful to the Department of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Birmingham for granting me a Scholarship, without which I could not have undertaken my Masters degree. I should like to thank Mum, Dad, Hazel and Crystal for their constant encouragement. Finally, my thanks to Michael, whose patience and understanding sustained me through this year.

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List of Abbreviations

WM	William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings Volume I</i> , ed. and trans. R.A.B Mynors completed by R.M. Thompson and M. Winterbottom, (Oxford, 1998)
HH	Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. D. Greenway, (Oxford, 1996)
GM	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>The History of The Kings of Britain</i> , Latin text ed. M.D. Reeve and trans. N. Wright, (Woodbridge, 2007)
GG	Geoffrei Gaimar, <i>Estoire des Engleis: History of the English</i> , ed. and trans. I. Short, (Oxford, 2009)
Wace	Wace, <i>Roman de Brut: A History of the British Text and Translation</i> , ed. and trans. J. Weiss, (Exeter, 1999)
JF	Jordan Fantosme, <i>Chronicle</i> , ed. and trans. R.C. Johnson, (Oxford, 1981)

Introduction

In 1992 Ian Short wrote that the ‘vernacularisation of culture is, for me, one of the most important, and one of the least widely recognised, aspects of the twelfth century which we fondly refer to as a Renaissance.’¹ He goes on to remark that scholars need to ‘look more critically at the validity of the polarised opposition that we all tend to work within between Latin and the vernaculars and to scrutinise more carefully the many areas of overlap and interdependence between what for our own convenience we categorise as the learned and lay cultures.’² Despite Short’s comments, scholars have continued to mostly study Latin and vernacular literature separately. If we consider twelfth-century historical narratives from Anglo-Norman England, the sources with which this study will deal, then we can see that while some historians have begun to consider vernacular and Latin histories as one corpus of works, most historians still focus on the seemingly more scholarly Latin texts. This study will seek to address this balance, and compare Latin and vernacular histories to examine how different they really are.

Constraints of time and space mean this study will focus on one factor which is often considered of paramount importance to the development of vernacular histories; secular aristocratic influence. This study will examine the extent to which secular aristocratic patronage was responsible for the development of vernacular texts, and whether this patronage differs from the kind that Latin authors were receiving. It will then discuss whether vernacular texts were overtly ‘aristocratic’ in their contents, and whether they

¹ I. Short, ‘Patrons and Polyglots: French literature in 12th-Century England,’ *Anglo-Norman Studies*, Vol. 14, (1992) p.231

² *Ibid.*, p.231

differed in this respect to their Latin contemporaries. Chapter three suggests that the way in which each history is crafted depends more on the way the historian uses the past than the language it is composed in. This method of analysis allows for individual differences to be discerned between twelfth-century histories, instead of making generalisations based on linguistic differences. A case study will be used to demonstrate how useful vernacular histories can be when used as evidence alongside Latin histories. We shall discover that secular aristocratic influence is visible in both Latin and vernacular histories and that by looking at the ways in which each historian uses the past, rather than the language they write in, we can use twelfth-century histories as a single corpus of historical narratives.

England had a long tradition of historical writing. With the beginnings of this tradition in Bede, followed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, historical writing had especially flourished following the Norman conquest of 1066, developing across the twelfth century as a form of discourse. The production of history came in two waves. First, Norman authors writing in Normandy wrote histories which were largely extensions of previous histories. These were works like the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* of William of Jumièges and the *Gesta Guillelmi* written by William of Poitiers. There was little originality in their style, and they often followed the pattern of their sources; continental histories composed in the early eleventh century. It has been argued that these works sought to justify the legitimacy of the conquest and the new Norman presence in Britain.³ A so called ‘second generation’ of historians began to write in the early twelfth century.⁴ Most of these

³ William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. and trans. E.M.C. Van Houts, (Oxford, 1995); William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and M. Chibnall, (Oxford, 1998)

⁴ For more on twelfth-century histories composed in Latin see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing In England c.550 To c.1307*, (London, 1974) pp.92-104; 136-268

historians were monks or religious men. It is argued that these later histories were used to provide records of the lands that monastic and religious houses owned for their new Norman masters.⁵ Other scholars have argued that these histories were a way for the new Norman aristocracy to place themselves within English history, creating a new identity for themselves.⁶ With the introduction of historical works in the vernacular, the landscape changed again. Geoffrei Gaimar's *Estoire Des Engleis* was the first history in Europe to be composed in a dialect of the vernacular Old French. It foreshadowed the explosion of vernacular history which occurred in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries across Europe.

This study will compare three histories written in Latin, and three in the vernacular. The Latin histories used in this study will be: William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.⁷ Malmesbury's history, the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, was commissioned by Queen Matilda, the wife of Henry I, and was probably begun before 1118 as Matilda died in that year. It was revised c.1135 and by 1140 William had begun its continuation, the *Historia Novella*.⁸ Henry's *Historia Anglorum* was produced at the command of Alexander bishop of Lincoln and by c.1133 the first version was finished. In the next decade two more books were added, while a later tenth book dealt with the

⁵ M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record England 1066-1307*, 2nd Edn, (Oxford, 1993) pp.146-149; R.W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 4. The Sense of the Past Presidential Address,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, Vol. 23, (1972) pp.243-63

⁶ K. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the works of William of Malmesbury*, (Woodbridge, 2008) pp.9-10; For more on post-Conquest English and Norman identity see H.M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066 - c.1220*, (Oxford, 2003)

⁷ Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway, (Oxford, 1996); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings Volume I*, ed. and trans. R.A.B Mynors completed by R.M. Thompson and M. Winterbottom, (Oxford, 1998); Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, Latin text ed. M.D. Reeve and trans. N. Wright, (Woodbridge, 2007)

⁸ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 2nd Edn, (Woodbridge, 2003) p.7

period after 1135. The earlier books were revised and added to until 1154 when the narrative ends.⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, one of the most inscrutable historical texts ever written, must have been written between 1123, when Alexander, who is mentioned in the text, was consecrated bishop of Lincoln, and January 1139, when Robert of Torigni showed Henry of Huntingdon a finished copy at Bec.¹⁰ Geoffrey's history has a distinctly mythical content, featuring giants, classical myths and the first mention of king Arthur. William of Malmesbury was a monk of Malmesbury Abbey, Henry of Huntingdon was the archdeacon of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth may have been a canon of the Church of St. George in Oxford castle, and possibly Bishop of St Asaph at some point in his career.¹¹

These texts shall be compared to Geoffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle of the War Between the English and the Scots in 1173 and 1174*.¹² Geoffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* was written sometime between March 1136 and April 1137.¹³ Wace himself comments in his *Roman de Brut* that it was completed c.1155,¹⁴ while Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* was probably written after 1174 and the end of 1175.¹⁵ Wace's work is an adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britaniae* and another variant version of this work. Weiss has noted that the variant reshaped the original, giving it a more coherent narrative structure. There are few

⁹ Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.xviii

¹⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, p.vii

¹¹ Ibid., p.vii; See also, H.E. Salter, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford,' *English Historical Review*, Vol. 34, (1919) pp.382-385

¹² Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis: History of the English*, ed. and trans. I. Short, (Oxford, 2009); Wace, *Roman de Brut: A History of the British Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. J. Weiss, (Exeter, 1999); Jordan Fantosme, *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R.C. Johnson, (Oxford, 1981)

¹³ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xii

¹⁴ Wace p.373

¹⁵ A. Lodge, 'Literature and History in the Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme,' *French Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (July 1990) p.257

differences in content, with its author making mostly omissions although occasionally adding longer speeches, a more pious tone, an interest in pagan ceremonies and details from Roman legends.¹⁶ Wace's work sometimes follows the variant, and sometimes the original. All three of the vernacular histories were composed in the Anglo-Norman language and written in prose verse form.

As Gillingham has noted, Gaimar's *Estoire*: '...has been better appreciated – or, rather, parts of it have been, - by scholars of language and literature than by prosaic historians.'¹⁷ Historians have traditionally avoided the use of vernacular histories due to how overtly fictional they seem in comparison to their Latin counterparts. However, the linguistic turn has led some historians to reconsider their views. Spiegel, an influential writer on the uses of medieval texts, describes the linguistic turn as a 'semiotic challenge.'¹⁸ It has caused historians to consider whether texts can refer to an actual reality, or whether, as some linguistic theorists have argued, they can only be self-referential, and never refer to any 'real' external reality. Texts are products of the situations in which they are produced and cannot be subject to our modern expectations of genre.¹⁹ Application of these ideas can be seen in the work of historians studying Anglo-Norman histories. As Blacker writes, 'each of the authors conceived his work to be an accurate representation of historical

¹⁶ Wace, *Roman de Brut*, p.xviii

¹⁷ J. Gillingham, 'Kingship, Chivalry and Love. Political and Cultural Values in The Earliest History Written in French: Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*,' in J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values*, (Woodbridge, 2000) p.234

¹⁸ G.M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,' *Speculum*, Vol. 65, No. 1, (Jan, 1990) p.60

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.59-86; S. Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages,' *History and Theory*, Vol. 22, No.3, (1983) pp.278-310

events,' and so should be respected by modern historians as such.²⁰ We cannot judge these histories by modern standards of historical scholarship.

Yet historians still often see vernacular histories as the product of a more overt secular aristocratic influence than Latin histories which are perceived to be more scholarly and religious. For example, Jan Ziolkowski in 2004 in *The New Cambridge Medieval History IV* writes that twelfth-century oral stories were lost unless 'they chanced to be reworked in either the learned language of Latin or the courtly language of a vernacular that had developed a written form.'²¹ Similarly, Gillingham sees Gaimar's *Estoire* as offering 'an unparalleled insight into the thought-world of the secular aristocracy of the early twelfth century.'²² He considers Gaimar's history in aristocratic terms. Even Ian Short discusses vernacular texts in aristocratic terms writing that with the creation of vernacular literature, 'a new lay culture is born, operating in a parallel and symbiotic relationship to the learned.'²³ Vernacular histories are perceived to be overtly aristocratic.

Recently scholars have started to argue that vernacular histories are more similar to those written in Latin than scholars have traditionally believed. Damian-Grint argues that vernacular historians had as much scholarly authority as Latin ones. He sees vernacular works as containing the same protestations of 'truth' we commonly see in Latin histories, whilst also using the authority of their Latin source material to add extra weight to these

²⁰J. Blacker, *The Faces of Time: Portrayal of the Past in Old French and Latin Historical Narrative of the Anglo-Norman Regnum*, (Austin, 1994) p.53

²¹ J. Ziolkowski, 'Latin and vernacular Literature,' in D.E. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith (eds.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History IV c.1024 – c.1198 Part I*, (Cambridge, 2004) pp.667-668

²² J. Gillingham, 'Kingship, Chivalry and Love,' p.233

²³ I. Short, 'Language and Literature,' in C. Harper-Bill and E. Van Houts (eds.), *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, (Woodbridge, 2002) p.192

assertions.²⁴ Even more importantly, scholars have begun to note how diverse twelfth-century histories could be. Blacker's comparative investigation of vernacular and Latin histories is one of only a few studies which analyses these texts on equal terms. She notes 'the degree of individual differences among texts which deal with the 'same' material.' Anglo-Norman histories, Blacker concludes, 'on the one hand beg for generalizations to promote comprehension of the larger issues and on the other defy them.'²⁵

This study expands on the work of Blacker and Damian-Grint by demonstrating the value of vernacular histories as part of a corpus of twelfth-century historical narratives. This study will discuss the extent to which vernacular histories can be seen as the product of lay aristocratic influences, and whether they differ from Latin histories in this respect. Although scholars have discussed how individual histories were influenced by the lay aristocracy, there is no existing comprehensive study which compares how the lay aristocracy influenced both Latin and vernacular histories as a whole.

Some scholars, like Shopkow, believe that these histories should be investigated as two linguistically separate groups.²⁶ Shopkow argues that twelfth-century authors used different languages for different purposes. She cites the evidence of sociolinguists who believe that Latin and Anglo-Norman are linguistically very different, arguing that

²⁴P. Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, (Woodbridge, 1999) p.xii

²⁵ J. Blacker, *The Faces of Time*, p.196

²⁶ L. Shopkow, *History and Community Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, (USA, 1997) pp.24-25

medieval people were aware of these differences.²⁷ These scholars argue that medieval writers used different registers to express different ideas and structure their social relationships. Vernacular histories were intended to have a different meaning to the works of authors who chose to write in Latin.²⁸

However, while historians chose their language of composition in the same way that they chose the form, style or content of their history, there is evidence that the use of Latin was not necessarily synonymous with scholarly history. More recent sociolinguistic theory challenges the idea that texts should be divided on the basis of the language they were written in. As Derrida noted; the law of genre is contamination.²⁹ Many literary scholars, like Short, have pointed out that the strange mix of vernacular and Latin histories seen in twelfth-century England are only possible because it was trilingual. Latin was the language of the Church and Anglo-Norman that of the new Norman incomers, whilst ordinary people spoke some form of English. Stein has argued that in a multilingual field like this there are no 'points of stability.' No one language can be tied to a place of production or reception.³⁰ This seems obvious if we consider the authors of these histories probably had competency in at least two of these languages. So, if a monk, who speaks Anglo-Norman to his masters and English to local villagers, writes a history in Latin, is his work the product of just the linguistic world of Latin? Many scholars would argue not.

²⁷ Shopkow cites N. Steuver, 'The Study of Language and the Study of History,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 4, (1974) pp. 401-415; G.M. Spiegel, 'Social Change and Literary Language: The Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth-Century Old French Historiography,' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 17, (1987) pp.129-148; G.M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth Century France*, (1993)

²⁸ L. Shopkow, *History and Community*, p.25

²⁹ R.M. Stein, 'Multilingualism' in P. Strohm (ed.), *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature Middle English*, (Oxford, 2007) p.34

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.28

The question becomes even more confused if one considers texts which are largely translations. Wace's *Roman de Brut* is one of these texts, being largely a modified translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*. Warren argues that translations such as this are monolingual products of multiple languages working together to give meaning.³¹ They are both the product of the original text, and a new text in itself. Translations provide an opportunity for authors to alter the original source material to appeal to a new audience, different societies and different identities. Wace's translation is therefore the product of the Latin of its source, the Anglo-Norman it was translated into, as well as the linguistic world around it.³² This study will consider the histories used in this history as a product of a number of different factors, and not as two distinct groups of texts defined by their linguistic features as Shopkow has.

Rita Copeland has contributed extensively to the debate about vernacular translations and their authority as historical narrative in early medieval Europe. She believes medieval authors in the vernacular had a reliance on Latin thought and literature, even if they did not acknowledge it, due to the Latin concept of *translatio studii et imperii*. This concept was central to the medieval conception of the relationship between past and present cultures and how cultural value and authority was transmitted between two periods. It allowed vernacular translations of Latin works to both draw authority from those Latin works as well as signalling change as a modern text is produced. Vernacular translations

³¹ M.R. Warren, 'Translation,' in P. Strohm (ed.), *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature Middle English*, (Oxford, 2007) p.52

³² *Ibid.*, p.52

are dependent on, and yet different to, the past.³³ It is thus possible to see vernacular texts as existing within the linguistic world of Latin.

There is more evidence that twelfth-century scholars could conceive of Latin and vernacular histories as of equal authority and not as languages of different status as Shopkow argues. The manuscript Harley 978, for example, contains texts composed in both Latin and Old French as well as prose texts, Marie's Fables, Latin material from the cult of Thomas Beckett and a French praise of Simon de Montfort's victory at the Battle of Lewes.³⁴ Medieval scholars were not afraid to mix historical styles together in one book. Two of the four copies of Geoffrei Gaimar's *Estoire* survive in manuscripts where it has formed a continuous historical text with Wace's *Roman de Brut* placed before and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* positioned after it.³⁵ Medieval scholars do not appear to have been concerned with separating vernacular histories from those written in Latin, or more marvellous histories, like Wace's, from more scholarly ones, like Fantosme's.

This does not mean that the transition to writing history in the vernacular is an unimportant one. Many people in the twelfth century could not read Latin and benefited from histories beginning to be composed in vernacular languages they understood. The use of the vernacular opened up access to written literature many people.³⁶ However, a change in language does not necessarily mean a change in the actual style, form and content of history. We cannot assume that aristocratic people could not become involved

³³ R. Evans, A. Taylor, N. Watson and J. Wogan-Browne (eds.), 'The Notion of vernacular Theory,' in R. Evans, A. Taylor, N. Watson and J. Wogan-Browne, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory 1280-1520*, (Exeter, 1999) pp.317-318

³⁴ R.M. Stein, 'Multilingualism,' pp.31-32

³⁵ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xvi

³⁶ I. Short, 'Language and Literature,' p.192

in the production of Latin works and that vernacular works were the preserve of the lay aristocracy. To dismiss vernacular histories as secular and aristocratic is to generalise across a corpus of historical narratives which vary widely in the ways they use the past. The third chapter of this study will investigate the ways in which twelfth-century historians, both writing in Latin and vernacular, use the past for different ends. This will help us better understand why histories were crafted in certain ways.

An interdisciplinary approach is essential in this study as scholars of both literature and history have contributed to scholarship on twelfth-century histories. Consequently, a number of literary terms are used throughout this thesis, especially ‘style’, ‘form’ and ‘content’. Scholars have extensively debated how these terms should be defined, however constraints of time and space mean such debates cannot occur here. Some working definitions can be offered to clarify the sense in which these terms will be used in this study. ‘Style’ refers to the way in which language is used in a given context for a given purpose, by a given person.³⁷ For example, to write in a ‘courtly’ style is to use rich description and words which refer to the luxurious objects and fashions at court. ‘Form’ refers to arrangement of the material content of any given piece of historical narrative. For example, a historian can craft their history to have a chronological form, or order their content using the reigns of kings as a structural framework. ‘Content’ is a term which can be defined in many different ways by linguists. Here, we will take the definition of Leech and Short who see ‘content’ as encapsulating both the logical and conceptual meaning of a text, as well as what that text communicates to the world.³⁸

³⁷ G. Leech and M. Short, *Style in Fiction A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd Edn., (Harlow, 2007) p.9

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.20

This study examines the belief that vernacular histories were largely the result of aristocratic influence, and as such, are the products of an overtly aristocratic and secular culture. The first chapter discusses the extent of aristocratic influence on twelfth-century historical narratives in terms of their patronage of certain authors. Chapter two examines the direct influence of lay aristocratic culture on vernacular histories, and whether they differ in their focus from Latin histories. Chapter three demonstrates how different all these histories actually were, regardless of the language they were composed in. It proposes that it is more useful to consider these histories as affected by the different ways in which each historian was using the past, rather than as products of religious or secular, scholarly or aristocratic influences. This study ends with a case study which puts the conclusions of the past three chapters into practice. It demonstrates how useful the evidence from vernacular histories can be when used alongside Latin histories to assess historical change over time.

Chapter 1

Patronage

This chapter will investigate the extent to which both lay and secular aristocratic patronage influenced historical narratives across the twelfth century. It will discuss whether aristocratic figures influenced vernacular narratives to a greater extent than Latin ones. It will do this by looking at a number of issues. Firstly, this chapter will discuss the sorts of author-patron relationships which existed in the twelfth century and whether the patrons of vernacular histories were different to those of Latin histories. This will enable us to see if lay aristocratic patronage is a new influence on historical texts which develops alongside vernacular historical expression. Secondly, this chapter will consider how much impact patrons actually had on the historical works they were involved with. Could aristocratic patrons exert enough influence on the histories they patronised to dictate the way in which they are crafted? The answers to these questions will help understand the influence that aristocratic patronage had on Latin and vernacular histories. This chapter will argue that Latin histories are not solely products of a religious community, nor are vernacular histories just the products of aristocratic influences. We cannot separate these texts by the languages in which they were composed.

Who were the patrons of twelfth-century histories?

This section will compare the different types of patronage which can be seen across the six historical narratives examined in this study. It will demonstrate that not all Latin histories had religious patrons, and that not all vernacular histories were the product of aristocratic patronage. It is more important to consider the function which each patron

had within the patron-author relationship when examining the sorts of influence patrons had on historical narrative in the twelfth century.

There is a difference between authors who dedicate their texts to certain figures in the hope of gaining future rewards, and those who are directly involved in the patronage of a text during its production.¹ Both shall be discussed in this section, as both can tell us something about aristocratic involvement in the production of twelfth-century history. However, it shall be made clear if a dedication is speculative and not referring to an actual author-patron relationship.

Latin histories were dedicated to both lay aristocrats as well as the members of the church. William of Malmesbury's history was dedicated to Robert, earl of Gloucester, King Henry I's illegitimate son.² However, he also offered his work to David, king of Scotland, hoping that he would bring it to the attention of Empress Matilda. She was the daughter of Queen Matilda, wife of King Henry I, who William claims encouraged him to write his history.³ Henry of Huntingdon had a religious patron, Alexander, bishop of Lincoln.⁴ Alexander was also involved with Geoffrey of Monmouth's history. Geoffrey claimed that Alexander had encouraged him to include the *Prophecies of Merlin* in his history.⁵ These prophecies are a number of predictions that Merlin, a prophetic figure in this history, is shown to give to Vortigern, a British king. Geoffrey dedicates his work as a whole to Robert, earl of Gloucester, adding an extra dedication to Waleran, Count of

¹ I. Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots,' p.232

² WM pp.11-13

³ WM pp.3-9

⁴ HH pp.5-7

⁵ GM p.142

Meulan and earl of Worcester, in some later manuscripts.⁶ A number of key figures, such as Alexander and Robert, earl of Gloucester, are very interested in histories. That these histories are composed in Latin does not seem to dissuade their authors from offering them to aristocrats.

These patrons are all very high status figures. Robert, earl of Gloucester was King Henry I's illegitimate son, Waleran of Meulan was a powerful actor in the politics of Stephen's reign and Alexander, bishop of Lincoln was an important member of both Henry I's and King Stephen's government. Alexander's uncle, Roger of Salisbury, had been Henry I's chief government minister and his whole family, including Alexander, played important roles in the politics of England.⁷ In contrast, Geoffrei Gaimar's vernacular history is patronised by an aristocrat of much lower status, a Lady Constance fitz Gilbert from Lincolnshire.⁸ The fitz Gilberts were probably minor members of the large Clare family. There is evidence that they were tenants of the Lincolnshire fees of Grant, making them minor regional aristocracy.⁹ Dominica Legge has argued that this sort of patronage heralds the beginning of regional aristocratic courts patronising local works of history.¹⁰ Here we see different levels of the aristocracy patronising history.

In contrast to Gaimar's history, Wace's history was probably the product of the royal court. There is no dedication in his *Roman de Brut*, or at least none that survives, and few clues within the text itself which point to an obvious patron. However, his other work of

⁶ GM p.4; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, p.ix

⁷ See B. R. Kemp, 'Salisbury, Roger of (d. 1139)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, (Sept 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23956>, accessed 1 Sept 2010]

⁸ GG p.349

⁹ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xi

¹⁰ M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, (Oxford, 1963) pp.3-5

history, the *Roman de Rou*, does provide clues as to the sort of people that may have supported his work as a historian. In this history, Wace complains that King Henry II is no longer supporting him, 'The king in the past was very good to me. He gave me a great deal and promised me more, and if he had given me everything he promised me things would have gone better for me.'¹¹ It seems as if King Henry was providing him with some sort of financial support in return for his works of history. He could also have been supporting Wace during his composition of the *Roman de Brut*. However, if Wace started his work earlier than 1152 then it is unlikely that Henry II or his queen Eleanor of Aquitaine commissioned the work as Eleanor was still married to Louis VII of France and Stephen of Blois was still king of England.¹² Wace himself notes that he had completed this history by 1155, so it possible that King Henry I or his Queen had patronised his work.¹³ Wace also complains about the lack of support he now receives from the aristocracy at court in general, again suggesting that these were the kinds of patrons he wanted to attract. He writes that, 'Those who wrote chronicles and composed histories...often used to receive handsome gifts from barons and noble ladies for setting down their lives in writing...But now I can put in a great deal of effort, write and translate books and compose romances and *serventeis* but I will scarcely find anyone sufficiently courtly to give me and present me with enough money to employ a scribe for a month.'¹⁴ Wace's comments suggest that the wider aristocracy were interested in historical works and had patronised historical works in the past, even though their generosity has declined.

¹¹ Wace, *Roman de Rou: The History of the Norman People*, ed. and trans. G.S. Burgess and notes to trans.E. Van Houts, (Woodbridge, 2004) p.220

¹² Ibid., p.xxvi

¹³ Wace p.373

¹⁴ Wace, *Roman de Rou: The History of the Norman People*, p.92

It is more difficult to discover the patron or patrons of the last history in this study, Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*. It contains no dedication; however there are clues in the text which point to a specific group being involved in its production. Fantosme completely disregards many of the major figures involved in the civil war between Henry II and his son of which his history tells. Most of Henry II's main supporters are not mentioned in the text, including the young William of Mandeville, earl of Essex; Aubrey de Vere, earl of Oxford and Reginald earl of Cornwall.¹⁵ However, the northern noblemen Humphrey de Bohun, Ranulf de Glanville, Richard de Lucy, Roger de Stuteville, Odinel d'Umfaville and Robert de Vaux, are mentioned 111 times collectively.¹⁶ Humphrey de Bohun was constable and therefore officer of the Exchequer; Ranulf de Glanville was sheriff of Lancashire; Roger de Stuteville sheriff of Northumberland; Odinel d'Umfaville lord of Prudhoe and justiciar and Robert de Vaux, a relatively new baron and sheriff, completes the group.¹⁷ These men were all northern barons with important administrative functions within the government. Rector has argued that Fantosme's focus on this group of men suggests that he is writing at the command of one of members.¹⁸ Fantosme's *Chronicle* could have been produced to commemorate their actions in the civil war between King Henry II and his son.

These men had strong connections to one another and to Fantosme, again suggesting that the group, or a member of the group, commissioned Fantosme's narrative. Jordan Fantosme, it appears, spent most of his life working as a bishop's clerk and administrator of bishop's affairs at Winchester firstly under Henry of Blois and then under Richard of

¹⁵ G. Rector, 'Faites le mien desir': studious persuasion and baronial desire in Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 34, Iss. 3, (Sep., 2008) p.324

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.325

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.330

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, pp.311-346

Ilchester.¹⁹ Richard of Ilchester features in Fantosme's *Chronicle* and delivers news of the war in England to Henry II. Richard of Ilchester was also a friend of Richard de Lucy, who features heavily in the *Chronicle*. The group featured in Fantosme's history are, as a whole, seen witnessing Henry II's charters. Among the names which witnessed Henry's arbitration between the kings of Navarre and Castile we find 'Richard de Luci, William de Vesci, Odonell d Umfravill [sic], Robert de Vaus, Roger Mowbray, Robert de Stutevill, Philip de Kime and Roger Bigot.'²⁰ There was also a high degree of intermarriage between these men. Odinel d'Umfraville was married to Alice, daughter of Richard de Lucy while William de Vesci was married to Burga, sister of William and daughter of Robert de Stuteville. William de Stuteville was married to a Bertha who was either the niece or granddaughter of Ranulf de Glanville.²¹ As an administrator who worked in Richard of Ilchester's household, it is possible that Fantosme was asked to write a history to commemorate this group. Fantosme's history could thus have been the result of the patronage of a man with a religious profession, Richard of Ilchester, bishop of Winchester, or one of his aristocratic acquaintances. Fantosme's history is an example of how vernacular histories can be caught up in a web of both religious and aristocratic influences. Just as Latin histories can have aristocratic patronage, so vernacular histories can also be influenced by groups of both aristocratic and religious men.

The functions of patrons

But, the author-patron relationship is governed by more than whether the patron is lay or religious. Here it is poignant to ask exactly what a patron is in terms of their function

¹⁹ G. Rector, 'Faites le mien desir,' p.327

²⁰ Ibid., p.330

²¹ Ibid., p.330

within the author-patron relationship. It will then be possible to assess whether aristocratic patrons influenced these histories in a different way to religious patrons.

One important question is whether there was a financial relationship between historians and their patrons. Wace and Gaimar had the most obvious financial relationships with their patrons. As we have seen, Wace complained about the lack of generosity of his patrons. In his *Roman de Rou* he writes, 'He who sings must drink or take some other reward. He who can should progress in his profession. Wace would gladly accept bounty, for he needs to take something.'²² Gaimar also implies that he is financially supported by his patron. At the end of his *Estoire* he writes that 'provided he has a patron, he will continue his narrative.'²³ This suggests that he relies on patrons to be able to produce history. He explicitly writes that 'If his lady had not helped him, he would never have completed it [the history].'²⁴ Lady Constance acquired resources for him also, sending to Walter Espec for a text that was essential to the history's composition.²⁵ Gaimar writes that Walter Espec in turn 'requested this historical narrative, Earl Robert sent it to him, and then Walter Espec lent it to Ralf fitz Gilbert; Lady Constance borrowed it from her husband.'²⁶ Lady Constance was used to paying for the production of histories for her own private use. Gaimar records that she paid for a copy of a book by a man called David, paying 'a mark of silver, duly assayed and weighed' for this.²⁷ Both Gaimar and Wace appear to have relied on their patrons for financial support as well as resources.

²² Wace, *Roman de Rou: The History of the Norman People*, p.88

²³ GG p.351

²⁴ GG p.349

²⁵ GG p.349

²⁶ GG p.349

²⁷ GG p.353

In contrast, Latin works are often written by men who would not need personal financial support from their patrons. Many of them were financially supported by the religious institutions they belonged to. William of Malmesbury was a monk and would have been supported by his monastery. Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth had high positions in the Church hierarchy, probably receiving enough money from the Church to support themselves. Yet these historians still sought rewards, just not always for themselves.

There is evidence that William of Malmesbury was seeking a reward for his monastery. The first version of his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* from the early 1120s emphasises Robert's generosity to St Mary's in Tewkesbury. William writes; 'Your generosity and your contempt of coin are advertised by the community of Tewkesbury; for, as I hear, so far from raking in presents from them, you even send back what they proffer of their own accord.'²⁸ Robert is known for his generosity and by mentioning this William suggests he desires similar rewards. Shortly after William's history is published, Henry I granted Malmesbury abbey a broad exemption from tolls, possibly at the request of Robert.²⁹ Robert also acted as patron for William's later work, the *Historia Novella*, a work which Leedom argues 'idealises' Robert's actions during king Stephen's tumultuous reign.³⁰ In the prologue to the *Historia Novella*, William claims that Robert 'desires the transmission to posterity of those things that, by a wonderful dispensation of God, have happened in England in recent times.'³¹ Perhaps William writes to commemorate Robert in return for

²⁸ WM p.801

²⁹ R.B. Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester: A re-evaluation of the *Historia Novella*,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 70, No.4, (July, 1965) pp.984-985

³⁰ J.W. Leedom, 'William of Malmesbury and Robert of Gloucester Reconsidered,' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 6, No.3, (Autumn, 1974) p.263

³¹ William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella: The Contemporary History*, ed. E. King and trans. K.R. Potter, (Oxford, 1998) p.3

a reward. Wace's comments in the *Roman de Rou* suggest that historians could get rewards for commemorating the lives of aristocrats; 'those who wrote chronicles and composed histories...often used to receive handsome gifts from barons and noble ladies for setting down their lives in writing.'³² Yet William does not seem to seek personal rewards. He even turned down the abbacy of his monastery when offered it.³³

Thomson has also argued that William's letters to King David and Empress Matilda are soliciting their help in persuading the king to give Malmesbury abbey an abbot and end its long vacancy.³⁴ William writes to David that Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I, 'left our church a flock without a shepherd.'³⁵ In his letter to Empress Matilda he again complains that, Queen Matilda 'left our church without a head,' and that 'it is the height of justice that that the wisdom of so powerful a daughter should set right the one point in which a truly blessed mother has so far by her ignorance laid herself open to criticism.'³⁶ Queen Matilda and King David were not personally involved in William's history. His dedications to them are speculative, in the hope that they will give him their support. Here we see two different types of patronage; speculative patronage in the hope of support, and patronage whereby the patron is directly involved in the production of the text.

Jordan Fantosme may also have had a financial attachment to his patrons. If Richard of Illchester employed Fantosme as a clerk, then he may have extended his duties and

³² Wace, *Roman de Rou: The History of the Norman People*, p.92

³³ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p.6

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.37

³⁵ WM p.5

³⁶ WM p.7

commissioned him to write a history. He probably would have supported Fantosme financially during this time and granted him some reward for its composition. As a clerk Fantosme would not have been supported by an institution in the way that a monk like William of Malmesbury would.

Twelfth-century historians also sought the support of patrons to aid in the distribution of their texts. Geoffrey of Monmouth solicits the aid of both Waleran of Meulan and Robert of Gloucester; ‘lend your assistance to my book, so that, promoted by the concerted efforts of you both, it may shine forth more brightly for its readers.’³⁷ Here we to consider the main audience for historical narratives. It was the aristocracy who were literate enough, in the sense that they could read at least one language, to access at least some of these histories. Histories could also be read aloud to illiterate people. It seems as if some historians needed help to access some of these aristocratic groups. William of Malmesbury writes to David, king of Scotland, in order to gain access to his niece Empress Matilda. He wants David to ‘add your own authorization, and to arrange for this gift, together with our messenger, to be sent forward to our lady the empress.’³⁸ Lady Constance’ book borrowing in Gaimar’s narrative shows that books did circulate within the aristocratic community. Gaimar also comments that another book written by a poet named David and patronised by Lady Constance, ‘achieved some circulation and reached several places.’³⁹ Latin and vernacular historians were aware of the value of aristocratic patronage in distributing their histories.

³⁷ GM p.4

³⁸ WM p.3

³⁹ GG p.353

The distribution of histories was aided by networks of aristocratic families, friends and acquaintances, both secular and lay. As we have seen, although separated by a few degrees, minor families such as the fitz Gilberts could have contacts with much larger families like the earls of Gloucester. The fitz Gilbert family also had connections with the Clare family and the earls of Chester. Gaimar himself ends his own history with a prayer for his history to gain notoriety; ‘here is where the History of the English comes to an end. May Jesus Christ bless all those who turn their attention to it and those who inform others of its existence.’⁴⁰ These networks are visible in Fantosme’s history also, forming a close circle of both high ranking and more minor aristocrats. Aristocratic patronage could aid the distribution of histories within these networks.

This section demonstrates, therefore, that it is mistaken to divide the lay and religious aristocracy. Most church men with any status were members of aristocratic families and part of aristocratic networks.⁴¹ Henry of Huntingdon’s relationship with his patron Alexander indicates this. Henry of Huntingdon was certainly acquainted with aristocratic groups. As a child he had been raised in the house of Robert Bloet, bishop of Lincoln.⁴² By virtue of his close relationship with Robert Bloet, one can assume that Henry was also close to the new bishop, Alexander. Bishop Alexander was extensively involved in both lay aristocratic and religious networks. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in a letter to Alexander which is written before his prophecies of Merlin, writes that ‘no one among the clergy or the people enjoyed the service of so many nobles.’⁴³ A high ranking church man like

⁴⁰ GG p.355

⁴¹ This is demonstrated in C. Warren Hollister, ‘Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth Century Renaissance,’ in C. Warren Hollister (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth Century Renaissance*, (Woodbridge, 1997) pp. 1-16

⁴² HH p.587

⁴³ GM p.142

Alexander would have been considered politically important. During his lifetime he owned three castles, and was considered so powerful that King Stephen had him and his uncle arrested for trying to plot against him.⁴⁴ It is thus difficult to consider patronage as either religious or lay, as clerics could have political power and extravagant lifestyles very similar to their lay aristocratic contemporaries. We must remember that high ranking members of the clergy were mostly from high ranking aristocratic families, and thus members of extensive aristocratic networks themselves.

Patronage was an important factor in the production of twelfth-century historical narratives, and as we shall see in the next section, patrons could affect the way in which those narratives were crafted. However, dividing patronage into aristocratic and religious is not very useful. By considering the function each patron had in the author-patron relationship, we can see differences between the types of patronage which existed in the twelfth century. A patron could give financial support to the author, rewards to their institutions or help them obtain the resources they required. They could also ensure a wide distribution of the text, and gain access to important aristocratic networks which were potential new audiences. There are a few notable points which can be made about the types of relationships Latin authors have with their patrons compared to those that vernacular authors do. William of Malmesbury, Geoffrei Gaimar and Geoffrey of Monmouth all want aristocratic help to distribute their works. Gaimar, Wace, William of Malmesbury, and perhaps Jordan Fantosme, all require some sort of financial aid or desire some sort of reward for their services. The difference is that William of Malmesbury does not need personal financial support, whereas Wace, Gaimar, and

⁴⁴ K. Yoshitake, 'The Arrest of the Bishops in 1139 and its Consequences,' *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 14, Iss. 2, (June, 1988) pp.97-99

maybe Fantosme, depend on the generosity of their patrons. Another difference can be found in the status of the people patronising vernacular and Latin histories. Latin histories tend to be patronised or dedicated to very high status members of the aristocracy. In contrast, Gaimar's and Fantosme's histories are the result of regional patronage. Even Wace, who may have been at court, did not have dependable support from a network of aristocratic acquaintances in the way someone like Henry of Huntingdon did.

The influence of patronage on historical narratives

First, we must consider the extent to which each patron could influence the way each history is composed. A comparison of the effects which different patrons have on twelfth-century historical narratives will demonstrate that Latin histories are just as affected by the demands of their patrons as vernacular histories. The extent to which patrons affect the content of histories is determined by the type or relationship they have with each author, not the language in which each history is composed.

Twelfth-century patrons are often given important positions within the histories they patronise. This is the most obvious way that patrons can influence the content of twelfth-century histories. Historians writing in both Latin and the vernacular can be shown to do this. Henry of Huntingdon gives Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, a prominent place within his history. The most obvious example of this is in Henry of Huntingdon's treatment of Bishop Alexander's imprisonment by King Stephen along with his uncle, Bishop Roger of Salisbury. Most accounts generally agree that Bishop Roger and his nephew Bishop Alexander were arrested by the king at the encouragement of some leading men at his

court. They had convinced the king that these men were working with his enemies, pointing to their castle building as examples of their militaristic behaviour. King Stephen had set out to seize these castles and arrest these men on suspicion of conspiring against him.⁴⁵ Huntingdon writes that King Stephen ‘violently arrested them in his court.’ Roger is then tortured ‘with starvation and putting a rope around the neck of his son, who had been the royal chancellor, as if to hang him, ‘all in order to gain a number of castles which Roger and Alexander owned.’⁴⁶ Following these events, the important religious men of the country held a council at Winchester. Huntingdon writes that they ‘fell at the royal feet, begging in utter supplication, that to gain their free forgiveness of all his offences against the said bishops, he should restore their possessions to them.’ The king refuses. Huntingdon judges that it was this act which leads to Stephen’s ‘eventual ruin’ as Matilda comes to England to fight for the English crown soon after these events take place.⁴⁷ Henry places Alexander right at the centre of an event to which he gives great significance in dictating the direction of King Stephen’s fortunes.

Other sources detailing these events do not emphasise Bishop Alexander’s role as much as Henry. In the *Gesta Stephani* King Stephen is shown to realise his mistake in arresting the bishops. It records that Stephen ‘humbly accepted the penance enjoined for his fault.’⁴⁸ This account gives these events less significance in the context of Stephen’s reign. The author of the *Gesta Stephani* appears to be writing in favour of Stephen.⁴⁹ Here we see two authors, each crafting their histories to appeal to their own political stance. This suggests that Alexander is exerting influence on Henry’s history. However, Henry

⁴⁵ K. Yoshitake, ‘The Arrest of the Bishops in 1139 and its Consequences,’ pp.97-99

⁴⁶ HH p.723

⁴⁷ HH p.723

⁴⁸ *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter, (Oxford, 1976) p.81

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xix

makes no pleas in his history to Alexander to aid the distribution of his work or for rewards from aristocratic or religious sources. Although he does write that Alexander did ‘command’ him to write his history.⁵⁰ Alexander could have instructed him to include these elements. Alexander would probably have also influenced Henry in less obvious ways, merely by being his acquaintance and informing him of his version of events.

Henry writes Alexander into other important events as well. This is visible in Henry’s account of Stephen receiving mass at the Feast of Purification in 1141. Henry writes that the mass is given by Bishop Alexander. When Stephen, as is customary, is given a candle ‘fit for a king’ it breaks into pieces. The pyx above the altar, containing the Lord’s body, then falls from its place. Both of these events are interpreted by Henry as signs of the king’s downfall.⁵¹ Again, Alexander is given the central role in these prophetic events, and God shown as the central agent. This story features in the *Gesta Stephani* too, however in this account Bishop Alexander is not mentioned as being present, nor does the pyx fall from above the altar. Instead, the candle is said to go out and break for a moment before mending itself and relighting.⁵² It is written that this is a ‘sign that he would lose the dignity of the kingdom for his sin and...when penance had been rendered, by God’s favour wondrously and gloriously get it back again.’⁵³ Henry writes to please his patron Alexander, while the *Gesta Stephani* writes more favourably of King Stephen. It should be noted that nowhere else does the story of the pyx falling from above the altar occur. Henry gives his patron a central role in some of the most politically important episodes of history.

⁵⁰ HH p.5

⁵¹ HH p.733

⁵² *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter, p.111

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.111-113

Vernacular histories also gave patrons and their family and friends important roles in their histories. In Geoffrei Gaimar's *Estoire* the fitz Gilbert family do not personally feature within the narrative, however, a number of their acquaintances do. For example, Hugh of Chester, a relative of Lady Constance's, is given a central role at William Rufus' coronation. He is even granted 'the office of serving and aiding him [the king] as bearer of the royal staff,' as a reward for eloquently justifying his refusal to carry a sword during the coronation. Hugh argued that he was of too high a status to act as a servant for anyone.⁵⁴ Hugh is also described a man of great wealth and generosity during Gaimar's account of the battle of Maine.⁵⁵ Yet, Orderic Vitalis described him as depraved.⁵⁶ He writes that Hugh, 'devastated his own land, and preferred falconers and huntsmen to the cultivators of the soil and ministers of God,' and was, among other things, 'addicted to lust.'⁵⁷ The prominence of the earls of Chester within this history is probably due to their connections to Gaimar's patrons, the fitz Gilberts. The fitz Gilberts were minor members of the Clare family, to whom the earls of Chester were related. The fitz Gilberts probably related or at least connected to the earls.⁵⁸ It is possible that Lady Constance had asked for her family members to be included in the history, especially if she was paying for it to be produced. She may have been looking to gain the favour of the most politically important members of her family.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ GG p.327

⁵⁵ GG pp.317-319

⁵⁶ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xxvi

⁵⁷ F. Barlow, *William Rufus*, (California, 1983) p.174

⁵⁸ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xxvi

⁵⁹ In the Carolingian Empire lower status people often solicited the help of their higher status acquaintances. See G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, (Cambridge, 2004) esp. p.45

Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* is almost entirely focused on commemorating a small group of northern aristocrats who were probably also the patrons of the text. Their loyalty is demonstrated frequently throughout the text.⁶⁰ In a conversation with a messenger from England King Henry II in France refers directly to 'loyal Richard de Lucy,' and Humphrey de Bohun is said to be 'one of the most faithful who stand.' The earl of Arundel is also called a 'loyal supporter' of Henry's cause.⁶¹ William de Vesci is said to think 'more longingly of his absent Lord than a knight does of his mistress.'⁶² Fantosme uses the past to create a history which commemorates the loyalty of one group of people. If his text was commissioned by the aristocrats featured in his text, then his whole work is an example of the extent to which patrons can dominate historical narrative.

William of Malmesbury's history *Gesta Regum Anglorum* does not really mention his patron Robert earl of Gloucester, as it does not deal extensively with events beyond King Henry's reign. It does, however, provide glowing references to Queen Matilda, who William claims originally asked him to write his history.⁶³ However, his later work, the *Historia Novella* does discuss Robert of Gloucester and his actions in the civil war between Stephen and Matilda. William is different from the other histories in this study in that while his histories do contain idealised images of certain figures, he never glorifies certain people to please others. Even in his *Historia Novella* he idealises rather than glorifies Robert, earl of Gloucester.⁶⁴ Thomson writes that, 'Naturally he [William] has been accused of favouring the cause of Robert and the empress [Matilda], and he himself recognized the difficulties of writing contemporary history from an unbiased viewpoint.

⁶⁰ L. Ashe, *Fiction and History in England 1066-1200*, (Cambridge, 2007) p.89

⁶¹ JF p.115

⁶² JF p.43

⁶³ WM pp. 755-759

⁶⁴ J.W. Leedom, 'William of Malmesbury and Robert of Gloucester Reconsidered,' p.263

And yet he remained remarkably independent.’⁶⁵ With this in mind, can we see some patrons have more influence than others?

It appears as if William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon were able to have more freedom in when composition their histories. Both Henry and William include personal information within their histories as well as more disparate pieces of information they deem worthy of sharing. Henry includes a letter written to his friend Warin the Breton within his history, as well as a whole chapter of epigrams and a section on ‘Contempt for the World.’⁶⁶ William of Malmesbury’s history includes large digressions from the central focus on the kings of England. His digressions on the first crusade occupy around 12% of his work.⁶⁷ Both William and Henry are also free to include personal memories within their histories. Henry includes his memories of his childhood in the house of Robert Bloet; ‘his handsome knights, noble young men, his horses of great price, his golden and gilded vessels, the number of courses, the splendour of those who waited upon him, the purple garments and satins.’⁶⁸ It appears as if William and Henry had some freedom in choosing what they included within their histories.

We must be careful not to make too much of this, however, as William and Henry both wrote such large histories that it is easy for them to seem unaffected by the demands of patronage. In contrast, Fantosme’s history is so narrow in its focus that it seems

⁶⁵ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p.37 There is a tendency for scholars to hold William of Malmesbury up as a beacon of modernity in a period where historical narrative, hagiography and superstition could often mix. This seems more borne out of their own desire for him to be ‘modern’, than for him to necessarily always be a ‘first class historian.’ However, in his portrayal of his patrons William is quite measured, although a little idealist. He does not deliberately glorify his patrons in the way some of his contemporaries do.

⁶⁶ HH pp.778-827; HH pp.584-619

⁶⁷ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p.178

⁶⁸ HH p.587

consumed by the concerns of its central narrative. Yet this could be a function of its narrative form, rather than evidence that his history is completely governed by the demands of his patron. Gaimar's history also appears focused in its form, being a chronicle interpolated with six longer narrative pieces. In contrast, Henry's and William's histories are broadly structured by overarching frameworks, leaving more room for digressions from the central narrative. Henry of Huntingdon's history has a teleological structure. His history is broadly based around the coming of 'five plagues' to Britain which he names as the Romans, the Picts and Scots, the English, the Danes and the Normans. Each was 'divine vengeance' sent to punish both 'the faithful as well as 'unbelievers.'⁶⁹ William of Malmesbury's history is broadly structured using the reigns of each king. These looser structures leave more room for Henry and William to add pieces of interesting information.

However, other loyalties, besides the obvious influence of patronage, could impact on these histories. William of Malmesbury, for example, does not mention Robert, earl of Gloucester, in his history in the way that Henry includes Alexander in his; however he does write extensively of Malmesbury abbey and its community of monks. One example of this is the record of the restoration of some land to Malmesbury Abbey by King Edgar. He records that:

This land, which was leased out by the aforesaid clerks, was taken into possession unjustly by the contentious Æthelnoth; but his subtle and superstitious argumentation having been heard by my wise men and his defective claims rejected by them in my

⁶⁹ HH p.15

*presence, it was given back by me for the benefit of the monastery in the year of our Lord 974...*⁷⁰

When one considers the historical period that this history was composed in, it is not surprising that Malmesbury chose to include this sort of charter. The Norman Conquest had led to the almost entire replacement of the ruling class of England with elite men who had no ancestral claims to land. The years following 1066 had been dominated by legal cases concerning competing claims to land. As massive land holding institutions, monasteries would have been concerned about their own claims to their land. By copying charters of land grants into his history, Malmesbury was providing evidence of specific land gifts which could then be used if a dispute over ownership arose.⁷¹ William is influenced by the needs of his monastic community to include elements like this in his history, even though he may attempt to be more balanced in his references to his patron Robert.

Conclusion

Aristocratic figures patronised histories in both Latin and the vernacular in the twelfth century. Therefore, instead of considering vernacular histories as products of aristocratic influence, it is therefore more useful to discuss the different types of patronage which existed. The author-patron relationship often had a financial component; however Latin authors such as William of Malmesbury often sought rewards for their institution, rather than personal rewards. Lower status clerics like Wace, Gaimar and perhaps Jordan Fantosme would have needed personal financial support. Despite these differences, Gaimar, Fantosme and William of Malmesbury all feature their patrons within their

⁷⁰ WM p.251

⁷¹ M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp.146-149

histories. Patrons can thus be seen to influence the contents of the histories which they patronise.

However, it appears that Latin historians did have more freedom to include different types of information within their texts, although this perception could be due to how much bigger they are than vernacular histories. Some vernacular histories, like Fantosme's, do seem to be more controlled by the demands of their patrons than others. Generally, historians writing in both Latin and the vernacular show a willingness to include elements within their histories to please their patrons. Some historians, such as William of Malmesbury, also have loyalties to other institutions which are visible in their histories. Historians like Fantosme and Gaimar mention the aristocratic networks with which their patrons are connected. Twelfth-century historians were involved within larger aristocratic, both religious and lay, networks which influenced the contents of their histories.

Latin histories tend to be patronised or dedicated to aristocrats of a higher status than vernacular histories. Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury were acquainted with some of the most important men in England. Wace was too, but never gained the sort of position that either William or Henry did. Vernacular histories do seem to be composed by clerics of a lower status than those writing in Latin, and consequently their patrons appear to be of a lower status also. We are not therefore equating vernacular texts with the aristocracy, but a particular type of regional aristocracy. We see networks of aristocrats in both Fantosme's and Gaimar's histories. Yet, there is potential for vernacular histories to be connected to those of higher status through these aristocratic

networks. We should not forget that Wace had connections to the royal court and that his texts reached the King. It is more useful to conclude that the aristocracy were involved at all levels with historical narrative across the twelfth century, with the regional aristocracy increasingly involved in its production.

Chapter 2

Aristocratic Elements in Vernacular Historical Narratives

This study does not try to deny that lay aristocratic influences had an effect on the way in which historical narrative developed across the twelfth century. There are notable examples of lay aristocratic culture within vernacular histories and a growing focus on fashion and the court. This chapter will discuss how vernacular histories differ from some Latin histories in their focus on these points, demonstrating how vernacular authors change well known stories to conform to the new ‘courtly’ fashions of expression. It will then discuss how diverse vernacular and Latin histories can be, and that we should not simply label vernacular histories as courtly and aristocratic. Vernacular histories were the products of a number of different influences, not all of which were secular or aristocratic.

Literary scholars have made a connection between Anglo-Norman vernacular works and the romance genre of the later medieval period.¹ They have noted that these texts contain certain elements which they describe as ‘courtly’. These courtly elements would go on to define the genre of romance. Literary scholars have thus tried to compare these vernacular histories to later Continental romance texts, making them seem like quasi-romance literature. However, as Rosalind Field has noted, the ‘evident factual inaccuracies [of vernacular histories] irritate the historically minded reader, while their deviation from the norms of the [romance] genre disappoint the reader whose

¹ For discussions on how English and Continental romance literature relates to historiography see R. Field, ‘Romance as History, History as Romance,’ in M. Mills, J. Fellows and C.M. Meale (eds.), *Romance in Medieval England*, (Cambridge, 1991) pp.163-173; R.M. Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History and Governmental Authority, 1025-1180*, (Indiana, 2006); S. Crane, *Insular Romance Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature*, (California, 1986)

expectations are set by the courtly romances of France.’² Vernacular histories are thus caught between two modern academic disciplines, with literary scholars seeing them as bad examples of romance literature, and historians tending to distance them from Latin histories. This chapter will compare the ways in which Latin and vernacular histories differ as a result of the inclusion of these courtly elements, and whether we should see vernacular histories as more literary and overtly fictional.

Courtly elements in twelfth-century histories

‘Courtly’ elements, as Susan Crane argues, are hard to define, but can be broadly described as a focus on the court and its fashions, ‘praise of ladies, depiction of rich clothing and objects, and delineation of fine manners and generous behaviour.’³ It is thus not surprising that these courtly elements have been seen as the result of the influence of secular aristocratic culture, as they appeal to modern ideas of lay culture. This section will investigate how vernacular historians incorporate these courtly elements into their histories, and if they differ from Latin histories in their inclusion of these court and fashion focused episodes.

However, we must be careful not to assume that the histories here are part of the development of later romance literature. It is important not to see the development of these genres as inevitable, and that the vernacular histories here are as much ‘romance’ as history. The vernacular works in this study reflect the fashions of their own time for

² R. Field, ‘Romance as History, History as Romance,’ p.163

³ Ibid., p.135

narratives which feature the court and certain fashions; they are not the beginnings of the developing genre of romance which would appear first on the Continent.

Some vernacular authors alter stories first seen in Latin histories to include new ideas which could be termed 'courtly.' The story of Ælfthryth and Æthelwald is present in both William of Malmesbury's and Geoffrey Gaimar's histories and is a good example of this sort of crafting.⁴ In the basic story, a close companion of the king, Æthelwald, is sent to see if the noblewoman Ælfthryth is a suitable marriage match for the king. Once Æthelwald discovers her beauty, he plans to keep her to himself, telling the king that she is unsuitable to be his wife. The king decides to grant Ælfthryth to Æthelwald to marry instead. When the king discovers he has been deceived, he disposes of Æthelwald and takes Ælfthryth as his wife. In William of Malmesbury's version, the king kills Æthelwald himself, whilst in Gaimar's he orchestrates his death by sending him away on business and having him murdered.⁵ Each version is crafted to give slightly different messages. William places much of the blame for the situation on Ælfthryth, for disobeying her husband and not dressing in an ugly fashion when she met the king. If she had done, he would not have been interested in her. However, William writes, 'she found the heart to break faith with her wretched lover and her first husband, and sat down at the mirror to paint her face...All happened as she intended.'⁶ However, in Gaimar's text, Ælfthryth is approached by the king without her knowledge, and does not orchestrate the match.⁷ William of Malmesbury wishes to uphold the Christian idea of women as lustful creatures who can deceive men. However, Gaimar's Ælfthryth is meeker. The king has

⁴ A.R. Press, 'The Precocious courtesy of Geoffrey Gaimar,' in *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, (Liverpool, 1980) p.270

⁵ WM pp.257-259; GG pp.197-219

⁶ WM p.259

⁷ GG pp.207

Æthelwald killed and then brings Ælfthryth to court as his ward. She has no say in the matter. It is Æthelwald who is denounced as a ‘common criminal’ by Gaimar, and shown to be the villain of the story.⁸ Gaimar, as he often does, lends his support to the reigning king. He focuses his attention on the central pair of lovers, the king and Ælfthryth, demonising Æthelwald as a traitor who stops them being together. Æthelwald is even described as a ‘*losengier*,’ the character which would later become the arch-enemy of the ‘lovers’ in later medieval romances.⁹ Gaimar crafts his version of this story in a more courtly and vivid way.

A.R. Press has argued that Gaimar’s version of this story is the first example of a courtly story in early medieval Europe. He notes that Gaimar’s emphasis is on the development of love within his narrative; an emphasis mirrored by latter descriptions of ‘courtly love,’ an important element of medieval romance. Gaimar devotes no less than 330 lines to his description of how the king heard of, fell in love with, and married Ælfthryth.¹⁰ Gaimar also extends Malmesbury’s rather straight forward account with an extensive description of the court, Ælfthryth’s and the king’s clothing, and of Ælfthryth’s personal beauty. Gaimar even has to interject to stop himself from elaborating further on the aesthetics of the piece, proclaiming, ‘Hey!’ – says Gaimar – ‘I have no wish to expatiate on her beauty and risk delaying [my narrative].’¹¹ Gaimar’s account of this episode is certainly more deliberately entertaining than William of Malmesbury’s.

⁸ GG p.211

⁹ A.R. Press, ‘The Precocious courtesy of Geoffrey Gaimar,’ p.272

¹⁰ Ibid., p.270

¹¹ GG p.213

Similarly, Wace alters the stories of Geoffrey of Monmouth to place more emphasis on court scenes and provide extended descriptions of the aesthetics of the court. Wace places far more emphasis on court scenes than Geoffrey, adding additional description to make each scene appear more rich and lively. If we compare the descriptions of Arthur's coronation then the difference of Wace's style is clear. For example, when describing the four queens who attend Guinevere, Geoffrey writes that they followed the queen 'with great joy.'¹² Wace adds a description of the clothing of these queens; 'They had the most expensive garments, costly attire and costly vestments, splendid tunics, splendid mantles, precious brooches, precious rings, many a fur of white and grey, and clothes of every fashion.'¹³ Wace's description of the games following the feast is also livelier than Geoffrey's. While Geoffrey spends barely twelve lines describing the games, Wace takes sixty-eight.¹⁴ Wace describes how games of chance were marred by cheating; 'Very often they shouted and cried out, one saying to the other: 'You're cheating me, throw them out, shake your hand, scatter the dice!'¹⁵ His use of direct speech partly explains why his version of this court scene seems to have more activity within it. Many of Wace's additions are stylistic and make his narrative seem more vivid than Geoffrey's original scene.

However, interestingly, Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, while not quite as descriptive as Wace's, contains romance elements itself. For example, when Geoffrey writes that women watch the men involved with the tournament at Arthur's coronation court, he uses another motif which would feature in late romantic fictions. Robert Hanning has noted

¹² GM p.212

¹³ Wace p.263

¹⁴ GM pp.212-214; Wace pp.265-267

¹⁵ Wace p.267

that the motif of women watching men during mock battles is an early chivalric feature.¹⁶ It is probably a mistake to ally this early history with some sort of defined chivalric movement; however what we can see in Geoffrey's history is an open portrayal of aristocratic people at play.¹⁷ Such worldly frivolity does not feature in William of Malmesbury's or Henry of Huntingdon's histories unless it is being criticised.

In contrast to Geoffrey, Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury both denounce the court and its fashions. On the death of king Henry I, Henry comments; 'see the, whoever you are reading this, how the corpse of the most mighty king, whose crowned head had sparkled with gold and the finest jewels...see what that body became, how fearfully it melted away, how wretchedly cast down it was!'¹⁸ For Henry, everything is equal in death, and the splendour of the court and the men who reside there disappears. He has only contempt for the pomp and circumstance of these institutions. Similarly, Malmesbury launches a scathing attack on those at court who follow the latest fashions;

*'Long flowing hair, luxurious garments, shoes with curved and pointed tips became the fashion. Softness of body rivalling the weaker sex, a mincing gait, effeminate gestures and a liberal display of the person as they went along, such was the ideal fashion of the younger men. Spineless, unmannered, they were reluctant to remain as nature had intended they should be; they were a menace to the virtue of others and promiscuous with their own. Troupes of effeminates and gangs of wastrels went round with the court.'*¹⁹

It is not a specific feature of Latin histories to denounce the court, as Geoffrey of Monmouth writes about these topics. The difference lies in how Henry and William use

¹⁶ R.M. Stein, *Reality Fictions*, p.110

¹⁷ For information on chivalry see M. Keen, *Chivalry*, (London, 1996), pp.1-43; 83-101

¹⁸ HH p.703

¹⁹ WM pp.559-561

the past. This will be more extensively discussed in chapter three, however here it can be noted that both William and Henry were writing their histories partly as aids to moral instruction.

Henry and William both used historical events as *exempla* of how to behave and how not to behave according to Christian doctrine. Their histories therefore followed the teachings of Christian doctrine which encouraged people to relinquish their materialistic lives on earth. To have included courtly elements within their texts would have contradicted these teachings. As William of Malmesbury writes, from history people could ‘learn to follow some men’s successes while avoiding the misfortunes of others, to imitate the wisdom of some, and to look down on the foolishness of others.’²⁰ Similarly, Henry writes that, ‘in the recorded deeds of all peoples and nations which are the very judgements of God, clemency, generosity, honesty, caution and the like, and their opposites, not only provoke men of the spirit to what is good and deter them from evil, but even encourage worldly men to good deeds and reduced their wickedness.’²¹ Both historians wanted their histories to be a sort of moral education for their readers, as well as records of past events.

The lack of courtly elements within William’s and Henry’s histories is also, of course, partly due to their own religious convictions, as religious men were taught to shun the worldly atmosphere of the court. However, both these historians must have been acquainted with the court. Henry had been brought up in the household of Robert Bloet, bishop of Lincoln, who had a reputation for having a lavish lifestyle. He recalls; ‘we saw William the king’s son, dressed in silken garments stitched with gold, surrounded by a

²⁰ WM p.9

²¹ HH p.5

crowd of household attendants and guards, and gleaming in almost heavenly glory.’²² William of Malmesbury was probably well aware of the world of the court through his patron Robert, earl of Gloucester, and his meetings with Queen Matilda which he details in his letter to Empress Matilda. Queen Matilda had visited Malmesbury abbey and was interested in her family history. William writes that she ‘easily induced us to contemplate a full history of her predecessors.’²³ Henry and William were both aware enough of the court and its fashions to criticise them, however they chose not to include these elements within the main body of their histories.

However, where courtly elements are placed in historical narrative it is not necessarily to the detriment of religious morals and ideas. The two could exist side by side. This is demonstrated in Jordan Fantosme’s history. The action of his history mostly takes place on the battlefield, so there are no descriptions of the court. Generally, his history does not contain many overtly courtly elements at all, instead focusing almost entirely on the bravery of the few men mentioned in his text. The courtly elements of the history appear in references to objects or in seemingly unimportant personal comments. For example, Fantosme’s description of the earl of Leicester’s attack on Dunwich is reminiscent of descriptions of knights at tournaments in romance texts. On hearing the order to attack, Fantosme writes that ‘you would at once have seen many a streamer unfurled from shaft of spear, many a silk pennon borne on a fair lance, and many a noble vassal, and many a man of great valour.’²⁴ Fantosme also makes a number of comments about knights and their love for young women. He writes that one Earl Ferrers was ‘a simple knight, more

²² HH p.593

²³ WM p.9

²⁴ JF p.67

fitted to kiss and embrace fair ladies than to smite other knights.’²⁵ Of course, this is partly intended as an insult, but it is also reminiscent of later romances of courtly love, where knights are often pictured fighting for their ladies’ honour.²⁶ This is also referred to later in the text, when Fantosme comments that while at war William de Vesci thinks ‘more longingly of his absent lord than does a knight of his mistress.’²⁷

Yet, Jordan Fantosme’s *Chronicle* describes historical causation in religious terms. While at times elements of his history appear courtly, he also composes his history within a profoundly religious framework. Fantosme shows God to be in control of historical events. At the end of his history, William, the king of Scotland, is captured and his army defeated, bringing the narrative to an end. Fantosme tells his audience that they do not ‘need to ask if God is angered and if he is roused to hatred of King William...misfortune has come on many because of his sin, and he himself was that day overthrown.’²⁸ Here we can see the danger of assuming that vernacular histories are merely influenced by lay aristocratic culture because of their inclusion of courtly elements. They could be profoundly religious as well, mixing new courtly fashions of expression with Christian frameworks of historical causation.

Similarly, Gaimar may propose to write a history focused on the court, but his *Estoire* is largely a chronicle. It is the self-contained stories which appear at intervals in his history which contain courtly elements. The basis of much of his history before King Edgar’s

²⁵ JF p.71

²⁶ See S. Crane, *Insular Romance Politics*

²⁷ JF p.43

²⁸ JF p.141

accession is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was composed in Latin.²⁹ His history is a perfect example of how twelfth-century histories borrow from many different traditions and works written in a number of different languages. Gaimar's history is influenced by the Latin sources he uses, as well as by literary fashions for courtly elements in historical narratives.

Wace's history also draws on a number of different traditions. His history does contain courtly elements; however, he also includes didactic or moralising asides which are additions to the Latin source material he uses from the *Historia Regum Britanniae* and its variant. For example, Wace extends Geoffrey's single sentence mention of the Sirens during Brutus' sea voyage to Britain to include Christian teachings. Geoffrey writes that 'they sailed up to the Pillars of Hercules and saw there the sea monsters called the Sirens, which swam around their ships and almost sank them.'³⁰ Wace adds a more religious tone to this reference, noting that the Sirens, 'get their shape from the Devil, whose handiwork is so delightful to live with that it is hard to leave, and he who holds fast to it loses his path and his right way, just as he who listens overmuch to the Sirens comes to a bad end.'³¹ Here, Wace draws on his classical education as well as his religious teachings.³² In this passage, he is referring to Christian teachings on the dangers of women who can tempt men from the correct, chaste path. Wace's history is influenced by his own position as a member of the church, as well as by the religious and Latin texts he encountered in his education.

²⁹ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xxxix

³⁰ GM p.20

³¹ Wace p.21

³² F.H.M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*, (Cambridge, 2005) p.92

This section has demonstrated that vernacular histories, as well as Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin history, did contain courtly elements which become part of later romance genres. However, these histories also contained elements similar to some Latin histories, which shunned more courtly elements due to the way in which they were using the past to express religious teachings. So, while scholars are correct to point out the courtly fashions depicted in vernacular histories, they should also note that vernacular histories can contain lots of different ideas, not all of which are profoundly secular and aristocratic.

The extent of aristocratic influence

This brings us back to questions about who was influencing the composition of each history. To what extent are aristocratic influences responsible for the inclusion of more courtly elements within vernacular histories? This section will first discuss the extent to which courtly elements are the product of literary fashions in the twelfth century. It will consider whether these literary fashions were influenced by aristocratic demands.

There is evidence of twelfth-century literature being rewritten to include courtly elements, demonstrating that there must have been a demand for these types of narratives. This evidence is found in a story, *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* which was originally written in Latin by one Benedeit, possibly a Benedictine monk.³³ This work was dedicated to Henry I's first wife, Queen Matilda, although we do not know for sure that she commissioned this work directly. It appears that this text was written first in Latin

³³ See, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St. Brendan by Benedeit*, ed. and trans. E.G.R. Waters, (Oxford, 1928); E. Walberg, 'Sur le nom de l'auteur du Voyage de S. Brendan,' *Studia Neophilologica*, Vol. 12, (1939), pp.46-55

and then translated into the vernacular Anglo-Norman. It tells the story of Brendan, who towards the end of his life prayed for a sight of heaven and hell. He visits the hermit Barinz, who had landed on an isle near 'Paradise' during a sea voyage. Following Barinz's advice, Brendan builds a ship and selects fourteen companions. At the last moment he reluctantly allows three more men to join his voyage. The rest of the text is a description of the fantastical wonders which Brendan encounters on his voyage.³⁴ Legge describes this work as 'perhaps the first appearance in French literature of a stock-character in romance – the hermit who dispenses wise counsel.'³⁵ Benedeit also includes the motif of the three felons which appears in later romance literature. These are the three extra men who join Brendan's voyage at the last minute.³⁶ Manuscript evidence shows that Benedeit continually edited the text. Later versions of the text are altered in two main ways. Firstly, the story is made more edifying and the voyage is transformed into a trial of faith. Yet, at the same time, courtly elements are added into the text. Overtly clerical elements are removed, such as the liturgical versicles spoken by Benedeit's characters, while other parts are shortened, such as the long list of Canonical Hours celebrated at one point in the text.³⁷ Benedeit may have altered his text to appeal to a lay aristocratic audience. However, there is no way of knowing whether these changes occurred before the work was translated into the vernacular.

A few points can be made here. Firstly, we have an example of a possibly monastic author, composing a fantastical tale in Latin, for a member of the lay aristocracy. The text is altered to include more overtly courtly elements. This suggests that these courtly

³⁴ M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp.10-11

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10-11

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12

elements are part of literary fashions at the time this text is written. If these courtly elements were included after the text was translated into the vernacular, then we may also be able to suggest that these elements were included to appeal to a lay aristocratic audience who would benefited from such a translation. However, at the same time as these courtly elements are added, the whole text is made to be more edifying. Benedeit's *Voyage* was very popular, surviving in almost one hundred manuscripts.³⁸ Similarly, Geoffrey of Monmouth's quasi-fictional Latin history, which included courtly elements as well as religious overtones, was one of the most popular medieval texts of all, surviving in over 200 manuscripts.³⁹ Courtly elements and religious overtones existed together in some of the most popular texts of the twelfth century. These histories could thus appeal to both lay and religious aristocrats.

Clearly, there was a market for courtly narratives. Gaimar believed that the court was an adequate subject for a history, he writes;

‘Gaimar now declares that he is not after all going to go into any of this here, though if he were willing to work hard at it he could compose a compose a verse account of the finest exploits [of Henry's court], namely, the love affairs and the courting, the drinking and the hunting, the festivities and the pomp and ceremony, the acts of generosity and the displays of wealth, the entourage of noble and valiant knights that the king maintained, and the generous presents that he distributed. This is indeed the sort of material that should be celebrated in poetry, with nothing omitted and nothing passed over.’⁴⁰

³⁸ M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p.11

³⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, p.vii

⁴⁰ GG p.353

Gaimar clearly believes there is demand for a history which contains these elements at the time he is writing, in the 1130s. The above passage is a plea from Gaimar for a patron. He is trying to sell himself and his skills. He obviously thinks that a court focused narrative would appeal to potential patrons. Considering his present patron, Lady Constance, was part of the lay aristocracy, it is reasonable to suggest that Gaimar was again trying to appeal to these sorts of patrons.

It is very difficult to discover the kinds of audiences which twelfth-century histories had. We cannot discount the idea that the clergy enjoyed reading histories with courtly elements within them. Geoffrey of Monmouth's history enjoyed wide circulation, despite its quasi-fictional contents and the fact it was written in Latin. It must have been read by clerics and those members of the lay aristocracy who could read Latin. Access to this history was extended by Wace's translation, which itself survives in almost thirty manuscripts as either a complete text or a fragment.⁴¹ As we have seen in chapter one, Wace wrote for primarily for the court and it is reasonable to assume that this was his expected audience. Similarly, Gaimar's text was probably financed by Lady Constance and Gaimar probably expected it to be read by Constance and her aristocratic acquaintances. However, it is far harder to speculate about the other histories in this study. Even if a history is dedicated to a lay person we cannot assume that all the lay dedicatees of Latin histories actually read the texts they were sent.⁴² It is thus intensely problematic to identify whether courtly elements were included in twelfth-century histories to appeal directly to aristocratic audiences. What can be concluded is that courtly elements were included in twelfth-century histories because they had become

⁴¹Wace, *Roman de Brut*, pp.xxviii-xxix

⁴² L. Shopkow, *History and Community*, p.216

fashionable. Although, courtly elements did appear in texts like Gaimar's and Wace's which we can suggest were meant to appeal to aristocratic audiences.

Conclusion

Although there are indications that some vernacular histories such as Gaimar's and Wace's were intended for an aristocratic audience, it is a large jump to suggest that this was the reason why they included courtly elements within their histories. These elements account for only a small proportion of the material in their histories which also contain religious ideas, classical references, and the influence of Latin source material. Therefore, while the courtly elements which feature in vernacular histories do suggest that historians were influenced by lay aristocratic culture and literary fashions, they were also influenced by the Latin tradition and their own religious and Latinate educations. We must also be careful to assume that these courtly traditions only had their origins in a lay aristocratic world. As we have seen, the lay and religious aristocracy were very close. Vernacular histories are the product of a number of different factors, both religious and lay. They used both vernacular and Latin literary traditions. It is better to think of these histories as including certain elements and excluding others as the result of the way in each historian is using the past. Chapter three will explore how twelfth-century histories were crafted for certain uses.

Chapter 3

Uses of the Past in Twelfth-Century Historical Narratives

In chapter two we saw how the vernacular historians in this study as well as Geoffrey of Monmouth, use courtly elements within their histories. However, these elements do not define these histories, and each history contains many elements which were not specifically ‘courtly’ or influenced by secular aristocratic culture. This chapter will demonstrate that we can better explain the choices historians make when composing their histories if we look at how each historian is using the past. It will discuss how diverse each historian was in their aims and how this influenced the choices they made about the form, style and content of their history. We cannot separate histories according to the language in which they are composed; these texts are more complex than such this simplistic division suggests.

History in the twelfth century was an experimental genre. In many ways, the historians in this study were the inventors of this discipline, their works investigating different ways of using the past. History in the twelfth century was not a discipline in its own right. Within medieval education systems it was merely a subsection of grammar, ordinarily used for practising rhetoric rather than in order to consciously study the past.¹ But, there were conventions to which some historians adhered. Damian-Grint has argued that all vernacular and Latin histories adhered to the idea that historians should use reliable source material and strive for their narratives to be truthful. However, this is not ‘truth’ in a modern sense. Twelfth-century scholars wrote according to the rules of *inventio*, a

¹ R. Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages Rhetoric, Representation, Reality*, (Cambridge, 1991) pp.85-124

principle of rhetoric. This taught that the overall argument of a history was more important than the accuracy of individual pieces of information. A historian could invent plausible pieces of information to fill inconvenient gaps in their sources. When twelfth-century historians claim the ‘truthfulness of their narrative,’ they are protesting its verisimilitude, not its accuracy.² However, twelfth-century histories still differ in their form and style. This is partly because they were crafted with particular purposes in mind. This chapter will discuss how histories were crafted to use the past in different ways.³

History as *exempla*

Some historians intended their histories to convey the moral teachings of the Christian church, using historical examples to demonstrate these ideas. As William of Malmesbury writes, history could act as *exempla* from which readers could ‘learn to follow some men’s successes while avoiding the misfortunes of others, to imitate the wisdom of some, and to look down on the foolishness of others.’⁴ Similarly, Henry of Huntingdon invites his readers to ‘see how sacred history teaches the moral code.’⁵ In William’s history, this conception of history ties in with William’s use of divine causation. For example, it is implied that Earl Godwine’s death was the work of God. William reports that when Godwine is accused of harming King Edward’s brother, Arthur, at a feast, he announces, ‘may God not permit me to swallow this mouthful, if I was ever aware of having do

² R.Ray, ‘The Triumph of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Assumptions in Pre-Carolingian Historiography,’ in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography 350-900*, (Exeter, 1986) p.68

³ Latin histories also adhered to other conventions which vernacular histories did not. They typically used prologues and claimed to write in a simplistic style. They also used a humility *topos* to protest that they were unworthy for the task of writing history. For more information see, A. Gransden, *Historical Writing In England c.550 To c.1307*, (London, 1974) and P. Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, (Woodbridge, 1999)

⁴ WM p.9

⁵ HH p.5

anything designed to endanger him or hurt you.’ He immediately chokes and dies.⁶ William is demonstrating how historical events are controlled by divine powers. Godwine is punished by God for the bad things which William describes him doing earlier in the narrative, and especially the murder of Arthur, Edward the Confessor’s brother.⁷

This belief in the didactic nature of history led these historians to craft their histories in specific ways. These histories are often crafted to provide examples which display certain moral ideas, often referred to as ‘universal truths’. This is seen in scenes of war. Historians use standardised models of war scenes which are easily recognisable to an audience familiar with rhetoric techniques, to convey these ‘universal truths.’ Generally, histories such as Henry’s and William’s first show the victorious army as well organised before the battle, followed by a speech given by the army’s commander. After this, the army is seen almost losing, before being rallied by their leader and going on to win. The victory is then dedicated to the divine power of God.⁸ This pattern is seen in Henry’s history during his representation of the first crusade. Following their arrival at the port of St Simeon, the Christian forces are encouraged by God to march out to meet the Saracens with ‘God as their commander.’ The Saracens try to blind the Christians with smoke but ‘the Lord of the winds, being present, changed the wind,’ and the Christians are able to win at the last moment.⁹ In William’s record of Baldwin’s journey to Jerusalem we see a similar style and form. He is shown to notice the danger of Saracens approached and plan a feigned retreat with his well-organised force. Having done this, ‘those who had been winning were defeated, and the losers won the day.’ William records that this battle was a

⁶ WM p.355

⁷ WM pp.357-339

⁸ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles The Writing of History in Medieval England*, (London, 2004) p.2

⁹ HH p.439

miracle, as only four knights ‘shed their blood’ that day. He finished his account with the reaffirmation of his belief that, ‘Christ’s servants would never be defeated by the paynim [heathens] if before battle they would fortify their valour with the help of Heaven.’¹⁰ The message of both these accounts is clear; God decides the outcome of battle. The use of well-known formats makes it easier for readers to recognise familiar teachings within these passages. The use of this technique is an example of how historians saw the overall argument of their history as more important than accurate representations of historical events. The form of Latin histories is in part dictated by the meanings each author wishes to convey.

However, these aims are not confined to historians who write in Latin. We have seen in the chapter two that Jordan Fantosme explains historical events through divine causation in a similar way to William and Henry. Consequently, he also considers the past to contain examples of appropriate behaviour according to religious ideals. He writes; ‘I consider him wise who mends his ways from the example of others.’¹¹ However, unlike Henry and William, he did not craft the episodes within his history to deliberately display universal truths. He crafted his history with another purpose in mind. It is this which can partly explain why his history has a very different form to William’s and Henry’s texts.

Oral History

Jordan Fantosme’s history is unlike the others in this study. It is similar to Latin histories in that it sees historical events as dictated by God; however it communicates its message

¹⁰ WM p.671

¹¹ JF p.3

in a different way to the histories of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon. Fantosme's *Chronicle* contains features which suggest it was intended to be read aloud as an oral history. The opening line of his history proclaims; 'Hear a true story and may God's blessing be on you!'¹² Throughout the text, Fantosme asks his audience to *oëz*, that is, 'hear' what he has to say.¹³ Such commands are not seen in William of Malmesbury's or Henry of Huntingdon's histories. However, they are a feature of later *chansons de geste*, medieval stories composed in Old French which tell of knights, courtly love and grand adventures. The *audite* topos of *oëz* is one of the conventions of these later works.¹⁴ Fantosme's history reads as though it was intended to be read aloud. It is far shorter than any other history in this study and by focusing on one particular sequence of events it forms a strict, coherent narrative. Fantosme's history is crafted into a form which aids oral delivery.

The forms which other histories take could also be partly explained by evidence suggesting they were intended to be read aloud. There is much debate over whether Gaimar's *Estoire* was intended oral delivery, however the overall form of his history suggests parts were. His history is mainly a chronicle based largely on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, interpolated with longer anecdotal stories. These stories are self-contained and could easily be read aloud as complete stories in their own right. Short has suggested that by strategically placing these stories at intervals throughout his history, Gaimar breaks up his chronicle into smaller parts more suitable for oral delivery. Short suggests that this must have been the main way that Gaimar's narrative reached audiences.¹⁵ However,

¹² JF p.4

¹³ JF p.2; p.54; p.72; p.74; p.92

¹⁴ P. Damian-Grint, *The New Historians*, p.116

¹⁵ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xl

there is also evidence that Gaimar's narrative was read privately by his patron. Gaimar mentions at the end of his narrative that Lady Constance had a written copy of David's book which she 'often reads in her chamber.'¹⁶ Gaimar's history could have been intended to be read privately and aloud.

There is, however, evidence that Latin histories were intended to be read aloud as well, even though they differ greater in form to Fantosme's and Gaimar's histories. Clanchy has argued that the frequent use of speeches and dramatic dialogue in monastic chronicles meant they were intended to be read aloud.¹⁷ They could have acted as didactic texts to be read aloud to religious men. *Lectio Divina* was the practice of reading scripture. However, it was more than straight recitation. It was intended to involve a process of deep reflection on the words being read aloud, focusing on each word and idea.¹⁸ William's and Henry's histories were intended for oral delivery in a different way to Fantosme or Gaimar's histories. Fantosme and Gaimar wrote their histories to be lively and easy to communicate orally. In contrast, William and Henry craft their histories to focus firstly on didactic aims, as well as making them suitable for reading aloud in a Church setting.

History as Politics

Nowhere is the diverse nature of the historical discipline demonstrated better than in the *Historia Regum Britannie* of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Why Geoffrey chooses to write

¹⁶ GG p.353

¹⁷ M.T. Clanchy, *From memory to Written Record*, p.268; See also J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, (New York, 1961)

¹⁸ M.T. Clanchy, *From memory to Written Record*, p.269

about the topics he did and in the way he did is open for debate.¹⁹ However, there are some ideas which are favoured more than others. Generally, scholars accept that Geoffrey was writing for a political purpose, to demonstrate how ruinous political division could be for a country.²⁰ However, if Geoffrey was using the past to demonstrate this, then are we to assume he was deliberately lying when he claimed his narrative would be truthful? Not if we consider that twelfth-century historians aimed for their histories to be ‘plausible’ rather than accurate.

But, even some of Geoffrey’s contemporaries felt he stretched the bounds of historical convention too far. William of Newburgh’s well known tirade against Geoffrey’s work is an example of the sort of competition which existed between historians in this period. William of Newburgh writes that; ‘a certain writer has emerged in our time who, to atone for the shame of the Britons, has concocted ridiculous things from their own myths... This person is called Geoffrey.’²¹ It appears that such attacks were not uncommon amongst the scholarly communities of the twelfth century. Geoffrey even asks Waleran, Count of Meulan to ‘extend your protection to me, your poet, and to my book...so that I may rest beneath the shade of your spreading branches and my muse can play her melody on my rustic pipe, safe from envious critics.’²² Despite this, there is evidence that some of Geoffrey’s contemporaries appear to have understood the political message of his history.

¹⁹ See V.I. Flint, ‘The *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Parody and Its Purpose. A Suggestion,’ *Speculum*, Vol.54, No.3, (Jul., 1979) pp.447-468; J.S.P. Tatlock, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Motives for Writing his “*Historia*”,’ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol.79, No.4, (Nov., 1938) pp.695-703; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, esp. Introduction.

²⁰ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of The Kings of Britain*, ‘Introduction’; P. Dalton, ‘The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*: History, Prophecy, Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century,’ *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, (October, 2005)

²¹ N.F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England*, (Chicago, 1977) p.63

²² GM p.4

Geoffrey's history reflected the time in which it was written. It reflects the fear in England following Henry I's death and the subsequent battle for the throne. This situation had arisen following Henry's designation of his daughter Matilda as heir to the throne during his lifetime. On his death in 1135, Henry's nephew, Stephen of Blois, ignored this, laying claim to the throne and gathering enough noble support to be crowned king. By 1139 the country had sunk into civil war. Geoffrey's history was definitely written sometime between 1123 and 1139, although it is more likely that it was written in this period of turmoil in the 1130's.²³ His prophecies include allusions to this situation. For example, Geoffrey writes that 'Two dragons will succeed, one of which will be suffocated by the arrow of envy, while the other will return beneath the shadow of a name.' Here, Monmouth is alluding to William Rufus, who was killed by an arrow in the New Forest, and Robert Curthose.²⁴ It is then written that the 'lion of justice' will succeed. This is surely meant to be Henry I.²⁵ Geoffrey's *Prophecies* contain a political meaning which comments on the present historical situation.

There is evidence that those reading these prophecies were well aware of what symbols such as these meant. Orderic Vitalis, a twelfth-century historian, had read the prophecies and noted that 'men well read in histories can easily apply his [Merlin's] predictions if they know the lives of [various kings]...of the Angles and Britons.' Suger of St-Denis was also aware that the 'lion of justice' symbol referred to Henry I.²⁶ Suger of St-Denis, was himself involved in the peace-making between Stephen and Matilda between 1141 and

²³ P. Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*,' p.692

²⁴ Ibid., p.697; GM p.146

²⁵ P. Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*,' p.697; GM p.146

²⁶ P. Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*,' p.705

1151, and could have been the sort of person Geoffrey wished to reach with his narrative which preached the importance of unity at a time of political division. It seems Geoffrey's audience understood his prophecies and knew they were relevant to the time in which they were written. If Geoffrey's text really is a political discourse, then he could have been writing for these political elites.²⁷

When Wace translates Geoffrey's history, he removes the *Prophecies of Merlin*. They no longer serve any sort of purpose within the narrative, merely breaking up the continuity of the main narrative. Wace's text no longer uses the past as a political treatise as Geoffrey does. Wace creates a whole new text which uses the past for different ends.

History as Translation

Wace's *Roman de Brut* is a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and a variant version of this text. However, it is translation in the medieval sense. The practice of *Translatio* in the twelfth century often involved an author rewriting or changing parts of the basic narrative they were using. Translations in the medieval period were an opportunity for authors to change the original text to appeal to a new audience, moment in time or place.²⁸ Therefore, while the basic story of Wace's history is the same as in Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, the way in which this story is embellished is not. Wace uses his text to convey new ideas.

²⁷ The argument that this text was written for high ranking clerics involved in politics in this period is that of Paul Dalton in P. Dalton, 'The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*,' pp.688-712

²⁸ M. R. Warren, 'Translation,' p.52

Wace seems more concerned with the truthfulness of his narrative than Geoffrey. For example, at the end of his history, Wace records that Æthelstan was king at the time the Saxons come to Britain, something Geoffrey does not mention.²⁹ Wace attempts to connect the *Historia Regum Britanniae* to more generally accepted history by placing an undisputed king figure at the end of his narrative. That is not to say that all of the figures Wace and Geoffrey write about before this are fictional figures, some are mentioned in many other medieval histories as seemingly genuine early British kings, however many of the main kings featured in these histories such as Arthur, Brutus and Uther Pendragon are considered to be mythical figures. By ending his narrative with Æthelstan, Wace is perhaps attempting to make his history seem more authentic than Geoffrey's. Contemporaries do appear to have considered his history to be as valid as more traditional historical narratives. In two of the manuscripts in which it is preserved, Wace's history is followed by Gaimar's *Estoire* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*.³⁰ This is despite Gaimar having written a *Brut*, a vernacular version of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which preceded his *Estoire*. Wace's translation is chosen over Gaimar's effort by the compiler of this manuscript. By being placed alongside these other historical narratives, Wace's history is perceived to be connected to 'real' history.

Wace also often comments on the likelihood of some events occurring, seemingly trying to make his history appear as 'truthful' as possible, something Geoffrey never attempts to do. He doubts, for example, Geoffrey's assertion that Arthur would return to rule Britain as promised. He reports that there is controversy about whether Arthur is alive or dead,

²⁹ Wace p.371

³⁰ Geoffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xvi

yet he does not vouch for the truthfulness of this prophecy.³¹ He writes that, ‘Merlin said of Arthur, rightly, that his death would be doubtful...ever since, people have always doubted it.’³² Wace therefore avoids having to write of this prophecy as truth. He appears concerned with demonstrating the truth in a balanced, and more conventional, way.

Wace uses Geoffrey’s basic narrative to communicate a different set of ideas. As we have seen in the chapter two, he extends the descriptive elements of Geoffrey’s original history and adds a greater emphasis on the court and its fashions. Wace also includes moralising asides in his history, as seen in chapter two, and uses direct speech around seventy percent more than Geoffrey.³³ Some of this can be explained by his use of the Variant text of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Wace uses the variant text for around fifty percent of the chapters of the second half of his history. The variant text does not alter the main story of Geoffrey’s history much, instead altering its style and including more biblical phraseology.³⁴ This ties in with the more pious additions which Wace also makes. However, the courtly elements, moralising asides and use of speech are all of Wace’s invention. His history fits into the literary fashions of his time as well as reflecting his own religious education and preference for didactic asides.

The question is, of course, for whom does Wace translate his history, and for what reasons does he change the style of Geoffrey’s original text? Considering his connections to the court, it is likely that he was writing his text for the men who resided at court, and probably for those who could not read Latin. His inclusion of some courtly elements in

³¹ J. Blacker, *The Faces of Time*, p.35

³² Wace p.333

³³ F. H. M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*, pp.16-17

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.93

his history demonstrates that he was following courtly fashions. However, he also adds more pious elements into Geoffrey's original text, suggesting that he was himself a pious man who wanted his history to have some didactic uses. We must note here that Wace was one of the most prolific authors of the twelfth century, writing numerous Latin *Vitas* and religious texts, as well as histories.³⁵ However, many of his religious works were also composed in the vernacular Anglo-Norman, suggesting he often wrote for an audience who could not read Latin.³⁶ These works demonstrate how we should not see Latin as a language for scholarly and religious works, and vernacular languages as used for less scholarly and profoundly aristocratic subjects. Many different types of narratives were composed in vernacular languages.

Wace's history also demonstrates how interdependent Latin and vernacular histories were. In Anglo-Norman England where three languages were used, English, Anglo-Norman and Latin, it must have been almost impossible to avoid using sources composed in multiple languages. Geoffrey of Monmouth claims that his history is a translation of a 'very old book in the British tongue.'³⁷ His work is thus part of the linguistic world of British texts as well as a Latinate linguistic culture. As Warren has argued, translations like this are the products of alliances between languages.³⁸ Wace's text inherits the British elements of Geoffrey's source material, as well as the Latinate quality of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and yet produces a text which is different in style from both of these.

³⁵ For more details on these works see F.H.M. Le Saux, *A Companion to Wace*

³⁶ Wace, *Roman de Brut*, p.xii

³⁷ GM p.4

³⁸ M. R. Warren, 'Translation,' p.52

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how historians craft their historical narratives for certain uses. Some historians use the past for didactic uses, to demonstrate Christian ideals through carefully crafted historical examples. Others craft their histories according to how it will be disseminated, in the case of Jordan Fantosme's history. Historians can also use their texts to make political points. A comparison between Geoffrey of Monmouth's history and Wace's translation best demonstrates how twelfth-century historians crafted their histories for different uses. Wace alters Geoffrey's text to have a completely different style which reflects literary fashions for courtly literature, his own piety, and the needs of his expected audience, which was probably the royal court. He also attempts to connect Geoffrey's basic narrative to more conventional histories, removing its political tone. Twelfth-century history was a very flexible discipline, each text being influenced by various factors of production and reception. We therefore cannot consider twelfth-century histories as grouped by the languages in which they were composed, but rather as part of one corpus of historical narratives produced in the twelfth century.

Case Study

Victims of Warfare

This case study will show how Latin and vernacular histories can be used together to show change over time. As we have seen, scholars like Shopkow have argued that it is not possible to use these histories together. However, this case study will demonstrate how vernacular histories can in practice make extensive contributions to some of the most important debates in early medieval historical studies. This case study will show how the evidence of vernacular histories can contribute to discussions about whether elite men were becoming more restrained in battle and thus developing a set of behavioural standards to which they adhered. Such developments are seen as part of the creation of a set of ideas which some scholars call ‘chivalry’ or ‘courtliness.’ This case study will show how a discourse of concern for the victims of warfare develops across the twelfth century within the histories in this study.

The histories of Wace and Jordan Fantosme show concern for the ordinary people who become victims of warfare in a way none of the historians in this study writing before them do. This does not mean they deplore violence against other elites, but rather the effect that that violence has on ordinary people. Jordan Fantosme shows the Earl of Leicester to be unable to assault Dunwich because he could not bear to hurt those in the town. Their response to his efforts to besiege them is described as being ‘valiant.’¹ The earl could not bring himself to ‘bear on them any assault, nor any knightly vassal, nor

¹ JF p.65

sergeant, nor esquire who could cause them any fear.’² What is even more exceptional is that Fantosme gives these ordinary people a voice within his narrative. He allows them to respond directly to the Earl of Leicester’s threats through granting these characters an extended piece of direct speech. Fantosme writes; ‘And they replied to him, each one eager to be the first to do so: ‘A curse on him who gives twopence for your threats! Our good and rightful king, who will speedily bring your war to nought, is still alive. As long as we live and can stand on our feet, we shall not surrender the town no matter what assault we have to fear.’’³ These ordinary people are given space to become some of the central protagonists in this episode of his text. By allowing them to speak Fantosme draws attention to their loyalty to the king in his fight against the rebel Earl of Leicester, and their courage in the face of the earl’s formidable army. Fantosme gives ordinary people substance in the way that the Latin historians and Gaimar do not.

If we compare Henry of Huntingdon’s treatment of ordinary people involved in warfare with this episode, then the differences become clearer. It is not that Henry is not sympathetic to the plight of innocent parties caught up in warfare or political disputes. Like any good man of religion he often writes of the plight of the vulnerable and of the injustice of kings and noblemen in respect to their people. His most noble kings are often shown to act in the interest of their people. King Edmund is even said to choose to suffer death ‘rather than see the desolation of his people...’⁴ However, he never allows those ordinary people to have a character of their own, and he never has his ‘ordinary people’ address others using direct speech. When he mentions the suffering of ordinary people it is in the sense of commenting on wider injustice. For example, when he comments on

² JF p.67

³ JF p.65

⁴ HH p.283

injustices of King William throughout England, he writes ‘Nor did he care how great an injury was done to the poor by the reeves.’ But, he also then writes that God punishes all for this. ‘And so in this year God sent plagues of sickness and famine to England, and those who escaped the fevers died of hunger.’⁵ Everyone suffers for the king’s injustices. Henry’s poor are tied inexorably to the king and his deeds; they have no actions of their own. In contrast, Fantosme’s ‘ordinary people’ are not only directly addressing a person of the highest status, but also actively defending their town against his extensively trained army of knights. Fantosme’s townspeople have agency.

But, is Fantosme’s attitude toward the victims of war a reflection of his own beliefs or of society’s? Fantosme could have a genuine concern for the victims of warfare; however, a similar, and perhaps even more prominent, attitude is seen in Wace’s history also. This suggests that this attitude is perhaps a result of the realities of the world in which Wace and Fantosme both lived. It is in a comparison of Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s histories that this concern for victims of warfare can be best seen. Arthur battles the Scots, Picts and Irish at the Battle of Loch Lomond. Once the battle is over, the ordinary people who live in the area where the battle has just taken place beseech Arthur to show mercy on them. In Geoffrey of Monmouth this event is brief. The bishops of the land come to Arthur and ask to have ‘some small tract of land of their own.’ It is said their ‘patriotism moved him to tears.’ He grants a pardon to the Bishop’s people.⁶ In Wace’s history this scene is extended, and much greater emphasis is placed on the damage Arthur has done to these peoples’ lands and homes. Wace has the ordinary people of the region accompany the bishops to see Arthur. He describes ‘the women of the land, their feet and

⁵ HH p.405

⁶ GM p.220

heads quite bare, their clothes torn and their face scratched, their little children in their arms.’⁷ Wace clearly wants to provoke some sort of emotional response. This group are shown to weep and cry ‘Mercy my lord!’ before asking ‘Why have you destroyed this land?’⁸ There is no doubt that Arthur is being shown to have been wrong in his attack on these people. The bishops even compare Arthur to the heathen Saxons who had also attacked them, questioning how a Christian king could attack a Christian people.⁹ While Arthur is moved to tears by the actions of the bishops in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history, in Wace’s history no such response is provoked. Instead, Arthur is said to have ‘spared them life and limb, received their homage and left them alone.’¹⁰ Wace makes Arthur’s actions look worse than Monmouth does. For Wace, Arthur attacked an innocent people who deserved mercy; he makes it clear that Arthur should have been more restrained.

This belief is mirrored in his portrayal of Arthur’s siege of Frollo in Paris. Wace notes the plight of ordinary people during the siege more than Geoffrey of Monmouth does. Geoffrey merely writes, that Frollo challenged Arthur to single combat because he was ‘concerned that his people were starving.’¹¹ Wace extends this passage by writing; ‘They [the people] were starving!’ and that ‘the women and children wept and wailed; if it had been up to the poor, the city would soon have surrendered.’¹² Again, these ordinary people are granted direct speech through which they directly address Frollo, again a man of very high status. Wace writes that the people of Paris ask, ‘Frollo, what are you doing?

⁷ Wace p.239

⁸ Wace p.239

⁹ D. Buttry, ‘Authority Refracted: Personal Principle and Translation in Wace’s *Roman de Brut*,’ in R. Blumerfeld-Kosinski, L. Von Flotow and D. Russell (eds.), *The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, (2001) pp.88-90; p.94 She first noted Wace’s concern for the victims of warfare. This chapter extends her discussion using a selection of vernacular and Latin histories from the twelfth century.

¹⁰ Wace p.241

¹¹ GM p.206

¹² Wace p.251

Why don't you ask Arthur for peace?'¹³ Yet, it must be noted that Wace's concern for these ordinary people does not lead him to consider war to be in any way bad. Earlier in the *Brut*, Wace writes of an argument between two knights, Walwein and Cador. They are discussing what sort of action Arthur should take against the threats of the Roman Emperor to invade Britain. Cador counsels for a swift recourse to arms, and notes that the British have become 'weaklings through peace and idleness.' Walwein, however, argues that 'peace is good after war and the land is lovelier for it.'¹⁴ Walwein does not feature in Geoffrey of Monmouth's text. Therefore, it would be easy to assume that Wace favoured peace over war, and had added Walwein's character to display this opinion. However, he later actively criticises Mordred,¹⁵ the nephew of Arthur, for putting together an army of men 'brought up to peace and quiet' who 'did not know how to protect themselves.'¹⁶ It is true that Wace seems ready to put forward the benefits of peace; however, he also knows the value of warfare in the twelfth century.¹⁷

Geoffrey Gaimar's vernacular history does not contain this concern for the victims of war, neither do the Latin histories in this study. Gaimar's *Estoire* was composed sometime between March 1136 and April 1137.¹⁸ This makes it contemporary to the production of all the Latin texts. This increased focus on the victims of war was a product of the latter half of the twelfth century when Wace and Jordan Fantosme's histories were produced. King Stephen had died in 1154, bringing an end to a tumultuous reign, much of which was dominated by a civil war against Henry I's daughter Matilda. In 1174 a second civil

¹³ Wace p.251

¹⁴ Wace p.271

¹⁵ A. Lynch, 'Peace is good after war': The Narrative Seasons of English Arthurian Tradition,' in C. Saunders, F. Le Saux and N. Thomas (eds.), *Writing War Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, (Cambridge, 2004) p.140

¹⁶ Wace p.329

¹⁷ This argument is found in A. Lynch, 'Peace is good after war' pp.127-146

¹⁸ Geoffrey Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, p.xii

war between Henry II and his son Henry began. Wace himself states that his history was completed in 1155,¹⁹ while time markers in Fantosme's text suggest he composed it sometime between the end of 1174 and the end of 1175.²⁰ These texts were produced in periods of great political turmoil.

The development of this discourse of concern for the victims of war feeds into existing scholarship about chivalry and the idea of a 'civilising process.' Strickland has noted that Anglo-Norman histories written in the twelfth century begin to show knights being more restrained in battle. There are examples of this in Orderic Vitalis' *Ecclesiastical History*,²¹ which was composed from c.1114 to 1141.²² He writes that in 1119 a battle was fought between Henry I and the army of Louis VI of France at Brémule in the Norman Vexin. What is notable about this battle is that Orderic records that only three knights were killed out of the nine hundred or so at the battle. Orderic explains this by writing that 'out of fear of God and fellowship in arms; they [the victors] were more concerned to capture than to kill the fugitives.'²³ The restraint of knights is also evident in the *Gesta Stephani*. The *Gesta Stephani* records that although some royalists were killed in the battle of Lincoln in 1141, the victorious Angevins took 'a vast throng of prisoners.'²⁴ Similarly, after the royalist victory at Winchester, also in 1141, the *Gesta*

¹⁹ Wace, *Roman de Brut*, p.373

²⁰ Jordan Fantosme, *Chronicle*, p.xxiii

²¹ See Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, (6 vols., Oxford, 1969-1980)

²² J. O. Prestwich, 'Orderic Vitalis (1075–c.1142)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, (Oct 2006) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20812>, accessed 8 Sept 2010]

²³ M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217*, (Cambridge, 1996) p.132

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.142

Stephani records that there were ‘countless captives.’²⁵ Jordan Fantosme’s and Wace’s concern for victims fits into this discourse of restraint which Strickland has identified.

Gillingham has argued that the appearance of more restrained methods of warfare signals the turn towards a more ‘chivalric,’ by which he means ‘civilised,’ ideal of behaviour. For him, the eleventh and twelfth century are comparatively less ‘violent’ than previous periods as captured men begin to be taken prisoner rather than executed, and mercy is increasingly shown to elites.²⁶ The development of a concern for the victims of warfare in later twelfth-century histories could thus be a development of earlier twelfth-century discourses promoting restraint on the battlefield. These discourses speak to a developing class of knights, who wish to distinguish themselves as class through their behaviour. Scholars like Jaeger and Elias have argued that knights begin to structure their behaviour as society becomes less dependent on war, and more dependent on the court as the centre of competition. At court the only way by which people can compete is through structuring their behaviour and serving their Lord.²⁷ Some historians have seen these ideas as signalling the beginning of the development of codes of behaviour by which knights lived. Some scholars refer to these codes as ‘chivalry,’ others as ‘courtliness.’²⁸

We see here how vernacular histories are useful in discussions about wider issues in the twelfth century, like the development of knightly codes of behaviour. They can be used

²⁵ M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, p.142

²⁶ J. Gillingham, ‘Thegns and Knights in Eleventh-Century England: Who then was the gentleman?’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, Vol.5, (1995) p.151

²⁷ C.S. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness - Civilising Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals – 939-1210*, (USA, 1985) pp.8-13 ; N. Elias and E. Jephcott (trans.), *The Civilising Process State Formation and Civilisation*, (Oxford, 1982) pp.52-111; pp.230-297

²⁸ See D. Crouch, *The Birth of the Nobility Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300*, (Harlow, 2005) esp. Chapter One, ‘Reconstructing Chivalry’

alongside Latin histories as serious texts which provide evidence which adds to our knowledge of the twelfth century. If we treat vernacular histories as different to Latin histories then we risk losing the valuable insights they can provide.

This case study has also demonstrated how particular ideas can develop within the historical discipline over a period of time. This is not a result of a new type of historian using the past in a different way or because of literary fashions, but instead just a natural progression of ideas across the century. It is important to strike a balance between seeing historical narratives as individual texts, each the product of unique influences, as we have seen in previous chapters, and seeing them as part of a larger corpus of works which develops across time in response to wider changing contexts.

Conclusion

This study addressed some scholars' beliefs that vernacular histories were different from Latin histories, and as such, should not be used together. The tendency for literary scholars to focus on vernacular histories and for historians to use more seemingly 'scholarly' Latin histories is testament to this. This study investigated how different vernacular histories were from histories composed in Latin, discussing whether it is sensible to treat them as two different groups of texts. It focused specifically on claims that vernacular histories were more influenced by the lay aristocracy and their culture than Latin histories, asking whether this lay aristocratic influence is also visible in Latin histories. It put forward a different way of considering differences within these histories through examining how each historian used the past, rather than the language they constructed their history in.

While the lay aristocracy were involved in the production of vernacular histories, they were also involved in the production of Latin histories. However, it is a mistake to separate out religious and lay aristocratic influences. High status members of the Church were often members of important aristocratic families. Networks of both lay and religious aristocrats helped acquire resources for historians and aided distribution of their works. Patrons were often commemorated in these histories, as were members of their families or important acquaintances. This suggests that patrons could influence the content of twelfth-century histories; but it is difficult to know whether they deliberately asked to be written into the histories they patronised. It is likely though, as most patrons had some sort of financial relationship with the historians they patronised.

Vernacular historians appear to have been more controlled by the demands of their patrons than Latin historians. Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* seems only to focus on commemorating one group of aristocrats to which he was connected. Perhaps this text was commissioned specifically for this purpose. In contrast, the Latin histories of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon include a vast array of disparate information such as charters, records of church councils, epigrams and letters. These historians appear to have had much more freedom when composing their histories.

However, we must distinguish between different financial arrangements within patron-author relationships. Vernacular authors needed financial support from their patrons. They were not supported by a religious institution, nor had a high position in the church like the Latin authors in this study. Gaimar and Wace certainly seek patrons who are willing to finance their histories. That Fantosme focuses so much on one particular group of men, suggests that he too was commissioned to write his history. It is thus not surprising that Latin historians appear to have had more freedom with their texts, as they did not rely on patrons supporting them personally. Henry of Huntingdon never asks his patron, Alexander, for a reward or to aid in the distribution of his work. Geoffrey of Monmouth does ask Robert of Gloucester and Waleran of Meulan to help him distribute his work, but does not ask for any rewards. William of Malmesbury does seek rewards from his patrons, but for his monastery. He appears to suggest he desires rewards from Robert of Gloucester, but there is no conclusive evidence of Robert giving any significant gifts to Malmesbury abbey. William also appeals to King David of Scotland and Empress Matilda to aid his monastery politically and encourages the King to grant them an abbot. William is more open than Henry and Geoffrey in asking for rewards.

Vernacular histories do appear to have been patronised by lay aristocrats of lower status than those involved with Latin histories, which were often part of more regionally-based aristocratic families. However, Wace testifies that vernacular histories were in demand at the royal court. This does not mean that high status aristocrats necessarily saw Latin as more prestigious than vernacular languages, as King Henry II was known to have rewarded Wace for his vernacular works. It is perhaps a function of the fact that monastic historians tended to be of a higher status, and thus attracted patrons of a higher status. Of course, William of Malmesbury did not have a high status position within the church, even though he was offered the abbacy of his monastery.¹ The question then, is how did William come to be involved with conversations with Queen Matilda, and be encouraged by her to write a history of her ancestors? Thomson suggests that William may have written histories which have not survived to modern times, and hence already established himself as a historian.² Wace was a prolific author and it may have been his reputation which allowed him to write for the royal court. Maybe Gaimar and Jordan Fantosme had not yet proven themselves enough to write for the most distinguished members of the aristocracy, both lay and religious. However, we must remember Wace's complaints about the lack of lay support for his writing. It seems to have been difficult to acquire effective patronage.

So, when Gaimar suggests a courtly narrative for his next work, he is trying to appeal to potential patrons. Courtly elements were beginning to become popular, and it is not

¹ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p.6

² *Ibid.*, p.37

surprising that vernacular histories followed this literary fashion, especially if they needed to appeal to potential patrons and relied on them for personal financial support. However, histories composed in Latin, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's and Benedeit's, could include courtly elements also.

However, we should not reduce vernacular histories to being just 'courtly,' or as influenced only by lay aristocratic culture, excluding all the other literary traditions and factors of production which impact on the content of each history. Wace's inclusion of pious episodes, classical references and courtly elements, demonstrate that his history cannot merely be described in this way. This history is the sum of all its influences.

It is also difficult to know for certain to whom these courtly elements would have appealed. It is not enough to assume that religious people did not enjoy reading lively descriptions of the luxurious fashions at court and that these elements were intended for a lay aristocratic audience. Henry of Huntingdon's memories of his childhood in the household of Robert of Bloet testify to how the fashions of the court could be reflected in the lifestyles of high status Churchmen. What can be concluded is that these texts make use of an emerging literary trend for which there was a growing market.

Instead of considering vernacular histories as reflections of lay aristocratic culture due to these courtly elements, it is better to look at the way each historian is using the past to understand how each crafts his history. William of Malmesbury's and Henry of Huntingdon's perceptions of history as containing examples of good and bad behaviour

as dictated by Christian teachings, led them to write against the court and its fashions. However, they were both familiar with this world, and to some extent participated in it. To write of it in positive terms would go against Christian teachings about materialistic behaviour and worldly show. Geoffrey of Monmouth's has no such qualms about including episodes showing the aristocracy at play in his history. Wace includes more courtly elements into his version of Geoffrey's history, as well as more religious information and moralising asides. Religious culture and lay aristocratic fashions sit side by side in Jordan Fantosme's history too, where aristocratic display on the battlefield is combined with the idea that God controls historical events. Yet the form of his history is dictated by his intention that it could be orally transmitted, as well as read privately. It is also possible that William's and Henry's histories were intended to be read aloud too, but in a different way. Their histories could have been read as part of *Lectio Divina*, and are constructed linguistically for this purpose. Fantosme's history is different to these Latin histories as it is not written specifically for this kind of oral activity. Even in the similarities between these histories we can see difference.

By looking at the ways twelfth-century historians used the past we get an idea for how different historical narratives could be. But this is not a difference based on languages, but on the aims of each historian. Geoffrey of Monmouth's inclusion of fictional characters, mythical beings, and prophecies reflect his use of historical narrative to make a political point, rather than write a typical history. Wace changes Geoffrey's history, removing its political edge and attempting to make it appear like a more conventional history. Wace uses the information in Geoffrey's history in a different way.

This study should be extended to investigate the factors of production and reception beyond aristocratic influences. The reception of these histories is particularly under investigated, and could benefit from a wider study to see whether aristocratic audiences favoured vernacular, or Latin, histories. A wider comparison of twelfth-century vernacular and Latin historiography should be completed which follows on from Blacker's 1994 study.³ It should treat these histories as part of one whole corpus, rather than two separate groups of works.

This study has demonstrated that twelfth-century Latin and vernacular texts are part of an ever-evolving historical discipline which developed in a non-linear fashion across the twelfth century. The aristocracy did influence the construction of historical narratives; but it was an aristocracy of both lay and religious figures. We cannot consider vernacular histories to be the product of solely lay aristocratic influences, even though vernacular histories do tend to follow new literary trends more than Latin histories. We can better understand the choices each historian makes by examining the ways in which they use the past, and how this impacts on the composition of their text. We cannot simplistically divide Latin and vernacular histories by the languages in which they were composed. There are far more factors of production and reception involved which need to be examined.

³ See 'Introduction' in this study and J. Blacker, *The Faces of Time*

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