



## **The *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* and the Political Climate under Edward I**

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Medieval chronicles written in Anglo-Norman have frequently occupied only a marginal place in medieval historical and literary studies – they are often neglected by historians as lacking in historicity and originality but are equally avoided by literature specialists for being too historical, that is, insufficiently literary. Recent scholarship, however, has begun to re-evaluate the importance of medieval vernacular chronicles as literature but also as political tools and as reactions to the political environment in which they were written.

While scholarship has tended to focus on the narrative of these works, examining their contents in order to glean clues regarding their authorship or date of composition, the milieu in which these chronicles were written is beginning to be more closely examined. M. Warren analyzed the context in which a number of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arthurian texts were written in order to examine the sociological and political motivations behind their composition<sup>1</sup>. According to her, the Arthurian chronicle, by which I mean any chronicle in any of the insular languages which incorporates the life of Arthur in its regnal list, was written in response to political tension on the borders, particularly with (but not limited to) Scotland and Wales. Warren concludes, «the historical Arthur attracted writers specifically engaged with pressures to defend, maintain, or expand the identity of their region. These historians wrote from peripheral positions, usually in border areas»<sup>2</sup>. Thus the increased production of Arthurian literature in the twelfth

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1. M. WARREN, *History on the Edge : Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300*, Medieval Cultures, Vol. 22, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

2. *Ibid.* p. 1.

century can be seen chiefly as a literary response to political instability. «Border pressure», as Warren calls it, leads to a historiographic response, the writing of the past easing anxiety about the future.

While Warren confined her attention to works written prior to 1300, her conclusions can also apply to later vernacular works, in particular to the most popular vernacular chronicle in England, albeit one of the least studied. Could a closer examination of the political events during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century offer clues to the conditions under which the anonymous *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* (hereafter referred to as the ANPB) was written ?

Vernacular historiography developed much earlier in Britain and Ireland than on the continent, leading to the composition of six chronicles in the insular dialect of French before the end of the twelfth century. Many attempts have been made to explain the relative precocity of Anglo-Norman chronicles, some tracing the early interest in historical writing to the early English chronicle tradition and others pointing to the influence of the Norman Conquest. Some consider that the composition of these early chronicles is a function of Norman curiosity in the history and legend of their conquered lands<sup>3</sup>, but as Peter Damian-Grint has pointed out, this «ignores the wider interest in historical matters, as evinced by the very many Latin histories written during the twelfth centuries»<sup>4</sup>. It seems that the large number of dynastic chronicles written in the twelfth century were not due to an inherent love of historical literature in the Norman population ; rather it can be argued that the particular social and political climate in post-Conquest England fostered a historiographic response to the tensions.

In a similar manner, the political situation in the Anglo-Norman regnum at the end of the thirteenth century may have encouraged and continued a desire for literature which focused on questions of legitimacy and heredity, and which attempted to explain the division of the island into three separate kingdoms. It seems likely that the composition of the ANPB was the result of not only a continued appetite for historical literature in England but also a manipulation of history for political ends, a transformation centred on the image of a tripartite realm reunited under a single, powerful king.

It is not by chance that the author of the ANPB chose the sources for his work. During the twelfth century in England, there was a flourishing of

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3. For example, see J. WEISS, *Wace's Roman de Brut : A History of the British. Text and Translation*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2002, p. XIII, «Wace wrote for a Norman public which had a strong interest in the history and legend of their adopted work».

4. P. DAMIAN-GRINT, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1999, p. 12.

historical texts written in Latin, and for the first time, in the insular French dialect. These early vernacular texts all shared one theme, establishing the royal genealogy beginning with Brutus<sup>5</sup>, grandson of Aeneas, who was reputed to have discovered the island, a story first occurring in the ninth-century Cambro-Latin text *Historia Brittonum*, but popularised by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia regum Britanniae*, written around 1136.

The two earliest chronicles written in Anglo-Norman became the source texts for the first half of the ANPB. Written around 1137, that is, the year after Geoffrey's text began circulating, the *Estoire des Engleis*, written by Gaimar, was the first chronicle of the Saxon kings written in French. This work is extant in four manuscripts and recounts the history of the island from 495 to 1100.

It is likely that Gaimar's chronicle was once preceded by another work that told of the arrival of the Britons in England. This *Histoire des Bretuns* is hinted at in the opening lines of Gaimar<sup>6</sup> but little else is known about this work. The immense popularity of another Anglo-Norman version of British history as presented in the later *Roman de Brut* may have rendered Gaimar's introductory work obsolete.

Instead, Gaimar's text was copied with another early Anglo-Norman chronicle. The *Roman de Brut* by Wace, composed around 1155, is a translation of the Variant Version of Geoffrey's *Historia*<sup>7</sup> and is the first vernacular version of the Brutus foundation myth. Extant in 32 insular and continental manuscripts, this translation seems to have been very popular at the time and became in turn a source of a number of further translations and adaptations.

Very little is changed from the source text in Wace's translation besides the odd omission ; Wace's version is generally felt to be more courtly in tone. As Geoffrey did in the *Historia*, Wace begins his chronicle with the discovery of the island by Brutus and the division of the island after his

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5. Britain's eponymous founder in fact gave his name to the entire genre of dynastic chronicles written in England in the Middle Ages. Those historical works which begin with the discovery of the island by Brutus are known, both now and at the time they were written, as *bruts*. The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* cites a number of these usages, both within Brut texts and within other literary texts. See the AND2 entry for *bruit*<sup>2</sup> at <http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/bruit2>.

6. Gaimar's opening lines suggest an earlier chronicle, «[O]id avez cumfaitement Coste[n]tin ot cest casement E cum Yvain refait fu reis De Mureif e de Loeneis». *L'Estoire des Engleis by Geoffrei Gaimar*, ed. A. BELL, ANTS XIII, 1960.

7. For a discussion of the variant versions of the *Historia*, see Neil Wright's excellent edition, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, 2. The first variant version : a critical edition*, Cambridge, Brewer, 1985.

death into three realms : Loegria, Cambria and Albany. The succeeding kings have relatively short descriptions before Wace turns to King Arthur. More than one third of his text is devoted to Arthur's reign, developing his foreign conquests at length and most famously, including the earliest mention in French of the Round Table.

The increased interest in dynastic chronicles, as demonstrated by the precocious composition of these two vernacular works, compared to similar developments in France, may also have been influenced by the political climate of the time. The appearance of two dynastic chronicles at the beginning of the reign of Henry II, which happen to celebrate the two ancestral families of this king, cannot be due to chance. His claim to the throne of England and the duchies of Normandy and Aquitaine in 1154 was matrilineal. It seems an unlikely coincidence that the *Roman de Brut*, a chronicle tracing his mother's family back through Brutus and Arthur should be written one year after he acceded to the throne. What is less clear is whether Wace simply profited from the political opportunities presented by Henry's accession or if the task to translate the *Historia* had been confided to him.

There are many suggestive coincidences that could indicate that the *Roman de Brut* was commissioned by Henry. Wace's second chronicle, the *Roman de Rou*, which recounts the lineage of the dukes of Normandy, the king's paternal line, was definitely written by request of the king<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, a copy of the *Roman de Brut* was dedicated to Queen Eleanor according to Layamon, author of an English translation of the *Roman de Brut*<sup>9</sup>. It is likely that Geoffrey's *Historia* was known to Henry – Geoffrey had dedicated a copy to Robert of Gloucester while Robert was tutor to the future king. It is impossible to know whether Henry commissioned Wace, or if Wace took it upon himself to translate the work, knowing it to be to the king's tastes<sup>10</sup>.

Henry was not the only European king of the era encouraging the writing of royal dynastic chronicles. In France, under Philippe-Auguste, the

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8. I. SHORT, «Patrons and Polyglots : French Literature in 12<sup>th</sup>-Century England», *Anglo-Norman Studies XIV : Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, Ipswich, Boydell Press, 1991. Wace makes numerous references to the royal patronage in the chronicle.

9. F. LE SAUX, *Layamon's Brut : the poem and its sources*. Arthurian Studies XIX, D.S. Brewer, Suffolk, UK, 1989, p. 15. «... the third book, made by a French clerk named Wace, who knew how to write well ; and he had given it to the noble Eleanor, who was the queen of Henry the high king».

10. M. AURELL, «Henry II and Arthurian Legend», *Henry II : new interpretations*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2007, p. 371, mentions Wace's inclusion of a reference to Pontieu, not mentioned in the *Historia* but, «of obvious strategic interest to Henry II».

French monarchy had begun to manipulate their lineage to claim descent from Charlemagne<sup>11</sup>. The motivations behind such a claim were not due merely to vanity but rather to assure that the French king could then claim all the lands that had once belonged to this illustrious ancestor. According to Spiegel, the cult of Charlemagne had one purpose, «Philip [Augustus] was less concerned with his true descent from Charlemagne than with legitimizing his territorial conquests by implying that as king of France he should rule within the same boundaries as Charlemagne»<sup>12</sup>.

In this, Henry was slightly ahead of the fashion, as the *Roman de Brut*, if indeed it was commissioned by him, and the *Roman de Rou*, preceded comparable continental chronicles by about 20 years. Like the French dynastic narrative, the Anglo-Norman chronicles focused on the unifying figure of Arthur, one who brought together an empire from disparate lands.

Including Arthur in the royal lineage however was problematic ; during the twelfth century, Arthur dominated the realm of French romance, where many legendary and fabulous details surrounded his life. If one wished to claim Arthur as an illustrious ancestor and a symbol of a united kingdom, it would be necessary to alter his biography, as established by Geoffrey, and to offer proof of both his life and his death. The *Roman de Brut* would mark another step in an attempt to legitimize or rehabilitate Arthur's historical biography.

At the closing of the Arthurian portion of Wace's *Roman*, one of the more famous parts of his narrative, Wace refers to the popular tales told about Arthur and the fictive aspect of his life :

En cele grant pais ke jo di,  
Ne sai si vus l'avez oï,  
Furent les merveilles pruvees  
E les aventures truvees  
Ki d'Artur sunt tant recuntees  
Ke a fable sunt aturnees.  
Ne tut mençunge, ne tut veir,  
Tut folie ne tut saveir.

11. The first recension of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* would trace the history of the French kings from their Trojan origins, through Charlemagne to the death of Philippe-Auguste in 1223.

12. J. C. PARSONS, «The Second Exhumation of King Arthur's Remains at Glastonbury, 19 April 1278». *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, Ed. James P. CARLEY, Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2001, p. 182. He is summarizing G. Spiegel's argument in «The *Reditus Regni ad Stirpem Karoli Magni* : A New Look», *French Historical Studies*, 7, (1971), p. 145-71.

Tant unt li cunteür cunté  
 E li fableür tant flablé  
 Pur lur cuntes enbeleter,  
 Que tut unt fait fable sembler<sup>13</sup>

In this passage Wace juxtaposed the two natures of Arthur, historical and fictive, to underline the veracity of his chronicle, opposing his text to the fabulous romances of the time. Nevertheless, Wace does not deny their possibility but rather suggests that the fantastic events as presented in the *romans* could have occurred during a period of peace (*'cele grant pais'*) after the pacification of England or after the conquest of Europe.

At the moment of Arthur's death, Wace indicates that certain people are still awaiting his return, and that Arthur will return to retake his kingdom<sup>14</sup>. This is a departure from Wace's source text ; Geoffrey does not mention any messianic return, though his contemporary, William of Malmesbury refers to beliefs of an Arthurian return, «But Arthur's grave is nowhere seen, whence antiquity of fables still claims that he will return»<sup>15</sup>. Wace also makes mentions of the belief, but emphasizes the legitimacy of his account, attempting to explain why these beliefs have persisted :

Arthur, si la geste ne ment,  
 Fud el cors nafrez mortelment ;  
 En Avalon se fist porter  
 Pur ses plaies mediciner.  
 Encore i est, Bretun l'atendent,  
 Si cum il dient e entendent ;  
 De la vendra, encor puet vivre.  
 Maistre Wace, ke fist cest livre,  
 Ne volt plus dire de sa fin  
 Qu'en dist li prophetes Merlin ;  
 Merlin dist d'Arthur, si ot dreit,  
 Que sa mort dutuse serreit.  
 Li prophetes dist verité ;  
 Tut tens en ad l'um puis duté,

13. WACE, *Le Roman de Brut*. Ed. Ivor Arnold. 2 vol. S.A.T.F. 1938-40. Il 9787-9798.

14. *Ibid.* Il. 13297-8. «Livra sun regne si li (=Constantin) dist Qu'il fust reis tant qu'il (=Arthur) revenist».

15. O. J. PADEL, «The Nature of Arthur», *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), p. 10. It is difficult to determine how widespread this messianic belief really was – though William of Newburgh mocks Britons for this same belief. C. BULLOCK-DAVIES, «*Espectare Arthurum*, Arthur and the Messianic Hope», *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 29 (1980-82), p. 432-40.

E datera, ço crei, tut dis,  
Se il est morz u il est vis<sup>16</sup>.

To really be able to profit from Arthur as an ancestor, it was necessary to completely eliminate any suggestion he would return. A favourable moment seemed to arise after fire destroyed the abbey at Glastonbury in 1184. Henry II, according to Giraldus Cambrensis, had suggested to the monks of Glastonbury that they dig up a grave on their property, for surely, this would be where King Arthur was buried. It was no accident that Arthur's remains were discovered in 1191. While the discovery may have been prompted by the financial need of the abbey, resulting from the fire in 1184, it did more than provide funding for the abbey—it also solved several problems for the monarchy. The fortuitous 'discovery' of Arthur's remains, an event which James Carley characterizes as, 'a turning point in the historicizing and anglicizing of Arthur'<sup>17</sup>, established firstly, that Arthur was in fact a real king and not merely the subject of tales told by poets. Secondly, by confirming that Arthur was in fact dead, and would not be returning to aid the Welsh, the English kings could transform him from a symbol of rebellion to one of unification and imperialism.

The kings that immediately succeeded Henry II were less interested in manipulating the Arthurian myth, probably because at this time the monarchy was primarily concerned with the loss of land in France. It was not until after the death of Henry III in 1272 that the interest of the king turned once again to Arthur, at the moment when insular conflicts were at the forefront. It is also at this moment that the ANPB, one of the earliest vernacular prose chronicles, was first composed, describing the royal lineage from Brutus to contemporary times.

The ANPB family is comprised of 50 manuscripts which narrate the history of the English kings, beginning with Aeneas and his flight from Troy and continuing until 1272. The chronicle was composed before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but the author of the chronicle and the motivation behind his redaction remain unknown. Although this chronicle was one of the most popular in the Middle Ages in England – according the Matheson, only the Wycliffe Bible was copied more frequently<sup>18</sup> – nearly nothing is

16. *Roman de Brut*. ll. 13275-90.

17. J. CARLEY, «Arthur in English History», *The Arthur of the English : the Arthurian legend in medieval English life and literature*, Ed. W.R.J. BARRON, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2001, p. 48.

18. L. MATHESON, *The Prose Brut : The Development of a Middle English Chronicle*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 180, Tempe, Arizona State University, 1998, p. 8.



known about the circumstances in which the chronicle was written. It may be that a closer examination of the political situation in England during the period may help us to theorize about why and for whom the text was written.

The ANPB probably ended in 1272 originally ; however, the majority of the manuscripts include a continuation into the reign of Edward III (only 5 manuscripts finish before the reign of Edward I). There are two different continuations to the original texts, of different lengths, though both update the text to approximately the same period in 1333. This organisation suggests, to Taylor, an institutional author, as redaction of the chronicle seems to have a continuous style and structure over the three component parts<sup>19</sup>.

But what could have inspired this effort ? The composition of the ANPB helped resolve two of the great political problems for the English king at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century – the Welsh rebellion and the succession of the Scottish kingship. As Warren showed with the earlier chronicles, it was at the moment of territorial conflict that the Arthurian chronicle was revitalized, emphasizing Arthur as conqueror and legal precedent.

The beginning of Edward I's reign was marked by the Welsh rebellion and it is in the context of this uprising that one must consider a visit Edward made to Glastonbury. At Easter 1278, Edward visited Arthur's remains there to witness the translation of his body to a place below the altar. This reburial amid border conflicts with Wales reaffirmed that this saviour would be coming to aid the Welsh.

It is likely that it was at a similar moment that the ANPB was first composed. It was the first vernacular chronicle which presented the entire history of the monarchy up to current times – achieving what Gaimar had (probably) attempted nearly 150 years prior.

Written between 1272 and 1300, at the beginning of the reign of Edward I, a prose translation of the history of the monarchy probably would have been positively received. In France, the *Grandes Chroniques* had just been completed, a text which, «condensed the genealogical and

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19. J. TAYLOR, «The French Prose *Brut* and Its Continuations», *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 114. «It is difficult to believe that a chronicle could have been continued over such a period and written in a more or less distinctive style without the aid of some institutional background. That institution need not have been a religious house of an ecclesiastical centre. The authors may well have been clerks working in some writing office located in the capital, possibly operating on the fringes of the central administration and attached in some manner to the Chancery».

dynastic memory of France into a simple edifice that inaugurated a new understanding of French history as the history of the *trois races* of kings – Merovingians, Carolingians and Capetians»<sup>20</sup> The composition of the ANPB can be seen in part as a response to this chronicle as it incorporates the three English ‘races’ – Breton, Saxon and Norman – into one continuous history.

But the ANPB was much more than this ; it was propaganda for the monarchy, encouraging the idea of a unified realm, first outlined by Geoffrey, with all three kingdoms ruled by a king descended from all three races and from both Brutus and Arthur. The division of the land by Brutus into kingdoms would be reversed by Arthur in his imperial expansion. The English kings could point to him as justification for their own expansionist desires as Arthur was venerated as a model of kingship, a model first laid out in the *Historia*. It was a mythology that would be significantly exploited by both Edward and his descendants. As Lister Matheson notes, «In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the record of Arthur’s foreign victories and conquests had obvious contemporary implications with regard to Scotland and France. Sceptics were few, and the political advantages of royal identification with Arthur and his military prowess ensured that official disapproval or scepticism would not occur»<sup>21</sup>.

Like its source, the *Roman de Brut*, the most important (and longest) episodes in the ANPB are those which describe the discovery of the island by Brutus and the Arthurian portion of the narrative. The Brutus episode is little altered from the version found in Wace – the story of Aeneas is reduced, the references to pagan gods are eliminated and Brutus’s voyages are shortened. As in Wace’s version, the discovery of the island and its subsequent division is carefully explained :

Et qaunt Bruyt avoit enserché tut la terre de lung et de lee, il trova une terre joignant a Brutaïne en le north, et cele terre dona il a Albanac soun filtz et il la fist appeler Albanie après soun noun, et ore est appellé Escoce. Et Bruyt treova une aultre pais devers la west et cele terre dona il a Kambor l’autre filtz et il la fist appeler Kambre après soun noun, et ore est appellé Gales. Et qaunt Bruyt avoit regné .xx. aunz et pluis, com devant est dit, donqe morust il en la cité de Nove Troie, et la lui enterrenter sez filtz ov graunt honur, et Lotrin lour frere regna et governa

20. G. SPIEGEL, *Romancing the Past : The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, University of California Press, USA, 1993, p. 315.

21. L. MATHESON, «King Arthur and Medieval English Chronicles», *King Arthur through the Ages*, Ed. Valerie M. LAGORIO, Mildred Leake DAY, Vol. 1, London, Garland, 1990, p. 265.

noblement et sagement sa terre et sa gent, car il fust mult prodomme et mult amé de tut sa terre<sup>22</sup>.

This is the first reference amid many to the fact that the land which would become England was held by the eldest son and that the two younger sons held their lands in fief.

The Arthurian section of the chronicle is by far the longest ; it varies significantly from the source text. A number of episodes in the *Roman de Brut* are omitted from the *Prose Brut* such as the coronation feast and Arthur's dream. There is less emphasis on Arthur's continental conquests – the account of the war in France is much less developed while the insular campaigns are emphasized. Repeatedly, it is mentioned that the kings of the lands Arthur has conquered owe him their fealty ; the Scots, in particular, are described as completely subject to Arthur after a short battle, after which they throw themselves at his feet and pay him homage. Guillomar, king of Ireland, «rendi a luy [Arthur] et devint soun homme et ly fist homage de tenir de luy de cele houre en avaunt tut la terre d'Irland pur luy et pur toutz ceux qe jammés vendroient après luy»<sup>23</sup>.

The author of the ANPB eliminates nearly any reference to the more fantastic details of Arthur's life, such as his prophetic dreams, though he attempts, as Wace does, to suggest when the well known stories found in the romances could have taken place. Shortly after the conquest of the island, he writes, «En mesmes cele temps q'il regna issint en pees furent lez mervailles provez et lez aventures trovez dount homme aad sovent counté et oie»<sup>24</sup>. The author does not deny the existence of these alternative visions of Arthur's reign, but he can offer a timeframe for, following Wace, when they might have occurred.

There are some differences in the description of Arthur's final moments between the ANPB and its sources. Like the *Roman de Brut*, the ANPB makes reference to prophecies concerning Arthur's eventual return. The author of the *Prose Brut* however, seem to have an explanation for the source of the uncertainty surrounding Arthur's death, «Meas il se fist porter en une liter a Avaloun q'ore est appellé Glastingbury<sup>25</sup> pur mediciner

22. H. PAGAN, *The Anglo-Norman Prose Brut to 1332*. Anglo-Norman Text Society, Vol. 68, 2011, ll. 228-238.

23. *Ibid.* ll 2039-41.

24. *Ibid.* ll 2062-4.

25. Neither the *Roman de Brut* nor the *Historia regum Britanniae* makes the identification of Glastonbury with Avalon, understandably, since the link between the two was not made before the 1191 exhumation of Arthur's bones at Glastonbury. The author of the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* may have found this identification in a number of sources, as the

sez plaies et unqore entendout lez Brutouns q'il est vivaunt en aultre terre et q'il vendra et conquera tut Brutaigne. Meas pur verité ceo est la dreit prophecie de Merlin. Il dist qe sa mort est dotous et il dist verité qar l'em aad tut temps doté et dotera s'il soit mort ou vif»<sup>26</sup> As in the *Roman de Brut*, Arthur hands over his kingdom to Constantine, though reference is made to this being a temporary state, «et luy dist q'il en fust roy tanqe a soun revenir»<sup>27</sup>. However, the mention of Glastonbury, and the discovery of Arthur's grave there, reinforced the idea that his return was unlikely.

While the reinterpretation of the Arthurian myth and the visit to Glastonbury attempted to put to rest any hopes for Arthur's return, conflicts on the border with Scotland at the end of the thirteenth century would perhaps inspire the composition of a national chronicle.

In the final moments of the thirteenth century, the task fell to Edward I to mediate the succession crisis in Scotland – the king and his direct heirs having died prior to 1290 and 14 pretenders for the throne having presented themselves. This ushered in a long period of hostilities between the two countries, partially a result of the question of the homage due the king of England from the king of Scotland.

According to Edward I, the natural solution to this succession crisis was to give him the lands, a decision he argued was not without precedent, as it was claimed that the king of Scotland held his lands in fief from the king of England : he demanded that the monasteries search their archives for written proof of such a claim<sup>28</sup>. Unfortunately for the king,

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*New Arthurian Encyclopedia* notes, «...the equation [the link between Glastonbury and Avalon] was widely publicized after that [1191] and accepted by Giraldus Cambrensis, Robert de Boron, and the anonymous author of *Perlesvaus*» (ed. N. J. LACY, G. ASHE. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Routledge, 1996, p. 26).

26. *Ibid.* ll. 2420-33. The Short Version of the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* is marked by the omission of nearly all references to Merlin's prophecies, beyond the interpretation of the two fighting dragons. Unlike Wace, who explains the reason for his omission, the author of the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* simply fails to mention the Merlin prophecies, except at this key moment. The prophecies are incorporated into the revised Long Version.

27. *Ibid.* ll. 2430.

28. For example, see the writ to the prior of Chester, 1291, in J. STEVENSON, *Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland*, Vol. 1. Edinburgh, 1870, p. 222. «Cum vobis nuper mandaverimus quod cronica vestra, registra et alia secreta vestra singula, quaecumque fuerint, quae statum regnorum Angliae et Scotiae, seu alterius eorum, vel reges et magnates terrarum praedicatarum, aliquialiter tangunt seu respiciunt, diligenter scrutari faceretis...». I translate, «As we have previously ordered you to diligently search your chronicles, registers and other private documents, whatever they are, which make reference to or concern, in some way, the government of the kingdoms of England or Scotland, or another of them, or kings and rulers of the aforementioned lands...».

«the evidence adduced by this method turned out to be scrappy and unsatisfactory»<sup>29</sup>.

In 1301, a second letter to Pope Boniface VIII concerning Edward's rights in Scotland was in preparation and a second search of the archives was ordered. This letter was very different than the one sent ten years earlier and contained new information concerning the king's rights for the period prior to 901 and post 1250. A three page draft of the letter was first drawn up in Anglo-Norman. This draft was then edited and a fourth page was added, drawing material from the Brutus mythology<sup>30</sup>.

This insertion into Edward I's letter to the pope underlines precisely how the history of the kings of England, as presented in the ANPB, was central to the task of settling the succession of the Scottish throne. According to Edward, his claims to the throne of Scotland were mainly based on historical rights, laid down in the reigns of Brutus and Arthur, a fact which the final version emphasizes repeatedly. The opening of the letter openly declares the dominion of the king of England over all other kings, «... it is graven upon the tablets of our memory with an indelible mark, that our predecessors and progenitors, the kings of England, by right of lordship and dominion, possessed, from the most ancient times, the suzerainty of the realm»<sup>31</sup>.

Is it possible that the ANPB was written in the context of a political desire to have proof of Scotland's feudal submission ? The presence of a

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29. M. T. CLANCHY, *From Memory to Written Record : England 1066-1307*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Cambridge, Blackwell, 1993, p. 153.

30. E.-L.-G. STONES and G. G. SIMPSON (*Edward I and the throne of Scotland, 1290-1296 : an edition of the record sources for the Great Cause*, Vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 156) summarize the additions thus, «the mythological prologue, which now makes the first of its many appearances in the English case, asserts that Lochrine, eldest son of Brutus, was overlord of his two brothers, who ruled Scotland and Wales. The ultimate source of this is Geoffrey of Monmouth, but we do not know whether the clerk who drafted Edward's letter worked directly from a text of Geoffrey, or from a summary supplied by the monks and scholars assembled at Lincoln. It is perhaps curious that the trouble taken in 1300 to secure new historical information led, in the end, to nothing more than the mythological prologue, and the supplement for the period 1251-96» The insertion into the letter is found in PRO E 39.1.18 and a transcription of the passage can be found in the appendix.

31. E.-L.-G. STONES, *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328, Some Selected Documents*, London, 1965, p. 96. This is a translation of, «... scrinio memorie indelebili stilo novit inscribi, quod antecessores et progenitores nostri reges Anglie jure superioris et directi domini ab antiquissimis retro temporibus regno Scocie et ipsius regibus in temporalibus et annexis eisdem prefuerunt, et ab eisdem regibus pro regno Scocie et ejusdem regni proceribus a quibus habere volebant, ligia homagia et fidelitatis jura receperunt ...».

large number of clerks at Lincoln preparing the case for Scottish rule is suggestive as the Short Version of the ANPB shows particular knowledge of northern affairs, to the extent that it had been hypothesized that the author was from the area<sup>32</sup>. As well, it is known that at least one copy of the *Roman de Brut* and the *Estoire des Engleis*, versions which are known to have been used as sources of the ANPB, belonged to a nearby cathedral<sup>33</sup>. As Stones and Simpson pointed out above, it seems improbable that these scholars had met together merely to help draft a letter to the pope. It could be that it is at Lincoln that the ANPB, or at the very least, the Short Continuation to the text, was first composed<sup>34</sup>.

As for the Scots, their response to Edward's letter in which he offered a chronicle as proof of English domination was swift. In a report written several months later, they mocked the supposed authenticity of the chronicle upon which his claims were based, perhaps the ANPB, at the same time, offering another foundation story, which claimed to tell the true tale of the discovery of Scotland and the division of the land (the *Chronica gentis Scotorum* would be written shortly after, despite the accusation levelled against Edward I that he had stolen all the historical material from Scotland). The report argues that : «vous fondez vostre droit par ancienetez qui contiennent diverses fausetez et mensonges [...] dient il que les ancienetez que vous amenez par vostre droit ne vous poet aider»<sup>35</sup>. The repeated use of the term *ancienetez* here to describe the sources used by the king is interesting as the word is not attested elsewhere with this sense<sup>36</sup>. While Stones translates the term as 'chronicle', I think rather it refers to all ancient texts.

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32. J. TAYLOR, «The French Prose *Brut* and Its Continuations», *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 114.

33. Lincoln, Cathedral Library 104 contains a copy of the *Estoire des Engleis* and the *Roman de Brut*. The version presented in this manuscript agrees at a number of places with readings found in the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* against what is found in other manuscripts.

34. That there is no mention of a chronicle which spans the entire reign of the kings of England may suggest that the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut* was composed after the meeting in Lincoln. The author of the papal letter makes an appeal based on what is «graven upon the tablets of our memory with an indelible mark» (*scrinio memorie indelebili stilo novit inscribi*) as mentioned above.

35. British Library Cotton Vespasian F VII ff.15-16 as transcribed in E.L.G. Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328 : Some Selected Documents*, London, 1965, p. 110.

36. See AND2, ([www.anglo-norman.net/D/ancienete](http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/ancienete)) where it is used to express «the past, olden times». The term is attested in all of the dictionaries of medieval French (Godefroy Complément 118 *ancienneté*, T-L i 380 *ancieneté*, FEW XXIV 638b *ante*) but all dictionaries agree with a meaning «of old, ancient character».

Even after the reign of Edward I, the Scottish question would remain problematic, and the monarchy would continue to manipulate history for their purposes. A new continuation would be added to the ANPB and as before, this would coincide with a visit to Glastonbury by the king. This time it would be Edward III who would reaffirm the ties with Arthur and the chronicle would be updated to include the reign of his father and grandfather.

The monarchy's manipulation of the Arthurian myth continued throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ; however, the writing of history in Anglo-Norman had come to an end in England after about 1350. The ANPB was translated into English before the end of the fourteenth century and any further continuations to the text were in that language. The chronicle continued to be copied in Anglo-Norman well into the fifteen century but was very rarely the subject of a continuation. It is extant in nearly 50 manuscripts, a testament to the vigour of Anglo-Norman historiography during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries in England.

## Appendix

### PRO E 39.1.18

En le temps de Ely & Samuel le profete, un nobles homs et puissaunt, que avoit a noun Brutus, du lignage des Troyens après la destruction de Troye, ariva ové moltz des autres nobles Troyens en un isle, qi adonques fu apelé Albion, enhabité de geauntz lesqueux vencus e occis par la peussance & la vertu de li & des soens. Cel isle de son noun apella Bretaygne & ses compaignons Bretons & edefia une cité q'il appela Trinovant, que ore est apelé Lundres & après devisa son roiaume a ses troys fuiz, cest a savoir a Locryn le eigné cele partie de Bretagne, que ore est apelé Engleterre & a Albanact le secund, l'autre partie que il apela de son noun Albania, que ore est apelé Escoce. Et a Cambre son puné fuiz, la terce partie que il apela de son noun Cambria, que ore est apelé Gales. Reservé a Locryn l'eigné, la reale dignité. Et puis, deuz aunz passez après la mort le dit Bruti, ariva en Albaigne un roy de les parties de Hungrye qui avoit a non Humber & occist Albanactum le frere Locryn. La queu chose oye, Locryn, roy des Bretons le porsuy que en fuant fu neyez en un flum, que de son non est apelé Humbre & ensi Albaigne reverti al dit Locryn. Item Dunwal, roy des Bretouns, occist Stater, roy d'Escoce, qi li estoit rebel & reprist sa terre en sa seignurie. Item les deus fuiz Dunwal, cest a savoir Belyn & Brenne, departirent entre eus le royaume lur pere, ensi que Belyn l'eigné averoit la corone del isle ové Bretagne, Gales & Cornewaille & Brenne prendreit Escoce a regner desoutz li, car la coustume Troyenne requereit que la digneté del heritage demorast al eigné. Item Arthur, roy des Bretons, puissant prince & de grant fame, Escoce rebel a lui mist en sa subjection & que après tote la gent destrut. Et après fit roy d'Escoce un Angusel par noun. Et com après li dit roy Arthur feist une graunde feste a la Cité de Legion, illoeques furent touz les roys que li estoyent subjetz entre les quei [A]ngusel, roy d'Escoce, fesant le service deu por le roiaume d'Escoce, portoit l'espeye le roy Arthur deva[nt] luy & puis tous les roys d'Escoce, chescon après autre furent subjetz au roy des Brutouns.



