A POST-CONQUEST ENGLISH RETROSPECT UPON THE AGE OF THE

ANGLO-SAXONS: A STUDY OF THE EARLY-MIDDLE-ENGLISH VERSE

CHRONICLE ATTRIBUTED TO ROBERT OF GLOUCESTER

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OCTOBER 1997

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to re-evaluate the thirteenth-century metrical chronicle attributed to Robert of Gloucester. In particular, it examines the nature of the chronicler's Englishness, assessing his retrospect upon the age of the Anglo-Saxons in order to ascertain how the historical record he creates is influenced by the events of this period. The focus is also upon the chronicle as a literary text. By both of these approaches, this thesis contributes to a wider understanding of the chronicler's motivations and identification.

Chapter one explores the concepts of nation and nationhood which are set up in the chronicle. Other studies on national identity are considered, and close textual analysis assesses the national distinctions which are drawn in the chronicle. The use of the English vernacular for the text is considered as a criterion in Robert's construction of an English community.

Chapter two addresses how Robert's pro-English stance affects the historical priorities which he makes in the text. The way in which different historical periods are handled, and the manner in which Robert manufactures continuities between the Anglo-Saxon era and his own time are studied.

Chapter three stresses the literary aspects of the text. Close textual analysis explores the intended dissemination method for the text. The literary techniques which Robert implements are also given detailed consideration.

In chapter four, the chronicle is placed within an historical context. This stresses the relevance of the chronicle to the society in which it was written, and also reconsiders the historical period in which it was composed. Some attention is also given here to the second-recension and the factors which make it distinct from the first recension.

Finally, the conclusion presents the findings of this study. It stresses the literary importance of the chronicle and its significance to studies on English national identity. New suggestions are provided for the influences upon the chronicler and for his identity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

EETS   *Early English Text Society*

HMSO   Her Majesty's Stationery Office

PMLA   *Publications of the Modern Language Association*

SEL   *South English Legendary*

SPCK   Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

'He Hath Continued too Long Hid from the World'[1]

Since the name Robert of Gloucester was coined in 1570 by John Stow to describe the

author of an English metrical chronicle,[2] knowledge has advanced little with regard to the

identity of this late thirteenth - early fourteenth-century chronicler, his location, milieu and

purpose in writing. Stow provides no justification for his connection of the name Robert

with Gloucester, but it is possible that this association was borrowed from an earlier writer

as Stow was a renowned plagiarist.[3] Nevertheless, the name has stuck, and studies since

have laboured to justify or dismiss the assumption that the text was composed by a single

contributor called Robert, who was a Gloucester man. In the absence of any other definition,

the name Robert of Gloucester has become a convenient device for identifying this text. It

remains, however, no more than a useful label.

Whilst my approach to the chronicle will contribute to this debate, my main line of enquiry

will be into the author's[4] 'Englishness'. My primary identification of Robert is as the first

post-Conquest historian to write an up-dated chronicle (that is, one which includes an

account of contemporary, or near-contemporary, events) in the English vernacular. The text

will be evaluated to assess whether the chronicler's medium, and view of his country's past,

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[1] *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle,* ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1810) viii.

[2] *ibid* vii.

[3] Anne Hudson, *An Edition of the Chronicle Attributed to Robert of Gloucester with a Study of the Original Language of the Poem,* Diss. Oxford, 1964, 46 n.1.

[4] I shall discuss the issue of singular or multiple authorship in a later chapter. For convenience, I will refer to the text's composer in the singular form. I will also use the name Robert to indicate the author of the first recension.

suggests a nostalgia for, or a desire to reawaken, Anglo-Saxon historiographical, linguistic and cultural traditions. This will inevitably necessitate an understanding of the author's contemporary context. His view, and manipulation, of past events must rest upon his own values and beliefs, shaped by his surroundings. Though chronicles are often treated by modern historians as source texts for earlier periods of history, my focus will be upon the chronicle as a literary text. Thus, I will concentrate upon not only what Robert is saying, but also how he says it. This will entail a consideration of his literary techniques (the use of formulas, language and syntax, for example) as tools to further his polemic. Before providing an outline of my argument in this thesis, however, I will first give a preliminary introduction to the chronicle, and to scholarly work upon it to date, to provide a context for my evaluation.

The chronicle attributed to Robert of Gloucester is a metrical work, composed in the English vernacular, and detailing the history of England. It begins by narrating the story of the legendary Brut from the Trojan war to his habitation of the British Isles, and culminates during the account of the events for 1271. At this point the narrative is cut short by damage to the longest manuscript.[5] Thirteen manuscripts containing the text are extant. The earliest is dated on palaeographical grounds to around 1300-1325,[6] the latest to the sixteenth century. None is thought to be a direct transcript of any other single extant manuscript.[7] The origins and distribution of the text are confused by the two recensions in which it has survived. Both incorporate the same material until 1135 (with minor alterations) after which

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[5] This manuscript (London British Library MS. Cotton Caligula A. XI) contains the earliest dated text of the chronicle. It consists of two parts bound together. The manuscript also contains a version of Piers Plowman and a selection of Latin writings.

[6] This is Hudson's dating of the chronicle (*Chronicle* 5). *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, Rolls Series (London, 1887) xl, dates the same manuscript 1320-1330.

[7] Hudson, *Chronicle* 72.

they diverge. The first recension narrative terminates in 1271 in its longest form, and consists of 12,050 lines, whilst the second ends with the accession of King Edward I in 1272, and is accommodated in around 9,700 lines only. The two recensions contain different accounts of King Stephen's reign (of almost exactly the same length) after which the second recension gives an abbreviated record of events. Six manuscripts of the first recension are extant, and seven of the second. The history of all of them is obscure, and none are known to have emanated from a monastic environment.[8] The existence of two recensions suggests the industry of at least two writers, and various patterns have been proposed for the production of the texts. Firstly, that a chronicle was composed to 1135, after which it was copied and distributed. The original composer then continued this text to 1271 (or beyond), this being the first recension. Another person added a different continuation, thus creating the second recension. Secondly, that one person devised the text to 1135 after which it was copied and distributed. Two other people then added continuations of their own.[9] A third alternative is that the texts are the work of multiple authors. That there were more than three people who could write in the general style of the chronicle is evident from the various editions of the *South English Legendary* (SEL),[10] a collection of saints' lives written in English, with the same metre and similar rhyme scheme. The coherence of the chronicle's viewpoint however (in particular in the first recension), argues against multiple authorship.

The name of 'roberd' occurs in only two of the extant manuscripts (London, British Library MS. Cotton Caligula A. XI and Glasgow, Hunterian MS. V.3.13), both of the first

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[8] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to c.1307*, (London: Routledge, 1974) 436.

[9] Wright, *Chronicle* viii-ix.

[10] See Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs NS 6 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1974). SEL texts are available in Charlotte d'Evelyn and Anne J. Mill, eds., *The South English Legendary*, EETS (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956) and Carl Horstmann, ed., *The Early South English Legendary or Lives of Saints*, EETS (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1887).

recension. The Cotton manuscript contains the earliest surviving copy of the text; the other is, at least in part, a copy of that text.[11] 'Roberd' is named in the work in the context of the darkness which spread around Evesham for thirty miles after the battle between the forces of Prince Edward and the Montfortian army in 1265. It is 'roberd's' response to this darkness that is recorded:

þis isei roberd.
Þat verst þis boc made . & was wel sore aferd.[12]

Of the other first-recension manuscripts, one lacks the leaf on which it may have occurred,[13] and two terminate before the narrated events of 1265.[14] One text appears to deliberately exclude these lines.[15] This copy is dated to around 1400, and it can be conjectured that this omission was a result of the perceived irrelevance of this autobiographical statement at such a later date.

As the only statement of authorial identity in the work, the comment on 'roberd' gives little information for the student of the text to work upon. The reticence by the author to reveal more about himself is unusual in the post-Conquest chronicle tradition: preceding Latin and vernacular chroniclers are apt to declare their name, aim and, perhaps, patron as a preface

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[11] The Hunterian manuscript ends with blanks corresponding to the damaged sections of the Cotton manuscript. Hudson, *Chronicle* 13.

[12] Lines 11,748-49.

[13] London, British Library MS. Add.18631. This mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, written in several hands, contains only Robert of Gloucester's chronicle. *Ibid* 10-11.

[14] London, British Library MS. Harley 201 and London, College of Arms MS. lviii. Both of these manuscripts have been dated to the fifteenth century. The Harley MS. contains a portion of the chronicle only. The College of Arms MS. contains a version of the chronicle interspersed with other verse and prose matter, as well as some historical notes in prose. *Ibid* 8 and 14.

[15] London, British Library MS. Add. 19677.

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to their work. Robert's identification of himself is oblique. He tells us that he was alive in

1265, and that he was then within a thirty-mile radius of Evesham. This information could

locate him in places as diverse as Hereford in the west, Hailesowen in the north, Eynsham

in the east and Malmesbury in the south. He also indicates that he was the author of 'þis

boc'. Antonia Gransden is the only person who makes any resolute attempt to supply an

identity for Robert, which she does by supplementing textual evidence with historical

information. She notes the familiarity of the author with both Gloucester and Oxford (a fact

first remarked by Hearne)[16] and suggests that this knowledge would be expected of a monk

from the Benedictine abbey of St. Peter in Gloucester. This monastery had a hall in Oxford.

Yet, as Hudson rightly asserts:

> the evidence is tenuous: the author clearly knew [Gloucester and] Oxford well
> ... and might clearly have known both without being a resident of either.[17]

Gransden's attempts to denote a religious order for Robert likewise founders through lack

of a bias towards any order by the chronicler.[18] It is evident that Robert's religious order (if

any) cannot be deduced from such evidence as Gransden uses. The signs she finds within the

text of secular interest are equally tenuous.[19]

As I shall demonstrate throughout this thesis, evidence for the identity of Robert must be

accumulated from a careful examination of the author's preoccupations and priorities in the

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[16] Gransden, *Historical Writings* 434; Hearne, *Chronicle* viii.

[17] Hudson, *Chronicle* 52.

[18] Gransden, *Historical Writings* 434.

[19] *ibid* 436-7

text.[20] In the absence of any definitive criteria, who Robert was must remain speculation. One possible candidate for the author, however, has not yet received full consideration. This is Robert (Le Wyse) of Gloucester, a Doctor of Canon Law from Oxford. Emden, in his *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford*, outlines the life (particularly appointments) of a Robert of Gloucester, born around 1252 in Gloucester.[21] He terminates this record with the statement that Robert:

> has been credited with authorship of an English chronicle in verse to 1270, written c.1300 ... but on no stronger evidence than that the 'author', whose name was Robert, was familiar with Gloucester and its neighbourhood.[22]

To make such a link from the fact that a name is shared by the canon lawyer and the chronicler would indeed be foolish, however, as I intend to demonstrate - both here and in the following chapters - there are elements of the chronicle which lend support to such a hypothesis.

The career of the canon lawyer, Robert, was both high-profile and contentious. Born in Gloucester, this figure proceeded to study canon law at Oxford where he remembered Thomas Cantilupe (Chancellor of Oxford 1261-1263 and again in 1273). Afterwards, Robert moved to the Hereford diocese during Cantilupe's episcopacy.[23] Robert was a canon and prebendary at Hereford in 1279, and from 2 June 1280 until 1282 was an official at the same

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[20] My focus throughout this thesis will be primarily upon the first-recension text, and in particular with the Cotton Caligula A. XI version of it. This version is both the most complete, and the earliest, of the surviving texts. I will consider the second recension as a part of chapter four. Its relationship to the first recension will be a major element of my evaluation.

[21] A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 773-74.

[22] *ibid* 774.

[23] Thomas Cantilupe was Bishop of Hereford 1275-1282.

place. In 1282, however, (the year of Cantilupe's death) Robert is found as rector of Wraysbury in Buckinghamshire. There he was sequestered on account of excommunication in that year. He had vacated Wraysbury by November 1299.[24] During the rest of his career he was centred at Hereford. In 1297 he was a prebendary of Hunderton (Herefords.); in the same year the rector of Willersley (Herefords.); in 1304 a prebendary of Huntington in the same county and, from 16 September 1299 until his death, he was chancellor of Hereford cathedral. This diocesan career was interspersed with wider involvement. From 10 September 1283, and still in 1285, Robert acted as proctor for bishop Swinfield (bishop of Hereford 1283-1317) at the Roman *curia*, and (1303-1305) he served as chancellor to Archbishop Winchelsey. Robert's location at Oxford and Hereford during the period of Thomas Cantilupe's appointments made him an important witness at the inquiry into the claims to canonisation for the bishop. This inquiry took place in 1307. Robert had died by January 1322, just two years after a commission was appointed by bishop Orleton (bishop of Hereford 1317-1327) for the administration of his affairs. The relative and namesake of Robert (Robert of Gloucester, rector of Wraysbury, Bucks.) was co-administrator of the commission.

The life of this Robert brought him into contact with many controversial ecclesiastical and political figures of his age. If the chronicle were his work, it would be expected that such an environment would be reflected there. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, the chronicle is influenced by contemporary political discourse, indeed, is a part of that discourse. In particular, ecclesiastical and monarchic inter-relationships are explored. The canon lawyer's

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[24] The letters which discuss Robert's excommunication do not reveal the specific nature of his offence. *The Register of John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury 1279-1292*, ed F. N. Davis and others (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1968) I, 156; *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ed. Charles Trice Martin (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1965) I, 271-73, 306-10, 318-20.

career situated him where these parties were in conflict. Thomas Cantilupe had been a fervent supporter of Simon de Montfort during the Barons' Wars of Henry III's reign. He was one of the baronial representatives at the arbitration for these troubles at Amiens in 1264, and was afterwards one of the council of nine set up at the Mise of Lewes in the same year to oversee the running of the kingdom.[25] He was also Chancellor of the realm during the time of Henry III's imprisonment from 25 February to May 1265. He was absolved for his involvement in the reform movement by the king, and was appointed bishop of Hereford in 1275.

Archbishop Winchelsey was an equally contentious figure on the political stage. His disputes with Edward I over taxation led to his eventual exile from the country. He was recalled to his post by Edward II.[26] It was during the reign of Edward I that Robert acted as chancellor to the archbishop.

Bishop Orleton, too, played a part on the national stage. His election to the Hereford bishopric in 1317 by Pope John XXII went against the king's express wishes,[27] and his conflict with the monarchy was to continue throughout his career. He was a dissident bishop against Edward II, and had his lands, goods and register seized by the king because of his association with Mortimer.[28]

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[25] Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1963) 182, 198.

[26] Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1997) 533; Jeffrey Denton, *Archbishop Winchelsey and the Crown 1294-1313* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) 231.

[27] Peter Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crisis* (London: Fontana, 1988) 93.

[28] *ibid* 78.

Within the chronicle, the problems of monarchic mis-rule are not overtly discussed; they are, however, implicit in the narrative which seeks to provide a remedy for them. Oppression of the poor, the abuse of good counsel, the maintenance of good and traditional laws, these are all subjects with which Robert deals. His interests are in just rule and the resultant equilibrium of the kingdom. Analyses of the rights of the ruler - particularly his relationship to God and the law - were prevalent in Oxford during the thirteenth century, and have been recorded in such works as John of Wales' *Communiloquium.*[29] It is with the ideas propounded by the Oxford schools that Robert of Gloucester's perceptions of rightful kingship equate. Some familiarity with not only the geographical aspects of Oxford, but also its intellectual environment, is therefore suggested for him. The canon lawyer, Robert, was at Oxford.

There are other ways in which the lives of the two Roberts are comparable: their connection with both Gloucester and Hereford, for example. The canon lawyer was born in Gloucester. The chronicler provides unique information about the events which occurred in Gloucester during the Barons' Wars, obviously had some familiarity with the city, and writes his chronicle in a Gloucestershire dialect.[30] It cannot be determined with any certainty where the chronicler was located at the time of the Battle of Evesham in 1265, but he does record the darkness which spread for thirty miles from the battlefield. Gloucester is well within a thirty-mile radius of Evesham. Hereford, in contrast, is almost exactly that distance away. The stipulation that the darkness stretched for that distance may not then have been idly chosen. It is unlikely that Robert was in Hereford at this date, but, if he later became centred

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[29] Jenny Swanson, *John of Wales: A Study of the Works of a Thirteenth-Century Friar* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

[30] Hudson, *Chronicle* 305-6.

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in that city, then he would have learned from others there that the darkness was also seen at Hereford. He could then be certain of its extent at least that far. Such a suggestion is not mere speculation; other aspects of the chronicle reinforce a Hereford provenance.

The chronicle's pro-Montfortian stance may have been influenced by contact with Thomas Cantilupe. Cantilupe was, as I have shown, an active political figure. His influence upon those in his *familia* is apparent. His successor, bishop Swinfield, for example, continued to resist monarchic oppression. In 1313 he refused what he considered an unreasonable tax by Edward II.[31] No mention is, however, made of Thomas Cantilupe in the chronicle. His representation at Amiens, and his Chancellorship of England remain unrelated. Reference is made to Walter Cantilupe (bishop of Worcester 1236-66) who was a friend of de Montfort, and also the uncle of Thomas. This bishop's fervent support of reform was such that he is said to have died broken-hearted after the death of the baronial leader.[32] Robert's interest in this ecclesiastic focuses particularly upon his attempts to arbitrate between the warring factions (11,262; 11,530) and his absolution of de Montfort's troops before the Evesham battle (11,688). Walter Cantilupe is thus presented as a key churchman during the time of crisis. He later became the subject of veneration, but his claims to sanctification were rejected, and he never became officially canonised. There was, however, an inquiry into the sanctification of his nephew, Thomas. Thomas' role in the reform movement had been forgiven by the king. Robert may have considered that to put a stress in his chronicle upon Thomas' involvement in the rebellion would have been detrimental to the opinions formed at the canonisation inquiry.

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[31] Peter Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crisis* (London: Fontana, 1988) 83.

[32] J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 81.

Contact with this ecclesiastical saint who played an active role in the running of the kingdom, may account for Robert's interest in advocating English saints and ecclesiastical advisers for the monarch. The two are often synonymous in the chronicle. That Robert does not refer to Thomas in the text may indicate that the chronicle was written before his official canonisation in 1320 (the canonisation inquiry took place in 1307). It would be unlike Robert not to have used Cantilupe's holy status to support his argument. Such a proposition would be compatible with the presumed date of composition for the chronicle of around 1300. It would also align the text within the reign of King Edward I, where internal evidence, as I will demonstrate in a later chapter, locates it.

A provenance in the West Midlands, if not Hereford specifically, is given further credence by the author's attitude towards the Welsh. This will be discussed in detail in chapter one, but it should be noted that Robert's contemporary perception of the Welsh as cowards for deserting de Montfort's army at Evesham (11,758-59) may reflect the borderland status of the chronicle. The often vitriolic descriptions of the Welsh and their beliefs suggest that the chronicle was the work of someone whose contact with these people had produced a contempt, not perhaps untinged with fear. A geographical knowledge of the border region is also indicated in the text by the independently made reference to Offa's Dyke (5573-75). If the chronicler, Robert, were indeed the rector of Willersley and prebendary of Huntington (Herefords.), then he would have travelled to within a few miles of the Dyke.

If the text is given a Hereford provenance, an explanation is provided for an unresolved element within it. I refer to the inclusion of the only Anglo-Norman statement in the chronicle. This is attributed to the Savoyard bishop of Hereford (1240-1268), Peter d'Aigueblanche, at the time of his removal from his post by the baronial rebels in 1263.

Upon being dragged from before the altar by Sir Thomas Turberville, the bishop exclaims:

> Par crist he sede sir tomas . tu es maveis.
> Meint ben te ay fet .
> (11,119-20)
> ("By Christ," he said, "Sir Thomas, you are evil. Many a good thing have I done for you.")[33]

The passage appears unextraordinary. What isolates it from the rest of the text is firstly, the fact that it was thought worthy of inclusion, and secondly, that it is reported in Anglo-Norman rather than English. Many of the other political figures in the chronicle who are given direct speech would have spoken Anglo-Norman also, but this is not signalled. Any claims that this linguistic diversion was to serve the purpose of identifying d'Aigueblanche as a foreigner are unconvincing. There are other aliens identified in the chronicle to whom Robert could have applied the same technique: Queen Eleanor's relatives, for example. Due to the wide-spread use of Anglo-Norman in both ecclesiastical and court circles, the application of this tongue to the bishop would not have unequivocally classified him as an alien. Such an interpretation would also be at odds with Robert's recounting of the bishop's deposition. He adopts the conventional ecclesiastical position of the time in implicitly denouncing those who thus defile the church.[34] Those who assist in the bishop's removal are termed 'ssrewen' (11,117). It is again to a Hereford provenance that I would turn to explain the anomaly of this Anglo-Norman speech. If the chronicler were based at Hereford, he would have had access to eye-witness accounts of this event. It is a plausible scenario, I would argue, that Robert recounts the remembered words of the bishop (however much modified by hearsay). The words are in Anglo-Norman because that is the language in which they were spoken. It is for this reason also that they convey little information either to

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[33] My translation. I would like to thank Stephen Minta for his assistance.

[34] Maddicott, *de Montfort* 303-4.

round-out the character of Peter d'Aigueblanche, or to add drama to the scene.

I intend to extend the identification of the chronicler, Robert, with the canon lawyer throughout the course of this thesis. Research upon the chronicle to date has not advanced this hypothesis. Indeed, little work has been accomplished with regard to the text as a whole. In this it suffers by comparison with Layamon's *Brut*, for example. It is only in recent years that progress has been made on the text. Before this, negligible research was undertaken after its first mention in John Stow's *Summaries of English Chronicles* in 1570. Thomas Hearne produced the first edition of the first recension in 1724,[35] and expressed an admiration for the chronicle never since repeated. Hearne's approach to the text centres particularly upon the identification of its author, although he does address issues of style and composition. This is generated by a consciousness of the opposition to these by his contemporaries. Whilst Hearne's responses do little to add to an understanding of the text, the issues he raises are pertinent to a study of the chronicle and its reception today. The neglect of the chronicle because of its poetic medium is one of these. Often perceived as doggerel, the text's verse form has almost certainly contributed to its general disregard as a literary work. Hearne's proposition that '[Robert] (and not Chaucer ...) is the Ennius of the English nation'[36] is perhaps over-enthusiastic, but the principle that Robert's poetry should be re-examined with a critical eye is fundamental to a re-evaluation of the text. Robert's use of sources is another aspect of the chronicle which Hearne tackles. He opposes protests against the use of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the text by advising a comparison of the two. This, he claims, will lead the reader to:

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[35] Hearne uses the following manuscripts: London British Library MS. Harley 201, supplemented by London British Library MS. Cotton Caligula A. XI.

[36] Hearne, *Chronicle* l.

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> Soon perceive, what a faithfull Historian Robert was, when he took care to be very exact in what he extracted from [Geoffrey of Monmouth].[37]

What Hearne addresses here is the discerning use which Robert makes of his sources. This is a matter central to any valid interpretation of the text, as it identifies the chronicler as an independent and intelligent reviewer of his country's past, and of his own age, rather than a slavish copier.

It was not until the late nineteenth century that the next major contribution to the study of the chronicle was made. This was Wright's edition of 1887. For this, the oldest and most complete manuscript of the first recension was used (London, British Library MS. Cotton Caligula A. XI), variant readings being footnoted. Alterations and insertions from the second recension were appended, together with the second-recension ending. In his introductory material, Wright provides an overview of the chronicle and its author, considering earlier studies and addressing the issues of multiple authorship, date and method of composition, the identity of Robert and his connection with Gloucester. He also gives a framework of sources employed by the chronicler. With all but the last of these matters, Wright reaches an impasse. Regarding the method of composition, he is led to comment that 'I am unable to frame even a plausible theory of the manner in which the chronicle has been compiled'.[38] His overall opinion of the work, confirming the prejudices of which Hearne wrote, is that:

> As literature it is as worthless as twelve thousand lines of verse without one spark of poetry can be.[39]

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[37] Hearne, *Chronicle* viii.

[38] Wright, *Chronicle* xxxix.

[39] *ibid* xl.

For Wright, the original value of the chronicle lay only in its contemporary account of the Barons' Wars.[40] It may also, he claimed, be useful for students of earlier forms of English.[41]

The early works upon the chronicle are descriptive rather than analytical. Into the first of these categories fits the work of William Ellmer. His two articles (published in 1888 and based upon Hearne's text) consider the sources for different sections of the chronicle.[42] He covers his ground extensively, but offers no analysis of the material he gathers. Like Wright, he does not rate Robert's poetry very highly: 'mann kann es nicht unternehmen wollen, die poesie Robert's zu verteidigen oder zu rechtfertigen'; 'der reim erscheint nur als ganz äusserliches beiwerk'.[43]

The next critique on the chronicle, Beatrice Brown's article comparing the chronicle and the SEL *Life of St. Kenelm*, followed these earlier works in focusing upon Robert's source material.[44] It was, indeed, prompted by prior claims about the origins of the geographical introduction, its relationship to Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* and, more particularly, to the SEL *Life of St. Kenelm*. Brown's aim was to ascertain which of the two thirteenth-century texts was earlier; that is, which author borrowed from which. After close textual comparisons, she concluded that *Kenelm* (and the SEL as a whole) was the source text.[45]

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[40] *ibid* xxxix-xl.

[41] *ibid* xl.

[42] W. Ellmer, "Über die Quellen der Reimchronik Roberts von Gloucester," *Anglia* 10 (1888): 1 - 37, 291-322.

[43] *ibid* 1.

[44] Beatrice D. Brown, "Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle and the Life of St. Kenelm," *Modern Language Notes* 41 (1926): 13 - 23.

[45] *ibid* 23.

Despite these forays into the chronicle's sources, no comprehensive research was conducted on the chronicle after Wright until Anne Hudson's doctoral thesis of 1964. Entitled *An Edition of Part of the Chronicle Attributed to Robert of Gloucester with a Study of the Original Language of the Poem*, Hudson's work set out primarily to deal with the problems of textual transmission and to re-examine the traditional connection of the text with Gloucester by linguistic methods.[46] Her conclusions as to the origin of the chronicle were that:

> Gloucestershire seems the most suitable area, though any rigid definition of the text's localization within the limits of the modern county is to be avoided.[47]

In her article resulting from this thesis, Hudson examines scribal method in the manuscripts of the chronicle, emphasising textual differences created by the role of the intelligently editing scribe.[48]

Hudson's is the last in-depth study of Robert of Gloucester's chronicle. It is given passing mention in the background texts on the literature of the period,[49] and modern historians use it as a unique source commenting upon the Barons' Wars 1258-1265.[50] Sociolinguists sometimes reference it as a source demonstrating the relative statuses of English and Anglo-

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[46] See note 3 for bibliographical details.

[47] *ibid* 306.

[48] Anne M. Hudson, "Tradition and Innovation in some Middle English Manuscripts," *The Review of English Studies*, NS 17 (1966): 359-72.

[49] W. P. Ker, *Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969); R. Morris and W. W. Skeat, *Specimens of Early English II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898); Elizabeth Salter, *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Concepts and Readings* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* (London: Macmillan, 1914).

[50] See, for example, Maddicott, *de Montfort* 341-2; Gransden, *Historical Writings* 437.

Norman in the late thirteenth century.[51] Such brief acknowledgements have done little to advance the study of the text. More recently, however, the chronicle has been productively utilised in investigations which refreshingly treat it as a serious historical document whose value lies in its whole, and not just in its narrative of the late thirteenth century. I have already noted Gransden's synopsis of the chronicle in her study of historical works to 1307. Lesley Johnson also used the chronicle as comparative material in a discarded appendix from her doctoral thesis.[52] Choosing as her main texts Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Layamon's *Brut* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Johnson focuses, in her thesis, upon 'the shaping and interpretation of British and Arthurian history ... in particular, the way in which these texts represent the relationship between the present and the past'.[53] Her work upon Robert therefore necessarily concentrates upon his narrative of British history, especially his acquisition of material from Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the second-recension author's integration of passages from Layamon's *Brut*. These integrated passages, she points out, are of a functional nature, serving to 'remedy significant omissions in an already-abbreviated version of British history' as created by the author of the first section (to 1135).[54] She returns to this matter of functionality again, with regard to the whole work, when she concludes that the author's concern is:

> To present a clear vision of events and not to dwell, or even comment on, points of historiographical tension and difficulty.[55]

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[51] M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1961) 421.

[52] Lesley Anne Johnson, *Commemorating the Past: A Critical Study of the Shaping of British and Arthurian History in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae, Wace's Roman de Brut and the Alliterative Morte Arthure*. Diss. London, 1990.

[53] *ibid* 1.

[54] Johnson, *Discarded Appendix from Commemorating the Past* 14.

[55] *ibid* 4.

Such tensions, she deduces, arise from Robert's conflation of various sources. His summary of the foundation of the seven Saxon kingdoms, she proposes as an example, retains discrepancies caused by the conflation of material from both Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth.[56] From his interest in drawing general lessons from his text, Johnson suggests that Robert's intent was to make 'good sense' of his history, both in proffering a 'clear vision of events' and in moralising to his contemporary society.[57]

More recent analyses of the chronicle have been undertaken by Thorlac Turville-Petre. In both an article and a later book, Turville-Petre includes Robert's text in his discussion of the exploration of the concept of the nation in early fourteenth-century writings.[58] In both works, his interest lies in the incorporation of the English language into concepts of national culture,[59] which he identifies occurring in a number of texts of the period: the *Short English Metrical Chronicle*, Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle and Robert Manning's Chronicle, for example. In his article, Turville-Petre registers the significance of the fact that the early works which first make this connection are histories. This he attributes to the need for shared memories in the shaping of a community.[60] His argument in this paper is that there is a conflict between the imaginative construction of 'nation' in early fourteenth-century writings and the reality of its existence. This he demonstrates by reference to inconsistencies in the authors' presentation of English national ideals. In Robert's chronicle, for example,

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[56] *ibid* 2.

[57] *ibid* 5.

[58] Thorlac Turville-Petre, " The 'Nation' in English Writings of the Early Fourteenth Century," *England in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Watkins, 1993): 128-139; Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

[59] Turville-Petre, " The 'Nation'" 131; Turville-Petre, *England* 10.

[60] Turville-Petre, "The 'Nation'" 132.

he explores a point of tension which arises from Robert's desire to emphasise a continuous line of descent for the English people from the Anglo-Saxons. As a result of Robert's preoccupation, he frequently refers to the Saxon tongue as 'engliss', conveniently forgetting 'that Anglo-Saxon would have been utterly incomprehensible by the fourteenth century'.[61]

The ideas expressed in this article are developed further in Turville-Petre's recent book *England the Nation*. His premise here is that there are three criteria for a definition of Englishness in early fourteenth-century writings: territory, race and language. It is the last of these, in particular, that he explores. His contribution to the study of Robert's chronicle lies especially in his acknowledgement of its author as a competent medieval historian. This fact has not been treated by previous scholars. In a comparison with Robert Manning, Turville-Petre upholds Robert of Gloucester as the more professional historian.[62] There, however, his admiration for Robert of Gloucester's skill ends. He considers him 'a less engaging writer than Manning', speaks of his 'metrical and stylistic monotony' and determines that there is no sense of a narrative *persona* in the chronicle.[63]

In this thesis, I intend to remedy some of the deficiencies which have occurred in previous studies on Robert of Gloucester's chronicle. In particular, I intend to re-evaluate this work as a literary text, emphasising the author's subtle application of literary technique; that is, the way in he most fully exploits both his material and medium. My approach to the text stems, essentially, from an understanding of its status as a chronicle of its own age. The chronicle occupies a unique position in the chronicling tradition because it is the first up-

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[61] *ibid* 137.

[62] Turville-Petre, *England* 76, 79.

[63] *ibid* 79.

dated history compiled in the English vernacular after the termination of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in 1154.

These facts being taken into consideration, I intend to evaluate Robert's retrospect upon the Anglo-Saxon period, to ascertain how his representation of that era is manipulated to stand as a golden age from which his own society has fallen. A study of national identity, as developed in the text, will necessarily emanate from this analysis. My argument is that Robert reinforces English national identity by his promotion of the Anglo-Saxon era. Robert's motivation for this stance is not, I will argue, nostalgia, but rather a challenge to perceived foreign oppression in late thirteenth-century England. Anti-alien feelings were prevalent in that period, prompted particularly by King Henry III's favouring of foreign kinsmen. Robert's chronicle has a hidden agenda. This is primarily concerned with monarchical reform through the re-establishment of pre-Conquest, English, customs and laws. How far Robert is really indebted to such pre-Conquest traditions is another aspect of the chronicle which I will discuss. As I have already indicated, through the pursuit of these objectives I hope to contribute to the identification, location and milieu of Robert of Gloucester.

In my first chapter, I explore Robert's concern with England, and his promotion of 'Englishness'. In order to fully evaluate Robert's presentation of a community of England, I assess, and contribute to, the current debate upon the concept of the 'nation' in the Middle Ages. Definitions of terms such as 'nation' and 'nationhood' are considered, to provide a framework for the discussion of the 'national' distinctions which Robert makes. To appraise Robert's presentation of land, people and the language of England (all of which contribute to his construction of Englishness) I perform a close textual analysis of the terms he employs

for them. Ethnic and geographical boundaries which he intends by his use of the words 'engliss' and 'engelond', for example, are assessed. How they are in part defined in contradistinction to other 'nationalities' and 'nations' is also considered.

As a primary aspect of Robert's construction of an English community, I examine his motivations for the use of the English vernacular in the chronicle. Sociolinguistic studies into language as identity are utilised here, and the proposal made that Robert makes conscious links with Anglo-Saxon traditions in choosing an English medium. The verse format of Robert's text is studied alongside verse near-contemporary with the chronicle's composition. Comparisons are also made to Anglo-Saxon poetry. Robert's long-line form, implementing a caesura, has similarities with the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line. Possible influences of that earlier tradition of poetry, together with the effects of Anglo-Norman end-rhyme, are assessed by textual comparison.

Robert's promotion of Englishness having been established, chapter two addresses how this affects the historical priorities which are made in the chronicle. This study focuses upon how Robert's sources - and therefore the received image of the past - are controlled in order to project a continuity from the Anglo-Saxon era to his contemporary age. In order to appreciate the selections which Robert makes, I address his presentation of three key eras in the country's past: the British period, the Anglo-Saxon era and the Norman Conquest. These historical ages are chosen so that Robert's treatment of the conflicting British and English pasts may be analysed. The stance which he adopts towards the termination of the Anglo-Saxon era in the Norman Conquest is also considered.

In the context of Robert's interest in 'Englishness', the role of the English (primarily Anglo-

Saxon) saints in the chronicle is addressed. The chronicler demonstrates a bias towards saints of the Anglo-Saxon age. The reasoning behind the selection of saints is considered here, as well as their relevance in the chronicle to the past and present of the country of England that Robert constructs.

Chapter three, like the previous chapter, addresses the historical priorities made by the chronicler. The stress here, however, is upon why Robert places these emphases and also how, in a text-specific manner. Close textual analysis appraises the potential audience for the text, in order to contribute to an understanding of why this nationalistic, political, representation of Englishness was composed. The author's positioning of himself (or of a narratorial figure) in relation to the textual audience is also considered as a related criterion. Indications made within the text about its function as perceived by its author are analysed to aid this debate.

In this chapter there is a particular focus upon Robert's literary techniques. The way in which he conveys his polemic to his audience not only provides clues as to the nature of the text's ultimate consumers, but also highlights the literary merits of the text. Such a scrutiny of Robert's literary mannerism also helps to provide an identity for him. A 'stylistic signature' is thus established.

For a full understanding of the milieu to which the chronicle belongs, the text needs to be understood within an historical context. Accordingly, chapter four provides an historical setting for the text. Working from the premise that Robert, in his writing, attempts to provide a remedy for the ills which he perceives in his contemporary society, I proffer potential backgrounds for the text. Taken into consideration here, necessarily, are the dates

which previous scholars have applied to the chronicle. The political events of Henry III's reign are then presented in order to demonstrate how the political anxieties of this period parallel those expressed by Robert. There is no doubt that the issues raised during Henry's reign influenced the chronicler, but, as I will illustrate, many of the issues which arose during the reign of Edward I are also similar to those dating from Henry's kingship, and may provide a more immediate context for the chronicle.

As my main consideration in this thesis is with the first recension, I finally turn my attention to the second. Here I examine the different agendas of the two versions of the text, and propose a later date of composition for the shorter recension.

In conclusion, I present my arguments, stressing the literary importance of the chronicle and providing new suggestions for the provenance of the text, the identity of its author and the influences which direct its polemic.

Chapter One

'Engelond his a wel god londe . ich wene ech londe best.'

Robert of Gloucester defines the country which is to be the subject of his chronicle in his

opening line, when he writes: 'Engelond his a wel god londe . ich wene ech londe best.'(1).

But it is not England alone which emerges as one of his preoccupations throughout the text.

As the chronicle develops, it becomes apparent that the abstract quality of 'Englishness' is

something which the chronicler assumes to exist, and which he promotes throughout his

narrative. An exploration of this concept is fundamental to an understanding of the

chronicle's didacticism. In order, therefore, to acquire a perspective upon Robert's

interpretation of 'Englishness', I will examine the way in which the chronicler presents the

country of England, its language and inhabitants. These are elements which contribute

towards the production of this concept. I will argue that Robert actively advances the

concept of 'Englishness' as a coherent and distinct attribute of the community which he

carefully constructs. So that the nature of this attribute - as perceived by the author - may

be ascertained, I will first examine the criteria which the chronicler applies to England and

its inhabitants; that is, consider what terms he employs to define these communities and their

locations. I will then analyse what is understood by these terms. The geographical limitations

which are designated to the country of England will therefore be noted, as well as the nature

of the people who inhabit it. By the last of these enquiries, I intend to discover whether

ethnic considerations are paramount in Robert's descriptions, or if other elements play a role

in his understanding of the community of England. May Englishness be acquired, for

example, by means other than birth in the country? Clarification of the terms England and English will ensue from an analysis of the juxtaposition which the chronicler creates with those lands and peoples which are understood to border England. Particular attention will be given to the language the chronicler implements in his descriptions, to assess how he strives linguistically to signal membership of any one community.

In discussing this aspect of Robert's chronicle, I will necessarily be contributing to the contemporary debate upon the 'nation' in the Middle Ages. Specific attention will be given to the variety of definitions of the terms nation and nationhood, for example, and to the claims by nation theorists that such concepts could not have existed in the medieval period. These latter claims will be analysed in the context of recent discussions which have sought to justify the study of national identity in the Middle Ages. Robert's position in this debate is important. Care must be taken to avoid imposing twentieth-century concepts and terminology onto the chronicle's narrative, but the consideration of Robert's treatment of the concepts of England and Englishness within such a context will provide a valuable frame of reference against which to uniformly measure his stance.

When addressing Robert's interest in defining, and advertising, 'Englishness', an important question I will ask is why he composed his historical narrative in the English vernacular. Answers to this enquiry will be sought in sociolinguistic research in the area of language as identity; an assessment of other post-Conquest works in the same tongue will also contribute to this study. The possibility that, by his use of English, Roberts makes a deliberate link with the Anglo-Saxon era will be evaluated. Not only will this discussion assess whether his language choice creates a sense of historical continuity, but it will also consider whether it contributes to the revivifying of ideals of community, monarchy and custom - polemically

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perceived as organisational concepts in the process of creating an identity - understood as having their origins there. Robert's use of language in these respects will necessarily have to be addressed within the context of the other languages current in the country, their traditional usages and the relevant signalling connected with their employment.

The author's language choice having been considered, his use of verse will next be assessed. Comparisons will be made with late *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* verse and contemporary verse, in French and English, in order to locate materials which may have influenced Robert's medium. Particular attention will be given to Robert's half-line form. In view of its similarity to the Anglo-Saxon poetic half-line format - the exploitation of which is intended to maximise audience manipulation - the chronicle's poetry will be analysed to ascertain if it functions in the manner of Anglo-Saxon verse, and whether it does so specifically to signal its claim to represent latter-day continuity from an admired past. Does it assert, in this case in the domain of language and rhetorical convention, a deliberate alignment with ancient Englishness and a dissociation from the contemporarily prevailing Latin and Norman cultural hegemony?

i. Robert's Definition of England

Robert's opening statement about the superlative nature of the country of England proves, on further reading of the chronicle, to be more than just a passing declaration of interest: England emerges from a reading of the work as the central protagonist. In thus defining his preoccupation, Robert immediately sets himself apart from preceding chroniclers, many of whom he integrates as source material, who speak of Britain. Even Bede, who calls his work

Historia Gentis Anglorum Ecclesiastica, and who frequently calls the people of the country in which he lives 'English',[64] speaks of *Britannia*. The lack of a politically coherent or geographically defined territory that could be called England in the early pre-Conquest period gave rise to the use of the term *Britannia* in naming the homeland of the English people. This is demonstrated in Eddius Stephanus' *Life of Wilfrid* when, in telling how Wilfrid was spared execution at Lyons, Eddius explains that it was because he was identified as *'transmarinus de Anglorum gente ex Britannia'*.[65] So the criteria of identity are here considered to be ethnic and geographical. It is noteworthy that the inhabitants of the country are being described as English even at this early date. Satisfactory reasons for the predominance of this term over the alternative 'Saxon' for those people occupying what is England today, have not yet been provided. A sense of common 'Englishness' was certainly developed precociously early,[66] but this feeling of communal identity may have arisen from the spiritual ideals brought to the country with the mission of Gregory the Great in 597 rather than from political realities.[67] A writer such as Bede, constructing a history of a Christian community, may have chosen to portray a coherent, English, people in order to reinforce his ideas of Christian unity. The idea of a *gens anglorum* was thus in place as an organising criterion long before a territorial and political reality could be aligned with it. With the exploration of common - Christian - origins, however, the foundations were laid for the consolidation of land, people and language in the later Anglo-Saxon period (late ninth - eleventh century). Evidence would suggest that the ninth-century king of Wessex,

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[64] P. Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*," *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 121.

[65] *ibid* 122.

[66]Wormald, "Bede, the *Bretwaldas*," 120.

[67] *ibid* 124 - 125. Gregory the Great's 'vision of a single "ecclesia" [was] for a single *"gens anglorum"*'; the idea of the Anglo-Saxons as such a 'single people before God' was a view promulgated by Canterbury.

Alfred, was conscious of, and was a main contributor to, this later development of an 'Englishness'. In his translation programme, he set up and established what was to remain a standardised written form of Anglo-Saxon until after the Norman Conquest. By this promotion of the vernacular tongue, Alfred stressed a common past, and contemporary aims, of the people of his kingdom. The compilation, and circulation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (whether or not this was a direct innovation of Alfred), reinforced, in its presentation of the country's fortunes in the vernacular, the idea of a contemporary united kingdom. Other historical works translated into Anglo-Saxon in the same period (Orosius' *History Against the Pagans*; Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*) stress a consciousness of a Christian cultural continuity and the role of the English people within it. Such a linguistic advancement was unique to England at a time when the histories of other countries were being composed in Latin.[68] For a thirteenth-century writer like Robert of Gloucester then, an established pre-Conquest idea of Englishness was available to be restored. That the restoration of a previously conceived past (whether British or English) took precedence over the creation of a new identity in the post-Conquest period probably rests upon a desire to legitimate, in the first instance, the position of the new, Norman-derived elite. By the late thirteenth-century, however, other forces were instrumental in this procedure, as I shall discuss further below.

In post-Conquest historical writings, the initial focus is almost invariably placed upon a country identified as Britain. An England does hold a place in these narratives, though alongside the competing terms '*Britannia*', '*Saxones*' and phrases such as '*rex anglorum*' ('king of the English', not of England). Equivalents to these terms do occur in Robert of Gloucester's chronicle. He speaks of the naming of the land of 'Brutaine' (505), of the

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[68] Alfred P. Smyth, *King Alfred the Great*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 515.

British people (506) and of the deeds of the Saxons (2457), but they are retained in their historically designated places by Robert. Any inconsistencies in terminology fall on the side of England rather than of Britain. Thus, after the arrival of Brutus, the kings are designated 'of England', not 'of Britain' or even 'of the British people'. England is indeed the dominant term in Robert's discussion of the country's fortunes at this point. When Brutus sails to the country, it is England at which he arrives, and he thus becomes 'þe verste man/ þat louerd was in engelond.' (214-5) even though later kings, such as Cassibel, are called 'king of bruteine' (1070). For a time, the chronicle therefore propounds the inverse of that which is the topic of Bede's *Historia*: the British in England. This predominance given to the land as England at this stage of the narrative may be seen as part of Robert's polemical technique. The renaming of a land after its conquest by another peoples is perceived by Leckie to be an important indicator of the passage of dominion, of the displacement of one race by another. Geoffrey of Monmouth, he demonstrates, thus 'attaches considerable importance to the renaming of Albion' (to Loegria), but does not emphasise the renaming of Loegria to England.[69] This constitutes part of his didactic intent in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. He teaches of the supremacy of the Britons, extending their hegemony into an era preserved in conventional histories for the rise of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy. In Geoffrey's narrative, the attainment of power in the land by the Anglo-Saxons is a historical fact which is delayed for as long as possible. Henry of Huntingdon also recognised the political importance attached to the renaming of the land and thus - having no British axe to grind - succinctly describes the country as one '*cui quondam nomen Albion fuit, postea vero Brittannia, nunc autem Anglia*'.[70] Considered within this context, Robert's choice of

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[69] R. William Leckie, Jr., *The Passage of Dominion: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Periodization of Insular History in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1981) 70.

[70] *ibid*

the name England to describe the land in its early phase, before its habitation by the Britons, represents a significant polemical standpoint. The chronicler relies heavily elsewhere in his work upon Geoffrey's *Historia* and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*. He therefore certainly had access to the traditionally perceived nomenclature 'Albion' for the country before it became Britain, yet he chooses not to implement it. Employing the name of England instead as the first appellation of the country, he scores his first point against popular British-dominated views of the past. He intrudes a former claim to the country by the English peoples, so denying the primary right of settlement to the British (Welsh). As an English 'coloniser', he thus rewrites history to strengthen the right of his people to the land. The British, by this interpretation, are merely temporary usurpers of an English homeland.

In other post-Conquest historical writings which recount events after the decline of the British, England is a term which holds currency only from the reigns of Alfred or Edward the Elder (c.900).[71] Before these eras, which they designate as a time of English hegemony, the use of the term *Britannia* appears to refer to the island of Britain which is considered to contain the subdivisions of England, Wales and Scotland. This may be confirmed by the measurements of the land which, following Gildas and Bede, are invariably given as eight hundred miles in length, and two hundred miles in width. Robert, too, applies this criteria, but to the country which he defines as England:

> Fram souþe to norþ he is long . eiʒte hondred mile.
> & tuo hondred mile brod . fram est to west to wende.
> (6-7)

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[71] In "Florence" of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis* Alfred is termed '*Angul-Saxonum Rex*', whilst his son, Edward the Elder, is rather '*Rex Anglorum*'. *Florentii Wigorniensis Monachi Chronicon ex Chronicis*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, 2 vols. (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1848) I, 116 and 130.

He is not alone in this description. The author of the *South English Legendary's Life of St. Kenelm* applies the same criteria in his geographical description of the country:

> Aboute ei3te hondred mile . engelond long is.
> Fram þe souþ into þe norþ . and to hondred brod iwis.
> Fram þe est into þe west .
> (11-13)[72]

The compact, clear and sophisticated nature of Robert's verse may be noted here in comparison to that of the SEL. Both passages contain the same information, but the chronicler's control of his medium, the manner in which he neatly condenses the SEL data, is impressive in its assurance. B.D. Brown, analysing the relationship between these two excerpts, argues for the earlier composition of Kenelm. This would be confirmed by the syntactical alterations made by the chronicler. It is apparent, nevertheless, that Robert's comprehension of the size of the country he defines as England is inaccurate. The statistics which he incorporates (whether borrowed directly from the Latin source identified for this passage - Henry of Huntingdon - or from the SEL) are those used to designate the extent of Britain in the Latin texts. This is not to say, however, that he perceives England to be co-terminous with Britain; indeed, a territorial study of England as a separate country did not exist at the date of the chronicle's composition, and thus the author would not have had access to figures for the land of that name. It may then be that he chooses to resort to the measurements traditionally reserved for the wider entity of Britain by default. I would argue, however, that a polemical intent underlies this appropriation of the statistics for Britain. In so doing, Robert projects an ideal situation of English supremacy over the whole of mainland Britain. That this is the chronicler's design may be signalled by the fact that he demonstrates elsewhere in the text that he has a coherent knowledge of the geographical and

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[72] SEL references are taken from, *The South English Legendary*, eds. Charlotte d'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956).

cultural differences between England, Scotland and Wales, as I will discuss further below. Robert's perception of England, it may then be asserted, is as a geographical entity remote from Britain. His use of the term does not generally encapsulate the rest of the British Isles.

ii. The 'Nation': Theories and Definitions

Throughout the chronicle, Robert is quite scrupulous in giving explanations for the terminology he uses. This is a virtue often missing in his sources. "Florence" of Worcester, for example, in his chronicle entry for 901 AD calls King Alfred '*Angul-Saxonum rex*'; in that of 906-911 AD he speaks of the '*lingua Anglorum*' and '*Saxonic[us]*' interchangeably, and from that of 919 AD onwards, of the '*Angl[i]*'. This confusion of expressions arises from the lack of a coherent country, people or language which could justifiably, and incontrovertibly, be called England or English in that period. As importantly, however, is that fact that "Florence" makes no attempt to impose any order upon his narrative. Robert, in comparison, after using the terms 'Saxon' and 'Engliss' side by side for a time,[73] not only clarifies the fact of the eventual unity of these peoples (5120) - if not why or how - but also gives notice of the renaming of Britain to England (5144) and of the British to the Welsh (5127). This is not, of course, historically accurate, but it is, however, concise. It also clearly signals a decisive passage of dominion. There is to be no confusion in his narrative. This is perhaps a consequence of the declared purpose which he makes for the text's composition: to inform the 'English' people of his day of their heritage:

> Here we englisse men . mowe yse some.

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[73] The term 'Saxon' is often used by Robert to discuss the Germanic people in a warlike mode, whereas, in the context of religion, the term 'Engliss' takes precedence, cf. note 4 above.

Mid woch riȝte we beþ . to þis lond ycome.
(5138-39)

This statement has a polemical tone to it. It simultaneously defends the stance which the

chronicler is taking towards recorded historical event, and justifies the right of English

hegemony. Robert here states that his is to be an assertive pro-English interpretation of

history, a definition of English credentials for rule in contradistinction to any claimed by any

other ethnic grouping, then (at the period of settlement to which Robert alludes), or now

(in Robert's own day). Such a statement could be seen to display a sense of an English

'national identity': the author recognises a community of interest ('englisse men') and a

location in which that community belongs ('þis lond'). Care must be taken, however, before

attributing that state of knowledge to the chronicler; nation theorists deny the possibility of

a 'nation', and hence of national identity, existing in the medieval period.[74] It is to that

debate that I will now turn in order to establish terms and criteria for my discussion of

Robert's sense of Englishness. A framework distinct from the chronicle will be set up for

reference.

Varying definitions and opinions of what a nation is abound. A nation must have boundaries,

that much is determined, for 'no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind'.[75] Thus,

a nation's existence is decided, in part, by a comparison with other nations. With this

Anderson concurs in his well known, and much-used, definition of a nation:

> It is an imagined political community - and imagined as both *inherently*
> *limited* and sovereign [my italics].[76]

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[74] Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*
(London: Verson, 1995) 41.

[75] *ibid* 7.

[76] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

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The boundaries which limit a 'nation' must be finite, but may be elastic, he elaborates. These

limits are most often conceptual rather than physical. Within these allowed limits, however,

the understanding of what a nation is is diverse. Theories are many, but there is no

consensus about what a nation is. It is notoriously difficult to define and analyse.[77] For the

purposes of this study I will therefore define the elements which I perceive as essential for

a discussion of nation and national identity.

Perhaps the most important aspect of nation debate which holds currency with many

theorists is its 'imagined' quality. As Johnson clarifies, 'imagined' means constructed,

produced, rather than 'not real',[78] and this emphasises the nation's non-tangible existence,

its conceptual quality. 'The members of even a small community,' Anderson asserts, 'will

never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind

of each lives the image of their communion'.[79] Representation is therefore an important

aspect of the development and endurance of a nation. As a non-tangible object, it is by

language that the nation is constructed and transmitted. Representation thus has a mobilising

function. When put into transmittable form, the imagined and created nation may gain

further adherents who thus become a part of that imagining, and continue the nation's

existence by further conceptual construction. Anderson argues that, because the dispersal

of commonly held beliefs had such a mobilising function, the fall of Latin and the advent of

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[77] Cf. James Snead, "European Pedigrees/African Contagions: Nationality, narrative and Communality
in Tutuola, Achebe and Reed," in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 231.
Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 12. Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation* 3. Lesley Johnson, "Imagining Communities:
Medieval and Modern," *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages,* eds. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson
and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: Leeds Texts and Monographs, 1995) 5.

[78] Johnson, "Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern," 6.

[79] Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6 - 7.

print-capitalism were essential for nation-formation. The circulation of cheap, popular, editions of vernacular texts, he claims, led to the activation of the masses. Nationalism could not, therefore, exist in the Middle Ages.[80] This is an opinion which Lesley Johnson quite rightly challenges:

> in his study, as in others, the medieval past is idealised, homogenised, mythicised and made to serve as a "before the Fall" time, as a period of pre-nationalist thinking and imagining, which may conveniently serve as a point of origins for a study which is in other respects committed to nuanced historical specificity and materialist analysis.[81]

Anderson's medieval world view is indeed very limited and simplified, ignoring, amongst other things, vernacular culture,[82] and, it might be added, oral culture.

Robert Colls does, however, acknowledge the growth of national consciousness in the medieval period, but places this 'in the fourteenth century, in the writing and fighting experience of the hundred years' war'.[83] This growth ought rather, I think, to be placed in the thirteenth century. At that time, in England, Latin was beginning to lose its hold as the language of authority, knowledge and education. The vernaculars were gaining in popularity in a variety of media; historical, devotional and educational texts began to be circulated in Anglo-Norman and English. That this rise in vernacular consciousness was linked to a rise in national consciousness may be confirmed by a reading of such texts as Layamon's *Brut* and the chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng. Robert of Gloucester, as has been seen, is engaged in constructing an England which he conceives, 'imagines', as a

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[80] *ibid* 44 - 45.

[81] Johnson, "Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern," 5.

[82] *ibid* 4 - 5.

[83] Robert Colls, "Englishness and the Political Culture," *English, Politics and Culture,* ed. R. Colls and P. Dodd (London: Croom Helm,1986) 29.

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'nation' (in so far as his representation is vernacular, limited and conceptual). His projection

of this assumes the existence of a group of like-minded people who share in his opinions.

They are constructed and positioned as such in the text. 'We englisse men', Robert writes,

at once creating an audience which works to support his narrative by acting as complicit

readers or listeners, and establishing a sense of togetherness, of community, with any real

audience of his work. By a reading of it, these last become participant in the text.

The imagined, limited, community must also, by Anderson's definition, be political. The

importance of a political coherency is an aspect of the definition of a nation which

Hobsbawm also supports.[84] To conceive of a nation necessitates, therefore, a common

adherence to a political norm.

Another essential part of nation formation which theorists other than Anderson assert, is the

importance of the past in its construction. 'A nation ... presupposes a past', Renan writes,[85]

and it must, by necessity, be promoted (or created) as a shared past. A recounted (his)story,

myth or legend plays an important role in giving legitimacy to a (particularly developing)

nation. The nation is given roots in antiquity, thus distinguished forbears are generated, and

contemporary prestige. So many medieval European 'nations' sought their origins in Troy.[86]

In assessing a nation at any point in time, the re-constructed past must therefore necessarily

be studied, for it is both 'determined by and contributes to the community of the present'.[87]

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[84] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 73.

[85] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 19.

[86] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 213.

[87] Johnson, "Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern," 2.

Histories, myths, and so on, primarily serve the present in, and by, which they were created. Part of the way in which they satisfy the needs of the nation is by establishing a sense of historical continuity. Discontinuities are smoothed over to affect the illusion that connection with the 'glorious past' is unbroken, and that it is therefore contributory to the present nation's status. Such continuities are, of course, themselves constructed. Thus another important element in the discussion of nations is brought to the fore; that which Renan describes as 'historical error'.[88]

Historical error underlies the production of forged medieval charters. Charters - such as the forged Westminster charters of the 1140s,[89] which gave ancient authority and right to what was merely the established practice of the coronation taking place at the abbey - sought to give legitimacy to current events by the creation of a (completely fabricated) continuity. The process of forgetting is an integral part of such actions:

> The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things.[90]

The often violent acts which may accompany the invasion of a country is one of the most important things which Renan considers must be forgotten. As long as that occupies the minds of the subjugated people, then unity is not possible. What Renan does not mention is that remembering may be as important as forgetting when a nation is being represented. The selective remembrance of facts is as much a part of 'historical error' as the glossing over of distressing events. The complementary techniques of forgetting and remembering

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[88] Renan 11.

[89] Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, trans. L. G. Wickham-Legg (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937) 39.

[90] *ibid* 11.

are often seen in the same text, thus creating apparent inconsistencies. For example, the fact of the subjugation of a race may, at times, be forgotten to serve the purposes of a represented nation in one context, but remembered at other times to meet a different need.

At the nascent time for a nation, language has an important role to play. The reason for this is that the use of a language demonstrates an affiliation to a particular speech-community, and, by extension, with that community's customs and self-representation. By claiming a language of its own, a nation is able to project an image of unity and coherence. The construction of a nation (or nationalistic statements) in the language which is seen to be affiliated with the nation, is likely to make more impact than that made in another language, because of the inherent link which is made between it, the past and authenticity.[91] Language is 'not only a vehicle for the history of a nationality, but a part of history itself'.[92] Its use in the present thus contributes to the creation of legitimacy and prestige by its connection with the past in which origins are sought. The significance of language lies - in no small measure, though not exclusively - in its symbolic function; it is a vital element, for example, in the operation of 'contrastive self-identification'. This is the term which Fishman applies to:

> The feeling of the members of a nationality that they are united and identified with others who speak the same language, and contrast with and are separated from those who do not.[93]

As Fasold points out, 'the notions of unification and separation go deeper than the simple fact that it is difficult to communicate with people who speak a different language'.[94]

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[91] Ralph Fasold, *The Sociolinguistics of Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984) 3.

[92] *ibid*

[93] *ibid* 3-4.

[94] *ibid* 4.

Language is a part of the conceptual limits which define a nation; it stresses the difference between 'them and us'. Thus Turville-Petre in his article "The 'Nation' in English Writings of the Fourteenth Century", sees language as the clearest form of self-identification for a nation. To define a nation in such terms, he asserts, presents fewer complications than attempting to do so by means of other limiting factors such as territory or race.[95] As Hobsbawm emphasises, however, 'non-literate vernacular languages are always a complex of local variants or dialects intercommunicating with various degrees of ease or difficulty'.[96] This was the situation in fourteenth-century England, for example, where northern English was said to be unintelligible to those in the south of the country. Thus there was no one 'national' language spoken at this time. Hobsbawm does not, however, perceive this as an obstacle to the operation of 'contrastive self-identification'.[97] In the literary milieu of Robert of Gloucester's chronicle, anyway, attention is not drawn to such dialectal discrepancies. This may be a part of Renan's process of forgetting, or of the selective representation of facts.

The role which ethnicity plays in constructions of nationalism is, like that of language, often more of an idealised myth than a factor having any foundation in reality. The adoption of an ethnic claim is another attempt to define 'us' against 'them', of identifying and excluding outsiders. There is, however, rarely any one ethnic group in any nation, 'the population of large territorial nation-states are almost invariably too heterogenous to claim a common ethnicity'.[98] This does not necessarily deter a developing nation from inventing a

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[95] Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The 'Nation' in English Writings of the Fourteenth Century," *England in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Watkins, 1993) 137.

[96] Hobsbawm, *Nations* 52.

[97] *ibid* 53.

[98] *ibid* 63.

homogenous ethnic background. Indeed, the construction of an ideal ethnic unity often results in the conferral of a national identity upon those whose ethnicity is without doubt foreign to that fabricated for the 'nation'. Turville-Petre discusses such a phenomenon as 'civic nationalism', claiming, however, that this was an alien concept in the Middle Ages.[99] In contrast, Hobsbawm's analysis concludes that 'the crucial base of an ethnic group as a form of social organization is cultural rather than biological'.[100] The criteria for belonging, he argues, is often more decisively based upon the adoption of cultural conditions than upon genetic homogeneity.

To recapitulate, then, the definition of nation in which I am interested, and within which Robert's work will be assessed, has the following identifiers: firstly, it is an 'imagined' community; it has geographical, or conceptual-geographical, elastic limits; it is a community with a single political aim; it looks to a (malleable) past in order to legitimate itself; it has (or portrays itself as having) a common language and it may propound ideas of ethnic unity. I intend to show in the course of this thesis that such nations did exist, or were projected as existing, in the late thirteenth century. Care must, however, be taken not to impose a twentieth-century value system onto the Middle Ages. My intentions are not to force Robert to fit into any mould. I hope rather that my definition of what is today identified as a 'nation', may serve as a yard-stick against which to assess Robert's attitudes and concerns. Some attempt will therefore be made to answer Lesley Johnson's query:

> If nations can be identified in the medieval period, is it not possible to trace some movements which seek to mobilise national self-consciousness (i.e.national movements) too and use the rhetoric of national identity to attempt to create the

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[99] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 17.

[100] Hobsbawm, *Nations* 63.

impression of a national body?[101]

Robert does, I would argue, 'attempt to create the impression of a national body'. The cautionary note of this expression needs to be emphasised, as the realities of life in thirteenth-century England will often be seen to contradict the constructions within Robert's historical narrative. Such problems which render inconsistencies in his text, and the strategies he employs to counter them, will be identified as they occur.

iii. Robert and the 'Nation'

I will begin with a study of the terminology of 'nations', 'nationality' and ethnic identity in the chronicle; that is, look at the chronicler's understanding of such terms as 'England', 'English', 'Welsh' and so on. This approach will assess Robert's notion of the limits of the nation he describes. It will also shed some light upon the issue of constructed ethnicity. As I have already shown, Robert's opening geographical measurements of the land he terms 'England' would appear to result from his substitution of that name for the 'Britannia' (and variants) which his sources employ. He does this without correcting the dimensions which those sources apply, either because he has no alternative information or for polemical reasons. Robert does not, however, generally perceive England as being coterminous with Britain, as reflections throughout the text indicate. His England is, for example, bounded by the countries, and peoples, of Wales and Scotland, and is defined, on the whole, by contrast with them.

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[101] Johnson, "Imagining Communities: Medieval and Modern," 14.

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Wales receives most attention as an 'other', as a place which is singled out as being 'not England'. This distinction is made in Robert's opening lines. When listing the chief towns of England - which he does not, like Henry of Huntingdon (amongst others), enumerate - he details those located in modern-day England (37-40) before dismissing the rest in the phrase: '& oþer grete tounes . þat were þo in wales.' (41). The same pattern follows with his description of the shires ('Þes ssiren wiþ oute walis . beþ alle in engelond.' (74)), and bishoprics ('beþ þer in walis . þre wiþ oute mor.' (81)). Despite the fact that these references are to towns and shires which he discusses at their origination in earlier time periods (those of the Britons and Anglo-Saxons respectively), Robert imposes a contemporary geographical setting upon them. Wales did not exist at the time of Brutus, but, in describing locations as they are in his day, Robert both makes his narrative comprehensible to his audience, and emphasises the relevance of these past events to his own society. So he anchors them in reality.[102] This is stressed by Robert's technique (also found in the SEL) of using the word 'ȝut' (still) together with the present tense of whichever verb he employs. In such a way he makes clear the perceived late thirteenth-century dividing line between England and Wales:

> Hor woniinge were . al bi weste weye.
> & no þing in þe est alf . so þat weye ywis.
> ȝut to þis day to delþ . engelond & walis.
> (5573-75)

This separation is recounted as occurring in the reign of Athelstan after his defeat of the Welsh (and Scottish and Northumbrian) kings. The 'weye' of which Robert speaks is Offa's Dyke, and it is brought into the narrative to neatly section off Wales from England, both

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[102] Cf. Klaus P. Jankofsky, "National Characteristics in the Portrayal of English Saints in the *South English Legendary*," *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe,* ed. R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski and T. Szell (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 84.

then and now. The historical cause for a contemporary phenomenon is thus provided. Although the Dyke plays no part in any of Robert's main sources at this point, it would seem that its role in constructing an identity for Wales was a norm in the period in which he was writing:

> Offa's Dyke clearly came to play an important part in shaping the perception of the extent and identity of Wales in the medieval period. In a world without maps and border-posts, it served as a reference point, whether literally or metaphorically, to demarcate England and Wales.[103]

Robert does not provide such a concise geographical division between England and Scotland. Hadrian's wall is mentioned as being built 'bitwene þis lond & scotlond' (2171), and indeed, Robert points out 'þe stede is ȝut ysene' (2185). He does not stress whether it is still the perceived border between the two countries. Scotland's 'otherness' is given expression mostly by the use of the term 'Scotlond' alongside that of England. When Hengist flees in fear at Aurelius' reputation, he crosses the Humber, rebuilding the castles there '& in scotlond al so. vor þulke londes were . / A luþer recet euere . aȝen engelonde.' (2904-5). A picture begins to be formed then of Robert's perception of Scotland. It is not part of England, it may be understood to be separated by Hadrian's wall (although that is not a firm dividing line), and it is north of the area immediately north of the Humber. Robert's description of Scotland has a subjectivity also. The associations which he makes with Scotland are not flattering:

> Scotlond aþ euere ybe . a luþer recet ylome.
> Wanne þer eni worreours . toward þis lond come.
> (2175-76)

The evilness of Scotland is determined in Robert's account by its function of harbouring

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[103] R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 3.

those who intend harm to England (see also lines 2904-5 above). This is narrated as if it is part of Scotland's 'national character'. It is presented as being both contemporaneous with Robert, and stretching back into history as he makes clear: it 'aþ euere ybe' (it has *always* been). Robert, however, gives no indication that he was conscious of Edward I's wars with the Scots. Beyond mentions of the habitation of Scotland, and other material obtained from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, Scotland is given little space in this chronicle.

The place which bounds England at its south-western limit, in the chronicle, is Cornwall. This Robert does not describe as a 'lond', but he clearly perceives it to be different in some way from the country which he speaks of as England. It is at the landing of Brutus that Robert reveals his understanding of the geography of this area:

> Hii come here to engelond . to þe hauene of totteneis.
> To þe on ende of engelond . as in þe west souþ.
> A lute bi norþe cornewaile . as in þe hauene mouþ.
> (475-77)

This is a comment independent of Robert's sources, and reads as another attempt by the chronicler to anchor his text in reality, here by giving an explanatory contemporary geographical description of a place of historical event. It might seem then that, by Robert at least, England was seen to terminate at Cornwall's northern border. This he makes clear was, at least during the reign of Athelstan (924-939 AD), fixed at the Tamar:

> Men of cornwayle he broȝte . to certeyn stude al so.
> Vor biȝonde þe water of tamer . he hom adde alle ybroȝt.
> To wonye þer as in hor owe . & a *þis alf noȝt.*
> Vor hii wonede þer biuore . anon to excestre riȝt.
> [my italics]
> (5577-80)

Robert slips into another contemporary allusion when he speaks of the Cornish being driven

from 'þis alf'. The use of the demonstrative adjective 'this' applies a sense of familiarity to this past occurrence, suggesting that the division then instituted was still in force in the late thirteenth century. This boundary must, however, have been conceptual, as Cornwall lost its independence in the first instance in the ninth century after the battle of Hengistdun (838 AD).[104] That it was under the control of England at the time of Edward I's wars with Scotland is apparent from the repeated (if small) demand put upon Cornwall's shipping by the king.[105]

Together with that of Wales, Robert's perception of Cornwall as 'different' from England seems to be determined by cultural and linguistic, rather than political, criteria. Twice throughout the chronicle the audience is alerted to an affiliation between the Cornish and the Welsh. One notice of this is dictated by Geoffrey's *Historia*. After the acquisition of the country by the Anglo-Saxons, the Britons flee into the land's extremities:

> Þe vewe þat were of hom bileued . as in cornwaile & walis.
> Brutons were namore ycluped . ac waleys iwis.
> After walon þat was hor duc . hii adde verst þe name.
> (5126-28)

As Robert's geographic separation of Wales and Cornwall from England implies, the British ancestry of these peoples renders them apart from the English. Wales, however, had been conquered by Edward I before the writing of the chronicle and so was under English political jurisdiction. That Edward's defeat of the Welsh had occurred by the time of the text is made apparent when Robert first conjoins the British peoples, in connection with the death of King Arthur. Here he writes:

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[104] L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Medieval Cornwall* (London: Methuen, 1955) 48.

[105] *ibid* 83.

    & naþeles þe brutons . & þe cornwalisse of is kunde.
    Weneþ he be aliue ȝut . & abbeþ him in munde.
    Þat he be to comene ȝut . to winne aȝen þis lond.
    & naþeles at glastinbury . his bones suþþe me fond.
    & þere at uore þe heye weued . amydde þe quer ywis.
    As is bones liggeþ . is toumbe wel vair is.
                  (2589-94)

The reference made to the discovery of Arthur's bones applies to the second occasion of

their finding in 1278 when, after his defeat of Llewellyn ap Gruffydd of Wales, Edward I had

the bones raised and translated to a new position in the quire of Glastonbury Abbey.[106]

Robert's use of the present tense ('abbeþ', 'weneþ') places his comment into a

contemporary context. So he illustrates how the Britons (Welsh) and the Cornish were seen

to share one legendary version of their history in his time. The way in which he presents

Wales and Cornwall as distinct from England may then be prompted by an understanding

of the different ancestry and culture of their peoples rather than by the political situation. It

can then be seen how the boundaries of England are discerned in part by Robert as much by

perceived ethnic and cultural differences as geographical location.

When he deals with the Welsh, Robert shows himself conscious of the artificial way in which

ethnic identities are constructed. He notes, for instance, the changes in the way in which the

Welsh viewed themselves as a distinct community. This information is provided near the

opening of the chronicle when he discusses how the Britons were named after Brutus:

    Brutons me clupede alle men . þat were in engelonde.
    As me clupede hom longe suþþe . *vor te nou late ich vnderstonde.*
    [my italics]
                (506-07)

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[106] Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen, 1988) 121.

Robert's declared understanding of this point is of particular interest when it is understood that the Welsh are considered to have abandoned the name 'Britons' at least as late as the end of the twelfth century, and adopted for themselves the term 'Cymru' (Welsh).[107] The implications of this fact for the historical Welsh was considerable. In surrendering the old name of the Britons, 'a term redolent of memories, of glories, of hope', as Davies points out,[108] the Welsh were accepting that their status had been lowered. Together with the realisation that there was a 'growing disjunction between historical mythology and current reality',[109] the alteration of their name resulted, to some extent, in a redefinition of their understanding of themselves in national and international terms. Robert's statement has, then, a basis in Welsh historical fact. In acknowledging the change in the way in which these people are described, he suggests that its occurrence - and the popular knowledge of it - was not far removed from the date at which he was writing. He also accepts the alteration in status (and of historical perception) which it entails. His scepticism at the way in which they cling to the myth of Arthur's return may be attributed to this.

In the wider discussion of British (Welsh) identity by the first-recension author, and the conflict which he perceives existing between it and that of the Anglo-Saxon (English), there are parallels to the text of Layamon's *Brut*. Layamon clarifies the renaming of the peoples and the land following the handing over of the country to the Saxons after the victory of Gormund. He places a different emphasis upon it, however, particularly in the closing lines:

> Bisiden Allemaine . is a lond . Angles ihaten.
> Þer weoren iborne . þa ilke þe weorn icome.

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[107] Davies, *Conquest* 19.

[108] *ibid*

[109] *ibid*

....
Of Englen heo comen . and þer-of heo nomen nomen.
And letten heom cleopien ful iwis . þat folc þat wes Ænglis.
7 þis lond heo cleopeden Ængle-lond . for hit wes al on heore honde.
Seoþþe ærest Bruttes . bæliȝen to þissen londe.
Brutaine hit wes ihaten . of Brutten nom taken.
Þa þat þis folc com . þa þisne nome . him binom.
Heo binomen heore namen . al for Bruttene sceome.
(Layamon: *Brut* 14,668-81)

This passage was introduced to explain how the country of England was named after its new leaders, the Saxons.[110] Similar interpretative remarks are found in Robert's chronicle, but verbal analogies between the two texts are not distinct:

After brut his owe name . he clupede hit brutaine.
Brutons me clupede alle men . þat were in engelonde.
(505-06)
Þat was bruteyne ycluped er . me clupeþ nou engelond.
(5125)
Brutons nere na more ycluped....
....
& ne miȝte neuere eft þis lond keuere . ac libbeþ mid alle ssame.
(5127-29)

The concepts about which both the poets speak, and the confusions which they try to negotiate, are the same. Their approaches are similar, but direct use of Layamon by the first-recension author of Robert of Gloucester's chronicle cannot be detected. That they should both - apparently independently - consider the Britons' loss of name and land to be shameful is of particular note. Their depiction of the Britons as living in disgrace is as much a statement of English supremacy as it is of British subjection. It is an accentuation of the English stance adopted by both authors.

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[110] *Lawman: Brut,* ed. Rosamund Allen (London: Dent, 1993) 463.

iv. Robert and the Normans

My focus to this point has been upon Robert's definitions and understanding of those countries and their inhabitants bordering on to England, but those still within modern-day Britain. Another national group which gains attention by virtue of contact with the English, is the Normans. Robert's comments about these are few, but they do reveal a perceived social and political reality nonetheless. The Normans first warrant mention in the chronicle's introductory passages when a synopsis is given of the different invasions of England. This induces Robert to comment:

> Þe vifþe time ʒwan engelond . þat folc of normandie.
> Þat among vs wonieþ *ʒut* . & ssulleþ euere mo.[My italics]
> (54-55)

Again the use of the present tense and the adverb 'ʒut' is used, this time to portray the Normans as aliens, 'others'. The cultural mixing in thirteenth-century England is constructed as an infiltration by foreigners into the native group 'vs'. The 'vs' is not defined further here, instead an assumption is made about the audience's perceived affiliation with the author. It is notable in this process how the chronicler's use of the word 'ʒut', begins to shape into something approaching a formula. As in the previously mentioned Arthur passage (lines 2589-94), the 'ʒut' is positioned as the last, stressed, syllable in the first hemistich of the line. The reader or listener is prompted to expect its location by the preceding present-tense verb, which normally indicates a move to authorial comment from narrative mode. Alert to such nuances in the author's style, the audience is primed to receive what is often, in the chronicle, a remark heavy with irony, and often subversive comment. These two passages, however, function in subtly different manners. In the Arthurian excerpt, the focus is particularly upon the repetition of the 'ʒut' formula:

    & naþeles þe brutons . & þe cornwalisse of is kunde.
Weneþ he be aliue ʒut . & abbeþ him in munde.
Þat he be to comene ʒut. to winne aʒen þis lond. [My italics.]
                         (2589-91)

There is a note of credulity, mixed with irony, in the two 'ʒut' half-lines, which could be

read as: 'not only do they believe that Arthur's *alive*, but they also think he is going to *come*

back again'. An exclamation mark is aurally apparent. The climax rests, ultimately, upon

the final half-line ('to winne aʒen þis lond'); the anticipation of it is created by the earlier

first half-lines.

In this passage on the 'folc of normandie', the second half-line carries most of the subversive

comment. The singular 'ʒut' formula creates less of a build up for the final, weighted, phrase

than the repetition discussed above, but is in itself a controversial statement. The Normans

are not, as might perhaps be expected, part of 'vs', but are demonstrated to be different. The

phrase at the end of the sequence, '& ssulleþ euere mo', is complex. It could be read as a

conformist, politically correct, acceptance of the co-habitation of those Robert designates

'English' and 'Normans', or it could be mocking such a sentiment: 'they think they are

going to live here for ever more, but not if we have anything to do with it'. The fact that the

chronicler adopts the term Normans for his statement suggests the latter reading. The people

who settled in England soon after the Conquest could not uncategorically be labelled

Norman, far less so those who, in the space of two hundred years, had been assimilated into

the 'native' community. To use this terminology is, however, part of Robert's polemic.

These other people, the Normans, have 'maystrye' of the land, he affirms elsewhere in the

text (5966). With such a term he thus categorises the oppressors of the English. Despite the

fact that these references suggest a lack of acceptance of these one-time invaders, Robert's

attitude towards the Normans throughout the chronicle may, in general, be described as

tolerant. Underlying social comment does however break through:

> So varþ monye of þis heyemen . in chirche me may yse.
> Knely to god as hii wolde . al quic to him fle.
> Ac be hii arise & abbeþ iturnd . fram þe weued hor wombe.
> Wolues dede hii nimeþ vorþ . þat er dude as lombe.
> Hii to draweþ þe sely bonde men . as hii wolde hom hulde ywis.
> Þey me wepe & crie on hom . no mercy þer nis.
>
> (7606-11)

Here Robert does not directly classify those people whose behaviour he reviles as Normans,

but as 'heyemen'. However, the narrative which prompts this reflection is the description

of the piety of William the Conqueror (a Norman). Earlier in the text the chronicler, in an

act of simplifying the social make-up of his society, explains how the high men are of

Norman descent:

> Of þe normans beþ heyemen . þat beþ of engelonde.
> & þe lowemen of saxons . as ich vnderstonde.
>
> (7500-01)[111]

The scene has therefore been set for his statement about the hypocritical actions of the

falsely pious high men, whom the audience are led to associate with the Normans. His

portrayal of this perceived social, and ethnic, grouping is linguistically aligned with those

other oppressors of the English, the Danes. Before briefly narrating the martyrdom of King

Edmund of East Anglia, Robert describes Danish movements into that region of the country:

> So þat atte laste . to estangle aȝen hii come.
> Þere hii barnde & robbede . & þat folc to grounde slowe.
> & as wolves among ssep . reuliche hom to drowe.
>
> (5296-99)

Robert here draws upon conventional representations of aggressive behaviour by

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[111] Cf. also lines 7330-1; 7540-47; 7579-87.

ecclesiastical writers. Ælfric, for example, in his *Passion of St. Edmund* portrays the Viking leader, Ivar, as stalking 'over the land like a wolf' (*'swa swa wolf, on land be stealcode'*).[112] In the chronicle, it is notably oppressors of the English who are thus categorised.

v. The English

Set amidst these often derisive descriptions and comments about other peoples rest the people central to Robert's chronicle: the English. 'The English' - as an abstract identifier - is, for Robert, a flexible concept (likewise, the Welsh and Scottish, it might be presumed), one which changes to meet his needs and intents throughout the chronicle. The 'vs', for example, amongst whom the Normans dwell (54-5) are, I would argue, those whom Robert describes elsewhere as 'we englisse men' (5138). The country which he is concerned to construct is England, and a necessary part of this 'imagining' is its habitation by a race whose credentials emanate from the country's (Anglo-Saxon) past, whose heritage is thus secure: the English. That no such homogeneous peoples existed in this period is apparent. Intermarriage between Normans and English occurred soon after the Conquest;[113] British and Anglo-Saxon interbreeding from the fifth century onwards may also be assumed. The conceptual nature of nationality designation is elaborated by the fact that, during the English war with Scotland in 1296, a password had to be arranged in order to distinguish a Scot

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[112] *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints,* ed. G. I. Needham (Exeter: Clarendon, 1976) 82, lines 34-35. Robert's comment here is independent of the SEL version of the *Life of St. Edmund.*

[113] Henry Kahane and Renée Kahane, "Decline and Survival of Western Prestige Languages," *Language* 55 (1979): 186. R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School,* Early English Text Society (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966) 88. Ian Short, "Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England," *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* 14 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991) 248. M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1307: Foreign Lordship and National Identity* (London: Blackwell, 1989) 56.

from an Englishman.[114]

For Robert, the English are essentially defined by their relationship to other people, and in terms of the country's past. It is to this last of these criteria that he gives most emphasis, allowing it more weight than territorial occupation. For example, the England which Robert constructs is created, geographically, by the boundaries of other 'nations' rather than being expressed in absolute terms. He takes a more positive interest in those people who inhabit the land, in those whose heritage and ancestry lies in the recorded past. In seeking to demonstrate to the 'englisse men' of his day 'mid woch riȝte [hii] beþ . to þis lond ycome' (5139), he anchors legitimacy in the time of the Anglo-Saxons. By his interpretation, there is direct continuity between that era and his own, and he does not shy away from the grim realities of conquest. Thus, after recounting the murder of the British chiefs at Amesbury, by Hengist and his followers, he comments upon the scene:

> Þis were lo vre faderes . of wan we beþ suþþe ycome.
> Þat wiþ such trayson . abbeþ þis lond ynome.
> (2696-97)

Robert's acknowledgement that English supremacy is founded upon perfidy does not challenge his actively pro-English polemic. The Saxons who treacherously betray Vortigern are realised as pagans; their deeds are thus dissociated from the Christian 'vs' of Robert's narrative. His recognition that they are 'vre faderes' may be construed as a kind of pious confession, a way of claiming absolution from the 'sins of the fathers', a measured remorse which purges the conscience and cleans up the credentials for continuing ownership by the English.

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[114] Prestwich, *Edward I* (1988) 470.

This posturing by the chronicler necessitates an involvement in that process which Renan denotes 'historical error'. In order to present the England of the thirteenth century as a legitimate country inhabited, primarily, by people of English descent whose fortunes are reasserting themselves after repression, Robert has to smooth over the realities of the situation. The mixed ancestry of a proportion of the populace is ignored, and the people for whom Robert writes are encouraged to identify themselves with a newly aroused sense of national identity. It is, however, another people who are brought into play in order to ultimately justify English rights to the land. Racial hatred is motivated to strengthen contemporary claims. So, to buttress his statement that the English will discover, by his narrative, their right to the country, he adds:

> Ac þe wrecche welissemen . beþ of þe olde more.
> In woche manere ȝe abbeþ yhurd . hou hii it abbeþ ylore.
> Ac þe feble is euere bineþe . vor hii þat abbeþ miȝte.
> Mid strengþe bringeþ ofte . þat wowe to þe riȝte.
> (5140-44)

In order to undermine any claim the Welsh might have to the land, as the oldest inhabitants, Robert introduces a 'might is right' element into his account. That the same argument would support Norman occupation and supremacy is ignored. Its purpose here is merely to support Robert's claims of the moment, and he is unashamedly patriotic.

vi. Robert and the 'National' Language

A common language for the English is another element of 'nation-formation' in which Robert participates. He provides an Anglo-Saxon past for the English, and a language descended from that past. In so doing, he makes the underlying assumption that language

is directly related to race and nationality. Robert shows the English speech to be that which was spoken by the first Saxons to land on the English shore: Hengist and Horsa. A language barrier between the Britons and Saxons is stressed at this point by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Layamon and Robert, particularly in the 'wassail' scene, where an interpreter is employed to interpret Rowena's greeting to Hengist.[115] Hengist later takes advantage of this barrier to murder the British chiefs at Amesbury. Where Robert differs from his sources here is in an objective comment which he interjects:

> Nou ne couþe þe brutons . non engliss ywys.
> Ac þe saxons speche it was . & þoru hom ycome it is.
> (2671-72)

The illusion is maintained that the 'engliss' of the fifth century is the same as that in which Robert writes. This is given credibility by the feigned archaism of Hengist's speech before the murder. Robert makes Hengist's command to his men ('nimeþ ȝoure sexes') sufficiently dated so that it passes for an older tongue, whilst being modern enough to be coherent to a post-Conquest audience. In this Robert follows his source - Geoffrey of Monmouth - who records this command as 'nimed oure saxes',[116] but, utilising a similar expression in his English (and pro-English) chronicle, Robert authenticates his contemporary project by language. The artificially archaic vernacular becomes a part of his polemic. The fact that the speech of the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century was not the same as the English of the thirteenth, is glossed over, and despite the attempted archaism of this phrase the fact is that it would probably have been incomprehensible to an Anglo-Saxon. That is to say, it is not truly antiquarian knowledge which Robert has, but he assumes a posture which implies that

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[115] Hengist and Vortigern have no trouble communicating, however, when the Saxons first come ashore. Line 2407 onwards.

[116] *La Légende Arthurienne: Études et Documents* III, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Champion, 1969) 184.

he has, and he utilises this situation to promote the authenticity of the descent of the English people and tongue of his day from the Saxons. This is, of course, a grossly oversimplified belief, but one which Robert stands by for his own purposes. He conveys the impression of a common language.

Throughout the chronicle, Robert chooses to portray a linguistic situation in England which falls somewhere between diglossia and bilingualism; that is to say, he presents the idea of two existent speech communities (Norman and English) between which there is some overlap (people who speak both languages). Membership of either of these groups is shown to indicate social status. This is, of course, a *constructed* situation, and must not be confused with the realities of late thirteenth-century England. In that era, for example, Latin was still the primary language of the church, literary writings and administration (although Anglo-Norman was making further inroads into its territory), but of this fact, the chronicler makes no mention. In his polemical linguistic argument it must therefore be assumed that Latin held a neutral position. As the language of the universal Catholic church, Robert may have viewed its co-existence with English as non-threatening to the social position, or 'national' status, of the tongue in which he writes.

That speech and nationality are conjoined in the mind of the chronicler is illustrated particularly when the Conquest of the land by the Normans is narrated. A contentious and political undertone arises as an evaluation is made between speech and social acceptability:

> Þus com lo engelond . in to normandies hond.
> & þe normans ne couþe speke þo . bote hor owe speche.
> & speke french as hii dude atom . & hor children dude also teche.
> So þat heiemen of þis lond . þat of hor blod come.
> Holdeþ alle þulke speche . þat hii of hom nome.
> Vor bote a man conne frenss . me telþ of him lute.

Ac lowe men holdeþ to engliss . & to hor owe speche ʒute.
Ich wene þer ne beþ in al þe world . contreyes none.
Þat ne holdeþ to hor owe speche . bote engelond one.
(7537-45)

Here Robert identifies English - the native language of the land - with the 'lowe' people, and

'frenss' (as he terms Anglo-Norman) with the 'heyemen'. Linguists and historians alike have

utilised this passage as an authority upon the status of English at this juncture in time.[117] Its

reading is, however, more complex, being heavy with irony. Robert makes his

announcement about the statuses of these tongues in the very language which he identifies

as belonging to the 'lowe' people. Sociolinguistic evidence for the wide-spread usage of

English at this time aside, it is apparent from the text alone that if such a highly-educated,

and astute, man as Robert, with such an obvious skill in English composition, was utilising

that language, then it could not have been occupying such a 'lowe' position at the time. This

remark is thus a tool for Robert's self-identification; it is a discreet but emphatic assertion

of the triumph of the underdog. The passage is highly polemical. It serves to pinpoint what

may have been a surviving social division in society based upon linguistic grounds, but also

attempts to rectify that by an appeal to a sense of English identity. Robert sets up a situation

where language is a primary identifier of status and nationality. What he here explores is that

which was earlier defined as 'contrastive self-identification'. Robert works upon the

assumption that his audience is aware that the language in which one communicates

identifies the society to which one belongs. Robert makes this plain when he makes a link

between England and its 'owe speche'(he uses the possessive), English. He thus asks those

who speak that tongue to associate themselves with that country - with its previously

described origins - against (or in spite of) the Norman-usurped present in which he perceives

himself writing. In order to be given an English identity, Robert understands that a common

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[117] Cf. Pope, *From Latin* 421.

language needs to be recognised, and conversely, that membership of that community may be defined, in part at least, by the speaking of that language. Turville-Petre supports the idea that medieval nationality was dependent upon the place of one's birth and could not be altered.[118] The apparent popular support of the Frenchman, Simon de Montfort shows how the realities of this time do not support this theory.[119] Robert's conceptions of national identity, I would argue, are more malleable than this interpretation allows. They move away from concise ideas of 'ethnic nationalism'. The 'englisse men' whom he addresses may not be English by birth or descent. Englishness, for Robert, is defined in part by the use of the English language and, his support of Simon de Montfort suggests, by the espousing of an 'English' cause, a cause given authentication by appeal to customs which he shows are inherited from pre-Conquest (and exclusively Anglo-Saxon) England.

The Englishness which Robert attempts to portray throughout the chronicle has been demonstrated to be dependent upon a variety of influences. His concerns are with 'attempt[ing] to create the impression of a national body' is certain. When he presents England and the English, he utilises those techniques and integrates those elements which modern nation theorists discuss. Robert's England is defined by perceived geographical and conceptual (elastic) limits and it is 'imagined', constructed and transmitted to a (also constructed) body of like-minded people within the text. That Robert sees the England about which he talks as having a political unity is a matter which will be discussed in the following chapters. The nation's past is necessarily created in the chronicle, but also manipulated in the manner which Renan discusses. In particular, the Anglo-Saxon era is

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[118] Turville-Petre, " The 'Nation'" 134

[119] Thomas J. Heffernan, "Dangerous Sympathies: Political Commentary on the South English Legendary," *The South English Legendary: A Critical Assessment* ed. Klaus P. Jankofsky (Tübingen: Francke, 1992) 7. Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: Macmillan, 1995) 132.

emphasised as the point of origin for England. Robert has a demonstrated understanding of the importance of a 'national language' as a unifier, as a means of identifying oneself (or of being identified by others) with a particular nation. Ideas of ethnic homogeneity are also treated by the chronicler, and form an ideological base for his discussions. Robert's ideas can therefore be seen to be well formed, his vision coherent. This is not to say that a 'nation' was fully operating in the thirteenth century in a political manner; what is noteworthy is that sections of the population were already imagining and narrating its existence.

vii. The Language of the Chronicle

Of greatest importance to Robert's representation of an ideal community ('nation') of England, is his use of the English vernacular. Robert's chronicle consists, essentially, of a skilful combination of a wealth of primarily Latin source materials. The composer's task then, was one of redacting, translating and versifying Latin source texts into English. Latin was still traditionally the language of historical narrative in this period. English - as Robert overemphasises for effect - was conversely, and equally traditionally, it might be claimed (at least in a post-Conquest setting) an inferior and non-academic tongue. What then was Robert intending to achieve in undertaking this mammoth task of translating Latin historical texts into English? To answer this, consideration must be taken of the chronicler's interest in the linguistic situation of his time. This is made evident by interjections he makes upon this matter independently from his sources.[120] It is apparent that Robert recognised an association between language and 'national identity', and it is the chronicle itself which stands as the greatest testimony to his concerns. Such works were traditionally written in

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[120]Cf. lines 7537-7547; 2671-2.

Latin or Anglo-Norman,[121] it is therefore necessary to ascertain whether Robert's language

choice constitutes a move away from Latin and Anglo-Norman, or, more positively, a

movement towards English.

Three languages jostled for recognition and precedence in this period: Latin, English and

Anglo-Norman, and their relationships to each other were shifting as cultural, political and

religious factors demanded. It was soon after the Conquest that Anglo-Saxon lost its

position as the language of general communication, law, politics, and so on; the influx of the

Norman invaders and their settlement caused the relegation of that tongue to the outskirts

of society. Essentially, a diglossic system was brought into being; that is, two languages

coexisted without the advent of general bilingualism, one tongue (Anglo-Norman) attaining

a social prestige denied to the other tongue. However, the use of Anglo-Norman was

weakening by the twelfth century due to intermarriage, and bilingualism began to emerge.[122]

In sociolinguistic terms, Anglo-Norman still maintained its status as the high (aristocratic,

cultural and court) language of the land, whilst English retained a position as the low

speech. Evidence suggests, however, that Henry II (1154-89 AD) had a passive knowledge

of English even though he spoke Anglo-Norman as his mother-tongue.[123] By the thirteenth

century, the linguistic situation at court was probably still much the same. Opinion varies as

to the linguistic capabilities of the three Edwards,[124] but that English was not the main

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[121]Layamon's *Brut* belongs, in part, to a different tradition of historical writing than Robert's *Chronicle*, as it does not seek to extend the historical record beyond the limits set by Geoffrey of Monmouth's work.

[122] Kahane and Kahane, "Decline and Survival" 186.

[123] George E. Woodbine, "The Language of English Law," *Speculum* xviii (Oct 1943): 414.

[124] M. D. Legge, "Anglo-Norman as a Spoken Language," *Anglo-Norman Studies II* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1980): 112: All the Edwards were thought to understand English but not to speak it; Henry IV was the first king of England to speak English as his mother-tongue. Ralph Berndt, "The Period of the Final Decline of French in Medieval England: Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century," in *Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 20 (1972) 363 says that proficiency in English is assumed for Edward I and II and evidenced for Edward III. Prestwich, *Edward I* (1997) 6 claims that Edward I could speak English.

language spoken at court is certain. For the remainder of society the picture is less clear. English dominated in most communications by the fifteenth century, but the timing of this occurrence is still open to debate. A major factor accelerating the reduction of Anglo-Norman to an acquired, second, language by areas of the population (apart from intermarriage) would seem to have been the loss of Normandy in 1204.[125] Many of the aristocracy had to relinquish claims to land on the Continent, and this loss of contact with other French-speaking areas, combined with the switch of allegiance to England, advanced the decline of the French (and the rise of the English) vernacular.[126]

It is a fact recognised by sociolinguists that the linguistic situation in England after the Conquest was peculiar in its developments.[127] Estimates of the proportion of the population who spoke Anglo-Norman range from 10-20%,[128] but its use by a minority does not necessarily signal its decline, as normal progression in bi- or multi-lingual societies is for the language lacking in social prestige to be most threatened.[129] However, by the thirteenth century it was evident that language-shift was occurring, and towards the low language, English. Fasold defines language-shift as being when:

> Members of a speech community begin to choose a new language in domains formerly reserved for the old one.[130]

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[125] Ian Short, "Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England," *Anglo-Norman Studies xiv* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991): 246 places an earlier date upon the decline of Anglo-Norman, claiming that by the 1180s French had lost its status as a true spoken vernacular and become a second, acquired language; he sees this occurring simultaneously with the Anglo-Normans beginning to refer to themselves as English.

[126] Pope, *From Latin* 421 .

[127] Parallels are found only in twentieth-century Paraguay. Fasold, *Sociolinguistics of Society* 12-19 .

[128] Cf. Kahane and Kahane, "Decline and Survival" 186; R. Berndt, "The Linguistic Situation in England from the Norman Conquest to the Loss of Normandy," *Philologica Pragensia* (1965): 147.

[129] Norman Denison, "Language Death or Language Suicide?" *Linguistics* 191 (1977): 16.

[130] Fasold, *Sociolinguistics* 213.

This is clearly what is happening in Robert of Gloucester's use of English in an area of historical writing where prestige languages (Anglo-Norman and Latin)[131] normally flourished. Robert makes it clear that 'frenss' (as he calls Anglo-Norman) was still spoken by the 'heyemen' in his era. The passage where he discusses this (lines 7537-45, page 57 above) may be worth further examination.

Robert's initial comment upon the Normans' inability to speak English is presented in the past tense. This is emphasised by the adverb 'þo', which locates this matter firmly in a past time. Even in that period, Robert explains, the Normans 'dude also teche' their children French. Whether or not, by the use of the verb 'teche' Robert intends the acquisition by the Norman descendants of the French language by instruction (implying that English was their mother-tongue), it is evident that such was commonly the case by the thirteenth century. By the middle of that century, several manuals were available to aid instruction in French, and to improve the command of that language, such as Walter de Bibbesworth's *Tretiz de Langage,* the *Glasgow Glossary* and the *Tractus Orthographiae.*[132] The remarks which Giraldus Cambrensis makes about his nephew, John Blund, early in the thirteenth century (1208-9), are also revealing of the fact that both French and Latin were languages which had to be acquired by the gentleman.[133] Robert of Gloucester agrees with Giraldus in perceiving that the attainment of French in particular (Robert makes no mention of Latin throughout the chronicle) is something to which people ought to aspire:

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[131] William Rothwell, "The Role of French in Thirteenth-Century England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 58 (1975-6):447, argues for Anglo-Norman as a prestige language from evidence taken from the works of Giraldus Cambrensis.

[132] *ibid* 458.

[133] *ibid* 447.

Wel me wot uor to conne . boþe [i.e.English and French] wel it is.
Vor þe more þat a mon can . þe more wurþe he is.
(7546-47)

Sentiments such as this echo those which King Alfred was discussing in the ninth century

in his preface to Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis*. Responding to the decline in the

knowledge of Latin, Alfred advocates the translation of *'summae bec, ða ðe*

niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne' into *'englisc'*,[134] (*'ðæt geðiode ... ðe we*

ealle gecnawen mægen'). He comments that his predecessors had not done this *'ðætte æfre*

menn sceolden swæ reccelease weorðan ond sio lar swæ oðfeallan: for ðære wilnunga hie

hit forleton, ond woldon ðæt her ðy mara wisdom on londe wære ðy we ma geðeoda

cuðon'.[135] The situation in late thirteenth century England was, quite obviously, different

from that of ninth-century Wessex. The native 'English' (in so far as such a group could be

defined) were no longer the masters of their land, and the choice of writing in English was

dependent upon different criteria than those which Alfred discusses. However, it is apparent

that Robert's programme of translation was 'Alfredian' in character. Alfred promoted the

use of the vernacular to counter the limitations of Latin as a cultural vehicle. Part of his

design was to instruct the children of free men in the reading of it. The translation of the

historical works of Orosius and Bede (whether a part of the Alfredian canon, or a reflection

of it), together with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* project, show a coherent, ninth-century,

plan of making available texts important for the English people's understanding of their own

identity, and of their place in wider Christian history. By the linguistic nature of his own text,

Robert demonstrates in his chronicle that, like Alfred, he was also aware of the limitations

of Latin as a cultural vehicle. He may therefore also have considered these limitations to be

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[134] Dorothy Whitelock, *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 6.

[135] *ibid*

based upon the consequent denial to the people of their heritage. To remedy this deficiency, to restore the common heritage of the people to the English-speaking peoples, is, at least in part, what Robert set out to accomplish in his chronicle.

Although it is true that Robert makes no overt indication in his description of King Alfred's reign that he particularly admired the king's academic achievements, nevertheless, he does emphasise Alfred's wisdom. This, he claims, was the major factor in his law-making (5388-91). He also comments - and this, it might be added, is a unique characterisation given to a king in the chronicle - that 'clerc he was god ynou' (5392). The attribution of the term 'clerc' (or, rather, its Latin equivalent 'clericus') had attained, by the twelfth century, a meaning concomitant with *litteratus*, which implied a capability in Latin learning.[136] Is Robert therefore stressing King Alfred's Latin education, instead of focusing upon his vernacular talents? I would suggest rather that by the application of the term 'clerc', Robert is remembering Alfred as a scholar competent in translating Latin into the vernacular. The king's relationship with the vernacular is, in effect, in-built into the definition. Robert's use of English may thus be seen as an attempt to counter the cultural oppression of Latin and Anglo-Norman, the latter of which in particular was entrenched as the language of an over-class. It is interesting that Robert encourages the acquisition of a second language because this reflects upon the 'wurþe' of the individual, whereas Alfred's concerns centre upon the good that this achieves for the country ('londe'). The changes which had occurred since the days of Alfred are thus highlighted. In the ninth century, in a country whose coherence was growing, and when a standard written form of English was being introduced, the education of the population could only lead to the furtherance of the nation. In the thirteenth

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[136]M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 226-31.

century, however, when large social divisions were perceived to exist, bi-lingualism, whilst a worthwhile part of any individual's development, would not be seen to encourage an 'imagined' belonging together in the minds of the people.

There is, of course, a polemical undertone to Robert's reflections upon language. Anglo-Norman was still perceived as the language of the ruling class (of the 'heyemen') in the late thirteenth century, whether or not it was an acquired language. This Robert makes plain when he addresses the matter in the present tense:

> Heiemen of þis lond . þat of hor [i.e.Norman] blod come.
> Holdeþ alle þulke speche . þat hii of hom nome.
> ....
> Ac lowe men holdeþ to engliss . & to hor owe speche ȝute.
> (7540-45)

By his analysis, Robert maintains a belief that English is the national language, 'the symbol of the people's identity as citizens of [the English] nation'.[137] It is as a part of this issue, I would argue, that Robert was prompted to use the English language for his chronicle. I would thus suggest that this move was a positive step towards the utilisation of English as a cultural vehicle. This is evidenced in the text when Robert overtly links the English language with those people whom he calls 'engliss'. In such a way he deliberately constructs continuities with the Anglo-Saxon past of the country, as it is from here, in the pre-Norman era, that he can project a simplified picture of his contemporary society. This is not a mere idle stance, but part of Robert's polemic of revivifying ideals of community, monarchy and laws perceived as having their origins there. Robert's use of English would seem to be determined by his attempts to identify himself with an English cause, an English identity and thus, (with deliberate irony) with the 'lowe' class. The restoration of their common heritage

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[137] Fasold, *Sociolinguistics* 247.

to the English-speaking peoples is an essential element of Robert's self-construction, a vehicle both for it, and for his political ideas. For the metrical form which Robert uses, however, it is less easy to identify an influence and purpose.

viii. Robert's Use of Verse

Constructing historical works in prose was traditional in Latin writings of this time, but that same tradition in English had died out with the last entries in the Peterborough Chronicle (c.1154). The translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle into Anglo-Norman verse by Gaimar is perhaps symbolic of the fate of English historical prose in this era. Why such a decline occurred can only, I think, be attributed to both 'fashion' and associated patronage. In the thirteenth century, when the revival of English as a language of the literate was ripe, it is, perhaps, unfortunate that French verse and rhyme had dominated the literary scene since the twelfth century, and had become, it would seem, an accepted form in which to compose works of romance, saints' lives and histories.[138] English religious prose, by contrast, survived 'in a series of links, sometimes working very thin, but never broken'.[139] Chambers attributes this endurance to the need to instruct the laity in a language which they could comprehend.[140] But, nevertheless, Robert was writing a work of history, not a religious tract. Whilst end-rhymes were not unknown in the Anglo-Saxon period and might have gained some precedence over alliterative verse even if the Norman Conquest had not

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[138] R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966) lxxxviii.

[139] *ibid* xc.

[140] *ibid*

occurred,[141] it was with Anglo-Norman writings that the rhyming couplet was introduced into England on any scale. It is this device which is used by both Gaimar and Wace in their histories. Both of these authors were commissioned to write by the king of England (Henry II). From the arrival of the troubadours with his wife, Eleanor of Provence, Anglo-Norman and French rhyming schemes gained association with the court. The adoption of these schemes by an Anglo-Norman speaking aristocracy is perhaps a reflection of the prestige attached to them.

Robert had few examples of post-Conquest English prose to guide him. The *Ancren Riwle* certainly had been composed and circulated before he wrote, but of secular English prose there were few exempla, except the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (perhaps now perceived to be archaic and antiquarian in both language and form). Layamon's *Brut* is the only historical work which may have set any precedent, and that was based upon an alliterative metre. The second-recension author certainly did make use of this. The way in which he converts Layamon's text neatly into the septenary verse of the rest of the chronicle, reveals his compositional techniques. Not all of the lines of the *Brut* which are used are heavily alliterative. Compare for example:

> Suoþþen com king Marke . he wes þritte wiken king.
> Þe com Gorbodiago . he wes fif ʒere god king.
> (Caligula *Brut*: 1956-7)
> Siþþe was king Marke . þritti wikes alyue.
> Gorbodiagus þer after . her was fif ʒer king..
> (RG: App. G: 8-9)

Unlike Layamon, the second-recension author avoids the rhyming of the words king/king[142]

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[141] Jakob Schipper, *A History of English Metrication* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910) 65.

[142] Strictly the king/king rhyme is not, of course, a rhyme at all. Schipper, *English Metrication* 273.

but elsewhere follows the rhyme created internally in the text of the *Brut*:

> elc mon ræuede oðer . þeah hit weren his broðer.
> Wrake wes on londe . wa wes þone unstronge.
> Her wes hunger 7 hete . here wes alre hær(me)ne mest.
> Her wes muchel mon-qualm . þat hit her quike bi-lefden.
> (Caligula *Brut*: 2015-18)
> ....& echman slou oþer
> & robbede & reuede . þei he were his broþer.
> Her wes hunger & hete . wo was þe unstronge.
> Her was muche manqualm . Wrake was in lande.
> Fewe lefde alyue .
> (RG: App.G: 47-50)

The indebtedness to Layamon is apparent. One point to note is the way in which the second-recension author rearranges, or infills, the half-lines in the *Brut*, adjusting the internal rhymes or assonance to lie at the end of his lines (oþer/broþer; londe/unstronge). The similarities between the metre of the chronicle and Layamon's *Brut* is thus accentuated. They both write in long lines composed of two half lines. The rearrangement of these units results in a considerable amount of poetic flexibility.

The first-recension author did not, however, implement Layamon's *Brut* as a source. The English work to which he did have recourse is the SEL. Written in the same metre, and with the same rhyme scheme, and emanating in the same period from the same area of the country as the chronicle, authorship of parts of this work was formerly attributed to Robert.[143] This possibility has since been refuted.[144] Close links between the two works are evident. The chronicle incorporates aspects of some of the legends,[145] and although it has

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[143] W. H. Schofield, *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* (London: Macmillan, 1914) 293.

[144] Görlach, *Textual Tradition* 34

[145] B.D. Brown "Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle* and the Life of St. Kenelm," *Modern Language Notes* 41 (1926) 13-23 proves that the chronicle text incorporates sections of the SEL and not vice versa.

been commented that the two works should be considered in isolation, appreciating and

attempting to understand this link may be fruitful in studying the chronicle (and vice

versa).[146] Annie Samson's convincingly proposed contextualisation of the SEL may, for

example, provide some clues as to why a rhyming verse format was chosen for the

chronicle.[147] She dismisses the liturgical function of the SEL collection and focuses upon the

'fairly active interest in political machinations' revealed in legends such as that of Becket.[148]

By her interpretation:

> The work is primarily political history, its bias against the Crown buttressed by its
> hagiographical cast and framework.[149]

If the SEL is seen in such a light, then its similarities to the chronicle may be more easily

envisaged. Questions concerning patronage and audience might then be asked for both

works. Samson posits the audience for the SEL which Coss recommends for romances:

'regional gentry and perhaps secular clergy'.[150] If this were accepted as the case, the rhyme

scheme might then be understood as directed towards those people with an interest in other

rhymed verse (Anglo-Norman romances, for example).

The influence of Anglo-Norman verse, and the lack of direction gained from English

historical prose, would seem to be the motivating factors for Robert's choice of format. The

Anglo-Norman derivation of the verse might seem to undermine the sense of English

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[146] A. Hudson *Chronicle* 53.

[147] Annie Samson, "The *South English Legendary*: Constructing a Context," *Thirteenth-Century England I*, ed. P.R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986) 194.

[148] *ibid* 191.

[149] *ibid* 191.

[150] *ibid* 194.

national identity which Robert promotes throughout the chronicle. A Layamon-type verse

of antiquarian appearance might seem more appropriate to his purpose. However, it might

be argued that in adopting a rhyme scheme made fashionable by the court and aristocracy,

Robert was empowering the English vernacular, lending it a prestige borrowed from French

and Anglo-Norman. By this, Robert is merely utilising all the means at his disposal in order

to provide his chronicle with interest for (potentially) all areas of society, thus giving his

presentation of Englishness greatest efficacy.

In common with Anglo-Saxon verse, however, Robert's medium shares the mid-line

caesura. Apart from this structural device, however, Robert's long-line form compares ill

with Anglo-Saxon historical verse. With the late *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* verse which

intersperses the prose annals there is more of a comparison, but the internal rhyme of these

verse episodes stands more as the forerunner of passages in Layamon's *Brut*. Compare for

example:

> *Eac he sette be þam haran . þæt hi moston freo faran.*
> *his rice men hit mændon . 7 þa earme men hit beceorodan.*
> *Ac he wæs swa stið . þæt he ne rohte heora eallra mið.*
> (Laud MS., an.1086)[151]
> Þer dude Maurius þe king . a wel swuðe sællech þing.
> uppen þen ilke stude . þer he Rodric uor-dude.
> he lette a-ræren anan. enne swuðe sælcuð stan.
> he lette þer-on grauen . sælcuðe run-stauen.
> hu he Rodric . of sloh . 7 hine mid horsen to-droh.
> (Caligula *Brut*: 4964-68)

The function of the caesura is similar in both of these examples. It is a means of controlling

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[151] *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. John Earl, rev. Charles Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon,1953) 221.

the long line.[152] Essentially two sense units are formed by the caesura which are at once united and separated by the pause. An idea or concept is encapsulated in one half line, an exposition or development of that is carried out in the next. In Robert's chronicle, the caesura performs the same function:

Hii wende aboute in to al þat lond . & heie tounes nome.
& alle þe men þat hii founde . hii slowe as hii come.
(2071-72)

Manfred Markus, in his analysis of the language and style of the Becket story in the SEL, sees the caesura as a feature of that text's orality, helping the reciter to more easily emphasise the often irregular septenary pattern of the verse.[153] Certainly the function of the line break may be to control the rhythm of the chronicle text and to organise the narrative structure, and this may originate from earlier English long line rhyming verse such as that contained in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The end-rhyme features of the chronicle's verse, however, are borrowed from French and Anglo-Norman verse. The text's poetic form is thus influenced by a variety of sources.

ix. Robert and his Sources

In the same way that Robert's verse can be demonstrated to emanate from a variety of sources, so, too, can the historical information which he integrates into his text. In order,

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[152] Schipper, *Metrication* 11: 'In no case must a line contain more feet than the ear may without difficulty apprehend as a rhythmic whole; or if the number of feet is too great for this, the line must be divided by a *pause* or *break* (caesura)'.

[153] Manfred Markus, "The Language and Style of the Becket Story in the *South English Legendary*: Towards a Computerized Analysis," *The South English Legendary: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Klaus P. Jankofsky (Tübingen: Francke, 1992) 116.

therefore, to counter the argument that Robert may have drawn his concepts of Englishness from his sources, I will make a brief consideration of his reliance upon these. There is no doubt that Robert is indebted to a variety of written sources for his material. Both Wright and Ellmer have assessed Robert's sources, and have identified some thirty works which the author of the chronicle consulted.[154] The chronicle is not, however, a mere compendium of other texts. Robert's approach to his work is individual, and his polemic is substantially unique. His purpose in integrating, translating and rewriting his sources is to serve his own political and polemical ends. A small section of his text may emanate from a variety of allusions made in other histories.

Care must therefore be taken when speaking of a 'source' for any particular passage of Robert's work. Where the editor identifies the origins of a certain statement in the chronicle, closer inspection often reveals that this is indeed very loose, and that comments or responses in the text to historical event often derives from the author himself. For example, with regard to Robert's description of William the Conqueror's Harrying of the North, Wright directs the reader to Roger of Wendover's chronicle:

> Þe king destruede þe contreie . al aboute þe se .
> Of frut & ek of corne . þat þer ne bileuede noȝt.
> Sixti mile fram þe se . þat nas to grounde broȝt.
> & al þe deneis . no mete ne founde þere.
> Wanne hii come to worri . & so þe feblore were.
> So þat ȝute to þis day . muche lond þer is.
> As al wast & untuled . so it was þo destrued ywis.
> (7664-67)

What is of interest here is that Robert claims that the effects of the harrying of the north were still evident in his day, some two hundred years after the event. However, if this

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[154] Wright, *Metrical Chronicle* xv ff.; W. Ellmer, "Über die Quellen" 1-37; 291-322.

statement were copied directly from Wendover, then the reliability of Robert as an informant of historical event, and its relation to the present in which he writes, would be brought into question. Yet this is how Wendover recounts this incident:

> William ... marched into the northern parts of England, ordering the cities, villages, fields, and towns of the whole of that part of the country, to be laid waste, and the crops to be burnt. He particularly ordered the devastation of the sea-ports, not only on account of this new cause for his anger, but also because there was a report of the approach of Canute, king of the Danes; and he now determined that this pirate-robber should find no supplies about the coast.[155]

Similarities between the two texts can be appreciated; however, the contemporary interjection can be seen to be inserted in the material obtained from Wendover, and thus it is probably an independent reflection by Robert.

This example is illustrative of the care which must be taken when assessing the originality of Robert's work. Whilst there is naturally a reliance upon earlier histories, the material drawn from them is often manipulated to fit the chronicler's own agenda. The advertisement of the Anglo-Saxon past, the creation of an English identity, are elements of this history which Robert decisively shapes out of those which have gone before.

Robert's reliance upon his sources for his vocabulary and syntax is, on the whole, slight. Even those texts which are not in Latin provide little more than general information for the chronicler. An excerpt from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* will serve to demonstrate this point. Here the death of William the Conqueror and the succession of his son, William Rufus, is recorded:

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[155] Roger of Wendover, *The Flowers of History*, ed.and trans. J. A. Giles (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1993-6) II, 336.

Æfter his deaðe, his sune - Willelm hæt eallswa þa fæder - feng to þam rice,
7 wearð gebletsod to cynge from Landfrance arcebiscope on Westmunstre þream
dagum ær Mich'a'eles mæssedæg; 7 ealle þa men on Englalande him to abugon
7 him aðas sworum.[156]

Robert's appropriation of this material amounts to the bare details:

Biuore Misselmasse he was icrouned . þre dawes & nanmo.
Of þe erchebissop of kanterbury . Lanfrance þat was þo.
At westmunstre it was ido . wiþoute long targinge.
Vor it was noȝt fourtene niȝt . after is fader buriinge.
He sende anon as quicliche . as he miȝte his sonde.
Holde oþes þat men him suore . þoru al engelonde.
(7856-61)

Robert extracts from the earlier text the name of the Archbishop, the place and date of the

coronation, and the swearing of oaths by the people of the land. His sentence constructions,

vocabulary and emphasis, however, are independent. Where the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,

for example, tells of the blessing of the new king (*'wearð gebletsod'*), Robert speaks of his

crowning ('he was icrouned'). The focus upon this procedure is part of Robert's formulaic

recounting of all coronations, as will be discussed further in the next chapter. Another

example of his individuality is the attention he draws to the speed of Rufus' election.

Historically, the haste made by Rufus was to ensure his own accession before his elder

brother, Robert Curthose, could gain the throne. The devious nature of Rufus' succession

is alluded to by Robert when he notes how soon after William's death the coronation

occurred. Rufus is one of the illegitimate kings of the land, by Robert's interpretation, and

such an indication is made in his manipulation of, and additions to, the information provided

by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The disparity between Robert's chronicle and the Latin texts he uses is even greater. But

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[156] Earl, *Two Saxon Chronicles* 222.

even when the SEL has been incorporated into the chronicle, verbatim usage is rare. One

of the passages most closely replicated by Robert is from the SEL *Life of St. Edward the*

Martyr, but even then, much licence is taken with this contemporary English verse. Words

are omitted by Robert to create better scansion (RG: 5841; SEL: 42), and often whole lines

are ignored. The martyrologist, for example, remarks upon the present condition of the

wood in which Edward hunted ('þat fair wode was þulke tyme . ac nou is al adoune/ Bote

þornes and þunne boskes . þat stonde biside þe toune' 43-4). Robert cuts this digression,

removing a rhyming couplet and joining what were two separate half lines in his source to

read:

> Þat vair wode was þulke tyme . a gret wille him com to.
> (5842)

Such alterations streamline the story. Other changes reveal a desire for syntactical neatness

and impact. Edward rides around with his men, the SEL author recounts:

> So þat wiþ him ne bileuede none . ac al one he was sone.
> Ac naþeles forþ he wende is wey . as he þoȝte to done.
> (53-4)

Robert hones this:

> So þat þis holy king . al one was sone.
> & alone wende vorþ . as he þoȝte to done.
> (5850-51)

Robert's lines are shorter and more concise, and he handles the information to suit his own

polemic. Edward is named the 'holy king', a label which spells out the conjoining of sanctity

and kingship which Robert emphasises frequently in his account of the Anglo-Saxon age.

The sudden isolation of this saintly monarch is then given force by repetition and rhyme.

Edward 'al one was sone'. Stress falls on both rhyming words here, with the effect that the

final 'sone' is highlighted both by its location in the rhyming position and the repetition. This syntax is borrowed from the SEL but tightened by omitting the conjunction 'ac' and personal pronoun 'he'. Being shorter than the preceding lines, the resulting line is emphasised by a slow pace, so that there is a note of foreboding in its four-beat second hemistich. This is compounded by the first stress in the next line falling on a word which continues the rhyme and sense already established: 'alone'. The warning of the danger to come is complete, and Robert cuts four intervening SEL lines to the point where Edward's stepmother sees him arriving and invents an evil plan. So Robert controls the pace of the action and the audience's response to it.

These passages are fairly typical examples of Robert's manipulation of his source materials. They reveal him as an author certain about the direction of his own narrative and adept at conforming information to his own intent and style. When Robert's sources are mentioned, there must be an awareness of the ultimate control that he had over his writing. He was concerned with fulfilling his own agenda. The advertisement of the Anglo-Saxon past and the shaping of an English identity are elements of this agenda that Robert shapes out of the histories which preceded his.

Chapter Two

A Quest for Perfect Kingship

Having made enquiries into the understanding of the concepts of England and Englishness in the chronicle, I now intend to address the historical priorities which are made throughout the text. I will assess how the sources (and therefore the received image of the past) are controlled in order to project the idea of a continuity stretching from the country's Anglo-Saxon past to Robert's contemporary society. In such a way he promotes the importance of Englishness. As has already been briefly suggested, the sources are manipulated in order to present an interpretation of historical event which best supports the chronicler's viewpoint upon contemporary problems. The way in which he handles different historical periods is an essential part of his polemical projection of his own society. In view of Robert's concern to present a contemporary English identity, any perceived exploitation of Anglo-Saxon traditions by the chronicler will be examined. The historical periods to which I will give attention will therefore be not only that in which Robert's interests might be expected to lie (that is, the Anglo-Saxon era) but also those which were least amenable to his pro-English stance throughout the chronicle: the British past and the Norman Conquest.

Analysis will first be made of Robert's treatment of the "Arthurian material". This will be considered particularly in relation to other texts containing this material extant in this period. General historical and literary interest in this era of the country's past, both before and after the time of Robert's chronicle, is demonstrated by the number of extant manuscripts of

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* alone (over 200 copies).[157] Robert's adherence to, or

deviance from, the popular myths surrounding the legendary figure of Arthur may, therefore,

provide evidence of his individual concerns and ultimate intent in writing the chronicle.

As a means of contrast and comparison, the chronicle's account of the Anglo-Saxon period

will next be assessed. Preference will particularly be given to the Alfredian material, as it

may be here that Robert finds a point of origin for aspects of his late thirteenth-century

society. As a period which holds such an importance for the chronicler, the account of its

termination in the Norman Conquest will also be considered.

Finally, I will concentrate on any emphasis given by Robert to the role of the English saints

in early English history, particularly in view of both Robert's integration of SEL texts into

the narrative, and his concern with Englishness. Preliminary investigations suggest that

Robert had a preference for alluding to saints from the Anglo-Saxon period, and a special

concern with instances in which saints were involved in the counsels of the English kings.

It is intended that Robert's treatment of these areas of historical event will serve to highlight

not only how, but why - to what polemical ends - he gives historical precedence to certain

eras of the country's past.

Before commencing an assessment of Robert's broader polemical address, I will consider

the formulaic nature of his discourse, and the manner in which this is utilised to augment his

argument. The formulas and themes which occur in the chronicle correspond to those which

Lord and Parry identified in the traditional oral epics which they surveyed. The definitions

which they give to these terms emphasise not so much the repetitive nature of these

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[157] *Layamon's Arthur*, ed and trans. W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Harlow: Longman, 1989) xxv.

techniques, as their usage under metrical conditions and their expression of 'a given essential idea'.[158] Thus:

> Formulas ... consist of "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea". A theme is a repeated passage with a varying, but fairly high, degree of verbal correspondence each time it is used.[159]

What Lord makes clear, however, is that a clear distinction must be made between formulas as utilised in oral and in written narrative. In the former mode of narration, formulas play a part in the composition of the epic, whilst the written tradition:

> employs repetition for aesthetic effect or for referential reasons. Formulas embody all previous occurrences and not any particular one; in an oral poem they do not point to other uses of the same formula.[160]

To the oral poet, formulas are a constructional aid rather than a narrative device. Lord thus highlights a difference in technique which isolates oral from written composition, where 'oral' indicates 'a specific technique of composing, performing, and transmitting a traditional literary composition'[161] rather than 'any poetry that is heard, that is spoken or sung, no matter how composed'.[162] Further differences which are identified as having no place in the thus-defined 'oral' poem are those of dating, and rhymed couplets.[163] Both of these devices are fundamental aspects of Robert of Gloucester's chronicle, and so (as I will demonstrate in this, and the following chapters) is the employment of formulaic techniques for 'referential

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[158] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1964) 4.

[159] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*, ed. M. L. Lord (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 4-5.

[160] *ibid* 122.

[161] *ibid* 189.

[162] *ibid* 188.

[163] *ibid* 231-234.

reasons' in particular. What I intend to emphasise is that the formulas and themes used in the chronicle are not primarily what Lord has identified as formulaic "residues" in literary texts, that is, echoes of a former oral practice,[164] but an active technique, a mechanism operating to convey essential ideas from the writer to the audience.

Formulas in the chronicle may be described as the most important, and most-often used, weapon in the author's polemical arsenal. The use of these is controlled and varied, ranging from the creation and manipulation of large-scale patterns of story or themes, to the appropriation of small-scale verbal formulations. They all, however, function in the same manner: once a formula has been set up, any deviance from its pattern is self-signalling. As a method of persuasion, this argues, naturally, for a reciprocity in the audience. It is expected to be sensitive to the nuances created by the narrator. Whilst there are some themes (to which I shall return later) which are set up and developed within the chronicle itself, at other times the chronicler accesses systems exterior to the text - systems which encode, for example, acceptable and unacceptable modes of behaviour - in order to convey his opinions to his audience. When detailing the activities of the Norman and English soldiers the night before the Battle of Hastings, for example, it is upon traditional Christian mores which the chronicler depends for effect. Thus, when the narrative reveals that the English 'spende al þe niȝt in glotonie . & in drinkinge' (7417) and the Normans 'criede on god uaste . / & ssriue hom ech after oþer' (7418-19), the descriptions inherently inform the audience of which of the sides the chronicler perceives to be right, and which wrong. This is enabled by reference to the formulas which permeate Christian instruction. So, whilst the former commit one of the deadly sins (gluttony), the latter are seen to be behaving in an accepted Christian manner. The audience recognises that the chronicler is drawing upon

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[164] *ibid* 120.

established formulas, and bring their own knowledge of those to participate in the text. As this example evidences, the execution of such formulaic techniques facilitates the author in tactfully arguing what is, at times, a subversive case. The opinions of the writer are covertly signalled to the audience by means of such devices.

Contextual notice will be given of formulaic programmes functioning in the chronicle throughout this, and the following, chapters, but a description of the forms which they take will be outlined here. Firstly, I include as an aspect of the chronicler's formulaic mentality the use of key words in the text. These, when applied in a particular context, indicate that quite complex ideas are in operation; 'pur' and 'kunde' are two of the most important components of this category (see chapter three). Formulaic expressions, such as 'gode olde lawe' perform in a similar manner. More complicated structures - the 'themes' of Lord - often consisting of a group of lines with a 'fairly high degree of verbal correspondence', draw mute parallels between events, between various coronation procedures, for example. Ultimately, I consider this to be a part of Robert's model-forming, a strategy which plays a foremost role in his polemic. An ideal type is illustrated to which the further use of formulas makes reference. Comparative allusions are thus drawn.

Not all repetitions in the text, it must be stressed, act as formulas. Some, like the reiteration of an adjective applied to a particular person, merely stand as a point of emphasis; that is, they do not convey an 'essential idea'. The manipulation of all such literary techniques employed by the chronicler will, however, be observed, as it is by the skilful combination of these that the historical priorities are presented. I turn, then, to the author's treatment of British 'history'.

i. Robert and the 'Matter of Britain'

In his handling of the "Arthurian Material", derived essentially from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, Robert is more tolerant of the British (Welsh) than might be expected (see introduction). The course of events, as outlined in the *Historia*, is closely followed: Arthur is portrayed as a great man, and one sixth of the total chronicle is devoted to his exploits. But, even granted the allowance of space conferred upon this leader and his predecessors (Constans, Vortigern, Ambrosius and so on) it is apparent that Robert seeks to demythologise the British cause of King Arthur in pursuit of the glorification of the era in which he perceives his contemporary society was founded (that is, the Anglo-Saxon period). In so doing, I propose, he seeks to rectify the imbalance between these periods created by (near-) contemporary interest in Arthurian legends. Thus he attempts to assert the importance of the country's English past. By 'demythologising', I mean in fact to suggest that Robert distinctively plays down any idealisation and mythicisation of the Arthurian matter, and thus brings it into conformity of treatment with that of the Anglo-Saxon past, which he similarly refrains from idealising or mythicising. By this process, and to this extent, the prestige of the British past is effectively lowered, relative to the English record.

The imbalance between the popularity of these two periods was initially created because of a lacuna in the English sources for the period of the Germanic "migrations". There was therefore no alternative history which could challenge the (widely accepted) course of events laid down by Geoffrey. Consequently, Robert looks to other techniques to inhibit the supremacy of "Arthurian material". He alters and omits passages from his sources, and interjects additional comments. Robert's proclaimed 'audience', it must be remembered, is

perceived to consist of 'englisse men', he therefore owes no loyalty to the British-associated material.

In his presentation of the "Matter of Britain", Robert is often prone to contracting his source material, unlike Layamon who considerably expands upon Wace. Where Layamon relishes in descriptions of battles, Robert at times cuts them short. This sometimes causes an error in sense. During the battle at which Eldol fights Hengist, and takes him captive, for example, Robert's compression of the scene limits its dramatic capacity:

> So strange kni3tes boþe hii were . & eke þe herte gret was.
> Gorlois erl of cornwaile . bi hom com bi cas.
> As sone as eldol him ysey . is herte vpward drou.
> Hengist bi þe helm bineþe . he hente vaste ynou.
> & mid strengþe him drou adoun ....
> (2955-59)

In Geoffrey's account, the combatants are evenly matched and the tension is heightened by the uncertainty of the victory:

> *Diu dubium fuit cui praestantior vigor inerat. Quandoque enim praevalebat Eldol et cedebat Hengistus; quandoque cedebat Eldol et praevalebat Hengistus. Dum in hunc modum decertarent, supervenit Gorlois, dux Cornubiae, cum phalange cui praeerat, turmas diversorum infestans. Quem cum aspexisset Eldol, securior effectus, cepit Hengistum per nasale cassidis atque totis viribus utens ipsum infra concives extravit.*[165]
>
> For a long time it was not clear on which side lay the greater strength. At one moment Eldol pressed forward and Hengist yielded, and then Eldol drew back and Hengist advanced.
>
> As they fought in this way, Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, moved up towards them with the squadron which he commanded, harassing the enemy's company as he came. When he set eyes on Gorlois, Eldol gained a new assurance. He seized hold of Hengist by the nasal of his metal helmet and by exerting all his strength dragged him in among his own men.[166]

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[165] *La Légende*, Faral 208.

[166] *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Thorpe 192.

The essential points are present in Robert's account, but the relationship of events - Eldol's difficult struggle with Hengist, the support of Gorlois' relief company - are inadequately expressed. Gorlois' appearance to rally Eldol, for example, is constructed with a certain implied casualness ('bi hom com bi cas').

Such instances, however, are not informative of Robert's overall management of this historical period, beyond demonstrating a method of contracting events, thus making them more concise. In his more substantial alterations of the legends, a firmer indication of his priorities may be gained, and a greater understanding of his polemical techniques. Of particular interest is the modification which Robert makes to the occasion of Arthur's single combat with the earl (Follon) Frollo in Paris. In Geoffrey's account, this takes place upon an island outside of Paris.[167] Robert rearranges this meeting, locating it in a site merely outside of Paris, and not upon an island (3820 ff.). The question of why Robert felt the necessity to amend such a small detail of the narrative needs to be asked. The answer may lie in the chronicler's concern to give precedence to the Anglo-Saxon period of history, and in his formulaic mentality. Robert is one of the first chroniclers writing after the Conquest to incorporate into his history details of both the British occupation of the British Isles (taken essentially from Geoffrey's work) and that of the Saxons.[168] As such, he is one of the first faced with recounting an event from each period which shares the same pattern of story, or theme. In this case, there is a similarity of narrative structure between the story of Arthur's island fight, and that of Edmund Ironside's single combat with his challenger to the throne, Cnut, in 1016 AD. The initial account of this incident, recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon*

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[167] *La Légende*, Faral 240-41.

[168] Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* although falling into this category is brief in his account of early British and Arthurian events.

Chronicle, informs that a meeting (it only later became construed as a conflict)[169] occurred between the two leaders on a named island in the Severn: Alney.[170] Robert gives full details of the confrontation - Edmund's military prowess, Cnut's fear - as he does for Arthur's battle, and here retains its isolated site. It is apparent that the chronicler seeks to avoid repetition of a theme here. That he settled on the side of the Anglo-Saxons when omitting one, that he chose to retain an authentic record of this account, may be attributable to a variety of factors. Robert is a chronicler with an interest in the veracity of his sources, and with detailing chronology. The duel between Cnut and Edmund may have been preferred as it has the authority of a variety of sources (including the contemporary *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* account). The Arthur legend has no contemporary authority. It is also possible that the Cnut incident was chosen to be repeated in its entirety as it is a conflict between two kings over the kingdom of England. The passage of dominion is determined by it, and the dramatic effect of the combat is heightened by the isolated setting.

Robert's editorial techniques are often subtle. In his rendering of Geoffrey's British history, for example, he at one point acknowledges his contraction of events, but conceals the importance of the missing material to the story of the British. This occurs when he shortens the list of earlier rulers of the Isles of Britain as related in the *Historia*:

> After kyng gurguont . kinges monion.
> Þer were here in engelond . me may noȝt telle echon.
> (1015-16)

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[169] The expansion of this particular moment in history can be seen developing throughout the works of "Florence" of Worcester; William of Malmesbury; Henry of Huntingdon, Roger of Wendover and Ailred of Rievaulx.

[170] Laud MS Annal 1016: '*7 þa cyningas comon to gædere æt Olan ige. 7 heora freondscipe þær ge fæstnodon ge mid wedde ge mid aðe ...*' *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, eds. Charles Plummer and John Earle, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) 153.

A reader or listener unfamiliar with British history as described in Geoffrey's *Historia* would

be unaware that the chronicler thus excludes the highly significant details of the lives of the

brothers Brennius and Belinus. These two Britons, Geoffrey informs his audience, seek and

achieve dominion over Rome. This episode is manufactured by him to elevate the prestige

and heritage of the Britons. It is for the regaining of their Roman territory that Arthur later

fights before his energies return to the internal strife instigated by his nephew, Mordred. To

deny this British claim to world dominion, Robert abbreviates his source, nonchalantly

dismissing the achievements of these monarchs in the casual phrase 'kinges monion þer were

here in engelond me may noȝt telle echon'. This intent is affirmed when he returns to

Geoffrey's narrative immediately after the death of these brothers, noting the reign of one

of their sons. That is to say, Robert's abbreviation here is not an attempt to shorten his

chronicle, but to exclude information regarding British supremacy which is detrimental to

his portrayal of the English as the supreme predecessors of his audience.[171]

Other omissions of Arthurian material present in the *Historia,* are equally revealing of, and

actively enforcing, Robert's intent. The first of these has a textual tradition emanating from

Wace: the exclusion of the prophecies of Merlin. Wace declines to elaborate upon the

prophecies in his *Roman de Brut.* After detailing Merlin's interpretation of the two dragons

in the pool under the castle Vortigern is trying to build, he comments:

> *Ne vuil sun livre translater*
> *Quant jo nel sai interpreter;*
> *Nule rien dire ne vuldreie*
> *Que si ne fust com jo dirreie.*[172]

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[171] There are, however, contradictions later in the text when Robert mentions Brennius and Belinus' conquest of Rome with reference to Arthur's aspirations (lines 4045-57).

[172] *Le Roman de Brut de Wace,* ed. Ivor Arnold, vol. 1 (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1940) lines 7535-7542.

Layamon excludes, without explanation, but Robert of Gloucester (apparently independently

of Wace) gives a reason for deciding to omit the prophecies:

> Of þe prophecye of merlin we ne mowe telle namore.
> Vor it is so derc to simplemen . bote me were þe bet in lore.
> (2819-20)

Robert's remark about 'simplemen' has been taken to mean that he perceived his audience

to be lowly and uneducated (the *Middle English Dictionary* itself holds to this definition

with reference to Robert of Gloucester).[173] I would suggest, however, that this interpretation

of 'simple' represents a twentieth-century understanding of the term. Robert's concern that

Merlin's prophecies should not be transmitted to this category of people does not

necessarily place them into the category: 'ignorant, uneducated; unsophisticated; simple-

minded, foolish; also, unintelligent, lacking reason'.[174] He stresses that the vaticinatory

material of the wizard (as seen in the *Historia*) 'is so derc to simplemen'. This is not to say

that they are too complicated for foolish people to understand. As the chronicler elaborates,

the prophecies would not be 'so derc' if the hearers were given the benefit of instruction and

interpretation. This explication would align with Robert's stance towards his constructed

audience throughout the chronicle. Robert perceives his 'audience' to consist of 'englisse

men'. As has been discussed earlier, his classification of the English as 'lowe' is particularly

ironic. The attribution of the term 'simplemen' to them is not, I would suggest, intended as

a qualitative statement, it is merely an expression of (deprived) status. This statement may

thus be based upon the author's understanding that the English language in which he wrote

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[173] *Middle English Dictionary S-SL*, ed. Robert E. Lewis (Michigan: Michigan UP, 1986) 903.

[174] *ibid*

was less learned than Latin. What he seeks to illustrate here is the educational standing of his audience relative to those with a higher academic status.

In electing to omit Merlin's prophetic remarks, Robert relegates them to a static past, deprived of an anticipatory function and dismissed, as well, as something irreligious (unlike the saintly divinations of Dunstan or Edward the Confessor, for example). In choosing to exclude Merlin's account of future events, he denies him continuity in the future. This type of continuity is reserved in the chronicle for holy men alone.

That there may have been a political motive involved in this omission may be understood when the nature of the Welsh prophetic tradition (especially that associated with Myrddin/Merlin) is considered. In 1199, the archbishop of Canterbury remarked that "'the Welsh being sprung from the original stock of Britons, boast of all Britain as their right'".[175] Merlin's prophecies nurtured this vision. Davies cautions historians against the dismissal of such mythology as having no real consequence:

> The importance of such prophecies, as indeed of Welsh historical mythology in general, should not be underestimated in any analysis of contemporary political attitude and behaviour. It was a remarkably resilient mythology.[176]

Robert may then have been alert to the power of such mythology, and his decision not to include the prophecies may have been in part determined by a wish to exclude the British vision which displaces, or challenges, that which he attempts to set up for the English. The apparent inconsistency which is suggested when he later includes a prophecy of Merlin

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[175] Quoted in R. R. Davies, *Conquest* 79.

[176] *ibid* 80.

regarding the eventual return of the British people to their inheritance, may be read as

another sample of the irony which serves as one of the weapons in his polemical arsenal:

> & nameliche at þulke tyme . þat in is prophecye.
> Merlin sede to arþure . þat nolde noþing lye.
> Vor he sede þat þe brutons . me ssolde ʒut yse.
> Winne hor riʒte kinedom . ac it ssolde arste longe be.
> Wanne þe relikes of þe halwen . yfounde were & ykud.
> Þat vor drede of saxons . er wide were yhud.
> (5094-99)

As has been noted earlier, the chronicler tends to locate heavily ironic statements in the final,

rhymed, hemistich of his line. Here again, I would argue, Robert employs this technique in

order to undermine British visions of supremacy, whilst simultaneously reminding his

English audience of the danger they will always face from the Welsh on account of this

'article of faith' nurtured among them. The declaration that Merlin 'wolde noþing lye', I

would suggest, mocks the power of this Welsh seer, and thus the Welsh belief in their return

to power. Robert does not give any concession to the cultural heritage of the Welsh, and he

amplifies this by echoing Welsh claims to legitimacy in this statement. He effectively uses

their own ammunition against themselves.

An observation made by Gerald of Wales confirms that the fount of Welsh hopes was the

vaticinatory material which Robert considers. When discussing the Welsh and the Merlinic

prophecies, Gerald comments:

> They boast ... that in a short time their countrymen shall return to the island and,
> according to the prophecies of Merlin, the nation of foreigners as well as its name
> shall be exterminated, and the Britons shall exult again in their old name and privilege
> in the island.[177]

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[177] Quoted in Davies, *Conquest* 79.

Gerald was writing in the early thirteenth century, and he substantiates that the Welsh still harboured ideas of conquest over the 'English'. It would seem, then, that this creed was well known amongst both the Welsh and non-Welsh inhabitants of the land. A thirteenth-century Latin poem emanating from the period of the Barons' Wars (1250s-1265) adopts this perspective, rallying the *Cambrenses, Britones* and *Cornubienses* with the cry that '*Mellinus verdicus nunquam dixit vanum;/ Expellendum populum prœdixit vexanum*' ('the soothsayer Merlin never said a thing that was vain; he foretold that the mad people would be expelled').[178] That Robert was familiar with at least some of the details of the Merlinic Welsh creed is illustrated by his return - for the last time - to one of the prophecies:

> Ac as þe angel sede er . & merlin ek biuore.
> Hii ssoleþ ʒut keuere moche lond . þat hii abbeþ ylore.
> Al walis & þe march . & al þe middel lond ywis.
> Þat is al þat bituene temese . & homber is.
> Al est toward londone . þis me ssal ʒut yse.
> Ac vpe godes wille it is . wanne it ssal be.
>   (5132-37)

This may again be read as part of Robert's anti-Welsh-nationalist polemic. His consideration 'vpe godes wille' may be tantamount to a sort of tactful scepticism, to be read as 'well, we'll see; believe it when you see it', rather than a comment seeking to acknowledge Welsh interests. That a dismissive tone is intended may be supported by his assurance immediately after this passage that 'þus we englisse men . mowe yse some. / Mid woch riʒte we beþ . to þis lond ycome.' and - particularly important in view of the testament by Gerald of Wales - that he precedes it with a declaration of the Britons' loss of name (5124-29). The 'Welsh' poem cited above may prove comparative to Robert's stance. The provenance of this song

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[178] *Political Songs*, Wright 57.

has been questioned; it is uncertain whether it was written by a Welsh man or by an English man whose intent was satirical.[179]

Robert most emphatically undermines the British cause - the belief by the Britons of their return to power, led in particular by their leader, Arthur - in his account of the death of Arthur. Diverging from all known retellings of this event, Robert interjects a passage upon what he considers to be the fallacy that this king will return to lead his people to victory. After receiving wounds at the hands of Mordred's men, Arthur is taken to an island:

> & deide as þe beste kni3t . þat me wuste euere yfounde.
> & naþeles þe brutons . & þe cornwalisse of is kunde.
> Weneþ he be aliue 3ut . & abbeþ him in munde.
> Þat he be to comene 3ut . to winne a3en is lond.
> & naþeles at glastinbury . his bones suþþe me fond.
> & þere at uore þe heye weued . amydde þe quer ywis.
> As is bones liggeþ . is toumbe wel fair is.
> (4588-94)

From what is known about Robert's consciousness (or imaginative vision) of the England of his day as a nation newly-acquiring a sense of identity, it is not surprising to find his attitude towards the popular belief in Arthur's return uncompromising. How Robert's syntax enforces his polemic has been discussed earlier, but the language which he uses to describe this scene is also instrumental to his undermining of the mystique surrounding Arthur. His use of Old-English derived vocabulary, and the juxtaposition of French-derived words, is interesting to observe here. 'Is bones liggeþ', he states, emphatically indicating the deadness of Arthur. His bones have been found, and they are not 'reliks' (a word he uses elsewhere in the text to describe holy remains, line 5541, for example). Robert thus overturns any

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[179] *ibid* 56.

mystical associations with the figure of Arthur. This he confirms by adding that his remains

lie in a 'toumbe', not a 'ssrine' as do those of St. Louis (line 10,943).

Robert presents Arthur's death in a non-mystical fashion. This, I would suggest, is an

aspect of the polemical English nationalistic, and anti-Welsh-nationalist, stance he takes

throughout the chronicle.[180] In this he aligns himself with the policies of King Edward I.

Robert's account was written in or after 1278, the year when Edward I ordered the opening

of the tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury Abbey, and had his bones translated into a new

position in the quire in front of the high altar. This occurred just after the defeat of Llewellyn

ap Gruffydd of north Wales, and was an attempt to reinforce that defeat. I would certainly

propose that Robert's understanding of the British cause as lost is instrumental to his

thinking throughout the chronicle.[181] In relating the account of the removal and reinterment

of Arthur's bones, he destroys the myth of his return to save the Britons.[182] By demystifying

the Arthurian legend, Robert is perhaps tacitly conceding that it is dangerous to allow the

Welsh leeway on the Arthur question, and supporting the appropriation of that hero by the

English royal house. Not only does he enforce the fact that Arthur's bones have been found,

but goes so far as to comment upon the attractiveness of the tomb in which they are laid.

That the English kings found the Welsh belief in Arthur's return a threat is evident from the

efforts they made to destroy it. Griffiths' assertion that prophetic material concerning

saviours of the Britons frequently drove the Welsh to take up arms, demonstrates that their

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[180] This stance is not synonymous with all English historical writing of this period. Witness, for example, Layamon's appropriation of the Arthurian story for the English, Françoise Le Saux, *Layamon's Brut: The Poem and its Sources* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989) 230.

[181] This was not Edward I's only political move against the Welsh after his victory. He also appropriated the residence of the Gwynedd dynasty, presented Llewellyn's golden coronet at the tomb of Edward the Confessor, and melted down the seals of Llewellyn, of his wife and his brother, Dafydd, to make a chalice which he donated to his new monastic foundation at Vale Royal. Davies, *Conquest* 355-356.

[182] *Chronicle*, Wright xvii.

fears were perhaps well-founded.[183] Dreams of expelling the foreigners and regaining a

Britain for the British with the aid of a deliverer were still active, in Welsh poetry, from the

twelfth to the fourteenth century, and intense hatred of the Saxons was still professed.[184]

The 'Song of the Welsh' cited earlier, harks particularly upon this point, appealing to the

British to fight against their old enemy, the Saxons:

> *Truccidare Saxones soliti Cambrenses*
> *Ad cognatos Britones et Cornubienses;*
> *Requirunt ut veniant per acutos enses,*
> *Ad debellandos inimicos Saxonienses.*
>   *Venite jam strenue loricis armati;*
> *Sunt pars magna Saxonum mutuo necati,*
> *Erit pars residua per nos trucidate:-*
> (The Cambrians, who are used to slay the Saxons, salute their relations the Britons
> and Cornish-men: they require them to come with their sharp swords to conquer their
> Saxon enemies, - Come now, vigorously, armed with coats of mail; a great part of the
> Saxons are fallen in mutual slaughter, the remainder shall be slain by us.)[185]

Whether composed by a Welsh, or English, man, this poem demonstrates the residual hatred

by the Britons of those they term *Saxones*, in the thirteenth century.[186]

Arthur (like the prophecies of Merlin) is thus, in Robert's account, denied a potential in the

future. That he was an excellent warrior, Robert acknowledges (he is 'þe beste kniȝt . þat

me wuste euere yfounde'). It might be asked why Robert is willing to concede this if his

position is single-mindedly anti-Welsh-nationalist. The question should be approached rather

from his perspective as a pro-English supporter. With his flexible definition of Englishness,

Robert's concern is with an ideal of 'national' unity, thus, just as it in his interests to scotch

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[183] M. E. Griffiths, *Early Vaticinatory Material in Welsh*, ed. T. Gwynn Jones (Cardiff: Wales UP 1937) 217.

[184] *ibid* 175.

[185] *Political Songs*, Wright 56.

[186] *ibid* 56.

the traditions which might tempt the Welsh to be *outside* of the fold, it lies in his interests

to keep them within the fold. It is a narrow path, and one which he negotiates with difficulty.

So he devotes 2300 or so lines (one sixth of the total chronicle length) to the narration of

the Arthurian material, but emphatically denies the prospect of a second coming. Robert's

hard-line attitude is perhaps best appreciated here in comparison with the account of

Arthur's death narrated by one of his near-contemporaries (also writing in the vernacular,

in around 1338) that of Robert Mannyng of Brunne:

> & þus seys ilka Bretoun,
> þat on lyue þere he ys,
> Lyuende man wyþ blod & flesche,
> & after hym ʒut þey lok.
> Maister Wace þat made þys bok,
> He sayþ namore of his fyn
> þan doþ þe prophete merlyn.
> Merlyn seide ful meruillouse,
> þat Arthures deþ was dotouse,
> þer-fore ʒyt þe Bretons drede,
> & seyn þat he lyues in lede;
> But y seye þey trowe wrong;
> fforʒyf he now lyue, his lif ys long;
> & ʒyf he lyue þis ilke day,
> He schal lyue for euere & ay.
>
> Noght þat y trowe þe Bretons lye;
> He was so wounded, he moste dye.
> (14,290-306)

Robert Mannyng supports Robert's conclusions concerning this hero of the Britons, but his

approach to the matter is more equitable than Robert's, whose attitude is brusque and

businesslike. Arthur, by Robert's account, is dead. He fought and died for his country, and

to live with an expectation that the heroes of the past will serve the politics of the present

is, for Robert, a defiance of factual evidence. The events of the past may serve as exempla

for his contemporary society, as he makes clear in more than one instance, but they cannot

be literally reborn.

Robert is dependent for this early period of British history upon Geoffrey of Monmouth's

Historia because there is a lacuna here in the English sources. The need for a parallel

ideology to the "Matter of Britain" has been apparent since its composition. Post-Galfridian

historiography left little place for the Anglo-Saxons and their achievements; their deeds were

cast into shadow by the romanticised heroism of Arthur and his knights. So, Robert, aware

of this, I propose, moves attention to the Anglo-Saxons to balance the British legend, and

simultaneously offers an alternative solution for the prosperity of the country. It has the

roots in the era of Alfred.

ii. The Golden Age of the Anglo-Saxons

A glance at Robert's portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon kings shows that they are presented in

vignettes. In his presentation of Alfred, for example, little attempt is made to expand the

character of the king, to give him a rounded figure. No direct speech is assigned to him. The

figure of Alfred (like that of Arthur) gained in popularity from the twelfth century, not

showing any particular signs of being regarded as exceptional by his contemporaries.[187] By

the twelfth century there was a growing tendency to attribute wise sayings to the king,[188]

evidenced, ultimately, in the *Proverbs of Alfred*. Robert does not, however, choose to

participate in this aspect of Alfred's growing popularity beyond remarking that: 'King alfred

was wisost king . þat longe was biuore' (5388), and this comment is linked rather to the

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[187] *Alfred the Great*, ed. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 45. John William Adamson, *'The Illiterate Anglo-Saxon' and Other Essays on Education, Modern and Medieval* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1946) 10.

[188] The references to Alfred's proverbial wisdom in the *Owl and the Nightingale*, as well as in Marie de France's *Fables*, points to this conclusion.

king's law-making capacities than to any proverbial wisdom. No elegiac speech is added

after recording his death, such as is found in the chronicles of Æthelweard and "Florence"

of Worcester,[189] for example, and it becomes apparent that Robert's interest lies not in

Alfred *per se*, but in the heritage deriving from his reign. Despite the fact that Robert is, to

an extent, heir to the intellectual tradition of vernacular writings promoted by Alfred, an

interest in this king's academic achievements is strangely absent. His only acknowledgement

of Alfred's learning is a note, discussed earlier, that this king was 'god clerc ynou'.

Throughout the text, Robert concentrates upon establishing continuities of kingship, law,

and customs from the Anglo-Saxon period. In order to lend this historical era significant

prestige, he focuses initially upon the conjoining, at that time, of the royal line with divine

authorisation (subsidiary issues are also discussed, to which I will give attention later). This

occurs during the reign of Alfred's father, Æþelwulf, when Alfred, at the age of four, is

taken on a visit to Rome. The account reads as follows:

Þe pope leon him blessede . þo he þuder com.
& þe kinges croune of þis lond . þat in þis lond ʒut is.
& elede him to be king . ar he were king ywis.
& he was king of engelond . of alle þat þer come.
Þat verst þus yeled was . of þe pope of rome.
& suþþe oþer after him . of þe erchebissop echon.
So þat biuore him . pur king nas þer non.
(5327-33)

As a consequence of this sacring ceremony, not only is Alfred anointed rightful king, but,

as this ceremony is echoed between future kings and the archbishop (normally of

Canterbury), they too are divinely appointed, if they are of the blood of Alfred.

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[189] *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London: Nelson, 1962) 50-51. *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis Monachi de Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1964) 134.

Robert's anxiety to emphasise how important this historical event is for his own society is emphasised by his application of the technique which he has been shown using before: the use of the adverb 'ȝut'. Not only, Robert makes plain, did Alfred have this honour bestowed upon him by the pope (a personal blessing which is operative through his descendants, it is made clear) but so did 'þe kinges croune of þis lond'. As has been discussed earlier, 'þis lond' about which Robert speaks, is England, and its crown, he asserts, 'in þis lond ȝut is'. It is uncertain whether Robert refers to a literal or abstract crown, but what is of importance is that he considers it to be still in his country, and to be an English crown, not French, Norman or British. By acceding to, or wearing, this crown, the monarch thus lays claim to the authority invested in Alfred, if he is in the line of descent from this king. This statement also reveals that Robert understands the monarch to be not only king of England, but of all the people within that defined area, of whatever 'nationality'. In this account, he is perceived as ruling over not only a defined geographical area, or a particular, identified, group of peoples, but over both, and over all those others, it is implied, who reside there. This may be another aspect of Robert's attempt to walk a path of desired 'national' unity. The English crown, he maintains, is the only insular crown to have true authority, by virtue of being invested with sacredness by the pope in Rome; thus, the Welsh ought to accept the sovereignty of this, the supreme crown within the islands. Welsh belief in the mystical kingship of Arthur is an impediment to the achievement or reinstatement of this political ideal. The Norman usurpation of the country is a similar obstacle.

Alfred is a key figure in Robert's perception of monarchic control of the kingdom. He is the root from which all kings of England must derive. This is made clear in the chronicle in the interpretation of Edward the Confessor's death-bed prophecy. Edward's vision of a green tree which is cut in half, but eventually reunites, flowers and bears fruit, was seen as a

prophecy of the troubles which would distress the land after his death, and their eventual

cessation. In his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury considers the first half of

the prophecy (the severing of the tree) to have been fulfilled, but sees no end to the miseries

which afflict his country.[190] In contrast, Robert, following the interpretation given by Ailred

of Rievaulx in his *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*,[191] identifies the green tree as the royal

house of England, and furthermore explains the nature of the tree's roots:

> Þe more bitokneþ þe riȝte kunde . þat ech of oþere come.
> Fram king alfred þe kunde more . þat verst was yeled at rome.
> (7242-43)

The key to the reuniting of the tree is thus given: the royal house must remain true to the

house of Alfred.

The ultimate source for the anointing of Alfred as king by the pope is the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle, which account was then incorporated into Asser's life of the king. A letter also

survives addressed to Alfred's father Æthelwulf, from Leo IV (pope 847-855) relating the

nature of the ceremony in which Alfred participated:

> ...we have decorated him, as a spiritual son, with the dignity of the belt [or sword] and
> the vestments of the consulate, as is customary with Roman consuls.....[192]

The authority of this letter has been challenged, and the proposal put that it is an eleventh-

century forgery commissioned by Pope Gregory VII in order to establish feudal relationships

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[190] *Willelmi*, Stubbs 277-78.

[191] Ailred of Rievaulx, "Historia Regum Anglorum," *Patrologia Cursus Completus 195*, ed. J. P. Migne (Turnholti: Brepols, 1979) 711-738.

[192] *Alfred*, Keynes and Lapidge 232.

with William the Conqueror.[193] The manner in which the heir apparent, Alfred's nephew

Ethelwald Clito, was passed over to allow for the accession of this king was unusual for the

time,[194] and it may be indeed that the legend regarding Alfred's "coronation" at the hands

of Leo IV was promulgated in order to legitimise his succession.

There is, then, a history of (mis)interpretation and manipulation in the portrayal of Alfred's

first visit to Rome, beginning (apparently) almost immediately upon the occurrence of the

events involved.[195] Robert is therefore not unusual in using this episode for his own

purposes. It had also been incorporated into the work of earlier chroniclers,[196] but its

interpretation to mean that as a consequence of this ceremony, Alfred was the first "perfect"

king of the country is adopted from Ailred's *Genealogia* and adapted by Robert to further

his own ends. The importance of Ailred of Rievaulx as a source might be noted here. As an

influence upon the chronicle, the works of this abbot have been little emphasised, and his

importance as a writer of English history has been under-rated. Ailred was descended from

a family heavily imbued with, and influenced by, the Anglo-Saxon past of the country.

Ailred's great-grandfather, Alfred Westou, was sacrist and keeper of St. Cuthbert's shrine

at Durham,[197] and Ailred himself was adopted into the Scottish court of King David. David's

sister, Matilda, married Henry I. This marriage was considered a political move by the king

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[193] *ibid*

[194] Edward Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chroniclers* (London: Elliot Stock, 1900) 15.

[195] This anointing ceremony is mentioned in both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser's *Life of Alfred*. Although the dating of the latter text, and its dependency upon the former, has been the subject of some academic discussion, this does not detract from the importance of Robert's inclusion of material ultimately derived from these sources. By so doing, he reflects a similar ideological allegiance to the house of Wessex, particularly to its claims to be the founding dynasty of the English monarchy.

[196] See *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia: Historia Regum*, ed. Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series, 2 vols. (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1965) I, 72. *Chronica: Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series, 4 vols. (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1964) I, 36. *Willelmi*, Stubbs 109.

[197] Aelred Squires, *Aelred of Rievaulx: A Study* (London: SPCK, 1981) 5.

because Matilda was a direct descendant of Edgar Atheling (grandson of Edmund Ironside). In making such a union, Henry was forging a link between the Norman and pre-Conquest royal houses.

Ailred's historical works, particularly the *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*[198] and the *Vita Edwardi Regis et Confessoris*,[199] illustrate how his upbringing was to affect his views of national history. Both texts are dedicated to King Henry II, and both emphasise the importance of the connection made between the Norman and Anglo-Saxon lines with the marriage of Henry I to Matilda.[200] In Ailred's account, their culmination is in Henry II, and he holds up Henry's English predecessors as models of virtue to be followed. The Norman kings are omitted from the *Genealogia*, and the *Vita* lauds the saintly Anglo-Saxon ancestor of the new king.

Robert by no means slavishly incorporates material from Ailred's writings, merely adopts viewpoints from this earlier pro-English historical writer which sustain his own narrative. Robert's concerns are essentially with the workings of his present-day society; he thus merges the material which he gains from Ailred's works in his own and also transcends it. In choosing to include the incident of Alfred's anointing, for example, and in interpreting it in the way he does, Robert diminishes the standing of those monarchs who preceded Alfred. He also fixes his contemporary monarchy in a clearly English past, and recognises the necessity of the coronation of all future kings by the archbishop in order to claim legitimacy, and therefore ensure peace.

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[198] *Patrologia Latina*, Migne, vol. 195 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1979) 711-738.

[199] *ibid* 738-790.

[200] *ibid* 738.

iii. Ideal Kingship

Robert's ideas on inauguration are consistent with coronation procedures in the thirteenth century. The English coronation *ordo* stemmed directly from Anglo-Saxon models. The 'Anselm' *ordo* by which Henry III was crowned to office, for example, was a late eleventh / early twelfth-century revision of the tenth-century 'Edgar' *ordo*. One essential alteration to this was that the chrism used to anoint the new ruler was replaced with a less holy oil to emphasise that kingship was distinct from the priesthood. Nevertheless, the anointing ceremony was intended to elevate the standing of the king above the layman. That the status it conferred was a live issue in the thirteenth century, is illustrated by a letter from Robert Grosseteste to Henry III which discusses sacerdotal and kingly powers.[201] The coronation procedure itself aided the idea of an historical continuity emanating from the Anglo-Saxon era. William the Conqueror had himself crowned in the same manner as the king he wanted to identify as his predecessor: Edward the Confessor. By this, he intended to legalise his right to the throne, and the words were therefore retained in the *ordo* that he held office *hereditario iure*.[202] The three-fold Anglo-Saxon *promissio* of the king to his subjects was also retained in the coronation oath, so, the duties imposed upon the thirteenth-century monarchs at their accession were derived from the earlier period. These were, firstly, to preserve the peace and protect the clergy and the people; secondly, to maintain good laws and abolish bad ones, and lastly, to ensure the equitable administration of justice to all

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[201] cf. Letter cxxiv in *Roberti Grossetesti Episcopi Quandam Lincolniensis Epistolae*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series (London: HMSO, 1861).

[202] P. E. Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937) 27-28.

men.[203] The maintenance of this *promissio* is central to Robert's concerns throughout the chronicle.

In his treatment of Alfred, Robert emphasises another aspect of English kingship which was implicit in the coronation procedure: that the monarch was the king of England, and was part of a long line of kings stretching back to the Anglo-Saxon era (where this procedure was initiated). In Robert's interpretation, this point of origination is placed more precisely in the days of Alfred. Robert's interest, it must be stressed (including his ideas about kingship), lies essentially in post-Conquest political ideology. It is this which he constructs in the chronicle, giving it validity by his calculated misrepresentation of Anglo-Saxon history.

Within the chronicle, it is only in the context of succession disputes which occur after Edward the Confessor's death that the force of Robert's argument regarding legitimate succession can be fully understood. By an application of Robert's criteria, Cnut, Harthacnut and Harold I are dismissed as illegitimate kings:

> Kinges of denemarch . in þis manere were.
> Kinges here of þis lond . kinges ech after oþer.
> Þe sone verst after þe fader . þe broþer after þe broþer.
> & engelond was out of kunde . six & tuenti ʒer.
> In pine & worre & sorwe inou.
> (6672-76)

They disrupt the royal line from its rightful course. So do Harold Godwinsson, William the Conqueror and William Rufus. This Robert makes clear by reference to the late King Edward the Confessor's prophecy:

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[203] *ibid* 196.

Þat tre [was] ismite fram þe more . ouer þre londes brede.
Vor þre kinges were of engelond . of vnkunde sede.
Verst harald þe quene broþer . & willam bastard al so.
& suþþe is sone willam . þe rede king þer to.
(7246-49)

The importance of a king's descent from Alfred lies, for Robert, in the miseries which the

succession of a wrongful king brings to the country. Robert does not need to detail his

reasoning for this thinking. He creates Alfred as a model of kingship and all deviations from

this model are self-signalling. By describing the anointing of Alfred, he makes clear that the

accession of a monarch who does not have such heavenly approval causes a breach in the

proper order of the universe. This inevitably results in troubles descending upon the

kingdom. Robert indicates the certainty of this when he reveals that Edward the Confessor

has chosen William (an 'unkunde' king) as his heir:

Þo was þer deol & sorwe ynou . of men þat wuste þat cas.
Vor hii wuste þat to engelond . muche wo to come was.
Worre & sla3t & oþer wo . & honger & gret won.
(7178-80)

Misfortune is predicted. The assumption is made that the people of the land in the text are

as conversant with Robert's abstract perception of correct kingship as himself. By his

application of the explanatory suffix 'bastard' to William, Robert not only reinforces in the

mind of his audience William's illegitimacy of birth, but also the illegitimacy of his reign.

Robert constantly reminds his audience of the qualities which ensure that a king is 'kunde'

because, in his account, Edward the Confessor's prophecy has been fulfilled; the divided tree

has been reunited with its root, and thus the kings of Robert's own era are 'kunde'. This is

enabled by the merging of the English and Norman lines after the marriage of Henry I to

Matilda of Scotland:

> Seint Edwardes nece . þat of is fader kunde com.
> & of þe riȝt kunde of engelond . king henry to wiue nom.
> Þat was mold þe gode quene . þat in gode time was ybore.
> Þe smot uerst þis tre aȝen to is kunde more.
>   (7252-55)

As a result of this - and a point to be elaborated by Robert to support his pro-English stance - the countries represented by these two members of royalty are united. King and country are thus fused, because for Robert's literary portrayal of 'England' an 'English' king is needed as its head:

> & normandie þoru þe king . & þoru þe quene engelond.
> Iioyned were þo kundeliche . as in one monnes hond.
>   (7256-57)

In this manner the foundations are laid for his presentation of a contemporary England, and, significantly, for his presentation of the English crown as the only available legitimised crown under which the peoples of the islands should group themselves, and take their place in the heavenly hierarchy under the kingship of God. Robert informs his audience of this union immediately after he recounts Edward's prophecy (indeed he makes allusion to this earlier after the death of Edmund Ironside (6467)). The historical moment is thus pre-empted so that the period between Edward's death and Henry's marriage (the reign of the Norman kings) may be interpreted as a time of ill-fortune for the country.

Robert is consistent, both before and after this point of union, in isolating wrongful kings and in emphasising that a legitimate king has been correctly anointed. He implements a formula. to clarify this. This concentrates upon the moment of heavenly dispensation: the coronation. So Richard's coronation is recounted:

Þe verþe day of septembre . he let him crouny iwis.
At westmunstre hasteliche . as þe riȝte crouninge is.
Of þe erchebissop of kanterbury . baldewine þat was þo.
(9906-08)

John's is narrated in a similar fashion:

He let him crouni king . an holi þorsday iwis.
At westmunstre in þe abbeye . as þe riȝte crouninge is.
Of þe erchebissop of kanterbury . Hubert þat was þo.
(10,100-02)

The element of individuality in the coronation formula, or theme, notes deviations from the

norm or points of particular consequence. Richard is thus crowned 'hasteliche', whilst the

occasion of John's ceremony on Holy Thursday (Ascension Day) is recorded.[204] In narrating

the details of the monarch's coronation, Robert displays an interest in the correct relocation

of power (a king's death does not warrant so much attention), and his descriptions of the

king's eligibility through the coronation procedure provides the audience with a convenient

means by which to assess the details for themselves. Hence a succession of kings are shown

participating in this ceremony. So William the Conqueror:

.... him let crouny king.
At londone midwinter day . nobliche þoru alle þing.
Of þe erchebissop of euerwik . aldred was is name.
(7548-50)

William Rufus:

he let him crouni king.
Biuore misselmass he was icrouned . þre dawes & nanmo.
Of þe erchebissop of kanterbury . lanfranc þat was þo.
(7854-57)

Henry I:

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[204] The chronicler's inclusion of this fact may again be an attempt by him to emphasise the holy nature of royal accession. The anointing of John to the throne is thus compared with the elevation of Christ (the king of heaven) to heaven; the divine nature of kingship is, in this manner, highlighted.

> ...þo wende he anon.
> To westmunstre & was icrouned . king þe verþe day.
> Of þe bissop of londone . as to him bilay.
> (8711-13)

Stephen's coronation, because of its disputed nature, warrants more detail. The chronicler stresses that the correct procedure has taken place, but also demonstrates that a dislocation has occurred in its application to an incorrect heir. The candidate is wrong, causing the ceremony to be 'sinuolliche'.

> A seinte steuenes day anon . þe croune verst he ber.
> & þe erchebissop of kanterbury . willam þat þo was.
> Sacred him as was riȝt . wel sunuolliche alas.
> Vor he was þe verst . as riȝt was and wone.
> Þat holde oþes to þe emperesse . suor & to ire sone.
> (9145-49)

Henry II's coronation is likewise incomplete, on this occasion, in detail. The archbishop of Canterbury does not participate in the ceremony, so causing a breach in 'right law and custom':

> & sixtene ȝer he was old . þo he was icrouned ich wene.
> Þe erchebissop of euerwik . & þe bissop of londone.
> & of salesbury him crounede . aȝen riȝt & wone.
> Vor þe erchebissop of canterbury . mid riȝte it ssolde do.
> (9737-40)

Robert's formulaic mentality as demonstrated at these instances in the text, presupposes a corresponding method of thinking in his audience. They are expected to recognise deviances from the correct procedures as built up throughout the chronicle. Such an interactive role is required of the audience in the account of Henry II's coronation. The obligatory role of the archbishop of Canterbury is clearly expressed here. Robert's concern to see that the coronation has been conducted correctly may stem from the understanding that the

coronation was only considered to have its due effect if all of the forms had been observed and nothing omitted.[205]

Correct and rightful kingship is not dictated in the text by coronation procedure and blood-right alone. Personal virtue and law-making (and keeping) capacities are also qualities which the ideal monarch should have. The former of these ancillary requirements emanates from Robert's Christian concerns, and therefore refers to universal Christian qualities rather than isolating any specific period of history as a source. Edgar, for example, reigns over a particularly prosperous country:[206]

> He broȝte al þat lond in pes . þat er was in striuing.
> He vndude alle þe luþer lawes . þat me hold biuore.
> & gode lawes broȝte vorþ . þat er were as uorlore.
>   (5691-93)
> Þe erþe ȝeld betere & þet weder . was murgore bi is daye.
> & lasse tempeste in þe se . þan me er ysaye.
>   (5696-97)

The 'godnesse' of Edgar is something which Robert goes to some length to expound: his reinstatement of Dunstan; his help to the Benedictine reformers; his raising of abbeys; the respect he gains from the Welsh and the Scots. Like Alfred, he is set out as a model for future kings to emulate. From this analogy, it is then determined that a king must not only be legitimate but be a good Christian man in his own person, and listen to the counsels of wise Christian men - saints - such as Dunstan. This model is crystallised by the discussion of its anti-type. That the Christian virtues evident in Edgar are not coterminous with blood-

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[205] Schramm, *English Coronation* 10.

[206] This idea may emanate from Ailred of Rievaulx's "Genealogia Regum Anglorum," *Patrologia Latina 195*, ed. J. P. Migne (Turnholti: Brepols, 1979) 726-30.

right and coronation, and indeed, that their absence will cause miseries for the country, is made apparent during the narrative of Ethelred's reign, for example.

When discussing the failures of this king, Robert also intimates that all people are bound by the laws governing coronation which have been implemented since Alfred's accession to the throne. Dunstan, for example, is loath to crown Ethelred the Unready because of the murder of his elder half-brother, Edward (the Martyr). Osbern's life of the saint reports that there was such a reluctance to crown this king,[207] but Robert's exposition of this event applies his own criteria to the scene and explores this point of tension. Dunstan is archbishop of Canterbury and therefore cannot deviate from his duty as outlined at the time of Alfred's anointing; he must crown Ethelred as he is the legitimate heir (by hereditary right, if not morally):

þis godeman seint dunston.
Hatede muche to crouny him . ȝif he it miȝte forgon.
Ac þo it moste nede do . þoru pur londes lawe.
(5902-04)

The archbishop too, Robert makes plain, is constrained by the country's laws, and cannot avert the disaster which he prophesies is to befall the land, because of the sins of Ethelred's mother, by omitting to crown him to office.

iv. Kingship and the Law

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[207] cf. Osbern's "Life of Saint Dunstan," *Memorials of Saint Dunstan: Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series (London: HMSO, 1894) 114-115.

Robert's concerns about personal Christian virtues are probably generated by his clerical interests, but he also demonstrates how the maintenance of good laws is an essential aspect of kingship.[208] Robert identifies how Edgar undoes the 'luþer laws' held by his predecessor (Eadwig) and brings forth (reinstates: 'þat er were as uorlore') 'gode lawes'. The chronicler is, once again, particular to make note of most kings' capabilities or failings in this respect. The concept of 'luþer lawe' enters the narrative early, with Constance ('a luþer man' (1828)), and is developed throughout the chronicle to be seen as a characteristic of a bad king. The expectation that the king should uphold just laws is, as has been seen, an element of the three-fold *promissio* in the coronation *ordo* and ultimately had its roots in the Anglo-Saxon period. Whilst the concept of king-as-law-giver does not emanate solely from the reign of Alfred in the chronicle - in that laws are associated with kings sporadically from the outset of the chronicle; Arthur, for example, amends the laws of his kingdom (3736, 3866) - Robert makes an attempt to locate the best laws for the country's governance in his time:

> Þey me segge þat lawes beþ . in worre tyme uorlore.
> Nas it noȝt so bi is daye . vor þei he in worre were.
> Lawes he made riȝtuolore . & strengore þan er were.
> (5389-91)

This is the first of two mentions regarding the law-making capacities of Alfred, and Robert seeks to stress what he perceives to be their originality at the time:

> So þat by pur clergye . as riȝte lawes he vond.
> Þat neuere er nere ymad . to gouerny þis lond.
> (5396-97)

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[208] There may be an element of clerical interest here too, for the effect of the law was equally upon the Church as the people. The first clause in the Magna Carta is related to the protection of the Church, for example. *Magna Carta: Text and Commentary,* ed. and trans. A. E. Dick Howard (Charlottesville: Virginia UP, 1964) 20.

In using the double negative ('neuere', 'nere') Robert emphasises the uniqueness of this event, and fixes the creation of strong and 'riȝte' laws in the reign of Alfred. As a king whose importance for his contemporary society Robert seeks to promote in the chronicle, Alfred is credited with the creation of good laws because he considers this to be a major aspect of kingship and wishes to present Alfred as an ideal king.

Throughout the chronicle, that which Robert terms 'law' has a variety of functions. It is, for example, 'law' which (together with an element of election) governs the succession of a new king. The primary adjunct of 'law' is portrayed as peace. A king who abolishes bad law and maintains good therefore ensures peace in the land and is, by analogy, a 'good' king. William Rufus, Henry I, Stephen and Henry II all promise to change evil laws for good,[209] although two of these, it is commented, break this vow (Rufus and Stephen). Henry II is the first king in the chronicle to make a charter of his laws, but there is a certain scepticism about its usefulness:

> he vndude þe luþer lawes . & grauntede alle þe gode.
> Þat sein tomas esste . as hii vnderstode.
> Of forest & of oþer þing . þat is elderne nome amis.
> He vndude & þer to . is chartre made iwis.
> Ac after is daye iholde. febliche it was.
> Of king Ion & of oþere . & naþeles þer nas.
> Non of hom at some time . mid wille þei it nere.
> Ne grauntede & confermede it . *þei it lute wurþ were.*
> Vor mani is þe gode bodi . þat aslawe is þeruore.
> [My italics]
> (9808-16)

The course of law-making does not, in Robert's understanding, run smoothly. In his declaration that the charter of Henry II was a fundamental part of King John's Magna Carta

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[209] cf. lines 7932; 8726-8728; 8718; 9171;9601.

he is, however, historically correct. It became customary for the Magna Carta to be reissued

at the first meeting of parliament after the king's accession,[210] although Robert seem to

strongly doubt its efficacy. Such a concern with kingship and law maintenance places the

chronicler firmly into a thirteenth-century milieu. The poem *The Song of Lewes* - thought

to have been composed soon after that battle in 1264 by an Oxford friar - declares that it is

necessary for the king himself to observe the country's laws. With reference to the Earl of

Gloucester, the comment is made:

> *Quicquid libet licitum dixit, et a lege*
> *Se putat explicitum, quasi major rege.*
> *Nam rex omnis legitur legibus quas legit;*
> (He calls lawful whatever he wills, and thinks himself absolved from the law, as
> though he were greater than a king: for every king is ruled by the laws which he
> enacts.)[211]

This author's stance is, however, more revolutionary than Robert's. He declares, after citing

the Biblical examples of David and Saul as kings who were punished for ignoring the laws,

that *'[q]uod non potest regere qui non servat legem'*.

From the reign of King John, the concept of the 'gode olde lawe' is first introduced into the

chronicle, and it is this which the barons ask John to maintain:

> þe barons .... nolde it þolie noȝt.
> Ne þe luþer lawes þat he huld . ac bede him wiþdrawe.
> Is luþer wille & granti hom . þe gode olde lawe.
> Þat was bi seint edwardes day . & suþþe adoun ibroȝt.
> Þoru him & þoru oþere . þat were of luþer þouȝt.
> (10,492-97)

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[210] Schramm, *English Coronation* 61.

[211] *Political Songs,* Wright 94, lines 443-445.

The Magna Carta does make a reference to the *'antiquas et rectas consuetudines'* ('ancient and just customs') of the land,[212] and the *ordo* similarly makes mention of the old laws which are to be preserved.[213] Here Robert locates these traditions firmly in the reign of the last rightful Anglo-Saxon king (Edward) as, indeed, does the coronation *ordo*. In the chronicle, Robert does not uphold Edward the Confessor as a law-maker; he merely states that the laws reinforced in the Magna Carta were those which were around in the reign of this king. Alfred is retained as the king whose dedication to law-making Robert admires, and he thus sets the standards for those kings who follow. It is from these standards that Robert makes it clear that he perceives his more contemporary kings to have slipped (see chapter four).

v. A Failure in the Line of Succession: The Death of Edward the Confessor

The Anglo-Saxon era terminated (politically at least) at the Norman conquest. In the chronicle, the reigns of the Anglo-Saxon kings Alfred and Edgar are presented as golden ages of kingship. Robert's account of the termination of this era - in which the controlling elements of monarchy were, by his interpretation, instituted - therefore yields further information regarding his attitudes towards that period, and also to the ones which follow.

The Anglo-Saxon era ended with Edward the Confessor's inability to provide an heir for the throne. Historically, and by the criteria discussed above, the next king should, therefore, have been the nearest legitimate male relative. Edward's decision as to whom to elect as his

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[212] William Sharp McKecnie, ed., *Magna Carta: A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1914) 398. *Magna Carta*, Howard 44.

[213] In the revised 1308 coronation *ordo* prepared for Edward II's accession, the wording was altered so the king swore to uphold the laws of Edward I, not of Edward the Confessor, and to maintain just, rather than old, laws. Schramm, *English Coronation* 206.

successor is narrated in the chronicle as a time of some anxiety for him. The safety and peace of the land, he realises, are at risk, especially when his chosen heir, Edward (son of Edmund Ironside) dies, leaving behind three young children. Robert describes Edward being faced with the same dilemma that he shows Henry I facing in 1135: the accession of a child-king, or a deviance from the true line. The law of primogeniture is one which Robert upholds throughout the text, and, in the absence of a suitable male heir for the king (unsuitable, most frequently, by reason of youth) he often seeks to explain the digression from the direct line of descent. Eadred's accession is thus described:

> Edred was þo king anon . after edmund is broþer.
> Vor is tueye sones so ӡonge were . þat me ne miӡte abbe hor noþer.
> (5638-39)

Similar explanations are provided in Edward the Confessor's reign. This king's caution about the succession of his nephew's son, Edgar Atheling, elucidates Robert's monarchic theories:

> Vor þet child was wel ӡong . eir & king to be.
> & he wuste þat in þe lond . much wo me ssolde ise.
> (7052-53)

Although he is the legitimate heir, the accession of the young king, it is recognised, will cause more disruption to the land than the enthronement of another male relative. Edward's disconcertment - as well as that of the people of the land - when faced with this dilemma, is reiterated by Robert (7062; 7106-09). Following William of Malmesbury, Robert presents Edward's choice of William the Conqueror as heir as a decision formed in the absence of a better alternative:

> He wolde þat is sone sone . after him king were.

Willam duc of normandie . riȝt lawe þei it nere.
Vor he was in is moder alf . next of is blod.
And þer nas non in is fader alf . þat þer to was so god.
(7056-59)

Although the chronicler does not pretend to be satisfied at this decision, he does make attempts to justify it. He feels obliged to acknowledge that this choice was not 'riȝt lawe', but demonstrates that, given the circumstances, there was no other option. When detailing this, he reinforces his statement by the formulaic structure of his lines. In the first line (7058), he explains William's connection to Edward by the maternal line; in the next line he makes a comparison to the dearth of satisfactory heirs on his father's side. Edward's choice is thus effectively - and not undramatically - presented to Robert's audience.

That Edward was making the best of a bad job, Robert seeks to assert. As his death draws nigh, he focuses upon the sorrows of the men close to the king:

Þo was þer deol & sorwe ynou . of men þat wuste þat cas.
Vor hii wuste þat to engelond . muche wo to come was.
Worre & slaȝt & oþer wo . & honger & gret won.
(7178-80)

The deliberate emphasis which Robert places upon the word 'wo' in this extract conveys the sense of horror which is felt at the death of this king. This sense of horror is furthered when, despite Robert's reassurance to his audience that 'Normandy' and 'England' are eventually united through the marriage of Henry I and Matilda (7256-57), he dramatically links the loss of Edward to the loss of the kingdom's happiness:

Al þe franchise of engelond . & al þe joye of blis.
Mid him was uaste ibured . þo me burede him ywis.
& þat me vond sone afterward . mid moni deoluol cas.
(7264-66)

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Dealing in absolutes ('al þe franchise'; 'al þe joye'), Robert portrays a situation of total deprivation for the country. In the *Life of St. Wulfstan* a similarly sensational approach is taken to the death of that holy man. The text reads at his funeral:

> their grief was neither feigned nor counterfeit, but tearful sobbing bore witness to the man's death, the ruin of religion, and the wretchedness of his native land.[214]

This type of response is generated by the association of particular, prominent, figures at a time of national crisis with national identity. Key figures become (at least in literary and historical texts) repositories for the hopes of the 'nation'. With their deaths - which herald the influx of foreigners - the nation's hopes are shown to falter. Fears for the future are thus projected in a superlative form.

To William's challenger to the English throne, Harold Godwinsson, Robert is uncompromising. Harold's claim is illegitimate. He has no right to the throne, and this view the chronicler strengthens in the terms which he has established earlier in the text. Thus Harold is not crowned king in the normal manner (that is, 'let him crouni king') but rather it is recorded that 'him sulue he let crouni king' (7269). By the manipulation of the formula, Robert gives force to this statement, here indicating the wrongful nature of Harold's succession: Harold's succession is self-recommending, not determined by the people.

Robert's stringent adherence to the criteria he has laid down is thus illustrated. Superficially, his disapproval of this king could be read as a pro-Norman statement as Harold's Anglo-Saxon descent does not positively affect his legitimacy. This is because Robert's belief in

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[214] *Three Lives of the Last Englishmen*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (New York: Garland, 1984) 145.

descent from Alfred stands as a greater principle of 'kunde'-ness. Harold has no such blood-

link to Alfred so he cannot govern the nation in peace:

> So þat harald was king . to wroþerhele þe kinedom.
> (7282)

The disruption of the land consequent upon Harold's accession is so exemplary that it leads

the chronicler to a general reflection upon the sorrows which England has previously

suffered, and those which it will again endure (and still does, by his interpretation):

> Much aþ þe sorwe ibe . ofte in engelonde.
> As ȝe mowe her & þer . ihure & vnderstonde.
> Of moni bataile þat aþ er ibe . & þat men þat lond nome.
> Verst as ȝe abbeþ ihurd . of þe emperours of rome.
> Suþþe saxons & englisse . mid batailes stronge.
> & suþþe hii of denemarch . þat hulde it al so longe.
> Atte laste hii of normandie . þat maisters beþ ȝut here.
> Wonne hit & holdeþ ȝut.
> (7324-31)

Robert expresses a sense of separation of himself (and his audience) from the Normans by

the phrase 'hii of normandie'; 'they', it is made clear, are not 'us'. Yet, it is William (the

Norman), who has the more 'riȝte' to the kingdom:

> uor seint edward him ȝef . engelond al so.
> & uor he was next of is blod . & best wurþe þer to.
> & uor harald nadde no riȝt . bote in falshede.
> (7366-68)

The comparison which Robert forces between William and Harold continues throughout the

era of disputed succession, similar literary techniques being used again and again (the

contrasting of their (il)legitimacy in corresponding lines, and language; the use of double

negatives) to illustrate the subtleties of the point in question. The culmination is, of course,

the Battle of Hastings. Robert here adopts the established pose in portraying the sinfulness

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of the English (they spend the night before the battle 'in glotonie . & in drinkinge' (7417))

and the piety of the Normans who 'criede on god uaste ./ & ssriue hom ech after

oþer'(7418-19).[215] But he also presents a unique view of the reason for the English defeat:

> Þus lo þe englisse folc . vor noჳt to grounde com.
> Vor a fals king þat nadde no riჳt . to þe kinedom.
> & come to a nywe louerd . þat more in riჳte was.
> Ac hor noþer as me may ise . in pur riჳte nas.
> (7494-97)

Robert's literary techniques of comparison reach a climax here. His regulations regarding

accession are also fully implemented to support his argument. The kingdom - and hence the

people - falls because of a wrongful monarch, and comes to a new master. Direct

comparisons to Harold inevitably cease here. Linguistic devices, the formulaic expressions

which contrasted legitimacy between the disputing successors, are here utilised with

reference to William alone to demonstrate the tension evident in his accession. The first

element is comparative ('in more riჳte was') whilst the second is negative ('in pur riჳte

nas'). In such a way the positive and negative aspects of William's succession are

juxtaposed. The employment of internal rhyme, or assonance ('more / pur') furthers what

is a striking poetic, and political, formula. The audience is forced to consider the

consequences of the accession of a king whose right to the throne, though not entirely

unjustified, was not correct either, and is made to feel apprehensive about the results of this.

In inverting much of that which is said about William as a more rightful heir than Harold,

this couplet is anticipatory of the ensuing diatribes against the Normans (see below) and is

a point of high tension in the chronicle.

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[215] See Stubbs, *Willelmi* I, 282 for this attitude.

vi. Norman hegemony and the Survival of the English Line

The author's erratic response to William is created because he cannot justify his succession. He is not a rightful king by all the criteria he has previously introduced into the chronicle. Throughout the succession dispute he supports an alternative candidate to the throne, the young prince, Edgar Atheling. This is the prince that Edward the Confessor passes over as an heir, in this account, in favour of William, because his youth is perceived to be a problem. The chronicler's bias is unambiguous, however, and he goes to the length of interpreting the explanatory suffix, 'atheling', for his contemporary audience, to reinforce the child's legitimacy:

> Þe gode trywemen of þe lond . wolde abbe ymad king.
> Þe kunde eir þe ȝonge child . edgar aþeling.
> Wo so were nexte king bi kunde . me clupede him aþeling.
> Þeruore me clupede him so . vor bi kunde he was next king.
> (7274-77)

As he did in his description of the woes which resulted from Edward the Confessor's death, the chronicler uses a limited vocabulary here in order to emphasise his point. The juxtaposition of couplets which employ the same rhyming pair (king / atheling) highlights the line of succession which Robert is interested in discussing at this point. In particular the second couplet, which contains an inverted repetition in its second line of that described in the line above, serves to make Robert's support of the 'kunde' heir, Edgar, as emphatic as possible.

Robert continues to propound the legitimacy of the young prince even after the succession of William. He ensures that the fate of this potential monarch - and the concomitant fate of the correct line of royal descent - is recorded. Edgar's retreat into Scotland is recounted,

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and no chance is missed to reinforce the fact that he 'riȝt eir was of engelond . & kunde to

be king' (7745) whenever his name is mentioned (7756-7557, 7630-7631, 7638). The true

line, Robert makes clear, is encapsulated in Edgar and his relatives. This having been

discussed, he can then return to the consequences of the Norman Conquest. To this subject

he has more than a little to contribute.

Robert's response to the Norman take-over of the land and the consequent suppression of

'English' identity, has been discussed in the previous chapter. The importance which Robert

perceives this historical watershed to hold for his thirteenth-century society is apparent from

the plethora of contemporary (present tense) remarks which it evokes in the chronicle. The

Conquest is presented as a pivotal time in the creation of the chronicler's own society. This

is particularly centred on his concerns with the oppression of the native English and the

English tongue. He understands that the root of his contemporary problems lies in William's

succession.

Robert's complaints do not focus solely upon the illegitimacy of William's kingship. The

Normans are criticised as intruders into English customs, and as deprivers of English

freedom. Robert's feelings about the foreigners are, however, at times ambiguous (the

character of William is painted in both a good and a bad light),[216] but vitriolic descriptions

intimate an underlying intolerance of their presence, or at least a posturing of this attitude.

After the victory at Hastings, Robert describes how many of the Normans atone for their

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[216] A similar response to William is also recorded in the Peterborough (Laud) chronicle for the year 1086 'we have set down these things against him, both the good and the evil, so that men may cherish the good and utterly eschew the evil, and follow the path that leads us to the kingdom of heaven; *Two Saxon Chronicles,* Earle and Plummer i 219.

sins by raising monastic foundations and churches (7588-01), but he reveals their outward appearance of penitent Christians is indicated to be a façade:

> So varþ monye of þis heyemen . in chirche me may yse.
> Knely to god as hii wolde . al quic to him fle.
> Ac be hii arise & abbeþ iturnd . fram þe weued hor wombe.
> Wolues dede hii nimeþ vorþ . þat er dude as lombe.
>   (7606-09)

Some notice has already been made of this passage as an example of Robert's anti-Norman attitude, but it also indicates that Robert's concerns are not dictated solely by clerical self-interest (see, as a comparison, his comments upon the imposed Norman abbacy of most English monasteries (7583-86)). A clerical stance is balanced in the text by a concern for the lay person, and hence of the general disruption of English inheritance by the Conquest. The wolf-like deeds of the Norman descendants are directed, he makes clear, against 'sely bonde men' not the religious orders (7610-11).

Further interest in the distress caused to the poor people of the land centres around one of Robert's key concerns in the chronicle: kingship. The crown-wearings of William the Conqueror - state occasions with prestige only slightly lower than coronation itself[217] - evince scathing remarks:

> Þre siþe he ber croune aʒer . to midewinter at gloucestre.
> To witsonetide at westmunstre . to ester at winchestre.
> Þulke festes he wolde . holde so nobliche.
> Wiþ so gret prute & wast . & so richeliche.
> Þat wonder it was wenene it com . ac to susteini such nobleye.
> He destruede þat pouere folc . & nom of hom is preye.
> So þat he was riche him sulf . & þat lond pouere al out.
>   (7722-28)

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[217] Schramm, *English Coronation* 32.

Both the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and William of Malmesbury's *Gesta* record the opulence

of these occasions, but with awe at the wealth displayed there. Robert seems to be unique

in his attitude. Such maltreatment of the king's subjects may be seen as an orthodox pastoral

concern of the Church, but it must also be seen as emanating from Robert's specific ideas

about kingship. Of the three-fold *promissio* of the coronation *ordo* the section of the oath

which is most overtly promoted in the chronicle is the second, that is, the maintenance of

good laws and the abolishment of bad ones. Here, however, in the discontent at William's

administration of his power, an inability to fulfil the first of the vows is expressed: to

preserve the peace and protect the clergy and the people. I do not profess for Robert any

intimate knowledge of the coronation *ordo*, but suggest a general understanding of its

requirements which provides him with a populist stick with which to beat William. The

king's failure to uphold this part of his coronation oath is elaborated slightly further on in

the text. The context is William's defeat of the Danes, having brought an army over from

the Continent to fight with him. However, 'þat folc of biʒonde se' (7757) remain in the

country, and the land cannot sustain them. The land is destroyed and the crops fail. The king

and his men, the chronicler reports, are unconcerned at this consequence of their arrival,

'vor hii wolde euere abbe ynou . wanne þe pouere adde wo' (7770). In this independent

insight, the sentiments expressed echo those of the earlier passage. The known source for

this section (the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) relates this scene with a different emphasis:

> *He ferde in to Englalande mid swa mycclan here ridendra manna 7 gangendra of*
> *Francrice and of Brytlande swa næfre ær þis land ne ge sohte swa þat menn*
> *wundredon hu þis land mihte eall þone here afedan. Ac se king let to scyfton þone*
> *here geond eall þis land to his mannon 7 hi fæddon þone here ælc be his land efne.*[218]

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[218] *Two Saxon Chronicles*, Earle and Plummer i 215-16.

an. 1085. [William's host] 'was so vast that men wondered how this land could feed such a host. The king, however had them spread over the whole country, quartering them with each of his vassals according to the produce of his estate.)[219]

The core of Robert's complaint is contained in this annal, but it is also resolved there. In his account, Robert removes the solution which the king provided to overcome this foreseen problem. This may constitute a real desire to present William as a bad king. I would suggest that it is also a rhetorical position, intended as a platform from which to denounce unacceptable practices of monarchy in general. It is therefore part of Robert's overall plan in the chronicle: to moralise regarding ideal kingship for contemporary purposes (see chapter four). This depiction of William's disregard for his subjects is thus a demonstration of how not to rule. From his position as a supporter of the English royal house, Robert's point is strengthened by the use of a Norman (non-English) anti-type.

vii. The Role of English Saints

Having considered Robert's treatment of these three specific chapters of history, I will now move to analyse the way in which he implements saints throughout the chronicle. This supplements his ideas about kingship, and aids his promotion of Englishness. The integration into the chronicle of parts of saints' lives also included in the SEL collections has been the subject of some academic dispute over the years. Hudson concludes that the "two" texts should not be considered together,[220] however, such research may prove useful when assessing the potential audience of these texts and the not unrelated consideration of usage.

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[219] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. G. N. Garmonsway (London: Dent, 1986) 216.

[220] Hudson, *An Edition* 53

It is not only the chronicler's inclusion in the text of saints who also warrant an entry in the SEL which needs attention. In ways which I shall discuss, the use he makes of saints - in particular, the mode of their selection - reinforces, and clarifies, Robert's concerns in the chronicle. A regional aspect of the text is also suggested..

Of primary interest is the fact that, of the forty nine saints given mention in the first-recension text, almost half derive from the Anglo-Saxon period, or have Anglo-Saxon affiliations (for example, Gregory the Great, Augustine). The remainder include four saints from the British period, Biblical saints, early Christian martyrs, founders of orders and six or seven post-Conquest saints. Many of these receive no more than passing mention. The existence and interaction of saints in past events precludes their exclusion from a historical narrative, perhaps most particularly if that interaction were a political one. Saints of all varieties (recluses, political advisers, apostles) will be found given a place in most medieval chronicles. William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and "Florence" of Worcester's *Historia Regum Anglorum* contain some fifty apiece; Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* contains approximately twenty, whilst even Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* has room for about ten. Robert's inclusion of saints in his chronicle is not therefore unusual in the genre in which he writes. What is individual to the text is the selection of saints made. There is a certain amount of overlapping between the saints which any collection of historical writers introduce into their works. This may be dictated by the author's particular religious interests, or, perhaps, the final use intended for a text. Saints whose lives may serve as exempla for a chronicle's intended audience may be chosen to reaffirm a model of existence which the chronicler is trying to convey. William of Malmesbury, for example, interjects a description of Anglo-Saxon saints into his narrative with the expressed intent that:

*Quia enim forensia et negotia bellica regum Anglorum huc usque contexui, libet
aliquantisper in sanctitate quorundam spatiari: simulque considerandum quateus
divinae pietatis fulgor ab initio fidei populum illum circumfulsent.*
Since I have hitherto recorded the civil and military transactions of the kings of
England, I may be allowed to expatiate somewhat on the sanctity of certain of them;
and at the same time to contemplate what splendour of divine love beamed on this
people, from the first dawning of their faith.[221]

William strives to reinforce the saintly character of Edward the Confessor who *'de quo ante
digressionem dicebam, minime degeneravit'* ('had by no means degenerated from the
virtues of his ancestors').[222] William thus shows an interest in pre-Conquest, Anglo-Saxon
saints, indeed the only post-Conquest saint he discusses is Anselm, whose canonisation did
not occur until around 1165, after the date of his chronicle's composition.

If Robert's intent in recognising a higher proportion of Anglo-Saxon saints than those who
lived before and after this period was analogous to that of William, then it would be
expected that similar emphasis would be placed upon the plethora of Anglo-Saxon saints
(some of them high profile, for example, Bede, Wilfrid) many of which he omits. These
include the many female saints (often daughters of kings) such as Hild, Etheldritha,
Sexburga and Ermengild about whom both "Florence" of Worcester and William of
Malmesbury write. However, the female saints who merit a place in the chronicle are only
six in number,[223] and only two of those issue from the Anglo-Saxon period: Edith and
Frideswide. This is worthy of some note, for the chronicler shows a regional preference in
the choice of these saints. Frideswide, as patroness of Oxford, may have been given

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[221] *Willelmi*, Stubbs I, 271; *William of Malmesbury: The Kings Before the Norman Conquest*, trans.
Joseph Stevenson (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1989) 200.

[222] *ibid* I, 271; *Malmesbury: Before the Norman Conquest*, Stevenson 208.

[223] Edith, Elene, Faith, Frideswide, Katherine and Mary.

attention because of the writer's knowledge of this city.[224] As patron saint of the nunnery at Wilton, Edith's inclusion may be purely a regional decision. Her name is mentioned in passing, but in noting Edgar's death, leaving amongst his children, Edward (the Martyr) and Edith. The holiness of the royal line is also stressed.

There are elements to suggest that regionalism plays a major role in Robert's inclusion of saints. Biblical and Roman saints aside, the saints from the chronicle can be located in an area focused in the (south-)west and south-west Midlands. Even those who appear upon first glance to have northern or south-eastern affiliations, can be shown on closer inspection to also have "Wessex" or Mercian links. Ælfheah, for example (archbishop of Canterbury, 1005-1012) was formerly a monk at Deerhurst (Glos.), a hermit in Somerset, and abbot of Bath. Cuthbert (monk and bishop of Lindisfarne) appears in the chronicle only in a vision to Alfred in the marshes at Athelney (5342-49). Oswald (king and martyr), another Northumbrian saint, whose body was translated to Gloucester (St. Oswald's priory) in 909 AD by Ethelfleda,[225] fights his last battle in the chronicle not in Maserfelth (Oswestry), in the marches of North Wales, but 'at þe toun of mersfeld . binorþe baþe' (4972). The same pattern continues with post-Conquest saints. Edmund Rich (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1233-1240) was educated, and later taught, at Oxford, and was 'of Abingdon'. Hugh of Lincoln was prior of the first Charterhouse at Witham (Somerset) before becoming bishop of Lincoln (around 1186). Richard of Chichester was born at Droitwich (Worcs.) and was one-time chancellor of Oxford.

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[224] Events which are unique to this chronicle (11,308 onwards) include the king's entry into the city of Oxford, and the riots which occur there.

[225] D. H. Farmer, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 369.

The plethora of associations with the south-west Midlands may result merely from the

concentration of religious houses in the Severn basin,[226] and the concomitant wealth of

saintly predecessors from those houses. Nevertheless, Robert's chronicle is unusual in what

is, undoubtedly, a regional saintly bias, particularly shown in his exclusion of most of the

Northumbrian saints.

Robert's selection of saints is also closely tailored to meet his needs, to emphasise his overall

plan in the chronicle. I would like to focus here upon those saints which occur after the re-

introduction of Christianity into the country with the arrival of Gregory's mission (597 AD).

These are twenty in number, and nearly all are connected with the monarchy of the country.

The exceptions to this rule are Æthelwold and Oswald (the Benedictine reformers),

Wulfstan, Ælfheah, Dominic and, perhaps, Egwine. Of the rest, six are proclaimed offspring

of kings, or kings themselves,[227] and the remainder are portrayed in advisory roles to the

monarch.[228] The cults of the saint-kings mentioned in the chronicle all retained a popularity

in the thirteenth century, particularly those of Edward the Confessor and Edmund the

Martyr, as these were identified as the patrons of England.[229] The chronicler may, then, be

appealing to popular taste, but he is also emphasising a perceived holiness of the royal line,

about whose correct descent, as has been seen, he is adamant. In this selection of saint-kings

there is again a regional interest: Robert excludes the large number of holy monarchs who

proliferated in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Many of the earlier royal saints emanated

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[226] Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 3.

[227] Edward the Martyr, Edmund the Martyr, Edward the Confessor, Kenelm, Oswald, Edith and Louis IX.

[228] I include Hugh of Lincoln and Richard of Chichester in this equation although only their deaths are recorded in the chronicle. As fairly recent saints, their royal connections may not have needed elaborating.

[229] *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* 147-8, 150.

from alternative royal lines to that of Wessex (Hilda, Sigebert, Werburga, for example). Alfred, the root of contemporary monarchy in this analysis, was a descendant of the Wessex line. Northumbrian, Kentish and East Anglian royal saints all belong to an era of a divided England, and it is the converse idea of unity which the chronicler propounds.[230]

The chronicler's belief in the mutually supporting (and, at times, converging) roles of the monarchy and the Church, in particular the essential religious element in the maintenance of kingship, is evidenced by the inclusion of these saints, but more especially by the large number of saints who are held up as advisers to the king. These stretch from Swithun - who counsels King Ethelwulf during some Viking raids, on which account: 'þe king was wel þe betere man . þoru hor beyre red' (5722) - to Edmund of Abingdon in the thirteenth century (see chapter four). Their role in Robert's historical narrative, and the importance attached to their advice, highlights his ideas about legitimate kingship. If a king is correctly chosen and anointed in the necessary manner, then, the chronicler implies, saintly intercession may occur at moments of 'national' crisis. So Swithun aids Ethelwulf in battle against the Vikings; prayers to Aldhelm miraculously provide a sword for the embattled Athelstan (5536), and Cuthbert appears in a vision to Alfred after his retreat into the marshes at Athelney to encourage him to victory. In recounting this last encounter, Robert follows William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum*. He mentions how it is the native saints of the country who have interceded for Alfred when his patrimony and kingdom had been usurped by foreign invaders:[231]

> Icham he sede Cuthbert . to þe icham ywent.
> To bringe þe god tydinges . fram god ich am ysent.

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[230] As one of the patron saints of England, Edmund the Martyr transcended these regional boundaries.

[231] *Willelmi*, Stubbs I, 125.

Vor þat folc of þis lond . to sunne hor wille al ȝeve.
& ȝut nolleþ hiderto . hor sunnen bileue.
Þoru me & oþer halwen . þat in þis lond were ybore.
Þat for ȝou biddeþ god . wan we beþ him biuore.
Vre louerd mid is eyen of milce . on þe lokeþ þeruore.
& þe poer þe wole ȝive aȝen.
<div align="center">(5342-49)</div>

The English saints, this speech makes clear, are active in invoking the aid of God for the

English king. In William of Malmesbury's account, it is God's recognition (unpetitioned)

of the *'indigenarum sanctorum meritis'*[232] which leads him to intervene on behalf of Alfred.

Thus the king defeats the Danes and baptises their leader, Guthrum. Robert stresses the

importance of the saints. In this intercession, they are a positive force in ensuring the success

of kingship, both living and dead. The importance of the prophetic utterances of the saints

is also encouraged by the space given to them in the narrative. Unlike Merlin's pagan

vaticinatory remarks, Christian foresight is shown to have a place in predicting the country's

future.

Robert again resorts to the use of models to emphasise monarchical and saintly cooperation.

The fact that saints only petition for the monarch if he is legitimate is never stated outright

in the chronicle. 'Bad' kings like Ethelred Unræd or Eadwig are often depicted ignoring the

counsel of a saintly figure (in these instances, Dunstan). Unrightful kings, such as Harold

Godwinsson or William Rufus, who do not receive the guidance of a holy person, are by that

token presented as bad kings. Once a formulaic discourse has been established in the

chronicle, deviation from it is self-signalling. Harold's loss of the kingdom, for example, is

related to his illegitimacy:

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[232] *ibid* I, 125.

Þus lo þe englisse folc . vor noȝt to grounde com.
Vor a fals king þat nadde no riȝt . to þe kinedom.
(7494-95)

There is no intimation that saintly help has been withdrawn at this moment of crisis, but, by

analogy to those other, rightful, kings who are divinely assisted in times of threat to their

kingdom, such a conclusion might be reached by a discerning audience.

It is Anglo-Saxon (English) kings, in particular, who are shown to be most favoured by

saintly intervention. This, of course, reinforces Robert's presentation of English kingship as

divinely ordained. He does, however, include a number of post-Conquest saints in the

chronicle. Of these, one is a monarch, and four others continue this inclination to politically

advise the reigning king. Two of these, however, are given no more than passing mention:

Richard of Chichester and Hugh of Lincoln. The birth and death of the former is recorded,

and the death only of the latter. No reference is made to the events of their lives. As both

were canonised in the thirteenth century (1262 and 1220 respectively), it is plausible that the

chronicler expected there to be some familiarity of these figures, and felt that they therefore

needed no further emphasis. Edmund of Abingdon (see chapter four) and Thomas Becket

stand out more particularly as holy men who guide and challenge the authority of their

kings. Anselm -'maister anselin' as the chronicler calls him (8723) - who conflicted with

William Rufus and Henry I, is not recognised as a saint (his canonisation was apparently

requested in 1163). Robert may not have been aware of the sanctification of Anselm, or he

may have extracted this excerpt from a work written before that time.

The two remaining "post-Conquest" saints (I use the term with caution as one straddles the selected period), are Wulfstan and Dominic. Despite the importance of Wulfstan as the last of the English saints, he is only allowed three lines of narrative, in which he defends Worcester castle (with God) from a siege of French knights (7914-16). The author clearly felt no great affiliation to the saint, omitting to raise him up as a defender of Englishness. This certainly argues against a Worcester provenance for the text.

The saints included in the chronicle reinforce Robert's polemic throughout the text. The selection reflects a regional bias, a concern with English sanctity in particular, and augments ideas about monarchy established elsewhere in the text. The selection which Robert makes further illustrates the concise manner in which he carefully applies sources to strengthen his own polemic.

Chapter Three

'Her after in þis boce . me ssal ihere al þis'

It is apparent that it is Robert's contemporary preoccupations which guide his historical priorities. In this chapter, therefore, I will concentrate upon the audience to which the chronicle is addressed. The consideration of audience is essential to an understanding of the chronicle's function. The preoccupations which the chronicler enforces in the text are directed towards a group of like-minded people, the 'imagined community' which was developed earlier (chapter one). That community was shown to be essentially English. It is an audience constructed both as an aid to Robert's promotion of Englishness, a foil to his ideas, and also, presumably, as a reflection of the extra-textual consumers of the text for whom Robert perceived himself writing. That is, Robert's political and polemical stance is unlikely to have been a mere idle phenomenon. In order, therefore, to gauge the nature of Robert's consumers, I will assess the textually created group of readers and listeners particularly in terms of their perceived literacy and social status. Of equal importance to an understanding of the chronicle's function is the author's position in relation to the textual audience. This will also receive some consideration. To provide a context for the discussion of function, I will evaluate this element of Robert's chronicle alongside authorial prefaces, or declarations of intent, from other chronicles (Latin and vernacular). Thus the chronicle will also be situated within its genre.

I will also continue to assess the way in which Robert's polemic is conveyed to the audience. This analysis will fulfill several roles. It will, for example, provide additional clues as to the

nature of that audience. It will also highlight the literary merits of the text. Such attention as Robert of Gloucester's chronicle has gained throughout its history has focused primarily upon its value as an historical source: it is often footnoted for the unique details it contains of the Barons' Wars in the 1250s-1260s. Those critics who have entered into a discussion of the work as a literary text have given the chronicle but passing notice, and are dismissive of its quality. Wright's reflection upon the text is symptomatic of this stance: 'it is as worthless as twelve-thousand lines of verse without one spark of poetry can be'.[233] More recent approaches to the text concentrate upon the wider schemes of the chronicle, and its place within its milieu, rather than emphasising the literary techniques it displays. In order to appreciate the literary talents of the author, we have to look beyond the 'metrical and stylistic monotony' of the text,[234] and study the way in which Robert deftly manipulates his language within the confines of his chosen metrical structure. His location of key words in stressed positions within the line and the previously mentioned utilisation of formulas are examples of these. It is from the absence of a literary methodological approach that this chronicle suffers in comparison to Layamon's *Brut*. However, a study of the literary, stylistic, form of the chronicle is of considerable importance to this chronicle. As there is very little definite identifying criteria for the author within the text, this approach offers the reader a method of recognising the writer by his style. Within this chapter I will therefore consider the elements which contribute to Robert's style. Textual allusions to scripture and the liturgy, the black-and-white characterisation of historical figures, his use of language, and the manner in which he positions the audience in relation to the text are aspects which will be discussed.

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[233] *Chronicle*, Wright xl

[234] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 80.

i. The Reception Mode of the Chronicle

The strongest impression which has so far been gained of the chronicler's perception of his audience is his understanding of their 'Englishness'. 'We englisse men' he addresses them near the outset of the chronicle, thus presenting any actual audience with their expected location in relation to the polemic of the text. This is to be 'englisse' by the criteria which is provided in the narrative, and to be so together with the author. His use of the collective pronoun 'we' immediately implies an intimacy between the author, the audience and the text. Robert's 'imagined' community is thus pronounced (I use this word in both its verbal and adjectival forms) at the beginning of the chronicle, not only in its wider, 'nationally' defined sense of a group of people identifying themselves with the concept of an 'England' existing without the text, but also in a more limited (but related) understanding of a sub-set of that larger 'community' existing in relation to the text alone. Robert heightens this textual familiarity by further use of plural pronouns. After relating the evil deeds of the Saxon host at the 'Feast of the Long Knives', for example, the narrator distances himself from events to comment:

> Þis were lo *vre faderes* . of wan we beþ suþþe ycome.
> Þat wiþ such trayson . abbeþ þis lond ynome. [My italics]
> (2696-97)

This insert strengthens the author's identity (or his attempts to construct an intimacy) with his audience. Consistently such parallels are drawn when discussing nationality designation. As has been addressed in chapter one, for example, his portrayal of the Normans is as an 'other', as a people who are not 'us'.

Rosamund Allen, analysing the intended performance method of Layamon's *Brut* (assessing

whether it was written for oral presentation or to be read by an individual consumer),

considers the use of the pronoun 'we' to be indicative of oral performance, in that a 'plural

enscripted audience' is being addressed.[235] Conversely, the occurrence of the second person

singular 'þe' is perceived as an address to a single recipient, and thus as an indication that

the text was not read aloud to a listening audience.[236] Her conclusions are that 'almost

certainly ... Laȝamon designed his poem to be heard'.[237] To reach these findings, Allen also

assesses the emphasis placed upon orality and literacy in the *Brut* and seeks to ascertain

whether the text may be divided into 'blocks' each constituting a single oral performance.

The difficulty in subjecting texts of the late twelfth - thirteenth centuries to such an analysis,

Allen identifies,[238] is that this period was one in which the written word was advancing as

a means of recording information. In the consequent move from orality as the medium for

the collective memory, a corresponding transition in modes of expression (formulas) was

slow to follow. Clanchy supports this theory, providing as evidence the use of the word

valete ('goodbye') at the conclusion of some early twelfth-century charters, written 'as if

the donor had just finished speaking with his audience'.[239]

Within vernacular literary works, the posture of an author addressing an audience is often

assumed. Clanchy explains that such an emphasis is a result of the fact that reading

'continued to be conceived in terms of hearing rather than seeing ... [it] does not necessarily

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[235] Rosamund Allen, "Counting Time and Time for Recounting: Narrative Sections in Laȝamon's *Brut*," *Orality and Literacy in Early Middle English*, ed. Herbert Pilch (Tübingen: Günter Narr, 1996) 74.

[236] *ibid* 71-72.

[237] *Ibid* 78.

[238] *ibid* 78.

[239] Clanchy, *From Memory* 253.

mean that the contents stem directly from oral tradition'.[240] The identification of apparent

oral diction in a text is often attributed to this perception of reading as an oral process. This

approach to oral diction in written texts may certainly have some validity, it does not,

however, encompass the reception method, strongly argued by Joyce Coleman, of the

presence of an audience listening to a book read aloud to them.[241] Coleman handles the

dichotomy of references to oral performance and to individual reading in a single text by

removing the concepts of orality and literacy from their traditionally assigned polarised

positions. So, she interprets the 'fictive orality' which Clanchy discusses as 'functional

aurality'; leaf-turning and listening are therefore *not* oxymoronic:

> Medieval people read publicly because they benefited from and enjoyed this
> experience. While illiteracy and book deprivation must certainly have influenced the
> development and persistence of the situation, these technological factors became deep
> background for what its practitioners perceived as an important cultural and social
> exercise.[242]

The physical presence of the book at medieval readings, Coleman demonstrates, played an

important role in the author's writing and the audience's responses to it. Both would be

aware of the permanence, and thus authority, of the text 'and of the author's role as

mediator of the traditions that text represented'.[243] One result of this is often the

construction of an author, or prelector,[244] in the text.[245] By creating such a textual figure, the

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[240] *ibid* 268.

[241] Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 57.

[242] *ibid* 64.

[243] *ibid* 88.

[244] This is the word which Coleman ascribes to the person reading the text to the listening audience, *ibid* 25.

[245] *ibid* 107.

author retains authority over his work. The narratorial role is enscripted to control the text's presentation.

Coleman's clearly argued approach to aurality in the later Middle Ages provides a constructive framework within which to assess the reception format that Robert envisaged for his chronicle. There is clearly also a polemical motivation to the creation of an enscripted audience. This is an option which none of these scholars discusses, but it is clearly an aspect of Robert's text. In invoking a company of 'englisse men' who are descended from the Saxons, and in including himself in this category, Robert places his reader or listener in a position of allegiance with himself. Elements of compatriotism are thus introduced, and the addressee is, voluntarily or otherwise, aligned with the author's identified 'national', and therefore necessarily political, position. The definition of monarchs as 'vre king', likewise emphasises the cohesion of the putative audience, positioning it as one community residing under a single leader.

The intended performance situation of Robert's chronicle is likely to have been that which Coleman analyses. Robert places an emphasis upon his text as a book (see below), and often uses verbs of oral communication both in relation to his own narrative ('telle') and to his sources ('yhurd'). Verbs which elucidate the written, and hence visual, nature of his tale hold an equivalent place: 'iwrite' and 'ise'. These verbs are most commonly incorporated into asides to the audience, and assume a formulaic manner. They are not constantly repetitive but assume one of a number of forms. As such, they contribute to the chronicler's stylistic signature. Examples of these phrases are as follows: 'ich wolle telle þat cas' (669), 'no tunge telle ne may' (270), 'as ich ȝow telle can' (215), 'as ȝe ssulle after yhure' (3440), 'as ich vnder stonde' (998), 'ȝe abbeþ yhurd þat cas' (3704), and so on. These formulaic

expressions have a role in controlling the oral delivery of the text to an audience. They are 'contemporary and functional';[246] they pursue a constant interaction between author, reader and listener. Their use indicates that an aural reception-mode was intended by the author. The formulaic nature of these phrases does not indicate that their use was purely mechanical. They certainly appear to have been drawn from the author's word-hoard, but their assistance to the narrative flow does not necessitate an originality of expression. As a selection of ready-made phrases, their function is to form a rapport with a listening audience.

The method of their construction is determined by Robert's septenary line. Consisting, in the main, of six or seven syllables, these phrases are ready-made to be inserted into one of the hemistiches of this line, and their positioning is determined by the chronicler's employment of rhyming couplets. They are either placed in the first hemistich to allow a narrative statement to fall in the second, rhyming position (*'þe deol ne may no tonge telle . þat þe king to him nom. / So þat to þe lasse brutayne . mid is sorwe he com.* [5070-71]), or occupy that latter position to complete a rhyming pair ('Of wilde bestes he let . þritti þousend quelle. / Of wilde foweles & of tame . *ne miȝte no tonge telle.*' [1211-12]). The rhyming couplets in which the formulas regularly appear are: cas / was, may / day and vnderstonde / londe. These rhyming pairs are not in themselves unusual; they also occur in the SEL, for example. It is the formulaic phrases which are often a part of them that makes them peculiar to Robert's work. In the SEL these couplets are constituted from the narrative account; that is, they are not usually part of direct authorial statements to a putative audience. This might be an indication that the SEL was written with a different reception method in mind. In Robert's text, formulas are utilised, and employed intelligently and contextually. The text is made less dense by these inserts, which aids the comprehension of

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[246] *ibid* 151.

an account of this length. In the SEL, by contrast, where the legends - though varying considerably in length - are necessarily shorter than the chronicle, the text is more succinct. Few deviations are made to address the audience or to reflect upon the action being recounted. In comparison, Robert's text reads with more familiarity. The presence of a controlling narrator guides the audience through the work. The audience is given a stance to adopt both in relation to the text and to the textual narrator, the position of which would be adopted by the prelector of the text.

The aural reception-mode enscripted by the author dominates his perception of his audience. They are delimited little by status, or literary ability. Coleman's research demonstrates that listening to a text read aloud was as much an enjoyable social experience for the literate as for the illiterate.[247] More particularly, she notes the way in which the esquires of King Edward IV entertained themselves 'in talkyng of cronycles, of kinges and of other polycez'.[248] Robert may therefore have envisaged his audience emanating from a wide social spectrum. The references which are made, on occasion, to extra-textual written sources to clarify a point or identify ancillary information (607; 646; 9986-7, for example) do not necessarily point to a literate audience. It is almost certainly a method by which Robert claims authority for his work. In the aural environment which Robert sets up, the knowledge of book-learning - if not the acquisition of it - is an essential element. By referencing other written sources, either directly, or by inference (by the use of the verb 'read', for example) the written traditions upon which Robert's narrative is based are given emphasis. To some degree these statements must be intended 'more to impress than to

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[247] *ibid* 31; 53.

[248] *ibid* 96. The source she uses here is the household book (*Liber Niger*) of Edward IV, dated around 1471.

educate the audience',[249] but it remains that the recipients of the text were expected to be literate-minded (appreciative of the authority of written testimony backing Robert's discourse) if not literate themselves.

This is confirmed by the fact that, in the text, directions to sources often take an impersonal form: 'þis was as me may in bok reden & ise' (646), 'as þe boc aþ itold' (9733), for example. These phrases indicate that Robert did not necessarily expect his audience to leave the oral reading to verify his information, but wanted them to be conscious of the authorities underlying it. Similarly impersonal allusions to oral sources ('as me haþ iherd ', 'of wam we spekeþ'), and to the narrator's position in relation to the facts ('as ich vnderstonde') contribute to the creation of an authoritative figure, the role of which is assumed by the prelector. Jean Blacker sees such imprecise and almost formulaic allusions to source material as characteristic of much early vernacular historical writing. This, she asserts, can in part be attributed to the fact that these works, not being written in Latin (the established and accepted language of authority) did not see themselves serving a documentary function (Blacker, *Faces of Time* 56). This is, perhaps, a factor concomitant with an anticipated oral delivery. The apparent confusion between the diction associated with oral and written sources which Robert reveals on one occasion ('as þe boc aþ itold') might also be generated by the expectation of this reception-mode. Robert may be referring to the oral delivery method of other books. In saying that some knowledge may be 'reden & ise' he similarly alludes to this mode of textual dissemination.

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[249] *ibid* 153.

The book forms an essential part of this means of learning. The audience might hear an orally composed recitation; what Robert emphasises is the stability, and hence authority, of the written word. To this end, the chronicler's own work is envisaged as a physical artefact:

In þe beginning of þis boc . me may rede & noȝt lye.
(4663)

The validity of the history, Robert believes, lies, in part, in its written format. Throughout his narrative, he encourages his audience to acknowledge, and appreciate, this fact. Phrases which he incorporates to this effect are: 'as me ssal sone rede' (56), 'we sulleþ hereafter in þise bok . telle of al þis wo' (56), 'her after in þis boce . me ssal ihere al þis.' (138). These asides have a dual function of maintaining audience interaction with the text, and bolstering the authority of the chronicle as a written work. They control the narrative flow - the audience is primed to receive the next section of the history - and, in most often assuming an impersonal form ('as me ssal sone rede'), they locate the audience as a listener of a written text. The manner of the text's performance is integrated in its dialogue.

From the aspects of Robert's text so far discussed, it can be seen that he gives his constructed audience little precise definition. Its essential nature is that it is 'English'; that it is an aural audience is also apparent. Delimitation by status cannot, however, be elicited from the last of these criteria as there is 'evidence that literate people with good access to manuscripts often chose to have them read aloud'.[250] The other factor which must have been determined by Robert as a delimiter of the recipients of his text is its composition in the English vernacular. As I discussed in chapter one, this language was understood by a wide

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[250] *ibid* 53.

section of late thirteenth-century society; I therefore suggest that the chronicler's design was to encompass and affiliate a self-selecting group of English-language sympathisers.

ii. The Social Status of Robert's Audience

This conclusion is supported by Robert's focus when he discusses various strata of society, therefore allowing an insight into his opinions of them. This focus is not upon any particular sector of the community, so the anticipated social background of his perceived audience cannot be determined. Robert's preoccupation is with all levels of society, and particularly, I will demonstrate, with the way in which their interrelation should operate for the benefit of the whole, for the 'community of England'.

This is made clear by the often moralising nature of the chronicler's viewpoint. Tales of past friction, or even conflict, serve as exempla for Robert's contemporary society. These are usually set aside from the main narrative by authorial comment upon a scenario, but are sometimes generated by the reflections of an 'historical' figure. Both techniques are used to enforce Robert's point when he displays the interdependence of the king and his knights. The episode which prompts this deliberation is the truce which the British king, Cassibel, proffers to Androge, the king of Kent, after a dispute leads the Kentish monarch to invite Caesar to the country to expel Cassibel. Having received Cassibel's offer of peace, Androge muses upon the situation which has brought the king to this plight:

> Vor it is ech prince iwis . & is king vileinie.
> To defouli is kni3tes . þoru wam he aþ þe maistrie.

Vor þe maistrie . nis noʒt a kinges . ne be no so god.
Ac kniʒtes þat vnder him viʒteþ . & ssedeþ hor blod.
(1329-33)

Robert then seizes upon this remark to add a cautionary note to his audience:

In þis manere was engelond . ibroʒt verst in seruage.
& þoru treson of þe sulue lond . verst ʒef truage.
Þeruore a king ne mai noʒt among is kniʒtes be.
To striue of is iugement . ac somdel him bise.
Þat he aþ to hom nede . he not wuche stounde.
Vor a such wille as ʒe iseþ . broʒte verst þis lond to grounde.
(1356-61)

How this opinion applies to the recipients of Robert's text - of whatever status - is evident.

The message reads that even the highest people of society are supported (and may therefore

fall) by those of a lower station. The relevance of this opinion within a late thirteenth-

century context is discussed fully in the next chapter.

In adopting this view of the community, Robert echoes the clerical writings of Wulfstan

(Archbishop of York 1002-1023). In his *Institutes of Polity* (written around 1023) Wulfstan

determines the duties of the people within a hierarchical structure which descends from the

heavenly king down to all Christian people. Within this hierarchy are two sections entitled

Concerning Kingship and *Concerning the Throne*. In the last of these, the community is

described as being supported by three pillars, those of the *oratores, laboratores* and

bellatores, the text then elaborates:

> *On þyssum þrym staþelum sceall ælc cyne-stol standan mid rihte on cristenre þeode*
> *7 awacie heora æniʒ sona se stol scylfð 7 fulberste heore æniʒ þonne hrysð se stol*
> *nyðer 7 þat wyrð þære þeode eall to unþearfe.*[251]
> Every throne, in a Christian nation must stand upright on these three pillars. And
> should any of them weaken, the throne will immediately totter; and should any of them

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[251] *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1840) 306-9.

shatter, then the throne will tumble down, and that is entirely to the nation's detriment.[252]

This is the same warning which the chronicler articulates in the first of his cautionary passages on kingship. The king's 'maistrie' he asserts 'nis noȝt a kinges' but the knights who fight for him. When they turn against the king, the second passage demonstrates, the country begins to suffer. The responsibility for the safety of the land, the text reads, rests upon both parties.

Robert's interest is to elaborate the mutually dependent nature of his Christian English community. He does not therefore isolate any group of people to address. He is conscious of the hierarchies of society, but he does not seek to erase them, he merely illustrates how each group of people has a designated role and responsibility within the overall structure. The common nature of experience which he exploits to reinforce the solidarity of the community exists within economic and social restraints. When the plight of King Leir after his rejection by his two elder daughters is narrated, the direct speech with which he laments his fall is only as universally advising as these restraints allow. The instructive statement is afforded a social boundary:

> Wel may a simple frankelein . in miseise him so bringe.
> Of lute lond wanne þer biuel . such cas of an king.
> (821-22)

Leir's lament is based upon his loss of land and property. In stressing the universality of his suffering, Robert therefore chooses the franklins for comparison. The franklins were the

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[252] 'Wulfstan's Institutes of Polity' in *Anglo-Saxon Prose* ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (London: Dent, 1993) 189.

lowest free landowners in the country.[253] Those with least social standing and, perhaps, least land are juxtaposed with the greatest and most powerful, to warn of the grievances which may befall a person of any, landed, social status. Robert thus shows himself conversant with the categorisations of his contemporary society, and is able to utilise them to dramatically, and most effectively, persuade his point.

The unlanded and the unfree are given space in the chronicle which reflects their situation within the community. As those to which least power pertains, they are often presented as the recipients of oppression. The hierarchical responsibilities of society are given to those above them to ensure their protection. In Wulfstan's *Institutes* an equitable relationship between the king and the people who represent the three defined "pillars" of the throne is recommended for its, and the country's, stability. As the lowest people of the land are apparently not regarded as a threat to the state, their protection is outlined as one of the prime obligations of the earls:

> ...wudewan 7 steop-cild hy scullon retan 7 þearfena helpan 7 þeowetlinჳan beorჳan . ჳif hi Godes willan rihte willað wyrcan.[254]
> They ... must comfort the widow and the orphan, help the poor and protect wretched slaves, if they wish to work God's will aright.[255]

The relationship is not viewed as reciprocal. The chronicler adopts a similar stance, but he emphasises this requirement by presenting its non-fulfilment:

> So varþ monye of þis heyemen . in churche me may ise.
> Knely to god as hii wolde . al quic to him fle.
> Ac be hii arise & abbeþ iturnd . fram þe weued hor wombe.

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[253] Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 26-27.

[254] *Ancient Laws*, Thorpe 318-21.

[255] *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, Swanton 192.

Wolues dede hii nimeþ vorþ . Þat er dude as lombe.
Hii to draweþ þe sely bonde men . as hii wolde hom hulde ywis.
Þey me wepe & crie on hom. no mercy þer nis.
(7606-11)

Robert's portrayal of the 'bondemen' as oppressed is not, however, necessarily an objective statement upon the need for the lowest sector of society to be protected, though this is certainly an element of his argument. Paramount to his discussion is his hatred of the Normans. The 'heyemen' who are shown neglecting their Christian duty here are specifically Norman (7537-41). The analysis of society which Robert provides exploits this fact. Not only is the maltreatment of the unfree in itself a crime, the chronicler states, but by its reverberations through the hierarchy, it might be considered endemic of the rottenness of the whole structure of society. This supports Robert's proposal of the moment: to illustrate the wrongness of the Norman acquisition of power.

Robert's concerns are continually double-edged, but it is clear that the bond men of society are not merely pawns which he uses to denounce the practices of higher sections of society. This is evidenced in his outburst against the bailiffs. During the account of the Barons' Wars, Robert recounts how the constable of Gloucester summoned a local baron, John Giffard,[256] to the hundred court at Quedgley. Giffard sent his armed men by proxy ('hi com bi asoyne' [11,156]) who excused ('asoynede' [11,158]) him by attacking the hundred court. This action leads the chronicler to reflect:

Þis luþer bailifs þat poueremen . so gret wo doþ ilome.
Suich Giffardes asoyne . icholde hom ofte come.

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[256] John Giffard, one of the Giffards of Brimpsfield, had a close association with St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester. He founded St. Peter's cell (Gloucester College) at Oxford. R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 47. In 1298, the control of the Oxford site was transferred from St. Peter's by Giffard and moved to Malmesbury. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1955) I, 27.

Distrust of the king's officials was common in the late thirteenth century.[257] It is doubtless

contributory to the chronicler's opinion here, but, it is also significant for an understanding

of Robert's social conscience that it is his wish ('icholde') that the poor people should

receive proper justice.

Robert does strive to illustrate that the 'bonde men' may contribute to the well-being of the

community. A contemporary observation to this effect is elicited by the battle between King

Ethelwulf and the Vikings:

> Þe deneys were al bineþe . & þat lond folc adde þe place.
> & more prowesse dude þo . þan þe king miȝte biuore.
> Þeruore gode bonde men . ne beþ noȝt al vor lore.
> (5235-37)

Even the highest members of society, Robert instructs, may, at times, need the support of

their lowest subjects. Therefore, he indicates, they should be treated with respect.

Just as the 'imagined community' which Robert constructs as his audience achieves little

specific definition throughout the chronicle, so, too, does the author's own identity. Robert

clearly perceives himself as a Christian English man committed to the furtherance of the

English language. He is, quite obviously, Latin-literate. His attitudes towards kingship and

baronial reform identify him as one familiar with the teachings of Oxford (as I shall discuss

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[257] It was the oppression by the sheriffs which resulted in the barons showing arms at the parliament of 1258 (David Carpenter, "What Happened in 1258?" *The Reign of Henry III*, ed. David Carpenter (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1996) 190. It was at the Michaelmas parliament of 1258 that the Ordinances of the Sheriffs was agreed; this placed these officials under new restrictions (J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 165. On 13 October 1260, the magnates were given power to correct offences committed by their own bailiffs (*ibid* 201). In Kent in January 1259, during the general Eyre, Bigod sent six bailiffs to gaol for misconduct (David Carpenter, "English Peasants in Politics 1258-1267," *Past and Present* 136 (August 1992): 24.

fully in chapter four), and he may indeed be the *magister* Robert of Gloucester, who was part of the *familia* of the bishop of Hereford (see introduction). These findings, however, are gleaned from a careful analysis of the chronicler's polemic, supplemented by contemporary records. There is no overt indication in the text of Robert's identity. It is, indeed, easier to categorise him by specifying those areas of the community with which he did not affiliate himself, than those with which he did. These include the Normans, the 'heye men', the bailiffs and, I would argue, the 'bonde men'.

iii. The Author and his Purpose

It has been remarked that Robert Mannyng's chronicle contains a more developed persona than Robert of Gloucester's chronicle.[258] This can be largely attributed, I would argue, to the tighter agenda to which Robert of Gloucester works - his approach is more detached and impersonal than Mannyng's - and also to his reliance upon formulas. His use of these, as discussed earlier, assists the reception of his text in an aural context. They create some familiarity with the audience, but nevertheless do little to humanise the author. The formulas are a façade which conceals his persona. The most pertinent instance of the author's reliance upon formulas is when the response of the figure 'roberd'to the darkness which descended over the Evesham battlefield after the death of Simon de Montfort in 1265 AD is recorded:

þis isei roberd.
Þat verst þis boc made . & was wel sore aferd.
(11,748-49)

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[258] Turville-Petre, *England* 15.

This is a statement which confirms the aural reception-mode for the chronicle. 'Roberd' is named here to clarify his difference from the I-voice of the narrative, which is assumed by its prelector. This Roberd 'þat verst þis bok made' is clearly the author. His identification at this point in the text is an appeal to the authority of eye-witness testimony. The use of the I-persona would not be sufficient here to claim first-hand knowledge as Robert expected this voice to be adopted by another person. As a claim of authorship, this reference fulfills the requirements set by other vernacular historical texts. The name of Wace is recorded in a similar manner in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Roman de Brut*: '*maistre Wace, ki fest cest livre*'.[259] This is taken up by Robert Mannyng in his chronicle when he remarks with reference to his source-text: 'Maister Wace þat made þys bok'.[260] Authorship declarations were frequently issued in the third person. The verb 'make' is also typically used with reference to the authorial process, and is applied with some precision to textual scholarship, not just composition or scribal work.[261] Robert's assertion therefore conforms to an established pattern. It is unusually, however, the only surviving reference to the author.

The elusive nature of the chronicler - the deficiency of details regarding himself, his location and intent - separates this work from other post-Conquest chronicles. The preface of these texts often declare the identity of the author, his patron (if any), sources, and the purpose for writing. Robert's chronicle does not contain any kind of preface.[262] In this respect, it is more akin to the annalistic historical texts such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and

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[259] *Le Roman de Brut de Wace* line 8.

[260] *Robert of Brunne*, Furnivall, line14,294.

[261] Margaret Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 13.

[262] All of the surviving chronicle manuscripts are incomplete. It can only be surmised whether they originally contained an authorial statement at their termination, in the manner of Matthew Paris' original 1250 ending of the *Flores Historiarum*.

"Florence" of Worcester's *Historia* than to the other Latin and vernacular works in this genre. Both of these works, despite the different methods of their composition, 'listed and explained'.[263] In contrast, Robert details the country's history in a narratorial mode. He has a heightened interest in cause and effect and in imposing an educative slant to the interpretation of events. His reticence about his identity is peculiar for an historical author with such a polemical intent. This can be partly attributed to the dissemination method Robert viewed for his text. If the work were intended to be read to various groups of people, and by someone other than the author, then the role of prelector (the text's mediator) would assume more importance than the identification of the author. There may also be some political motivations behind Robert's reticence in identifying himself, as I will discuss in chapter four.

Robert's self-effacement is such that he leaves few clues regarding his motivations for writing. He mentions no patron, and states no other purpose for his composition. Other medieval historians, however, proclaim that their intentions were to memorialise events, and to instruct by their presentation. Bede, Henry of Huntingdon and Roger of Wendover all profess these objectives. Bede, in his preface to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, provides the most expansive explantion of his reasons for writing:

> *Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuitando quod noxium est ac peruersam, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea, quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit accenditur.*[264]
> If history records good things of good men, the thoughtful hearer is encouraged to imitate what is good: or if it records evil of wicked men, the devout, religious listener

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[263] William J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History: Studies in Modes of Perception* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1966) 33, defines these texts as 'clerical'; they listed and explained.

[264] *Venerabilis Baedae: Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 5.

or reader is encouraged to avoid all that is sinful and perverse and to follow what he knows to be good and pleasing to God.[265]

Instruction in Christian morals and virtues is not, however, a function restricted solely to the person (and their contemporaries) to or for whom they write. Understanding the permanence of events in written text *'ideo memoriae per litteras commendantur'* ('the memory of [them] committed to writing') Roger of Wendover envisages the status of his work as a reference text.[266] Thus the deeds of good men are set out *'ad imitationem subsequentium proponi'* ('for the imitation of succeeding times').[267] In Bede and Roger of Wendover this future is expressed as *'posteritas'* in the phrase *'ad instructionem posteritatis'*.[268] Matthew Paris makes a similar claim for his chronicle at its initial termination in 1250.[269] A concern for the passing of time, the mortality of men, and thus the failing of memory is shown to necessitate the commitment, particularly of contemporary preoccupations, to the permanence of the written word, lest they be forgotten.

The strategy of some chroniclers is more specific. William of Malmesbury and Ailred of Rievaulx, for example, both write to highlight the prestigious lineage of a contemporary (Earl Robert of Gloucester and King Henry II, respectively). With the exception of Geoffrey of Monmouth (whose professed intent in writing is to fill the lacuna in early British history)

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[265]*Bede: A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Shirley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988) 33.

[266] *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1965) I, 1.

[267] *ibid*

[268]*Bede* 35; *Flores*, Luard 1.

[269] *Matthaei Parisiensis Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series, 7 vols. (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1964) 197.

and Roger of Hoveden (whose text is his *opus Dei*) the main intention of the Latin chroniclers is to memorialise and instruct.[270]

The vernacular chroniclers pronounce a similar rationale for writing,[271] although they may also express a wish to entertain their audience. Robert Mannyng declares the last of these intentions at the opening of his chronicle, listing the acquisition of knowledge as a subsidiary benefit:

> Ffor þo þat in þis land[e] wone
> Þat þe Latyn ne Frankys cone,
> Ffor to haf solace & gamen
> In felawschip when þai sitt samen.
> And it is wisdom for to wytten
> Þe state of þe land, & haf it wryten.
> (7-12)

Robert's chronicle was clearly written for group 'entertainment', and his moralising inserts demonstrate a desire to educate. His didacticism, however, focuses largely upon the problems current in his contemporary society (see chapter four) and in projecting an ideal of Englishness as an answer to these problems. Instruction in past events serves almost solely the purpose of explaining how the country has reached its present condition. There is, therefore, a significant interest in memorialising Robert's own version of history. Throughout the work, Robert indicates that he considers his chronicle as a repository for details previously held in what might be called the "collective memory". This is alluded to when some of the major historical figures in the text are discussed. The proponents of Arthur, for example (the Britons and the Cornish), are said to 'abbeþ him in munde' (4590).

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[270] *La Légende*, Faral III, 71; *Chronica: Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1964) I, 3.

[271] *Wace* lines 1-6; *Layamon: Brut*, ed. G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, EETS, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) I, lines 1-35.

Similarly, Edward the Confessor is spoken of as 'þe holiman seint edward . þat euere worþ in munde' (6681). In both examples the present tense of the selected verb is used in the third person, implying that these people are still remembered at the time of the chronicle's compilation. Robert also projects an expectation that these memories are wide-spread.

The term 'in munde' is also utilised in the latest section of the chronicle, that detailing late thirteenth-century events. The audience are instructed to remember particular, political, figures of the time. These are often contentious persons, such as the men who fought against the king at Evesham in 1065. The manner in which Robert alters his 'in munde' formula admits of a current and projected support of these people and their cause. Of both William Marshal and Richard Mandeville, the text states that they 'longe worþ in mone' (10652 and 11,859). A long-term commemoration of them is thus anticipated. The statement applied to the baronial leader, Simon de Montfort, does not so much extend the contemporary honouring of his name, but implies the magnitude of his current following: 'of wan gret munde is' (10,844). This is perhaps a veiled reference to the worship of Simon de Montfort as a saint (see chapter four).

By the use of the word 'munde', Robert thus ensures the remembrance of significant historic moments in his own time. He fixes their occurrence, and the cause of which they were a part, in both text and memory. Robert therefore seeks to preserve the memory of past leaders, and strives to ensure the survival of the political rulers of his own day in the memory of the future. Past and present events in the "collective memory" are thus consciously preserved in the chronicle for posterity. These are necessarily biased by the chronicler's own preoccupations, he records those events which he thinks should be passed

to posterity.[272] Such a function obviously does not preclude the intended reception of the text by a contemporary audience. For them, the chronicle is instructive. It leads them to contemplate the issues of nationhood and kingship propounded by the author.

iv. The Role of Christian Ceremony in the Chronicle

The idiosyncratic approach of Robert is often stressed by comparison with other works within the same genre. But his understanding of the providential nature of history aligns his work with that of Bede and Henry of Huntingdon, for example.[273] Robert's chronicle is firmly located within a Christian context; it is the anointing of Alfred by the Pope (God's vicegerent on earth) which determines the English line of succession. God, Robert emphasises, supports the good, Christian, Englishman before his adversaries.[274] This is a relationship which Robert explores, and exploits, when he wishes to signal that the destiny of the English is under threat. The climax of this is in his account of the death of the baronial leader, Simon de Montfort, at the Battle of Evesham. In order to convey the magnitude of de Montfort's death, Robert references Christian texts and ceremonies which would have been familiar to a wide audience. These are, specifically, the liturgy, and texts which pertain to that most fundamental period of the Christian calendar, Easter. In this account, a darkness is described as becoming manifest. This the chronicler proceeds to interpret:

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[272] Clanchy *Memory* 118.

[273] See chapter four also for a fuller discussion of the providential nature of Robert's work.

[274] See his use of saints (chapter two).

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Suich was þe morþre of euesham . uor bataile non it nas.

& þerwiþ iesu crist wel vuele ipaied was.

As he ssewede bi tokninge . grisliche & gode.

As it vel of him sulue . þo he deide on þe rode.

Þat þoru al þe middelerd . derkhede þer was inou.

Al so þe wule þe godeman . at euesham me slou.

As in þe norþwest . a derk weder þer aros.

So demliche suart inou . þat mani man agros.

& ouer caste it þouȝte al þut lond . þat me miȝte unneþe ise.

Grisloker weder þan it was . miȝte anerþe be.

An vewe dropes reine . þer velle grete inou.

Þis tokninge vel in þis lond . þo me þis men slou.

Vor þretti mile þanne . þis isei roberd.

Þat verst þis boc made . & was wel sore aferd.

<div align="center">(11,736-49)</div>

The text here is reliant upon oral tradition, and contemporary and eyewitness accounts;

Wright identifies the author's move from a reliance upon other written historical works at

around line 11,000, some seven hundred lines earlier.[275] The allusion drawn between the

darkness at the Battle of Evesham and that which descended at Christ's death is not,

however, unique. Such a description is extant in the 1265 entries of the Winchester and

Waverley Annals, both of which accounts are written soon after the events which they

describe and therefore probably predate Robert's chronicle:

Unde ipse die mane fuerunt tenebrae magnae et postea coruscationes et tonitrua usque ad horam sextam.

(Whence, the same day, in the morning, there was a great darkness and afterwards lightning and thunder right up to the sixth hour.)

Winchester Annals 1265

Dominus vero Symon de Monteforti, capite truncato, membratim decisus, pudibundis suis, Proh pudor! ablatis, martyrium pro pace terrae et regni reparatione et matris ecclesiae, ut credimus, consummavit gloriosum; ... In eadem igitur hora qua succubuit facta sunt tontitrua magna, et fulgara, et coruscationes, et sol obscuratus est per universam terram.[276]

(Indeed, Simon de Montfort, beheaded, dismembered, his genitals, alas the shame! cut off, he attained, we do believe, glorious martyrdom for the peace of the land and for

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[275] Wright, *Chronicle* xxxii.

[276] *Annales Monastici* vol. 2, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series (London: HMSO, 1865).

the reform of the kingdom and of the mother church ... Then, at the same hour where he sank down, there was great thunder and darkness, and lightning, and the sun was obscured over the whole land.)
Waverley Annals 1265

The comparison of de Montfort's death with Christ's is consistent with contemporary popular opinion which lauded de Montfort as a martyr.[277]

The Waverley and Winchester annals, however, differ in their representation of this event. The analogy in the Winchester annals is made primarily through linguistic parallels with the Vulgate text's account of Christ's death:

A sexta autem hora tenebrae factae sunt super universam terram usque ad horam nonam.
(Moreover, from the sixth hour there was a darkness over the whole earth, right up to the ninth hour.)[278]

Where that records the darkness at Golgotha remaining *usque ad horam nonam*, the Winchester annalist echoes the format, the darkness and storm at Evesham lasting *usque ad horam sextam.* There is in this explanation an expectation of audience recognition of allusion to, and knowledge of, the Vulgate account, hence the analogy is not extended. The Waverley Annals, in contrast, are more emotive in their presentation of events. *'Proh pudor!'* is the exclamatory remark made upon de Montfort's dismemberment, before the nature of his martyrdom is spelt out. Again there are linguistic echoes of the Vulgate here, the annalist claiming that the sun was obscured *'per universam terram'*. This text, however, makes clear the perceived status of de Montfort's death, but still only intimates a parallel

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[277] Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995)131-135.

[278] Vulgate: Matt. 27:45.

with Christ, in an expectation of the audience's recognition and shared knowledge of the Scriptural allusion.

In Robert's narrative, too, there is an awareness of the existence of such a traditional exposition of de Montfort's death, but there are significant differences. These can be defined as, firstly, the manner in which he draws upon the liturgy of Holy Week associated with the crucifixion, secondly, the elaboration of the allusion made between de Montfort and Christ, and thirdly, the chronicler's strategy of using 'I'-narration (that is, the way in which an 'author' is here constructed uniquely in the chronicle). Robert expects an oral delivery of his text; he therefore integrates into his text features which are intended to instruct the audience of the manner in which it ought to respond to the darkness. The annals reference the Vulgate to convey their message. Robert records the fear which the darkness over the Evesham battlefield invoked in those present, himself included. In this he alludes to the Christian liturgy of Holy Week.

The Church, in its liturgy, had long understood and exploited the role of human emotions in giving access, ultimately, to spiritual enlightenment, and knew and exploited the potency of light and darkness. The liturgy of Holy Week, in particular the *triduum* (that is, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), is concerned with those events central to the Christian religion: the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. This most solemn period of the liturgical year is well-documented in medieval times, and includes the introduction of darkness into the church as an anticipation of the darkness of the death of Christ and of the tomb. During the *triduum*, twenty-four candles were lit at Matins, and were extinguished one by one at the end of each antiphon. This was continued at Lauds until the church was

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in darkness.[279] This process was reversed at the Easter vigil (Saturday night to Easter

Sunday) when the Paschal candle was blessed and lighted, from which the other candles

were lighted.[280] Although evidence suggests that the Passion reading was from John

(chapters 18-19: verses 1-42) in which Gospel the darkness sent over the cross is not

recorded, an association between awe-inspiring darkness and the Crucifixion is nevertheless

established.[281] The tenth-century addition to the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, the *Regularis*

Concordia, elucidates what effect this recreated darkness was intended to have upon a

monastic community, it claims that:

Ad animarum compunctionem spiritualis rei indicium exorsum est.
(Compunction of the soul is aroused by means of the outward representation of that
which is spiritual.)[282]

The extinction of the lights, in this monastic document, is followed by the singing of the

Kyrie then two responses, the whole being devised, the *Regularis Concordia* reads:

A catholicis ideo repertus est ut tenebrarum terror, qui tripartitum mundum dominica
passione timore perculit insolito.
(By Catholic men for the purpose of setting forth clearly both the terror of that
darkness which, at our Lord's Passion, struck the tripartite world with unwonted
fear.)[283]

Such a feeling of compunction, aroused in part by the taught omnitemporalism of the

Crucifixion, may be what the chronicle text is leading its audience to experience.

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[279]John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of the Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century:*
A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 141.

[280] *ibid* 146.

[281] *ibid* 144.

[282] Dom Thomas Symons, *Regularis Concordia* 36-7.

[283] *ibid*

The liturgy, in its Latin form would have been most fully comprehended by those who were

Latin literate. All parishioners were, however, required to attend church at Easter to confess

and receive communion.[284] If, therefore, a dramatic recreation of the darkness as described

here took place - in some form - in churches which were not monastic, then the non-literate

laity would have some experience of it. The chronicler may then be drawing upon what he

at least perceives to be an area of common experience, thus directing his narrative to include

those with little or no formal education.

It is Robert's use of English in the chronicle, instead of Latin, which governs the expanded

description of the allusion that the annals draw between the aftermath of Christ's death and

that of de Montfort. Both of the annals, as has been demonstrated, rely to some extent upon

linguistic allusion to the scriptures in order to strengthen their metaphor. Writing in the

English vernacular, Robert cannot utilise this technique, and has to adopt other methods in

order to make similar reference. An explanatory note as to what the darkness is purported

to mean is therefore given.

v. Literary Techniques of the Chronicler

Throughout the text, Robert uses a variety of literary techniques to inform his audience of

his polemical stance. These include the use of key words and phrases, and the black-and-

white characterisation of historical figures.

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[284] R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe c.1215-c.1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 26.

Key words and phrases operate in the chronicle as a means of cohering the variety of historical periods discussed. The continuities between them are emphasised and the putative audience is guided along the line of the author's argument. This technique is most often used by the chronicler to elucidate the requirements, failings and achievements of a succession of kings. The recurrence of the phrase 'gode olde lawe', for example, draws a thread which the audience is asked to follow. Other phrases are manipulated in a similar way by the author. The concept of 'gode lawe' emanates linguistically in the era of Alfred (a key period in Robert's historical construction) and its application thereafter is a deliberate referral back to this golden age.

The word 'pur' (together with 'kunde') is an example of this. The concept of a king being 'pur' is most dramatically (if not initially) introduced with the succession of Alfred: before him, the chronicler asserts, 'pur king nas þer non' (5333). That the rightful monarchical heritage extends back to this point in the chronicler's perception is evident elsewhere in the text (see chapter two), and thereafter he is quick to object to the fact that a king is, by his definition, 'unkunde'. The reverse is also often noted, but the ideal of 'pur' is reserved for that moment in the history of the country when the direct line of descent is most distinctly broken: the Norman Conquest. It is here, after the death of Harold, that the chronicler laments the ills afflicted upon the English by the accession of that wrongful king, and juxtaposes him with his successor, William the Conqueror:

> Þe kinedom...
> ...come to a nywe louerd . þat more in riȝte was.
> Ac hor noþer as me may ise . in pur riȝte nas.
> (7496-97)

The chronicler's adept manipulation of his poetic form here has been noted before, and as a part of that functioning, of the juxtaposition of the positive and negative aspects of

William's succession is introduced the word 'pur'. The internal assonance created between the pair more/pur asks for the comparison of these words, and of that which they signify. William, the text reads, has 'more' right to the throne than Harold (a mere comparative term), but he does not have 'pur' right. This last stands as an absolute which requires no further referent. In echoing that which was declared in the reign of Alfred, the word heightens the audience's consciousness of why William's claim is flawed: because he is not of the blood of Alfred.

It is important to the chronicler's polemic that this concept is given only a limited application in the narrative. In direct reference to kingship it occurs only three times (the third being at the accession of Constans, whose reign signals another upheaval in the country's fortunes (2308; 2310)). Elsewhere it indicates the status of the law of accession (5904; 9995). This again reflects back to Alfred. The law which regulates kingship is 'pur' because the criteria it entails was laid down, in the chronicle, in that ninth-century reign.

By the use of key terms, the chronicler is able to convey subtle points of comparison to the audience. This is obviously a specific instance of the manipulation of the vocabulary available to him. Within the narrative there are other, broader, examples, which demonstrate Robert's literary abilities. The audience is guided to respond to historical figures in a way determined by the author's descriptions of them. Characterisation is black and white, leaving no confusion over who is good, and who is bad. The list of terms implemented is restricted. Perhaps the most common expression of virtue is 'god', often supplemented or replaced by 'wis', 'worþe', 'noble', 'gent', 'vair', 'stalwarde' and 'trywe'. So keen, indeed, is the author on occasion to present the figure he considers to be worthy in a flattering light, that the effect is, at times, comical, as in the case of Eadred:

God man edred was ynou . & to godnesse drou anon.
& muche louede holy chirche . & þe godeman sein dunston.
(5640-41)

Attempts by the chronicler to indicate the opposite lack of virtue results in the same

reiteration:

Vnder þis luþer emperours . þer was a luþerman.
& of hor luþer lawe.
(1829-1830)

To betoken evilness, 'luþer' is the main descriptor, together with 'false', the epithet 'foule

ssrewe', 'traytour', 'wrecche', 'cruel', 'þef' and 'robbeour' (with no context of stealing) and

'strange men'. This last is of particular interest for its translation of the French phrase '*gent*

estrange' (foreigner).

Jean Blacker discusses the 'tendency to define characters in terms of a fixed set of distinct

traits', locating people in the extreme categories of good and evil, in the Old-French and

Latin works of the Anglo-Norman regnum, and perceives this stemming:

> from an essentially atomistic and bi-polar world view, not from a deficiency of literary
> talent. Characters were typecast, not because authors' repertoires of techniques were
> severely limited, but because they viewed people in terms of types who responded to
> the dictates of good or evil.[285]

More than this, however, I would argue, these codes and formulae in Robert's chronicle

safely guide the audience to receive the author's opinions. Nowhere are these tactics so

forcefully applied as in the narrated period before the Battle of Evesham. There is no doubt

on which side of the dispute between the king and the barons the chronicler's sympathies

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[285] Blacker, *Faces of Time* 56.

lie. The vocabulary is emotive. The battle at Evesham is three times described as a 'morþre', the barons are entitled 'gode kniȝtes' whilst the royal party are their 'fou'. The latter are 'traitors' who 'villiche' kill the Montfortians, including Simon himself:

> Þer was simond de moutfort aslawe alas.
> (11,718)

The exclamation of sorrow at the end of this line is unequivocal in its indication of the chronicler's support of the rebels. As a culmination of the black-and-white descriptions constructed throughout the rest of the text, the distribution of good and bad phrases here clearly designates Prince Edward and his men as wrongdoers fighting against the righteous. Witness, for example, the attributes of the men who died fighting alongside de Montfort: 'þe noble iustise'; 'þat strong were & wise'; 'þat so gentil kniȝt was', ending with 'moni god bodi were aslawe'. Robert's perspective upon the country's history is clear, and he communicates this effectively by these formulas. His use of them identifies him as a competent literary composer.

Chapter Four

'Þe mest wo þat here vel . bi king henries day.
In þis lond icholle biginne . to telle ʒuf ich may.'

Much emphasis has been placed by scholars upon the chronicle's unique account of the Barons' Wars (1250s onwards), but little has been done to contextualise the work. This emphasis upon the closing years of King Henry III's reign can in part be attributed to the termination of the chronicle during its narration of events for 1271. The text's focus, therefore, appears to be on the upheavals of that era. The chronicle is, however, considered a production of around 1300 (see introduction and below), and was therefore written in the reign of King Edward I. To what extent the events of this monarchic period influenced the chronicler has received no attention.

Robert's chronicle is necessarily a product of its own age, and my tenet is that its composition was largely dictated by the troubles Robert perceived in his own society. If the chronicle did not provide a remedy for those troubles, it at least strove to identify their origins. I will, in this chapter, therefore assess to what extent the author's political anxieties mirror those mooted in the late thirteenth century. To this end I will consider the historical and political contexts of the reigns of Henry III and Edward I. Finally, I will extend this analysis of the first recension to make an assessment of the possible chronological location of the second recension. The clearly different agenda upon which this recension is based, I will argue, indicates a later date for its composition.

i. The Dating of the Chronicle

Robert did little to aid the precise dating of his text. There are, in his work, a number of *termini post quos*, but no *terminus ante quem*, which might serve as firm delimiters of the date of composition. The earliest surviving manuscript of the chronicle has been palaeographically dated to around 1300-1325. This *terminus ante quem* thus reinforces those gained from textual evidence; that is, that the chronicle is a late thirteenth, or early fourteenth-century, text. Textual evidence supports a date for the chronicle after the accession of King Edward I; as his reign is referred to in the work, 1272 must be taken as a firm *terminus post quem* for the composition. A later date than this is supported by Robert's reference to the deposition of King Arthur's bones in the choir at Glastonbury abbey. His remains were moved there after Edward I's defeat of Llewellyn ap Gruffydd in 1278. That a post-Conquest King Edward has ruled in the chronicler's lifetime is made clear. What is uncertain is whether his reign had also terminated by the time of the chronicle's composition. References to Edward I are made exclusively in the past tense; his birth is recorded, and he is then identified as Edward 'þat suþþe vr king was . & so noble kniȝt.'(10,877). When discussing the benevolence of Edward the Confessor towards the house of St. Swithin's, an aside on the later Edward is inserted, a political comment being conveniently and creatively manufactured from the fact that the two kings share a name, but not a character (7000-01). Again the statement is made in the past tense. It is difficult to ascertain from these retrospective remarks whether the chronicle was composed after 1307 (the year of Edward I's death). The narrative breaks off during the events of 1271, so, as the accession of Edward I is not narrated, nor therefore, is the reign of any later king. As I will discuss below, however, the author's political concerns demonstrate a close interest

in the events of Henry III's and Edward I's reigns, if not the composition of the chronicle during them.

It is from the chronicle's account of the year 1257 onwards that the chronicle is generally acknowledged as being independent of all known literary and historical sources.[286] This original portion of the text therefore predates the proposed date of the chronicle's composition by almost fifty years. For this reason Gransden creates a complicated schema which proposes that the first recension underwent two alterations in the thirteenth century. One author added (presumably around 1271) a continuation to an already extant chronicle which detailed events to 1135. The second edited this composite work near the turn of the century.[287] Gransden omits to consider the thematic, and polemical, unity of the work. The selection and interpretation of events, for example, is demonstrably integral with its composition. Nor does she consider that in the medieval period it was not unknown for a work to be circulated in an unfinished state before being completed by the same author.[288] Gransden also does not search for the political events to which the author was responding by compiling the chronicle. The events leading to the crisis of 1265 are, by her interpretation, the original motivating force for the extension of a pre-existing chronicle.[289] The baronial troubles almost certainly did play a part in shaping the chronicler's political and constitutional perceptions. However, the events of Edward I's reign did contribute to, or may have instigated, this work.

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[286] Chronicle, Wright xxxii.

[287] Gransden, *Historical Works* 433.

[288] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory and Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 214.

[289] Gransden assumes that this was an English text presumably.

ii. The Reign of Henry III

Robert was clearly influenced by his environment. The pro-Montfortian stance which he adopts, for example, (see chapter three) identifies him as one concerned with the issues central to late thirteenth-century politics. An overview of Henry III's reign will help to clarify the nature of the issues to which the chronicler responded. The early period of Henry's reign was beset with disputes which were to provide the tone for the rest of his kingship. In the 1230s, his appointment of, and reliance upon the advice of, the bishop of Winchester, Peter des Roches, culminated in the barons' threat in 1233 that they would make a new king if his evil advisers were not dismissed.[290] In 1236, Henry married Eleanor of Provence, and the arrival from the Continent of her relatives, as well as of the king's half-brothers in 1247, provided a basis for future discontent. David Carpenter has argued that the king attempted to integrate his foreign relatives into the noble community by intermarriage, and did not seek to exclude his native aristocracy from court.[291] However, Anglo-French relations were bitter during the reigns of both John and Henry,[292] and when Henry agreed the Sicilian venture with the pope in 1255, dissatisfaction amongst English society increased.[293] This venture entailed the provision by Henry of money and military support to the pope in order to recapture Sicily from its Hohenstaufen occupants. In return for his help, Henry was to gain the Sicilian throne for his second son, Edmund. The

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[290] Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers* 220.

[291] D. A. Carpenter, "Kings, Magnates and Society: the Personal Rule of Henry III, 1234-1258," *The Reign of Henry III*, ed. D. A. Carpenter (London: Hambledon, 1996) 95.

[292] Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers* 182.; George E. Woodbine, "The Language of English Law," *Speculum* 18.4 (1943): 419.

[293] Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers* 235.

conditions for this grant were that Henry not only had to send an army to Sicily, but also had to meet the costs already incurred by the war. These totalled some £90,400.[294] In order to collect this sum, Henry taxed unscrupulously, particularly the church. Together with the perceived injustices perpetrated by the king's relatives, and their lack of accountability, this deal pushed the barons into resistance to the monarch. After an armed demonstration at parliament in 1258, Henry capitulated to his barons' demands as outlined in the *Petitio Baronum*.[295] The reform measures to which he was made to agree included the expulsion of aliens from the country.[296] A council of twenty-four was elected to control the king's choice of ministers, and to regulate the reform process. By August 1258, Henry's consent to reform was published and distributed to all the counties in the kingdom. The details of the reform movement will be discussed later with reference to Robert's text, but the underlying issue was that the state had a right to restrain the actions of a bad king who abused his realm.[297] The dispute of 1233 had arisen because Henry believed that as king he had total authority.[298] This understanding was being challenged in the thirteenth century,[299] and a variety of documents from this period detail the debate: a letter from Robert Grosseteste to the king, for example, the 'Bracton' treatise, and John of Wales' *Communiloquium*. These beliefs in the nature of royal authority (that the king was subject to God and the law) became inextricably involved in anti-alien sentiments during the reform movement. Anti-alien feelings were strong amongst the general populace, and the reformers may have exploited

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[294] Maddicott, *de Montfort* 128.

[295] D. A. Carpenter, "What Happened in 1258?" *Reign of Henry III*, ed. D. A. Carpenter 183.

[296] Maddicott, *de Montfort* 152.

[297] R. F. Treharne, *Simon de Montfort and Baronial Reform: Thirteenth-Century Essays*, ed. E. B. Fryde (London: Hambledon, 1986) 3.

[298] Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers* 233

[299] Michael Prestwich, *English Politics in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1990) 3

these sentiments to rally public support for their cause.[300] Henry intensified the situation by

bringing foreign troops into the country in April 1260.[301] Simon de Montfort's leadership

of the baronial reform movement does not appear to have started until 1263, in which year

the first uprising against aliens in positions of authority commenced with an attack upon the

French bishop of Hereford, Peter d'Aigueblanche. In 1264 King Louis IX of France was

called in as an arbitrator between the disputing parties, and from the baronial petition to him

(*Grauamina quibus terra Anglie opprimabatur*), the extent and the nature of their

grievances against the king may be realised. These were: that the king had breached Magna

Carta (*carta de libertatibus Anglie*);[302] that he exploited the church; that he gave favours to

courtiers and aliens; that his local officials were rapacious, and that the Sicilian venture had

been an unwarranted burden upon the realm.[303] Louis' arbitration in favour of the king led

to the battle between royalist forces and the supporters of the rebel barons at Lewes in 1264.

The defeat and capture of the king and his son, Edward, resulted in the control of the

kingdom by an elected council of nine. Their control was brief, however, for Edward

escaped from captivity, rallied the royalist troops and gave battle to de Montfort's army at

Evesham in August 1265. This ended with the death and dismemberment of the baronial

leader, and the death, dispersal or dispossession of the baronial adherents to the rebel cause.

I have already remarked upon the chronicler's interest in this period when he recounts the

Battle of Evesham in 1265 (chapter three), and I will now highlight how the issues of that

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[300] D. A. Carpenter, "King Henry's 'Statute' Against Aliens: July 1263," *Reign of Henry III*, ed. Carpenter 272.

[301] *ibid* 270

[302] *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion, 1258-1267*, eds. R. F. Treharne and I. J. Sanders, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 258-259.

[303] Maddicott, *de Montfort* 151

period - both as narrated in the chronicle, and as known to us through the survival of a variety of contemporary documents - appear to be central to the chronicler's thesis throughout the text.

iii. Robert and the Baronial Crisis

Robert does not openly discuss his opinions of the baronial cause, although it is apparent that his support lies with de Montfort and the rebel barons. He does, however, provide his audience with an overview of the issues he considered to be involved in the dispute. These are listed during his discussion of the agreement reached between the king and the rebel barons at their meeting in Oxford in June 1258. This agreement contained unprecedented constitutional developments,[304] including a decision to set up a general eyre to hear complaints against royal, and other, officials; the naming of the *commune* of twenty four responsible for reform;[305] the nomination of a council of fifteen answerable to the above *commune*; a list of proposed reforms relating to the church; control of public officials; arrangements for regular parliaments, and a list of the powers of the elected council.[306] These measures effectively limited and controlled the actions of the king. Robert's report of the Oxford meeting reflects this restriction of the king's deeds, but presents an abbreviated, and idiosyncratic, view of the proceedings. The king, he recounts, is required by the barons:

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[304] It survives to us only in a memorandum copied into the Burton annals. Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers* 271.

[305] This had been set up after the initial confrontation with Henry III in April of the same year. It consisted of equal proportions of rebel and royalist barons. *ibid* 267-268.

[306] *ibid* 272.

> To remue frensse men . to libbe bi ȝonde se.
> Bi hor londes her & þer . & ne come noȝt aȝe.
> & to graunti gode lawes . & þe olde chartre al so.
>   (11,016-18)

Robert's advocacy of the 'olde chartre' (that is, the Magna Carta) and 'gode lawes' is not as specific as the surviving documentation. His anti-alien sentiment is, however, unequivocal. To this degree his understanding of the Oxford agreement is reflective of the earlier (April 1258) *Petitio Baronum* which requests (amongst a long list of other demands) the commitment of royal castles *'custodienda ad fideles'* of the king *'de regno Anglie natos'*, and the marriage of English women to true-born Englishmen.[307] The extent to which Robert was reliant upon the actual documents of reform is therefore illustrated. His interest is not to detail accurately the reform measures, but rather to present the ideals of the movement. This approach to the history of the country is consistent with Robert's attitude throughout the chronicle. His narrative is formulaic, and the use of key words and phrases enables him to convey quite complex ideas in a simple form to his audience. Thus when Robert details the grievances made at Oxford, he is not demonstrating a familiarity with the reform documents themselves, but rather presenting the essence of the reform movement as he perceives it.

This essence of the reform movement is also, I will demonstrate, an integral part of Robert's historical thought throughout the chronicle. A closer look at his view of the Oxford settlement shows the barons' concerns to be: the expulsion of the French, the maintenance of good law, and the restriction of the powers of the king. This last is encapsulated in the demand for the 'olde chartre' to be granted. This is a reference to the Magna Carta (and

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[307] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 80-81.

often its ancillary charter, the Charter of the Forest) the granting, confirmation and reissuing

of which Robert follows from its initial conferral by King John in 1215. In the abstract the

barons are thus shown to want: to protect an English national identity; to ensure the

maintenance of traditional laws (that is, those laws encapsulated in Magna Carta)[308] and to

ensure just rule. The pertinence of these objectives to the rest of Robert's history is

apparent. It is equally apparent that such a similarity is more than coincidental. In backing

the cause of the rebel barons, Robert conforms with other contemporary ecclesiastical

writings. The support of the barons' cause found in these texts, parallels the historical reality

of the ecclesiastical authorities whose wide-spread (if not total)[309] recognition of the

justifiable nature of the barons' concerns was instigated by the misdeeds of Henry III against

the church.

iv. A Chronicle for its Own Time

Robert of Gloucester's narrative of the baronial troubles has been highlighted by modern

historians as containing a unique contemporary account of events.[310] By examining the

thirteenth-century context of the work then from both its own perspective and alternative

sources, I intend to analyse how the text implicitly, or explicitly, provides an answer to the

problems which the author identifies as provoking the unrest.

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[308] In the Magna Carta, reference is made to the upholding of ancient and just customs.

[309] There was a minority of ecclesiastics who did not follow de Montfort. Michael Prestwich, *English Politics in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1990) 68.

[310] See, for example, Maddicott, *de Montfort* 341-2; Gransden, *Historical Writings* 437.

The protection of England from foreign influences became a main aspect of reform. Whilst, as Prestwich remarks, the questions of the thirteenth century may in retrospect seem to be 'consent to taxation, the nature of representation and the control of the crown by means of council and other mechanisms,' in practice, 'the emotive force of anti-alien movements was a powerful one in the day-to-day politics of the period'.[311] The influx of foreigners into England in the mid-thirteenth century has been described as a second French invasion,[312] and one which aroused more hostility amongst the natives and anglicised Normans than the Conquest itself. This last is attested by modern historians and sociolinguists alike. The sociolinguists maintain that this is a possible reason for the rare inverted language-shift which occurred in England, when the low language (English) ousted the prestige language of Anglo-Norman.[313] This is the primary context for the emergence of a Robert who commits himself to the English vernacular in order to furnish a reading of English history which is not only anti-French but, by extension, anti-Norman, and positively pro-English. Robert's attempts to develop a coherent view of England, its history, language and monarchy, is clearly as much a defensive reaction to perceived foreign interference as an introspective understanding of the concept of Englishness. Robert's anxieties about the presence of foreigners in the country are unequivocal. They are focused particularly upon those he defines as 'frenss':

Þoru hom & þoru þe quene was . so muche frenss folc ibrouȝt.
Þat of englisse men . me tolde as riȝt nouȝt.
& þe king hom let hor wille . þat ech was as king.
& nome poeueremenne god . & ne paiede no þing.
To eni of is breþeren . ȝuf þer pleinede eni wiȝt.
Hii sede ȝuf we do ou wrong . wo ssal ou do riȝt.

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[311] Prestwich, *English Politics* 80.

[312] Berndt, "The Final Decline" 344.

[313] Woodbine, "English Law," 419; Kahane and Kahane, "Decline and Survival," 187.

As wo seiþ we beþ kinges . ur wille we mowe do.
(10,992-98)

The identification of the king's brothers and the queen's relatives as 'frenss folc' illustrates

the exaggerated nature of Robert's picture. These people were Poitevins and Savoyards

respectively. David Carpenter has noted how chroniclers writing after the Barons' Wars

make no distinction between the two groups.[314] Robert's attribution of the term 'frenss' to

the royal relatives may represent such a blurring of distinction, but I would suggest that he

employs that term in order to access feelings of antagonism towards the French in his

audience. Robert deals with broad national terms, guaranteed to arouse anti-alien feelings.

His narrative is deliberately antagonistic. This is made clear by his narratorial technique.

Robert utilises direct speech to effectively convey the self-focused and aggressive mood of

the 'frenss'. The casual nature of the statement in lines 10,997-98 is calculated to inflame

Robert's target audience. Robert's verse is concise. He implements the force of the second

hemistich of his line again, placing in it a quotable slogan which encapsulates the arrogance

of the foreign intruders: 'ur wille we mowe do'.

The astuteness with which Robert handles his text must be highlighted here. In the

statement of line 10,998, he at once appeals to popular opinion, and references

contemporary constitutional debate. He reviles the 'frenss' by an allusion to the belief often

held by the monarchs of his day (Henry III, for example) that they were the vicars of God

(*Vicarius Dei*), and therefore unrestrained in their actions. The author of the *Song of Lewes*

forthrightly expresses this royal malpractice: '*Quicquid libet licitum dixit, et a lege/ Se putat*

explicitum, quasi major rege./ Nam rex omnis legitur legibus quas legit' ('he calls lawful

whatever he pleases, and thinks himself absolved from the law, as though he were greater

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[314] Carpenter, "King Henry's 'Statute'," 269

than a king: For every king is ruled by the law which he enacts').[315] Robert's understanding

of the term 'frenss' was, however, as flexible as the word 'engliss'. His use of it, I would

argue, is as an indication of foreignness, non-Englishness. Hence he does not apply this

adjective to the baronial leader, Simon de Montfort, because he supports an English cause.

De Montfort was a Frenchman who only arrived in England in 1231 to claim his inheritance,

the Earldom of Leicester. The incongruity of a Frenchman leading an English political

movement is noted and justified in texts such as the *Melrose Chronicle* and the *Song of*

Lewes. The former of these contains this eulogy on the earl in the annal for 1264:

> No man in his sound senses ought to believe that this Simon was a traitor, or to call
> him one. He was no traitor, but a most devoted respecter and most faithful protector
> of the church of God which is in England, and the shield and defender of the nation
> of the English people, and the enemy of the foreigners, whom he drove out of the
> country, though he was himself by birth a foreigner. [316]

Robert's adherence to such opinions on de Montfort's nationality are offered *ab silentio*,

he does not stress the incongruity or seek to justify it.

Robert's presentation of national unrest leading up to the crisis of the 1260s continues to

be inflammatory. He promotes the extreme consequences of the influx of foreigners into the

country:

> Þoru godes grace . þis erles atte laste.
> & þe bissop of þis lond . & barons bispeke it vaste.
> Þat þe kunde englissemen . of londe hii wolde out caste.
> & þut lond bringe adoun . ȝuf hor poer ilaste.
> (11,000-03)

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[315] *Political Songs*, Wright 94.

[316] *A Medieval Chronicle of Scotland: The Chronicle of Melrose*, trans. Joseph Stevenson (1850s; reprint Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991) 101-102.

Robert is unashamedly xenophobic, and to enforce the justice of the English resistance he supports, he implies that it is divinely ordained (it occurs 'þoru godes grace'). The Melrose chronicler is also xenophobic in his relation of events. In the annal for 1263, he records that Queen Eleanor intended to attack England and destroy all those dwelling there.[317] Robert, however, goes further than this. He also menacingly predicts the demise of the French. In the second half-line of line 11,003, Robert reminds his audience of the inevitable mutability of all things. The power of the foreigners, he implies, can be overthrown. This is an effective incitement to action.

The moral, and polemical, ground which the chronicler adopts is not in itself unique. The author of the patriotic *Song of Lewes*, for example, argues in defence of the barons that '*quidam studuerant Anglorum delere / Nomen*' ('some men had studied to erase the name of the English'),[318] and emphasises that the English received the assistance of God. Anxieties about the king's reliance upon foreigners, particularly in matters of national security, are found voiced early on in the dispute between the king and the barons. In the *Petitio Baronum* the barons requested, amongst other things, that Englishness be given precedence in matters of security:

> *Item 4 ... petunt quod castra regis committantur custodienda ad fideles suos et de regno Anglie natos, ob plures casus qui poterunt in regno Anglie euenire uel emergere.*
> (They ask that the royal castles shall be committed to the custody of the king's faithful subjects born in the kingdom of England, on account of many dangers which might befall or arise in the realm of England.)[319]

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[317] *Melrose*, Stevenson 98.

[318] *Political Songs*, Wright 86.

[319] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 80-81.

Here, in order to enunciate their demands, the king's 'fideles' are defined as those who 'de regno Anglie natos'. Concerns about aliens are moderately expressed here but still relate to the potential fall of the kingdom. It is of such a threat that Robert also warns. The unaccountability of the aliens, which he laments, (that is, their arrogant behaviour), is also a part of the baronial complaints. In the 1264 *Grauamina* presented at Amiens,[320] item four reads:

> *Cum in carta predicta contineatur quod rex nulli uenderet denegaret seu differret*
> *rectum aut iustum post aduentum quorumdam alienigenarum quos rex spretis*
> *indigenis ad consilium attraxit contra easdem et quosdam curiales etiam indigena*
> *quantumcumque grauiter delinquerent non poterat iusticia in curia domini regis*
> *immo nec breuia de communi iusticia que de consuetudine regni singulis petentibus*
> *concedi deberent nec aliqua remedia iuris impetrari.*
> (Although in the Charter it is laid down that to no one shall the king sell, deny, or
> delay right or justice, after the arrival of certain aliens whom the king, scorning his
> native subjects, drew to his counsels, no justice could be obtained in the lord king's
> courts against these men or against certain courtiers, some of them native, no matter
> how gravely they had offended, nor even could writs of common justice, which by
> custom of the realm should be granted to every petitioner, nor any other remedy of
> law be obtained.)[321]

The issue of counsel raised here, and the way in which Robert deals with it will be discussed later, but what is striking here is the parallels between the Latin document and Robert's chronicle. Robert echoes the *Grauamina*, in recording that foreigners were shielded from prosecution, and in acknowledging that some of those courtiers considered above the law were native ('Mani englisse alas . hulde mid hom also' (10,999) the chronicler admits). This does not affect the 'nationalist' argument put forward by either Robert or the barons. For both, the issue of English liberties was as much a constitutional issue of royal power as an expression of xenophobia. Clearly Robert did not think his criticism of English courtiers

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[320] Robert, it should be noted, does not mention the arbitration of King Louis in the dispute.

[321] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 270-271.

blurred his advocacy of an ideal of Englishness. On the contrary, perhaps he well understood the polemical advantage of identifying English traitors to an English cause.

The chronicler's understanding of the sorrows of his time seems to be well informed. This is reflected not only in the content of his chronicle, but also by its medium. Robert uses the English vernacular, and the crisis of the Barons' Wars was the stimulus for the first use of official English since the eleventh century. This was in the Proclamation of Henry III (dated 18 October 1258) which was circulated to all counties in the realm.[322] The normal language of government in this period was Latin or Anglo-Norman and this letter therefore constituted a break from post-Conquest tradition. It appeals for the assistance of 'alle vre treowe' (that is, Henry's faithful subjects) to ensure the maintenance of the oath taken to uphold the reform agreed at Oxford. The subjects are asked to consider those who break faith as their 'deadliche foan'.[323] The use of English was clearly intended to maximise the text's circulation, and to strengthen the general population's sense of a 'national' community of which they were a part. Robert's use of English may have been equally democratic in its intentions. In his text he forges a link between language and nationality, and therefore at least gestures towards an all-inclusive audience. The construction of a common Englishness was, to an extent, part of the rhetoric of reform; it was a baronial and aristocratic construct. However, as David Carpenter has demonstrated, the ideas of reform did filter down to the lowest strata of society, and were used, at times, to remedy their

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[322] This text survives in Latin, French and English. The French text is published in Treharne and Sanders, *Documents* 116-119. For the surviving English texts see A. J. Ellis, "On the Only English Proclamation of Henry III," *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1868): 1-135 and W. W. Skeat, "On the Only English Proclamation of Henry III, 18 October 1258," *ibid* (1880-1881): 169-177. The *Ordinatio Vicecomitum*, issued 20 October 1258 was another document of reference published in three languages (Treharne and Sanders, *Documents* 119-123).

[323] Skeat, "The Only English Proclamation," 173-174.

grievances.[324] Some of the lower orders, indeed, took an active role in resisting the foreigners, royalist barons and the king.[325]

v. Robert and Late Thirteenth-Century Law

I have shown how Robert's presentation of the barons' preoccupations has, at times, striking similarities to reform documents, although voiced - as appropriate to his genre and medium - in a less formal manner and vernacular idiom. Other issues which form a central part of the chronicle can likewise be shown to have a root in a highly political thirteenth-century context. Robert's understanding of the law is one of these. As has been noted above, part of the Barons' complaint against the foreigners in the land was their unaccountability , their belief that they were above the law, and that it was thus impossible to bring them to justice. The chronicler positions the maintenance of law as a major factor in negotiations between the king and the barons. In the agreement of 1258 the king agrees 'to graunti gode lawes' (11,018), and the reinstatement of good laws is a bargaining point which is reiterated before the Battle of Lewes in 1264. The king is then requested:

> To graunti hom þe gode lawes . & abbe pite of þis lond.
> & hii wolde him serui wel . to vote & to hond.
>   (11,356-57)

Here the implementation of good laws is perceived as an element in preserving the equilibrium of the kingdom. I have shown that 'good law' is a concept worked through the chronicle, and one which encapsulates ideas of just and rightful kingship. In Robert's

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[324]Carpenter, "English Peasants," 23, 29-30.

[325] *ibid* 7.

interpretation, the idea of 'gode lawe' is thus incorporated into the king's charter to the country from the reign of Henry II onwards. Such a charter thus enshrines the king's obligations to his subjects to rule fairly. This theme has parallels in the documents of reform and also in the academic debates of the thirteenth century. The rebel barons petitioned for the reinstatement of Magna Carta for reasons similar to that which Robert presents; it was considered a statement of the king's obligations to his people. This can be seen in the barons' appeal to Louis IX when they refer to the king's failure to uphold the charter:

> *Dominus rex uariis a communitate receptis subsidiis tociens eos illusit, cartam de libertatibus Anglie obseruare promittens et post modicum contraueniens expresse...* (The lord king had received many subsidies from the community and had tricked them every time, promising to observe the charter of liberties of England, and then speedily and specifically breaking his oath...)[326]

It is the issue of monarchic constraint embedded in the charter which Robert appropriates and provides with a historical development in the chronicle. The good law is provided with roots in the golden age of the English past. In calling it the 'gode *olde* law' from the reign of King John onwards, Robert emphasises this ancient quality. He thus reflects thirteenth-century debates and premises about legal antiquity. Law seeks its validity by association with stability and continuity. For this reason the charter issued by King Stephen mentions the restoration of old laws and the customs of Edward the Confessor,[327] and Henry I's coronation charter refers to the laws and times of the same king.[328] A precedent was set for this by William the Conqueror's claim to hold the throne legally from Edward the Confessor.[329] It thus became customary for ancient law to be understood as embodied in the

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[326] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 258-259.

[327] Schramm, *English Coronation* 191.

[328] *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster, Attributed to a Monk of St. Bertin*, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow (London: Nelson, 1962) 121.

[329] J. C. Holt, *Magna Carta and Medieval Government* 13.

laws of Edward the Confessor and Henry I.[330] In the chronicle, 'gode lawe' is defined in contradistinction to 'luþer lawe', a comparison which may derive from the tendency in vernacular chronicles to present a black-and-white picture of events. The 'gode olde lawe' (an expression used from 1215 onwards), in contrast, gains a further quality from the attribute 'old'. In changing his expression, Robert emphasises that the laws encapsulated in the Magna Carta are of ancient derivation and, in his construction of the country's history, that they derive from a point in the Anglo-Saxon (English) past. In re-issuing, or confirming, the charters, the king thus reinstates a part of pre-Norman history. So Robert creates for his audience some substance for the indistinct and undefined '*antiquas et rectas consuetudines*' appealed to in Magna Carta.[331]

The status of the law, its contents, application and function in society became a matter of some enquiry and debate in the thirteenth century. The *Laws of Edward the Confessor*,[332] and also the 'Bracton' Treatise of the 1220s-1230s were legal tracts compiled in this period.[333] The prominence which Robert gives to the law in his chronicle belongs to such an era of debate. Whilst his ideas do not label him as an original thinker in this area, they do show him as someone aware of this contemporary preoccupation. Fiercest arguments about the law were fought around the relationship of the king to the law. This is not an argument to which Robert openly contributes, nor indeed, does he provide much new material for the discussion, but he shows himself conscious of the climate on monarchical status. The criteria which Robert sets out in the chronicle for rightful kingship have been

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[330] *ibid* 13.

[331] McKechnie, *Magna Carta* 398.

[332] Holt, *Magna Carta* 204; Prestwich, *English Politics* 20.

[333] Prestwich, *English Politics* 21.

discussed earlier. In summary they are: that the king be legitimate; that he institute and maintain good law and that he accept wise, usually ecclesiastical, counsel. The monarchs who do not meet, or who defy, all or one of these criteria inevitably bring troubles to their country. Henry III, for example, can claim legitimacy through his descent from Henry I and Matilda, but his rejection of good law (which the barons seek to rectify, and the chronicler indicates as being a misdeed) and his refusal of wise counsel are the cause of the wars of his reign.

vi. The *Rex Inutilis*

The chronicler's understanding of the need for the monarchy to perform certain duties amounts to a proposal for the restriction of the rights of the king. These are, however, in the chronicle, historically attested requirements of the monarch. They are not presented as novel ideas, but as the established right and just way to govern. Robert presents an ideal of kingship in Alfred, and shows deviations from this model. In entering into such a debate, the chronicler draws upon the wider political discourse of his time. The rebel barons were themselves trying to impose upon the king such restrictions as Robert demonstrates, and yet at no point during the baronial rebellion was the deposition of the king considered. John of Wales, an Oxford friar writing around 1265, enables us to see why this was so in his *Communiloquium*.[334] The ideas current in this topical handbook for preachers were probably informed by the baronial troubles, as the assumptions of the rebels are justified in it.[335] In his

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[334] The popularity of this text is signalled by its survival in 144 copies. Jenny Swanson, *John of Wales* 257.

[335] Catto, *University of Oxford* 253.; Swanson, *John of Wales* 82

definition of the *respublica*, John includes all the people of the realm, emphasising that the

king (*princeps*) was within both the state and the law.[336] This is further elaborated; the state

is the body of the *respublica* and the ruler is the head.[337] The head was vital to the operation

of the body, and could not be severed, however the head owed a loyalty to the state, which

John of Wales determines is to ensure proper laws, and that the country is ordered by

justice.[338] It is because of the king's failure to uphold this relationship with the state that the

barons imposed a council on him. What John of Wales, the rebel barons and, indeed, Robert

of Gloucester identify in isolating the monarch's lack of accountability to the state, is the

political type formalised in canon law by Pope Innocent IV in 1245, the *rex inutilis*. The

fundamental criterion for the *rex inutilis* was that he was legitimate. Robert's presentation

of this monarchical type (in the figure of Henry III, for example) emphasises this point. In

his *Communiloquium*, John of Wales also recommends that blood is not enough to ensure

a king's right to rule; the king should also behave correctly and obey the laws.[339] The

parallels to Robert's beliefs are apparent. This 'legitimate ruler whose weakness and

incompetence cause disaster in the realm'[340] often resulted from a variety of failings,

including the acceptance of evil counsel.[341] Henry III had shown himself susceptible to the

vice of evil counsel in the 1230s when, on the advice of Peter des Roches, he made seven

individuals suffer disseisin *per voluntatem regis*, causing a baronial revolt and a lesson to

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[336] Swanson, *John of Wales* 66

[337] *ibid* 65.

[338]*ibid* 70.

[339] Swanson, *John of Wales* 75.

[340] Edward Peters, *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970) 20.

[341] *ibid* 43.

him that he was subject to the law.[342] That this was not a lesson the magnates considered

was well learned by the king is demonstrated in the record of baronial grievances made later

in Henry's reign. The *Grauamina* of 1264 complains of the way in which the king '*ad*

consilium attraxit' certain aliens.[343] Early in 1261, this matter had been raised by the king's

council in response to the king's complaints about their handling of the Sicilian business.

The barons declared that:

> *Par eux ne fit unques le roy couenant a lapostoille de lafiere de Puille, et mult lur*
> *serva beal qil ce puruayt a cieux qe si male couenant luy fesount faire.*
> (It was never by their counsel that the king bound himself to the papacy in the Sicilian
> affair, and it would be a splendid thing to their minds, if he would take this problem
> to those who had induced him to make such a bad bargain.)[344]

Evil counsellors were defined by the baronial reformers as foreign counsellors. Throughout

the reform procedure they advocate that the king should rule by 'natural counsellors',[345] that

is, '*per consilium fidelium nostrorum*', '*per consilium proborum et fidelium nostrorum*

regni Anglie'.[346] Robert is likewise attuned to the issue of counsel. His handling of this issue

in Henry III's reign is dependent upon the models of kingship set up earlier in the chronicle.

Ideas of conciliar kingship are first broached and advocated in his depiction of the Anglo-

Saxon era. Monarchs are shown to stand or fall according to their acceptance, or rejection,

of wise counsel;[347] Eadwig exiles Dunstan, for example, and soon dies, whilst Alfred,

Athelstan and Edgar, in contrast, all thrive by their acceptance of assistance. In all of these

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[342] D. A. Carpenter, "Justice and Jurisdiction under King John and King Henry III," *Reign of Henry III*, Carpenter 38-39.

[343] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 270-271.

[344] *ibid* 232-233.

[345] Reynolds, *Kingdoms* 271.

[346] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 72-73.

[347] See chapter two.

examples the assistance is usually divine (it issues from Cuthbert, Aldhelm and Dunstan respectively). It is in this respect that Robert differs from other contemporary opinions in his presentation of Henry III's reign. The ideal counsel, which he promotes, emanates from ecclesiastics. The attitude he adopts towards the Poitevin bishop of Winchester, Peter des Roches, is therefore probably dictated by his foreignness:

> ...þe king as me sede.
> Dede þoru is conseil . mani luþer dede.
> (10,760-61)

The counsel of this ecclesiastic is bad because he is an alien. Ideal religious activity and advice have been consolidated in the figures of Anglo-Saxon saints (Dunstan, for example) earlier in the chronicle. The evil nature of foreign relatives has also been established. Des Roches, as a favourite of the king, cannot, therefore, deliver worthwhile counsel despite his ecclesiastical appointment.

Other sources of this period which discuss the problem of the king's counsellors, do not advocate clerical advisers as the solution. Robert's focus would seem then to be the naturally partisan expression of his clerical preoccupations. The issue of good counsel is a matter raised by political commentators of the time (John of Wales [348] and the author of the *Song of Lewes*, [349] for example), but without Robert's particular bias. The topic of conciliar kingship aroused some debate at Oxford,[350] and it is possible that Robert's text reflects an element of those discussions which have not survived elsewhere.

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[348] *Political Songs*, Wright 99.

[349] Swanson, *John of Wales* 83.

[350] Jean Dunbabin, "Careers and Vocations," *The History of the University of Oxford: The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. J. L. Catto (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 565-605.

The manner in which Robert presents his opinions continues to be dependent upon his model-forming technique. The acceptance of bad counsel is shown as detrimental to the realm in the figure of des Roches; the rejection of good counsel is demonstrated in a similar manner to culminate in the same problems. As the audience has come to expect, the person whom King Henry III rejects is an ecclesiastic, indeed a saint, Edmund Rich of Abingdon, Archbishop of Canterbury (1233-1240):

> Þo sprong þer gret contek . bituene henri vr king.
> & þe erchebissop seint edmund . & noȝt vor lute þing.
> Vor þe king þo he adde iwiued . & an eir adde al so.
> He drou to oþer conseil . þan he was iwoned to do.
> (10,886-87)

The audience has been trained to recognise that ill-fortune must result from this dissension, and the inevitability of the king's decline is clearly signposted:

> Þe mest wo þat here vel . bi king henries day.
> In þis lond icholle biginne . to telle ȝuf ich may.
> (10,986-87)

Robert signals that his intent is to present the troubles of Henry's reign; the remedy for such is pre-figured in his narration of earlier periods of history.

vii. Simon de Montfort

The chronicler's concerns, and the remedies he proposes for them, are those of a late thirteenth-century environment. This is clearly signalled by his support of de Montfort, particularly demonstrated at his death. Approval of this leader's cause ranged throughout

most sectors of the population,[351] thus Robert's stance had a base in popular opinion. His

interest in the Earl is as the principal magnate involved in the baronial reform movement,

many principles of which I have shown Robert supporting. After his death, de Montfort was

lauded as a champion of Englishness. The Melrose chronicler describes him as having 'taken

in hand the most righteous cause of defending the inhabitants of England'.[352] The nobles

who die with him at Evesham 'came out to fight for justice to England'.[353] '*Benedicat*

dominus, S. de Monte-Forti' the *Song of Lewes* author exclaims:

> *Qui se magnanimiter exponentes morti,*
> *Pugnaverunt fortiter, condolentes sorti*
> *Anglicorum flebili, qui subpeditati*
> *Modo uix narrabili, peneque privati*
> *Cunctis libertatibus, immo sua vita,*
> *Sub duris principibus langüerunt ita,*
> (Who, exposing himself magnanimously to death, fought valiantly, condoling the
> lamentable lot of the English who, trodden underfoot in a manner scarcely to be
> described, and almost deprived of all their liberties, nay, of their lives, had languished
> under hard rulers.)[354]

A variety of factors probably contributed to the general appeal of the baronial cause, and

also to the acclamation of the magnates who upheld it as the defenders of Englishness: their

perhaps deliberate exploitation of anti-alien feelings in their demands for the expulsion of

foreigners; their insistence upon an enquiry being launched into the behaviour of officials

throughout the country, and their general opposition to a king who favoured foreign

relatives and heavily taxed his people. The populace may have felt that the barons were on

their side, and that they were fighting for their liberties, thus they died '*pur salver*

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[351] See note 44 above.

[352] *Melrose*, Stevenson 116.

[353] *ibid* 106.

[354] *Political Songs*, Wright 75.

Engleterre'.[355] It was after (and perhaps because of) his death that de Montfort was eulogised; he was '*la flur de pris ... ly quens Montfort, sa dure mort molt enplorra la terre*' ('the precious flower, ... the Earl Montfort, his hard death the land will deeply lament').[356] The loss of the baronial leader, and the failure of the reform movement, is almost without exception expressed in emotive and nationalistic terms in contemporary writings.

As I have already demonstrated, in an examination of the chronicler's sources and language at this moment in the text, Robert's presentation of de Montfort's decease is equally fervent. I have shown that the comparison which he draws between de Montfort's death and that of Christ is not as reliant upon scriptural allusion as are the Latin texts. Robert's use of English causes him to rely upon alternative techniques to set up this juxtaposition: analogy to liturgical rituals and the use of simile instead of metaphor. The providential nature of the narrative has also been suggested. Robert's depiction of the event is, however, clearly shaped by the political events of his time.

Robert presents the darkness which descended after de Montfort's death as a sign of divine displeasure (11,739-40), and the message which he conveys to the audience is unequivocal: God is on the side of reform. The reform movement must therefore be just. However, the lines which follow curiously undermine the impact of this suggestion:

> Al so þe wule þe godemen . at euesham me slou.
> As in þe norþwest . a derk weder þer aros.
> So demliche suart inou . þat mani man agros.
> & ouer caste it þoȝte al þut lond . þat me miȝte vnneþe ise.
> Grisloker weder þan it was . ne miȝte anerþe be.
> An vewe dropes of reine . þer velle grete inou.

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[355] *ibid* 125.

[356] *ibid*

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Þis tokninge vel in þis lond . þo me þis men slou.
Vor þretti mile þanne....
(11,741-48)

The author of the *Song of Lewes,* in contrast, is forthright in his comparison. When he

speaks of those who act for self-interest he declares, '*Non sic venerabilis . S. de Monte-*

Forti, / Qui se Christo similis dat pro multis morti' ('not so the venerable Simon de

Montfort, who, like Christ, offers himself a sacrifice for many');[357] he even endows him with

a degree of sanctity: '*venerabilis*'. In contrast, the language which Robert employs portrays

the divinely sent darkness in an almost mundane fashion. The darkness is a 'derk weder'

which comes from a direction of the compass - the northwest - like a weather system. It also

rains, and although 'more grisly weather might not be found upon earth', the land still only

'þoȝte' ('seemed') overcast, but was not wholly so, being restricted to a thirty-mile radius

around Evesham. The dichotomy here between initial intent and actual presentation might

be explained as an attempt by the chronicler to avoid excessive political statement. But, he

has elsewhere been unreserved in demonstrating his political stance. It is in thirteenth-

century politics external to the chronicle that an answer must be sought, and it lies, I would

suggest, in the popular acclaim of de Montfort as a saint, and in the surviving documentation

which dates from after the battle of Evesham.

The English were renowned for making saints out of their political heroes;[358] at the tomb of

Earl Waltheof (considered a martyr in the English cause against the Normans), for example,

112 miracles were recorded.[359] De Montfort was to prove no exception and, despite

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[357] *Political Songs*, Wright 89.

[358] Eric Waldron Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1948)
121.

[359] *Edward the Confessor*, Barlow 121.

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attempts to prevent it,[360] a cult sanctifying him appeared within weeks of his death.[361] Like

his father before him, Simon was to die excommunicate, but between August 1265 and

Whitweek 1279, approximately two hundred miracles were recorded at his tomb, and a

spring with therapeutic qualities sprang up where he fell.[362] Perhaps in response to this

popular canonisation, certainly from a fear that de Montfort's tomb might become a focus

for anti-royal movements, item eight of the *Dictum de Kenilworth* sought to control this

potential problem:[363]

> *Ipse dominus legatus sub districtione ecclesiastica prossus inhibeat, ne S. comes*
> *Leycestrie a quocumque pro sancto uel iusto reputetur, cum in excommunicacione*
> *sit defunctus, sicut sancta tenet ecclesia; et mirabilia de eo uana et fatua aba*
> *liquibus relata nullis unquam labiis proferantur; et dominus rex hec eadem sub pena*
> *corporali uelit districte inhibere.*
> (The lord legate shall absolutely forbid, under distraint of the church, that Simon, Earl
> of Leicester, be considered to be holy or just as he died excommunicate according to
> the belief of the Holy Church. And that the vain and fatuous miracles told of him by
> others shall not at any time pass any lips. And that the lord king shall agree strictly to
> forbid this under the pain of corporal punishment.)[364]

That this threat was taken seriously, if not strictly obeyed, is evident from the manner in

which the cult developed. The record of miracles by the monks of Evesham was not made

public, and research into the geographical distribution of the cult, as found from this record,

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[360] Heffernan, "Dangerous Sympathies" 5.

[361] *ibid* 7; Finucane, *Miracles* 133.

[362] Finucane, *Miracles* 133 and 135; Heffernan, "Dangerous Sympathies" 7-8; Simon Walker, "Political Saints in Later Medieval England," *The MacFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, eds. R. H. Britnell and A. J. Pollard (Stroud: Sutton, 1995) 82.

[363] Whilst the rebel barons were besieged in Kenilworth castle, King Henry III called a meeting there on 22 August 1266, and set up a committee of twelve, consisting of eight knights and four bishops, to decide upon the conditions necessary for the peace of the land. Arbitration was to be made by two umpires, and agreement by the king. The *Dictum* was the result. The rebel barons were forced to accept its terms after sickness and hunger made the garrisoning of the castle impossible. Treharne and Sanders, *Documents* 56-58.

[364] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 322-323.

indicates a degree of discretion by local families in the worship of de Montfort.[365] Pilgrims

to the site mostly lived over forty miles from the tomb, with involvement spreading up to

and beyond one hundred miles from Evesham. Finucane's observation that this geographic

pattern may be attributed to the 'prudent reserve' with which local anti-royalist families

honoured de Montfort is probably correct.[366] In the aftermath of the revolt, approximately

one hundred landowners in the West Midlands had their lands confiscated because of their

support of the baronial cause.[367]

Other instances of this caution are evident in writings of this time. Heffernan has isolated the

veiled worship of de Montfort in the SEL *Life of St. Dominic*, whose feast day (4 August)

the baron unofficially shared.[368] Similar veneration, as I have shown, is also present in some

of the Latin annals. These, however, had limited circulations, delimited both by their location

in monasteries and their use of Latin. In these contexts such pro-baronial statements were

safe to make. The use of English to praise de Montfort was necessarily a risky venture.

Royal disapproval of such a stance was not short-lived. Edward I regarded the matter in the

same light as his father[369] and during his lifetime would not allow the office in honour of de

Montfort, composed by the Franciscans, to be performed.[370] Such royal disapproval might

indeed have been some incentive for the ambiguous description given of the divine darkness

in Robert's chronicle. Within this ambiguity political undertones may, however, be found.

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[365] Finucane, *Miracles* 134.

[366] *ibid* 169-170.

[367] *ibid* 132.

[368] Heffernan, "Dangerous Sympathies" 1-17.

[369] *ibid* 13.

[370] Walker, "Political Saints," 86.

The chronicler remarks that the 'derk weder' arose out of the 'norþwest'. This is an objective note upon the direction of the 'weather front' perhaps, but also indicates the area of the country from which those who fought de Montfort originated. It was with the Marcher lords - with whom de Montfort had formerly held an alliance - that Prince Edward went to battle. The Welsh marches lie to the northwest of Evesham.

viii. Robert and the Reign of King Edward I

So far, I have highlighted the affinities between the topics deliberated by the chronicler in his text, and those contested by the baronial reformers. However, as I have previously mentioned, the chronicle needs to be assessed within the context of Edward I's reign also to evaluate how events of that period may have contributed to, or indeed have been the stimulus for, the work. There is no doubt that the baronial reform movement played a significant role in Robert's composition. The memory of both that movement and de Montfort did not, however, cease with the final capitulation of the barons in 1266, or indeed with the death of King Henry III. Veneration of the Earl of Leicester was at its height from 1265 until approximately 1280.[371] Some interest in the baronial leader survived in the form of popular song into the fourteenth century; such songs were sung to Edward II at Whorlton Castle in the Cleveland hills in 1333.[372] Intense enthusiasm for the cult appears, however, to have been short-lived. This Simon Walker attributes to the nature of de Montfort's cult which 'was valued by his devotees chiefly as a weapon in a continuing struggle, rather than

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[371] Prestwich, *Thirteenth Century* 203.

[372] Walker, "Political Saints," 96.

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as a means of reconciliation once the struggle was over'.[373] As the cult did not transcend the

political circumstances of its creation, so, as reconciliation took place, belief in his sanctity

waned.[374]

The termination of Henry III's reign in 1272 probably contributed to the decline in worship

of de Montfort. With that king died many of the baronial grievances. However, baronial

reform was far from forgotten. Edward I also disapproved of the veneration of de Montfort,

and his refusal to reinstate some of the disinherited barons is testimony to how sensitive the

issue of the reform movement still was in his reign. This can be seen in his treatment of

Robert Ferrers (Earl of Derby). Ferrers was deprived of his earldom for his part in the

baronial rebellion; the terms for its re-acquisition were declared in item fourteen of the

Dictum of Kenilworth:

> *Item comes de Ferrariis puniatur ualet terra sua per vii annos.*
> (Be it noted that earl Ferrers shall be punished by a ransom of seven times the annual
> value of his land.)[375]

The financial penalty imposed on Ferrers was so large that his heirs were never to reclaim

the whole earldom.[376] Robert comments upon the severity of this judgement:

> Þe king vor him & vor his . he grauntede is lond þer.
> Vort he him miȝte oþer his . of sterlinges paie.
> To & fifti þousund pound . al in one daye.
> & so he was deliured [of prison] . wiþoute lond & fe.
> God wite in o dai . wan it aquited be.

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[373] *ibid* 97.

[374] *ibid*

[375] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 326-327.

[376] Robert Ferrers' land was granted to the king's brother, Edmund of Lancaster, whose grandson, Henry of Lancaster, was created Earl of Derby in 1337. Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 212.

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Robert Ferrers died in 1279, and the debt was passed to his son, John. Despite petitions to

the king, Edward remained unsympathetic to John Ferrers' cause; he was never granted

pardon, even after the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Winchelsey, intervened on his

behalf.[378] Believing the king's 'long-term vindictiveness' against the Ferrers unjust, [379]

Winchelsey supported the earl's appeal to the pope, and himself judged the case in 1301.[380]

Edward, however, refused to yield to his judgement.

That Edward had not forgotten, or forgiven, the rebellion in his father's reign is also

recorded in his Manifesto of 12 August 1297. Drawn up in answer to a complaint about

taxation, this document threatened the excommunication of any who disturbed the peace of

the land. As justification for this threat, Edward quoted the papal bull of Clement IV which

had issued an excommunication notice against the rebel barons.[381]

Memories of the baronial rebellion thus not only endured into Edward's reign, but also

influenced some political decisions. How far, or how fervently, they were retained in the

popular imagination it is impossible to tell. Robert's preoccupation with that era, and its

tenets, might be a reflection of a prevailing interest amongst the general populace. It could

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[377] It is noteworthy that Robert records the debt of Robert Ferrers in pounds, when the *Dictum* relates it in terms of annual value of the land. This suggests the Robert had access to other sources (perhaps hearsay) for this extra information.

[378] Denton, *Robert Winchelsey and the Crown 1294-1313: A Study in the Defence of Ecclesiastical Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) 205.

[379] *ibid* 170.

[380] *ibid* 205.

[381] Denton, *Winchelsey* 147.

also be reflective of the fact that at least a number of the circumstances which were then

disputed had equal validity in Edward's reign, and that Robert advocated opposition to them

by reviving memories of an older dispute. Even though de Montfort dies, it must be

remembered, Robert portrays his cause as divinely supported. Though the leader is dead,

the issues at stake are part of universal, Christian, justice. They therefore live on.

Many of the problems of local government and monarchic rights certainly did re-emerge in

Edward's reign. A disregard for the liberties of Magna Carta, the corrupt nature of local

administration, and the dismissal of ecclesiastical advice were matters for concern in the late

thirteenth century. Hostility to foreigners resident in the country had, however, ceased to

be the problem it had been in Henry's time, but the war with France (1294-98) ensured

continued ill-feeling towards that nation. That fear of foreign interference survived in the

consciousness of the people, is suggested by Edward's attempted manipulation of it in 1295.

When Philip IV confiscated Gascony in 1294, Edward attempted to enlist aid for his

campaign by declaring that the French intended to eradicate the English language.[382] It is

apparent that he considered that his subjects felt that their language was an important part

of their identity. To be threatened with its removal, Edward's statement implies, was

therefore to arouse anti-alien impulses.

A fear of foreign interference was still latent, then, amongst the population, even if it had

ceased to be the political issue it had been during Henry III's reign. The king's responsibility

to uphold the liberties of Magna Carta was, in contrast, a hotly disputed matter. As a

consequence of the extreme military activity during his reign, Edward was obliged to tax his

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[382] Reynolds, *Kingdoms* 272; Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England 1272-1377* (London: Routledge, 1994) 90; Woodbine, "English Law" 424.

subjects heavily to raise the required funds. The first Welsh war alone cost around £23,000, whilst the second totalled about £150,000.[383] Two parliaments of 1275 had consented to a customs duty on wool and leather exports, and a fifteenth tax on moveable property to relieve the debts incurred by the king's crusade.[384] To help pay for the second Welsh war, the king sent the royal counsellor, John Kirkby, on a tour of England in 1282 to raise loans as an advance to a tax not then negotiated. Some £16,500 was unscrupulously collected.[385] The king followed this by seizing the crusading tax which had been deposited in English churches.[386] Edward's financial problems escalated in the 1290s. King Philip IV's confiscation of Gascony in 1294 led to a war with the French king which was to last until 1297. There was another Welsh revolt 1294-1295, and in 1296 the Scottish wars began.[387] Military expenditure for the years 1294-1298 has been estimated at £750,000.[388] For three years the people supported the king's war against the French, but the burden pushed the country into crisis. The clergy were the first to object to the heavy taxes; in 1294 they were still paying arrears on three subsidies granted in 1279, 1283-6 and 1290, as well as the crusading tenth.[389] In their resistance they were supported by Pope Boniface VIII who issued the bull *Clericis Laicos* in 1296 to place financial pressure upon the warring monarchs.[390] This bull placed an excommunication order upon any member of the clergy who paid taxes to the king without prior papal consent. When the clergy refused Edward

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[383] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 16.

[384] *ibid* 10.

[385] *ibid* 16-17; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 505-506.

[386] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 17; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 506.

[387] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 26.

[388] *ibid* 26.

[389] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 671.

[390] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 27; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 674 etc. etc.

a subsidy early in 1297, however, Edward responded by withdrawing his protection. He then made them pay a fifth in order to receive a royal writ of protection. If they refused, he threatened to confiscate their property and possessions.[391] To resolve the conflict, the clergy agreed to approach the pope, as their French counterparts had done, to plead the granting of tax during times of emergency without having to obtain papal consent. Edward offered to confirm the Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest if the tax was forthcoming.[392] In July 1297, after the magnates had refused to answer his summons to serve in Flanders, the king also declared to the laity his intention of confirming the Charters.[393] Amongst the grievances which the magnates had formulated against Edward in 1297 (the Remonstrances) was his failure to keep this promise.[394] Heavy taxation, as well as the impoverishment caused in the country by the seizure of goods were complaints also listed.[395] Particularly in the 1290s, a belief was still held that the liberties of the population were preserved in the charters, and that the king's reaffirmation of them could still satisfy domestic disturbances. The ineffectual nature of the king's promises was also, however, observed. On 23 August 1297, for example, the clergy of the York diocese refused the king a subsidy, claiming that the king's promises to confirm Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest had been futile.[396] The clergy in the county of Worcestershire responded similarly.[397] Robert's attitude towards the charters echoes these opinions. He uses Henry II's issuing of the charter 'of forest & of oþer þing' (9810) to comment upon the fruitless gesture of charter confirmation in general:

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[391] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 27-28.

[392] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 676; Denton, *Winchelsey* 136.

[393] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 680.

[394] *ibid* 682; Denton, *Winchesley* 138.

[395] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 28 29.

[396] Denton, *Winchelsey* 153.

[397] *ibid*

After is daye iholde . febliche it was.
Of king ion & of oþere . & naþeles þer nas.
Non of hom at some time . mid wille þei it nere.
Ne grauntede & confermede it. *þei it lute worþ were.*[My italics.]
(9812-15)

If he was writing in the reign of Edward I, Robert had every reason to express such disillusionment. After the outbreak of war with Scotland, following Wallace's victory at Stirling Bridge on 11 September 1297, an agreement was reached between the dissatisfied subjects of the realm and the king. This took the form of the *Confirmatio Cartarum*. Agreed on 10 October 1297, and confirmed by the king on 5 November of that year, this document provided clauses additional to (but not part of) the Magna Carta. The liberties of the church granted in the first clause of Magna Carta were glossed here, the issue of full consent to taxation was stressed, and the *maltote* (the heavy tax on wool) was abolished.[398] Robert Winchelsey, the archbishop of Canterbury, drew up an excommunication sentence against anyone who infringed the *Confirmatio*.[399] Despite the king's concessions in this document, it did not have the same authority as alterations to Magna Carta. As a separate piece of legislation, as a supplementary to the Charter of Liberties, the *Confirmatio* could more easily be revoked.[400]

Reference to, and reliance upon, the charters as bargaining counters by the magnates was frequent during this period. At York in 1298, for example, the magnates insisted upon a public proclamation of the charters, and the sentences of excommunication, before they

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[398] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 31; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 683; Denton, *Winchelsey* 163.

[399] Denton, *Winchelsey* 167.

[400] *ibid* 167; Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 31.

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joined the army at Newcastle.[401] Such demands for the reiteration of the king's promises

may have resulted from suspicions about the reliability of the king's assurances. These were

well founded, as the Easter parliament of 1299 was to demonstrate. On 2 April 1299,

Edward issued the statute *De Finibus Levatis*, in which he confirmed the charters of Henry

III, but omitted to mention the additions of 1297, and also disregarded the first five clauses

of the Charter of the Forest.[402] These oversights were remedied at the Westminster

parliament of 1300, when Edward again had to give in to concessions. In the *Articuli super*

Cartas published then, the king promised to remedy the grievances suffered by the people

due to the recent wars. The charters of Henry III were again confirmed, and the full Charter

of the Forest. Safeguards for the observance of these were contained in the *Articuli*.[403]

Attempts to ensure the king's compliance with the charters were finally destroyed in 1305

by the appointment of a new pope, Clement V. This Gascon pope, Bertrand de Got, had

been a former clerk of Edward in Gascony.[404] Clement was appointed in June 1305, and by

December he had released Edward from the oaths he had sworn to observe the *Confirmatio*

Cartarum, and, in February 1306, he revoked the *Clericis Laicos* bill.[405]

There was much in Edward I's reign to fuel Robert's disenchantment with monarchical

promises to uphold the charters would have had much substance. Robert would also have

had reason to support the restriction of the king's powers. Edward's pretensions as king

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[401] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 697.

[402] *ibid* 699.; Denton, *Winchelsey* 185.

[403] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 700; Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 32; Denton, *Winchelsey* 185-186.

[404] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 33; Denton, *Winchelsey* 219.

[405] Denton, *Winchelsey* 229-230.

were, at times, as autocratic as his father's. In 1281, Archbishop Pecham cautioned the king's excesses by spelling out his subordination to ecclesiastical law.[406] Edward's belief in his absolute power was further demonstrated when, in 1297, he attempted to enforce a tax on the clergy by declaring his divine right as king.[407]

Despite the fact that the issue of counsel was subsidiary to that of consent in this period, ecclesiastical advisers continued to figure prominently. Archbishop Winchelsey, in particular, fought tenaciously for the liberties of the church against Edward's exactions. The demise of this prominent ecclesiastical figure may have heightened Robert of Gloucester's consciousness of the importance of church advisers to the king. Winchelsey's disputes with Edward over taxation resulted in his suspension from office in 1306.[408] Because of his opposition to the Crown, the archbishop became popularly venerated for his sanctity after his death in 1326. The cult which rose around this uncanonised 'saint' had similarities with others of this period, in that it too was generated by the subject's defiance of the monarchy; Archbishop Grosseteste, Stephen Langton, and Simon de Montfort are further examples.[409]

I have so far demonstrated how the events of Edward I's reign could have provided an incentive for Robert's interests in the chronicle. The king's abuse of his power and the consequent importance of the charters to the populace was a major element of this king's rule. The rejection, and indeed exile, of ecclesiastical advisers also continued to play a part

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[406] Peter Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461: Conflict and Collaboration in an Age of Crisis* (London: Fontana, 1988) 24.

[407] Denton, *Winchelsey* 120.

[408] Heath, *Church and Realm* 52.

[409] Denton, *Winchelsey* 20.

in the politics of this era. Fears of foreign interference also survived, if more latent than they had been in the previous reign.

Robert's concerns about the rapaciousness of royal officials could equally pertain to Edward I's reign. I have already shown the chronicler's anxieties about the maltreatment of the poor people of the land by their superiors.[410] The bailiffs, in particular, are isolated by him as rapacious royal officials (11,162-63).[411] Distrust of royal officials was prevalent in Henry III's reign; it was one of the causes of the barons' showing of arms at the 1258 parliament.[412] It was equally a matter arousing discontent in the reign of his son. Edward I did, however, make wide-ranging attempts to remedy the problems. On his return from crusade in 1274, he set about overhauling the local administration.[413] As there were so many complaints, he postponed a general eyre and set up a commission of inquiry in October 1274.[414] To correct the abuses revealed by this inquiry, Edward then issued the first Statute of Westminster in 1275.[415] The approach was progressive but apparently too slow to remedy the situation, as the Dunstable annalist reports: *'Dominus rex...misit inquisitores ubique ad inquirendum qualiter vicecomites et alii ballivi se habuissent; sed nullum commodum inde venit'*[416] ('the king sent his commissioners everywhere to inquire how his sheriffs and bailiffs

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[410] John of Wales, in his *Communiloquium*, also enforces the need for proper justice for the poor. Swanson, *John of Wales* 86. Robert again shows himself attuned to ideas emanating from Oxford.

[411] This accusation is discussed in chapter three. It occurs with reference to John Giffard's refusal to attend a hundred court at Quedgely, in Gloucestershire.

[412] Carpenter, "What Happened?" 190.

[413] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 9; Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 357.

[414] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 358.

[415] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 10.

[416] *Annales Monastici*, Luard III 263.

had conducted themselves, but no good came of it').[417] Robert of Gloucester enters into this

pertinent, contemporary, debate when he details Giffard's opposition to the hundred court.

Abuse of power by local officials was a recurring theme during Edward's reign. It was

inevitable that the king's early concerns would be neglected whilst he concentrated upon

war, and indeed, no further statutes were issued to deal with the problems of corruption.[418]

On his return from the Continent in 1298, Edward set up an inquiry into administrative

malpractices during the wars. Many bailiffs and other local officials, for example, had

profited from the seizure of goods, taxes and, in particular, prises, for the Crown. They

appropriated more than was required from the people in order to enrich themselves with the

surplus. Edward's investigation did not result in any legislation, so no answer was provided

for the extortion.[419] The vehemence of Robert of Gloucester's attitude towards bailiffs thus

has a primary context in Edward's reign.

There is one further indication that Robert was writing in the later years of King Edward's

reign. This is his reference to Thomas Turberville as the perpetrator of the crime against

Peter d'Aigueblanche at Hereford. Robert recounts how this bishop took refuge from the

barons in the church, and records how the barons hesitated to defile this sanctuary.

However: 'sir tomas torbeuille . & oþer ssrewen mo' (11,117), he describes, persisted in

pursuing the bishop. It is peculiar that only one of the rebel barons is isolated as the offender

here. This may, in part, be due to the fact that Robert gained his information from an eye-

witness (see introduction). It may also represent a desire by the chronicler to sully

Turberville's name. Thomas Turberville was convicted of treason, drawn and hanged in

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[417] Powicke, *Thirteenth Century* 360.

[418] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 26.

[419] Prestwich, *Three Edwards* 31-32.

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1295.[420] He had acted as a spy for the French king, sending to him information about English troops and defence measures.[421] Robert may, therefore, be illustrating how Turberville's character was tainted before his act of treason. In so doing, he gives this incidence national relevance.

This is a further illustration of the way Robert uses the past to provide exempla for the present and future, and also to isolate contemporary malpractice. The way in which he manipulates the events of Henry's reign to comment upon those of Edward's, provides an insight into his use of more distant historical circumstance. Past eras are presented as golden ages, but the chronicle can by no means be construed as archaic, or backwards-looking. The chronicler's interpretation of the past is concerned with the presentation of ideals which he sees as necessary for the running of a contented society. These ideals anticipate the reestablishment of the English language as the official language of the country, and the coherence of an England led by an English king.

It has been suggested that the promise of 'official English' died with de Montfort.[422] However, the perseverance of the vernacular as a literary and historical medium continued afterwards, as it had arisen before. The cause for which the rebel barons fought - the exclusion of foreigners from office; control of the king's decision making; the enforcement of English law - had a definite nationalistic bent. In requiring that the king should not marry

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[420] J. G. Edwards, "The Treason of Thomas Turberville, 1295," *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, eds. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948) 297.

[421] Prestwich, *Edward I* (1997) 382-3.

[422] Basil Cottle, *The Triumph of English: 1350-1400* (London: Blandford Press, 1969) 15.

any women pertaining to him to any man '*qui non sunt de natione regni Anglie*'[423] the

barons were creating an 'imagined community' of 'English' people (defined, apparently, by

birth in that land). In communicating some of their aims in the vernaculars of the country,

the king and the barons did at least gesture to an inclusion of wide sectors of the community.

There is some evidence that the lowest strata of society had some involvement in, and

understanding of, the baronial crisis in Henry's reign.[424] A large number of the population

may well have been roused in the construction of an England. Robert is one of this number,

but one also seeking to reinforce awareness of that English present by considering its

inheritance.

ix. Robert's audience

Robert's chronicle must have been intended for an audience sympathetic to the tenets which

he maintains. This conclusion does little, however, to delimit the audience. Adherents to the

baronial cause came from a wide social range. This is testified not only by those who were

de Montfort's acknowledged supporters before his death, but also by the record of those

for whom miracles were performed at his tomb at Evesham. High-ranking ecclesiastics were

prominent amongst the barons' direct supporters. De Montfort had the backing of much of

the Church, including Walter Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester.[425] The lower clergy were also

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[423] *Documents*, Treharne and Sanders 80-81.

[424] Carpenter, "English Peasants," 3-42.

[425] Prestwich, *Thirteenth Century* 68; Heffernan, "Dangerous Sympathies" 15.

fervent supporters,[426] as were the Franciscans.[427] Amongst lay society, it was from the lesser

nobility of the Midland shires that the Earl of Leicester's adherents came.[428] The visitants

at de Montfort's tomb, however, came from a more varied social background.[429] The

medium in which the chronicle is written does little to further define Robert's audience. By

the thirteenth century, much of the gentry is thought to have been English literate.[430]

x. The Second Recension

Thus far, discussion has been based on the first recension of the chronicle. I will now analyse

how the second-recension text interacts with its contemporary society. It is written in a

manner which indicates that the motivations for its composition, and its intended audience,

were different from those of the first recension. Whether the authorship of the second-

recension continuation (the years 1135-1272) is the same as that of the first recension will

be assessed from this investigation.

There are some narratorial techniques in the second recension which an analysis of the first

recension has made familiar. The first-person singular performs the same function as it did

in the other text. It encourages audience complicity with a narratorial voice: 'ich not', 'ich

wene', 'as ich telle er' are common textual interjections. Those phrases which serve to give

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[426] Prestwich, *Thirteenth Century* 70.

[427] Hinnebusch, *Friars Preachers* 465-466.

[428] Ormrod, *Thirteenth Century* 70.

[429] Finucane, *Pilgrims and Miracles* 133, 169-70.

[430] Kahane, "Language Death," 186; Woodbine, "English Law," 399; Berndt, "The Final Decline" 359; Short, "Patrons," 248; Pope, *From Latin* 421.

events a contemporary, relevant, context ('þat nou ycluped is', and so on) are likewise frequent. But there points of direct comparison end. Differences in the language of the two recensions have been attributed by Hudson to chronological rather than dialectical factors.[431] The contents of this version, as I shall demonstrate, support this evidence. So different, indeed, is the approach to the subject matter in the two recensions, that any suggestion that both may have been written by one author, targeting separate audiences, must be dismissed. Fundamental variations may be illustrated by an examination of those 'leitmotifs' which have already been isolated as being of importance to the first-recension author in the second-recension text: kingship and law. The first-recension author's construct of 'Englishness' does not receive attention from this later author.

There is very little correlation in the treatment which the two texts give to kingship. In the second recension, the material up to the death of Henry I is rather added to than omitted. Those insertions, and the ending itself, show that the issues of rightful kingship, and correct coronation procedures, are not independently explored. Those coronations which are treated are brief, and show no inclination to repeat the formulas witnessed in the earlier text. Richard, for example, obtains the throne with little ceremony:

> Richard his sone þat vlke 3er . was ycrouned king
> (XX: 515)

This is typical of the handling of the coronation by this author. It is terse, and unconcerned with the ceremonies of kingship, and the theories which underlie those ceremonies. This could be a consequence of the sources available to the composer. However, I would attribute the interest in coronation procedures of the first-recension author rather to his

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[431] Hudson, *Chronicle.* 307.

political idealism than to any reliance upon comprehensive sources. Only at the accession

of Henry II does the second-recension chronicler attempt to introduce any detail, and then

the emphases which are made differ from those contained in the first recension:

> To king he was iblessed . at londone ywis
> & iset in trone . mid gret ioie & blis
> Þe bisschop of canturburi . theobaud mid his honde
> Crounede þis henri . king of engelonde
> (XX: 445-48)

The stress placed upon the blessing and the throne is an observation upon the king-making

process which belongs solely to this recension author. The significance of the throne does

not figure in the other text where the priority is upon *status* rather than *locus*. It is also

unique to this author to misname the archbishop of Canterbury 'bisschop'. What prevails

in the second recension is lack of attention to detail. Whilst there is some continuation of the

first-recension author's concern that the rightful king should reign, this is erratic, and does

not establish itself as a theme by the use of key words and formulas. One of the more explicit

expressions of interest on this theme occurs with reference to Stephen's reign:

> Muche wo & sorwe . on his time was in londe
> Vor þer is vnkunde king . is ofte gret schonde.
> (XX: 433-34)

As this statement does not form a part of the author's overall polemical stance, it does not

acquire the force which such sentiments receive in the other recension through repetition and

explanation.

A concomitant lack of interest may also be observed in the treatment of the law in the

second recension. The author does not lack knowledge of legal systems, but nor does he

emphasise them as a theme. Indeed, the second-recension author even peculiarly undermines

attempts by the author of the opening section of the chronicle to base the concept of 'good

law' in the age of Alfred. An insertion allows this privilege to the British queen, Maiciȝe:

Þis quene was of bok wyse . & wytti in þat dawe
Heo made þo lawe on bruitichs . þat het Marcene lawe
Þus after hure owe name . brutons þe lawe nempde
Þer after manie hundred ȝer . king alfred god sende
Þat wroute þe lawe on englich . wis man þat was ywis
Ac after þe quene y nempned heo was . þulke day & ȝute is
(H: 5-10)

This is essentially an excerpt from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, and is representative

of the second-recension author's reliance upon his sources in contrast to the first-recension

author's independence. The first-recension writer chose to omit this material in order to

bolster his claims for Alfred as a law-maker; the former reveals his information-gathering,

rather than literary-historical, skills. In this second ending, with its lengthy account of

Stephen's reign, it is not surprising to find that the other main aside upon the law occurs in

relation to this king. A record is made of Stephen's issuing of the Charter of Liberties at

Oxford in 1136. This charter was based upon that of Henry I, but was more far-reaching,

in particular with regard to the church,[432] and it is this aspect which the chronicler

emphasises:

God holi chirche & þe londe
Þat he nolde at holde . bissopriche on his honde
Þey eny bisschop were ded . of al þisse londe
& clerkes wode ne lewede . þat he nolde at holde
Vor hunting ne for hewing . ne þey he out solde
& þat he nolde fonge . as oþere hadde ido
Tweie schillinges of eche hyde . he swor neuere mo
(XX: 49-55)

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[432] A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta: 1087-1216* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1955) 190.

What this reveals about the clerical interests of the chronicler will be discussed further below, but what may be noted here, is how the second-recension author's interest lies in the freedom of the church rather than in the concept of good law itself. That good law is not a concern is indicated particularly by the manner in which Becket is disregarded in this version of the chronicle. The first-recension author's digression upon Becket in contrast (9611-9799) is influenced by the SEL life of that saint, and focuses essentially upon the laws which he counselled Henry II to implement. In the second recension, Becket is granted only two lines of verse, as if the anticipated audience is expected to know the background of his life:

> Enleue hundred ȝer . seuenti & on hit was
> Fram godes burþtime . þat slaye was seint thomas
> (XX: 479-80)

It is apparent, then, that the second-recension author was working to an agenda separate from that of the first recension. He demonstrates a greater reliance upon the veracity of his sources, and his additions to the original portion of the chronicle (to 1135) show that he was unaware of, or unconcerned about, the scheme revealed there.

These additions in themselves warrant attention. They reveal this chronicler as being inclined to sensationalise and accept folk lore incredulously. In the story of St. Augustine's preaching mission, for example, he includes the incident where the men of Rochester were given tails for insulting the saint. He is also emotive when dealing with the Scots; this attitude may have been designed to reinforce popular fears. After an attack by David of Scotland upon the north of England, the narrative reads:

> He nade ispared children . in hare moder wombe
> Ac slitten out & bere forþ . ope speres in hare honde
> Ne prustes at þe weuede . ne sparede riȝt nout
> Ac broute to deþe . sumdel þat was tout

This is the type of anti-Scottish sentiment which is missing from the first recension, where

any such feelings are more subtly expressed. The second-recension chronicler's enthusiasm

for a good anecdote seems almost unprofessional in comparison to the adept and cogent

views of the first. The first-recension author, for example, merely relates the fact that the

brains and intestines of Henry I were buried in Normandy whilst his body was taken to

England for entombment. The second-recension author, however, presents a somewhat

gory picture of the decaying and smelling body of the king which necessitates the (here

detailed) removal of the internal organs (XX: 22-40). Maintenance of a decorum where

kingship is concerned does not over-ride a feeling for a sensationalist tale.

The treatment of King Edgar also introduces elements into the chronicle which detract from

the mystique surrounding the monarchy which the first-recension author promulgates.

Again the second recension includes what the earlier author chose to ignore, in this instance,

the famed sins of the king, including the seduction of a nun (II: 6-7). Whilst the audience is

informed that Edgar repented of his evil deeds under the counsel of St. Dunstan, the image

of an ideal king is destroyed. Further lurid details are then added with the legend of how

attempts were made to cut off the limbs of the dead sovereign's incorrupt body years after

his death (II: 15-26).

These amplifications of the narrative represent, however, no more than this chronicler's

inclination towards anecdotes with popular appeal. Elsewhere he adds material which

illuminates a strong polemical stance not borrowed from the other chronicle. This is an anti-

Rome attitude, bred, presumably, by events which occurred between the papacy and the

church in England. It is prompted in the text by the conquest of Rome by Belinus and

Brennius:

> Whar þoru rome aute bet . abowe to þis londe
> Þan þis lond to rome . wiþ riȝte ich vnderstonde
> (G: 255-56)

This is supplemented by a proclamation which stands out from the rest of the text because

of its vehemence:

> Þo belin & brenne come . mid ost & wonne rome
> & oure auncestres slowe . & gret garison þer nome
> Þer of we scholde awreke beo . ich swerie bi min heued
> & wonne aȝen þe tresor . þat of rome was bi reued
> (K: 1-4)

It is difficult to locate events which could have provoked such caustic statements. We

cannot date the second recension with any accuracy. The earliest manuscript has been dated

around 1400.[433] Edward I's wars with Scotland roused resentment against both the Scots

and the papacy. In 1299 Pope Boniface VIII intervened in the dispute between England and

Scotland, ordering Edward to cease fighting as Scotland was a papal fief, and to send

proctors to Rome to argue his overlordship. Edward's speech in his defence at parliament

awakened unfavourable opinions against the papacy.[434] Fervent anti-papal feelings in

England were, however, recurrent, at least amongst the clergy, throughout the fourteenth

century. The lack of English representatives in the papal *Curia* was one of the roots of this

from 1305-1396.[435] Remuneration of papal servants with English church endowments (1305-

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[433] Cambridge, Trinity College MS. R. 4. 26 contains a Latin prophecy, Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle and a short chronicle recording historical events from the time of Brutus to that of Edward I in Anglo-Norman prose. Hudson, *Chronicle* 23.

[434] Heath, *Church and Realm* 61.

[435] *ibid* 89.

1334) heightened this discontent.[436] After the commencement of war between France and England in the reign of Edward III (1338), the English became suspicious of papal intervention, particularly as many popes and cardinals were of French origin.[437] French chauvinism fuelled anti-papal sentiment. In 1342, it was believed that the popes were filling English benefices with French bishops and cardinals.[438]

It is impossible then to isolate any precise period within the fourteenth century which may have instigated the chronicler's opinions about Rome. The attitude he adopts, however, suggests that his interests were primarily clerical. This is substantiated by the interest shown in the church liberties defined in the charter of liberties, which I discussed above. Further indication of clerical objectives is given by the attention paid to the establishment of the singing of the 'Gloria in Excelsis' by Pope Telaforas, which, the writer adjoins, 'is song of muche blis' (L:4).

Despite achieving an identity distinct from that of the first recension, the author of the second recension never obtains the focus of that other text. Its ending, in particular, weakens any polemical thread which may have been intended. After the lengthy description of the reign of Stephen, the succeeding kings are polished off with what can only be described as indecent haste. King John is despatched, from crowning to death, in eighteen lines, without mention of the Magna Carta. The initial synopsis of Henry III's life is only four lines in length, and this is supplemented by a longer digression of only six lines which includes the

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[436] *ibid* 90.

[437] *ibid* 123.

[438] *ibid* 128.

baronial events which distracted the first-recension author considerably. In Henry's reign,

it is commented, there were two battles:

> At lewes & at euesham . as ich vnderstonde
> Þat were ihurd ilome . & ne buþ for ʒute nout
> Þer fore on þis boke . ne buþ hii nout ywrout
> (584-86)

Abbreviation of events in this manner is noted in the first recension only during the British

era and may, as I have demonstrated, have been calculated as part of the author's polemical

strategy. The two distinct personalities apparent behind these renderings of English history

could not be more clearly illustrated.

CONCLUSION

Any study of Robert of Gloucester's chronicle is beset with difficulties inherent in the text as it survives to us today. The anonymity of the chronicler and the lack of an authorial preface, in particular, are impediments to an understanding of the chronicle's purpose, and also to its location within the chronicling tradition. In this thesis I have addressed many of the problems related to the chronicle by re-evaluating it as a literary text. By this approach, I have been able to describe a stylistic signature by which the author may be recognised and, by an analysis of his polemic, I have also suggested motivations for the text's composition.

Robert's importance as the first post-Conquest historian to write an updated chronicle in the English vernacular should not be underestimated. As I have shown throughout this thesis, Robert was a pioneer in his own time. His text was written in English not just to entertain a group of English monoglots, but to signal his belief in the concept of Englishness. In choosing to write in English, Robert deliberately made a move away from the prestige languages of Anglo-Norman and Latin which were traditionally used for historical purposes. He indicated the value of the English tongue by using it as a vehicle for his literary-historical work. That Robert's choice of medium was an element of his political position is clear. He does not, like Robert Mannyng, commence his text with a description of his anticipated audience who 'þe Latyn ne Frankys cone' but instead remarks upon the joys of England, and directs his polemic to a group of unspecified 'englisse men'. This group, I have argued, was intended to be self-selecting; the criterion for inclusion in the group was primarily acceptance of Robert's pro-English polemic. Robert's assumption of this is evidenced by his use of the plural pronoun 'we', particularly in the phrase 'we englisse men', which positions the reader or listener of his text as an advocate of his interpretation of English history.

Robert looks to the pre-Norman, English (Anglo-Saxon), past to validate his construction of an English national identity. He promotes the customs and values of that era as ideals which serve as a code of conduct for his own time. In so doing, he illustrates the continuity which exists between the two periods, and presents the phase of Norman hegemony as a mere deviance from an English supremacy. As I have shown, this objective is paramount in Robert's interpretation of English history. It governs his account of British history, his description of the Anglo-Saxon kings (especially King Alfred and King Edgar), and strongly affects his view of the Normans. It also dictates his opinions of events in his own era.

The original termination of the chronicle after recounting the death of King Henry I in 1135, is a strong indicator of Robert's desire to demonstrate a continuity of English kings ruling over an English homeland. Much emphasis is placed upon the conjoining of the English and Norman royal lines in the marriage of Henry I to Matilda of Scotland. As the reign of this king therefore ensured the accession of a rightful English heir, the culmination of his rule was an appropriate place at which to conclude the chronicle. There is a certain neatness in the ending of this abbreviated English history.

It is clear that Robert was attempting to construct an English nation in his writing. The England which he promotes has geographical boundaries, a 'native' group of people, a shared past and a national language emanating from that shared past. It also has a political unity focused upon the monarch and his advisers. It is a community which he presents as existing in his own time.

This community is not, however, egalitarian. Robert is conscious of the hierarchical structures within society which ensure its survival. At no point in his narrative, for example,

does he recommend the overthrow of the monarch, but he does advocate proper constraint of a rightful king who does not adhere to the customs laid down in the Anglo-Saxon period. These customs include acceptance of ecclesiastical advice and the protection of the English from foreign interference.

Robert's version of history is unique. He gathers the basic chronology of events from a wide variety of sources, and overlays and rewrites this to present his own view of history. The focus of this is essentially the period in which he writes. His emphasis upon the Anglo-Saxon age is not nostalgic; it is a means by which he identifies the rottenness in his own society. His contemporary political purposes are also served by advocating a return to values from an English past.

Comparisons between the two periods are effectively drawn by Robert's use of formulas. Varying from key words and phrases to themes and models, formulas are an essential part of Robert's composition. They often signal complex ideas regarding kingship and legitimacy, for example. Robert's formulas are more than just a residue from an oral-formulaic mode of working, they are the most active part of his polemic, and are utilised together with his flexible septenary line to convey often subversive ideas regarding the state of the country in his time. These often reference the rival groups to the English: the Welsh and Normans. Robert's style is easily identifiable. His use of his poetic medium is adept, as comparisons with the *South English Legendary* verse, and also his enscription of a reception mode for the chronicle, indicate.

The nature of Robert's audience, and the related method of dissemination for the text, has brought previous scholars to an impasse. Answers to both of these queries, however, are

evident in the work. Robert clearly wrote for a listening audience. The narrative voice is not that of the author. This is stressed when the author, Robert, is specifically identified - in contradistinction to the I-voice of the text - as an eye-witness for the darkness after the Battle of Evesham. References throughout to the seeing and hearing of the text further validate this conclusion. This does not classify Robert's audience as non-literate. Evidence suggests that listening to a book being read aloud was a valuable social experience for all sectors of society. No other definition of the audience is given in the text. As I have argued, this is probably because Robert expected his audience to consist of a group of self-selecting English supporters.

The version of history which Robert presents identifies him as an inhabitant of the late thirteenth century. As I have proposed in the last chapter of this thesis, there are elements within the chronicle which may be responses to events which occurred in the reign of King Edward I. The chronicler was also obviously affected by the baronial rebellions of King Henry III's rule. These may have influenced his attitude to later monarchical misrule and the disaffection it produced, but as I have argued, the text must be placed in the reign of Edward. The chronicler is a man of his own time. His views upon the rights of the king, and his relationship to the law, are analogous to those which were being propounded in the Oxford schools and amongst educated men in the late thirteenth century. This is one aspect of the text which contributes to the identification of the author as the Chancellor of Hereford cathedral, Robert Le Wyse of Gloucester. Another factor is the unique knowledge which the author has of events in Gloucester and Hereford during the Barons' Wars. Why, however, would a doctor of Canon Law compose a chronicle in the English vernacular? The chronicle, I have argued, is a politically motivated work. It supports the Montfortian cause which allied itself with the pursuit of Englishness. The chronicle strives to promote

the justness of both of these causes, and strengthens its logic by adopting a medium which supports its argument. By its construction in the vernacular, the chronicle challenges the traditionally assigned role of this language. Latin texts were assimilated for its composition, but a decision was made to present this pro-English narrative in the English vernacular. As the use of the vernacular is not an indication of the restricted linguistic ability of the author, or of his audience, it could well have been implemented by a highly educated man, such as Robert Le Wyse.

It is certain, as I have shown, that the authorship of the second recension is distinct from that of the first. This is signalled by a difference in style, as well by the alteration of historical focus in the second recension, and the greater reliance upon source material. Some of these variations may be attributed to the fact that the second-recension author wrote at a later date than the first.

Robert of Gloucester's chronicle remains a text which still has much to yield. As an historical work, the contribution which it can make to thirteenth-century historical studies is considerable. As an early vernacular post-Conquest composition, it is also a key text for the evaluation of national identity in the Middle Ages. This thesis has sought to demonstrate, however, that the literary aspects of the text must be given consideration in any evaluation of the text. The audience's understanding of events is controlled by the author's manipulation of his medium. At this he is adept. His vision of English history is constructed in an intricate manner which enables any single period to be fully comprehended only in comparison with the others. Only by this approach can the chronicle shake off its reputation as a labourious and unprepossessing text, and gain its deserved standing as a complex and professional work, which is an archetypical product of the late thirteenth century.

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