

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*

‘Ænglelande’: An African King’s Gift to the Saxons

Dora Faraci crossed conventional boundaries for Old English studies with her edition of the early Middle English Bestiary from British Library, MS Arundel 292, a trilingual manuscript of the later thirteenth century with press-marks from Norwich Cathedral Priory (Faraci, 1990)¹. Questions about the nature of English and English literary culture after the classic period of Old English have continued to proliferate since. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries present a complex and shifting multilingual mix in which Old English continued to be adapted and copied into the thirteenth century, especially in pastoralia and preaching; the chief vernacular production became francophone (with considerable overlap between French and Old English text-types); textual production as a whole remained dominated by Latin, and some texts were produced in what we call Early Middle English². The organicist and teleological metaphors in older nationalizing scholarship that constructed English texts after the eleventh century as desolate survivals or as precocious new shoots of a later, ‘natural’ triumph of English are not useful for this multilingual literary culture. Preaching and pastoralia, for instance, are face-to-face orally delivered performance texts, not a matter of nostalgic preservation of Old English. Writing in England was at once regional and transnational, and drew on literary cultures beyond England’s borders³. This essay takes multilingualism as a shaping factor

* Fordham University, NY (Emerita).

¹ Faraci (1990: 32-33) discusses the text as a translation from the French, lists the trilingual contents of its manuscript (31-22), and notes the influence of Anglo-Norman graphies and lexis in the text and the educative purpose of the manuscript (34-36). See now <<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7736&ColIID=20&NStart=292>> (accessed 6th October 2023); Kerby-Fulton *et al.* (2012: 40-45, also 2-5).

² For Early English continuities Da Rold *et al.* (2010, accessed 6th October, 2023); Da Rold & Swan (2011), Faulkner (2022); for continuities between English and French see Tyler (2009); on insular French manuscripts, Careri *et al.* (2011: xxii-xxxiii).

³ Salter (1988/2010). For an example specific to the main writer treated here, see

and resource for early English literary culture. It focusses on the figure of Gormundus the African king, especially in the early Middle English *Brut* by Lazamon. A priest and perhaps a legal adviser in Areley Kings, near Worcester in the West Midlands, Lazamon most probably wrote in the early to mid-thirteenth century⁴. A brief look at Gormundus in Lazamon's sources precedes discussion of his *Brut*.

Angles, Saxons and other Germanic groups have prominent roles as conquerors of Romano-Britain, but Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum* or *Historia regum Britanniae*, 1123x1139 (henceforth *HRB*) in both its Vulgate version and its more summary First Variant credit the Saxons' ultimate take-over of Britain to Gormundus, king of the Africans (Reeve & Wright, 2007: § 184-186; Wright, 1988: § 184/6-186/7)⁵. After the death of Arthur and the strife-torn reigns of his immediate successors, the Saxons in Northumbria see an opportunity in the civil conflict of the British king Kareticus's reign. They form a pact with Gormundus of Africa, the recent conqueror of Ireland. Gormundus leads a brutal siege against Kareticus at Cirencester, then carries out a devastating scorched-earth policy over almost the whole island, before handing it over, as agreed in the pact, to the Saxons. Gormundus himself leaves in fulfilment of another pact, to help the French king's renegade nephew usurp his uncle's kingdom through conquest (*Vulg.*, § 184/130-134; «ad Gallias», *Var.*, § 186/7). Later in the Vulgate, when Britain is under shared British and English governance – the British Caduallo reigning south of the Humber, the Saxon Edwinus ruling Northumbria – Caduallo's nephew, Brianus invokes for his king the memory of Gormundus's conquest as the Saxons' culminating act of treachery (*Vulg.*, § 191), a treachery then revenged by Caduallo, whose successful reign is the last time the British control Britain (*Vulg.*, § 202-203).

Wace's French verse re-working of Geoffrey's *HRB* as the *Roman de Brut* (completed 1155) elaborates Gurmunt [Gormundus] and his actions. Gurmunt is 'powerful, noble and physically brave' (vv. 13,384-13,385), an African king of high lineage who refuses to acquire a kingdom merely through inheritance and gives his father's kingdom away to a younger brother. Gurmunt himself sets off on a career as a 'sea-

Elizabeth Bryan's study of Lazamon's English-language *Brut* and the commonalities of text and book production between Alfonso X's Castile and the Anglo-Castilian Plantagenet court of England (Bryan, 2013).

⁴ For Lazamon as employee in a noble household, see Kerby-Fulton (2021, 49-52).

⁵ These versions of *HRB* henceforth referenced as Vulgate (*Vulg.*) and Variant (*Var.*) by paragraph numbers in the text.

wolf' (v. 13,402), obtaining kingdoms by seaborne invasion (Weiss, 2022)⁶. When Gurmunt conquers Ireland, the Saxons call a truce with the British, offer secretly to hold the land under Gurmunt as their lord, and argue that he and they should be allies in destroying Christianity in Britain:

Paens esteit, e il paen
E Bretun erent cristien⁷. (vv. 13,457-13,458)

[...]

Si cum il erent d'une lei,
Si deveient aver un rei⁸. (vv. 13,461-13,462)

It is not clear that Gurmunt adopts the ideological aspect of the Saxons' proposal, but he accepts the opportunity for conquest. In Wace's account, the Saxons show (*cunduiant*, v. 13,477) the Africans their preferred mode of warfare (by the atrocities of rape, torture and pillage such as are all too familiar in twenty-first century conflict). The siege of Cirencester against Cariz [*HRB* Kareticus] is elaborated with accounts of the siege-works Gurmunt builds around the city, and with the device of fire-carrying sparrows. The birds' return to their nests in the city's eaves sets it alight and breaks the fierce British resistance. In context this well-known motif becomes not just an ingenious stratagem but a convincingly horrible holocaust of the city. Gurmunt and the Saxons continue devastating the land, often to a point beyond restoration: 'the ruins, waste, and wilderness can still be seen', vv. 13,631-13,632 (an especially serious loss in an agrarian economy; it had, for instance, taken a generation for areas of Yorkshire to recover crop-growing capacity after William of Normandy's 'Harrowing of the North'). Nevertheless, in spite of this savage warfare, Gurmunt keeps the pact:

Quant il ot guasté lu païs,
Les viles arses, l'aveir pris,
Lu regne ad as Sednes duné;

⁶ References to Wace by line number (vv.) in the text. Wace uses *HRB Var.* but as Weiss remarks «skillfully conflates it with the Vulgate» (Weiss, 2002: xviii, xxv-xvi). On Wace's treatment of Gurmunt's conquest as a contrast to Arthur's, see the valuable study by Blacker (2015).

⁷ 'He was pagan, and so were they and Britons were Christian'.

⁸ 'As they [Gurmunt and the Saxons] were of one faith, so they should have one king'.

E il lur aveit afié
A duner s'il le cunquereit
E il si fist, *bien lur fist dreit*⁹. (vv. 13,635-13,640, my italics)

Wace's version of Gurmunt as a highborn warlord practising conquest as total dispossession removes shame from the British retreat into Wales, and further diminishes the Saxons as warriors. As a result, a once glorious British past and a country in need of better organization are retrospectively made always already available for the Normans. Gurmunt's justice (*dreit*, v. 13,640) in fulfilling his pledge to the Saxons – handing over a devastated and denuded country to people who themselves have helped ruin it with their treacheries and atrocities – is one of Wace's more savage and thought-provoking ironies, deftly underlined by his emphatic line-end positioning of the powerful concept of *dreit*. How justice operates in warfare and what kind of ethics military honour in the service of invasive warfare might constitute becomes a resonant question. The Saxons don't receive from Gurmunt a functioning society, still less the lush island (Geoffrey's «*Britannia, insularum optima*», *Vulg.*, § 5; *Var.*, § 5) celebrated from the opening of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* onwards (though not adopted by Wace). Nevertheless the Saxons take up their new kingdom and re-invent themselves as the English of 'Englelonde' (vv. 13,641-13,650), and Gurmunt, now relevant only as the cause of Britain's losing a name that had endured since Brutus came from Troy (vv. 13,651-13,658), vanishes from the narrative. The Saxons fail to agree on a king, let alone crown one for themselves, and don't restore the churches: they live with the results of their own warfare and no Christian institutions for the next hundred years (vv. 13,681-13,682), until Gregory the Great sends St Augustine to them.

Each of these sophisticated twelfth-century writers has different ends in view in their representations of British and English history, as does Lazamon. His *Brut* develops the figure of Gurmunt [*HRB* Gormundus] in yet another way, and one not so surprising, as I shall argue, in its thirteenth-century context. As already noted, franco-latin writings provide the most obvious connective tissue for vernacular literary culture within and outside England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The fullest and earliest extant manuscript of Lazamon's *Brut* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ix, second half of the thirteenth

⁹ 'When he had ravaged the country, burnt the towns and seized all possessions, he gave the kingdom to the Saxons. He had promised them he would hand it over if he conquered it, and he did so, doing them justice'.

century, perhaps as late as 1275) accompanies Lazamon’s text with *Le Livre de reis* (a French prose *Brut* history of England (Dean 13)¹⁰. Two early Christian narratives also accompany Lazamon in the manuscript. One is the *Set Dormanz*, Chardri’s French verse version of the seven sleepers of Ephesus, miraculously sleeping through Emperor Decius’s persecution (C.E. 249-251) and awakening in the Christianizing reign of Theodosius, Emperor of the Eastern Empire (C.E. 408-450). The other is Chardri’s *Josaphaz*, set in an (orientalized) India where a converted prince is tutored by a Buddha figure. Also included are West Midlands English-language lyrics and *Le Petit Plet*, Chardri’s debate between a youth and an old man, and the English-language *Owl and Nightingale* debate¹¹. As underlined by its French texts and their role as England’s vernacular *lingua franca* alongside the transnationalism of Latin, the manuscript’s spheres of reference show the English West Midlands participating in a wide-ranging multilingual and supra-regional literary culture. Lazamon’s world is not bounded by England, or England-in-Europe, but extends from Ireland and Iceland to the Mediterranean, Africa, Eurasia and India.

Lazamon’s prologue to his *Brut* famously invokes a trinity of sources, among them Bede’s «Englisca boc», and the Latin book of «Seinte Albin [...] & þe feire Austin» (Brook & Leslie, 1963-1978: I, 16-17)¹². As Elizabeth Salter points out in her classic account of this period’s literary culture (Salter, 1988/2010: 63-66), Lazamon draws on Latin for more than material and authority: he also uses Latin stylistic conventions in the form of the long Virgilian similes of Latin heroic poetry, whether following contemporary Latin poetry, such as Walter of Châtillon’s late twelfth-century *Alexandreis* (highly popular in thirteenth-century schools); Latin classics (Stattius, Claudian, Lucan) well known in the twelfth and thirteenth-centuries; or the *Aeneid* itself (well known, and also reworked in French in the twelfth-century *Roman*

¹⁰ Dean numbers refer to items in Dean with Boulton (1999). For the Caligula manuscript see: <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Caligula_A_IX> (accessed 25th October, 2023).

¹¹ For Chardri, see Carlidge (2015); for the close manuscript relation between Chardri and *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *ibid.*: 33-37.

¹² These lines are present in both manuscripts of Lazamon’s *Brut* (London, BL Cotton Caligula A.ix and Cotton Otho C.xiii), with only minor variation. Since, in addition to being an abbreviated text, Otho has lacunae and damage to existing lines in the treatment of Gurmund (fols 136r-137r), citations henceforth (by line numbers in the text) are to Caligula unless otherwise noted: punctuated medial pauses marked with a *punctus elevatus* are represented here by a colon and the Tironian *nota* by 7.

d'Enéas). Singled out in Lazamon's Prologue as a source, however, is the *Brut* of Wace, «þe Frenchis cleric», together with Wace's royal *destinataire*, «Ælieanor / þe wes Henries quene», thereby invoking francophone courtliness as another cultural matrix for Lazamon's text (ll. 19-23)¹³. Here too, sources and styles range still more widely than Lazamon overtly claims, as his treatment of Gurmund shows.

For Lazamon, as for Wace and Geoffrey, Gurmund the African king is the conqueror who enables the replacement of the 'Trojan' or British language by English together with the first creation of an English kingdom in the British Isles. Lazamon makes Gurmund a dynastic figure by naming his father, Anster, and younger brother, Gerion, underlining Gurmund's determination to conquer for himself¹⁴. Lazamon fashions Gurmund as an ideological enemy, not simply a power-hungry one. Once the British king Caric [*HRB* Kareticus] has been ousted by the African king and the double-dealing Saxons, Gurmund conducts a campaign of atrocities against Christendom – destroying monasteries and mutilating, maiming, and murdering monks, knights, women, priests and peasants (ll. 14,650-14,655). Lazamon reserves this terrorism (detailed by Wace as part of Gurmund's initial campaign, and presented as initiated and encouraged by the Saxons, vv. 13,487-13,497) until after Gurmund's victory, which had been initially gained through conventional armed fighting and siege warfare. Lazamon's Gurmund urges the Saxons to continue killing or converting and enslaving any remaining Britons (ll. 14,660-14,667): he actively incorporates as his own the ideological pagan-versus-Christian rationale for conquest proposed by Wace's Saxons. Gurmund's interest is in eradication and replacement rather than governance: he gives the kingdom to the Saxons as promised (l. 14,682), and leaves them to their long period of anarchy (ll. 14,684-14,691).

Both here and in a series of additions based neither on Wace or *HRB*, Lazamon refashions Gurmund in the conventions of *chanson de geste*. These epic narrative poems assert historiographical seriousness (as does

¹³ Given Wace writes for the Angevin court this is probably Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204). Since Caligula and Otho have been redated to the later thirteenth century, it is possible that Eleanor of Provence (1223-1291, m. Henry III, Henry II's grandson, January 1236) was queen during Lazamon's lifetime. On the tradition of queenly patronage for historiography in England in the eleventh century and its adaptations in the twelfth, see Tyler (2017).

¹⁴ Caligula treats this dynasty as it does others in the text: though the trimmed margin of fol. 173v leave only the names' final syllables, the three African royals are noted in red. Only Gormundus is named in Wace and *HRB*.

Lazamon's prologue) by claiming written sources, usually histories composed or kept in monasteries (often St Denis in Paris). The Muslim enemies of *chanson de geste*, among many other cultural functions, mirror warrior conventions from Latin Christendom's chivalry, though in the service of the 'wrong' religion (Chism, 2019). As in the famous case of the *Chanson de Roland* (Taylor, 2001), many of the *chansons de geste*'s earliest and sometimes their only extant witnesses are insular¹⁵. Formerly treated as primarily the literature of France, they are also intimate to insular as to European literary culture, especially that of crusade (Khanmohamadi, 2014: 88-112), and they share themes with insular historiography (Blurton, 2007). The *Chanson d'Aspremont*, set in Charlemagne's campaign against Muslim conquerors in Calabria, for instance, is formative for two of the kings during Lazamon's probable life-time, John, and Henry III, and possibly also for Edward I (Taylor, 2017).

Gurmund's actions compare closely with *chanson de geste* at many points. He initiates his career of conquest by sending for young men, offering them worthy equipment and a future as knights (*cnihtes*, l. 14,434): this is also Charlemagne's recruitment strategy for adding more men to his European allies in the *Chanson d'Aspremont* (Suard, 2008: 114-118, vv. 814-863)¹⁶. Gurmund's force, like Charlemagne's, is a high-status coalition: it includes seventeen kings' sons and twenty-eight descendants of earls aboard his 700 ships (ll. 14,448-14,449). He is a mirror image to Charlemagne in that his catchment areas are those of Charlemagne's opponents: as in the early *chanson Gormont et Isembart* (which Lazamon could have known), they include Turkey, Persia, and Arabia together with Babylonia, Macedonia and Nubia (ll. 14,428-14,431)¹⁷. In Lazamon's elaboration of the siege of Cirencester, Gurmund's commitment to a (Western, orientaling) version of Islam is made clear. He lolls unconcernedly in one of his many siege-towers, where he has installed his «*maumet*: þa he heold for his god» ('the *mawmet* which he held to be his god', l. 14,583; *mawmet* being a projection

¹⁵ *Chansons de geste* in England include, in addition to *Roland*, *Gormont et Isembart*, *Chanson d'Aspremont*, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, *Chanson de Guillaume*, *Otinell* (Dean 76-78, 80-82.2), and a prose historiographical version of *chanson de geste* (Dean 79), *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. See further Busby (2002: I, 368-404; II, 488-513), Ailes & Hardman (2017: 32-109).

¹⁶ Further citations by line number in the text are from Brandin (1919-1920). For *Aspremont*'s 24 known manuscripts see *La chanson d'Aspremont* (2010-2016).

¹⁷ «Turc e Persant e Arabi» (*Gormont et Isembart*, v. 434). The *chanson* is extant only in an Anglo-Norman fragment (Bennett, 2006), cited here from Bayot (1914).

from Christian sculptures in devotional and ecclesiastical contexts and a stereotypical term for purported Muslim ‘idols’).

The southern parameters of the *Brut*’s world are set by Brutus’s diasporic voyage along the North African coast, past territories which had been included in the Roman empire, but which by the thirteenth century were Muslim¹⁸. The enormous swathes of land held by *chanson de geste* opponents include a proportion of legendary figures and places, but they resonate with the vast arc of Muslim Mediterranean, Eastern and Eurasian empires surrounding Europe and sometimes, as in Iberia or Calabria, included within it. *Aspremont*’s African leaders Agolant and Aumont, for instance, build their army from Turks, Persians, Africans, Moors, Indians, *Amoraives* and *Lutissiois* (vv. 1380-1385); so too, the Muslim emperor Baligant in the *Chanson de Roland* has allies from Africa, Eastern Europe and Eurasia¹⁹. Gurmund’s collection of conquests («& alle þe londes he biwon: þat he lokede on», l. 14,456) might well carry echoes both of Muslim *imperium* and Muslim successes in the second and third crusades²⁰. For Lazamon, Stonehenge or the ‘Giants’ Ring’, the memorial to Saxon treachery and to their defeat by the Romano-British Aurelius, is brought initially to Ireland from Africa («Eotide Ring [...] hit com of Aufrike», ll. 8622-8623), a ready-made monument of ancient grandeur, before Merlin engineers it into its site near Amesbury in England.

Making Gurmund a Muslim ‘Saracen’ enemy was not the only choice. As Diane Speed’s survey found, ‘Saracens’ are usually Eurasian or Mediterranean peoples who were, or were regarded as, Islamic; occasionally Saxons; and very occasionally Scandinavians (Speed, 1990: 572)²¹. The early sources for Gormundus and even Lazamon’s own

¹⁸ As Weiss shows, the journey probably draws on Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum* account of the Scythians’ journey to Ireland as used by *HRB*, and its geographical names on Orosius’s description of North Africa in his *Historia adversum paganos* I, ch. 2 (Weiss, 2002: 19, n. 2). In Lazamon, Brutus voyages «Bi-fore Affrike [...] 7 euer [...] west 7 north» (l. 641), his one deviation being a temporary turn south temporarily on the Atlantic coast (l. 672) to plunder Mauritania (also under Muslim rule though culturally a transitional zone to sub-Saharan territory) before passing the pillars of Hercules (ll. 658-662).

¹⁹ The *Amoraives* are presumably to be identified with the Almoravids and the *Lutissiois* are probably Lycians from Anatolia. On Baligant’s allies and their kingdoms in *Roland* see further Beckmann (2017: xxxiv-xxxviii, and §§ A1-A3, 3-225).

²⁰ For examples of crusade influence in West Midlands texts in the period see Barrow (1987); Russell (2012: 23-40, 143-64).

²¹ See further the summary in Kay (1995: 177-79); Chism (2019). In the fourteenth-century Middle English *Of Arthour and Merlin*, the Irish are said to be gigantic Saracens (Byrne, 2011).

text move among these possibilities. The *chanson de geste Gormont et Isembart* makes Gormont the leader of the defeated Scandinavians at the battle of Saucourt in 881 (won by Louis III of West Francia (r. 879-881) against Viking raiders). However, as Gormont is clearly identified in the poem as a pagan king from the East (*d’Oriente*, vv. 69, 78) and as *Gurmonz li Arabis* (v.186), this is an alliance between Gormont and Isembart, not a conflation between a Muslim leader and Scandinavian. Lazamon, who, like Wace, includes Isembart only at Gormund’s Cirencester siege, does not deal with Gurmund’s next battle in France (as does *Var.*, § 186), leaving Gurmund’s *chanson de geste* resonances without Scandinavian complication.

Written and oral cross-channel traditions clearly circulated around Gormundus and his possible avatars. There is a potential web of connections between St Riquier (which had possessions in England and was burned in the Danish invasion of West Francia of 879-881); Hariulf’s late eleventh-century chronicle of the abbey (to which *Gormont et Isembart* probably refers in citing *la geste a Seint Richier*, v. 330); and *Gormont et Isembart* itself (Panvini, 1990: 83-90), though none definitively account for Geoffrey of Monmouth’s use of the African king²². One manuscript reading of Lazamon’s *Brut* testifies to the Saxon-‘Saracen’ understanding of heathen identity. In London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho C.xiii, the Saxons blandish Gurmund with a kinship claim: «We beoþ Saxisse men: icome of *þine cunne*» (Brook & Leslie, 1963-1978: II, 763, l. 14,489, ‘We are Saxon men who come from your people’). But the Caligula manuscript makes no such move, appealing instead to Gurmund’s haughtiness: «We sunden men Sexsice: selest of *þan kunne*», *ibid.*: II, 762, l. 14,489, ‘We are Saxon men, the best of *that people*’ [*italics mine*])²³.

²² The figure of Gurmund was early linked with the Danish leader Guthrum (at Cirencester with his army in 878, converted and d. 890 as lord of East Anglia under Alfred). But Guthrum was not the leader of the Scandinavians who perished in the invasion of West Francia from England in 879-881 (see further, n. 25 below). Gaimar, who in his *Estoire des Engleis* of 1136-1137 [?] used the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for his account of Guthrum, treats him as a separate figure from the Danish leader of the West Francia invasion, Gormund (Short, 2009: 395, n. to vv. 3240 ff.).

²³ Additionally, in Caligula Caric is consistently spelt as Karic when mentioned by or in the context of Gurmund and the Saxons (who are based in Northumbria), but as Caric when the narrative concerns the British king’s own perspectives and actions (14,400-14,639, and see 14,480-14,481). The losses in the Otho MS at this point obscure its practice, but the spelling Carich is used in a Saxon context (fol. 136va, Brook & Leslie, 1963-1978: II, 761). Caligula’s orthography may just possibly reflect the association of

That Lazamon understands Gurmund to be North African is suggested by several indications. Lazamon himself makes or accepts a distinction between ‘Africans’ (North African Muslims) and ‘Ethiopians’ (sub-Saharan Africans) in his account of King Ofustesar. This king is the subject of the culminating two lines of the list of the Emperor Lucius’s external allies before it moves to Lucius’s Roman supporters:

Ofustesar, king of Aufrike: nes þar na king his ilike.
Mid him com moni Aufrican: of Ethiope he brohte þa bleomen²⁴.
(Caligula and Otho ll. 12,665-12,666)

Ethiopians and Moors were known from classical geography and historiography, from which they entered medieval ethnography (Weeda, 2021: 105-107, 115 *et passim*). Some Christians from Ethiopia and the Sudan fought in the crusades and may have come to England afterwards, and one African man, registered in thirteenth-century England in the *Domesday abbreviatio*, provokes a marginal illustration of a black-skinned man²⁵. In the case of Stonehenge, as Ian Short remarks, it is tempting, though unlikely, «to see [Stonehenge’s] alleged African origin in the context of the thousand and more megalithic stone circles surviving today in the [sub-Saharan] Gambia and Senegal»²⁶. But for

Scandinavians with Muslims.

²⁴ ‘Ofustesar, king of the Africans – there was no king who was his peer – / With him came many Africans: from Ethiopia he brought the black men’. *HRB* «Mustensar rex Affricanorum» (*Vulg.* and *Var.*, § 163), without reference to any sub-Saharan; Wace’s Mustenfar brings «Affricans... e Mors» (vv. 11,109-11,112), further suggesting Lazamon equates Ethiopians and black people, and distinguishes them from Africans. For *ilike* in the sense of ‘peer, equal’ see the *Middle English Dictionary* (Kurath *et al.*, 1952-2001), s.v. *iliche*, n. sense 1a.

²⁵ For the *Domesday abbreviatio* (Derbyshire entry, c. 1241) and its illustration see The National Archives, E36/284, in Ohajuru, n.d. (accessed 27th October 2023). Ten skeletons dated 1190-1300 in the Ipswich Greyfriars’ cemetery may have been Sub-Saharan and in one case more certainly from Tunis (perhaps one of the Muslims brought back from crusade by Richard de Clare in 1272, see Nubia, n.d. (accessed 27th October 2023). Lumbley’s valuable essay (Lumbley, 2020: 391) suggests Gormundus’s African origin in *HRB* as a possible literalization of William of Malmesbury’s metaphor for the Danish leader Guthorm («quem nostri Gurmundus vocant») and his unchanging tyranny after his conversion «quia non mutabit Ethiops pellem suam» (Thomson & Winterbottom, 2019: I, ii.c., 161, § 6). Lazamon’s Gurmund, in my view, is more probably seen as a North African Muslim leader.

²⁶ Short (2022: 9 [accessed 1st November 2023]). Senegal and Gambia were part of the Sub-Saharan arc of trade that connected the African interior with the Muslim world of North Africa (Fauvelle, 2017), but detailed medieval northern European awareness of

Lazamon, as for Wace, Geoffrey of Monmouth's Africa, even in the case of Stonehenge, more probably signals the wealth and knowledge of contemporary Muslim North African empire rather than sub-Saharan literary or historical actualities²⁷. Both Lazamon and Wace simply give Africa as Stonehenge's provenance, without taking up *HRB*'s «ex ultimis finibus Affricae», 'farthest shores of Africa' (*Vulg.* and *Var.*, § 129; Wace, v. 8065; Lazamon, l. 8623).

Lazamon's is a course dictated not by English nativism, but by the opportunities of a burgeoning tri-lingual literary culture. As his prologue signals, Lazamon's *Brut* inhabits a culture that constructs its history in multiple languages and territories across a range of texts²⁸. Lazamon's stylistic choices, often treated as intrinsically 'English', confirm this picture. His verse often combines 'English' alliteration with 'French' assonance or line-internal rhyme, and needs further consideration in the light of his immediate tri-lingual prosodic environment as well as that of earlier English literary tradition (Madden, 1847: I, xxxiv; Allen, 2002; Wogan-Browne *et al.*, 2016: 414-424). So too, the frequency of French and French-derived words in Lazamon's *Brut* has often been judged as minimal and seen as testimony to a preference for English and its literary conventions. But French words are present, and, as Jane Roberts remarks, «Surely a writer who retained *abb(e)od* could, had he wished consciously to shun French words, have chosen *sanct* instead of *seint*? [...]. It is not so much that Lazamon 'eschewed French', but that the chronicle he chose to adapt could be told in words generally understood» (Roberts, 1996: 111; see also Arends, 2018; 63-96). If we look

sub-Saharan cultures does not seem to pre-date the fourteenth century.

²⁷ Nubia (modern South Sudan), for instance, is among Gurmund's recruiting areas, and was a zone of exchange between North African and sub-Saharan cultures, but was under Muslim rule from the seventh century (Fauvelle, 2018: 29-43).

²⁸ In French, together with the *chansons de geste* already mentioned, there are for example the *Roman de Horn* of the 1170s with its African kings and raiders (Dean 151), Hue de Rotelande's 1180s *Ipomedon*, set in Calabria and *Protheselaus* set in Sicily (Dean 162, 163). The late twelfth-century *Boeve de Haumtounne* (Dean 153) is partnered in its early thirteenth-century manuscript with the *chanson de geste Fierabras* (Dean 82.2), and itself reworked in Europe in three *chanson de geste* versions. *Gui de Warewic* (early thirteenth century, Dean 154), like *Boeve*, includes engagements with Muslims as opponents, allies and objects of romantic desire. Such capacious vernacular texts often render modern generic distinctions irrelevant (Short, 2007: 350-354). Particularly notable in this respect and in the context of Lazamon's *Brut* is *Waldef* (c.1190-1210, Dean 155), drawing in its 22,000 octosyllabic lines on historiography, *chanson de geste* and romance (Weiss, 2013). For translations see Weiss (2008; 2009) and Djordjević *et al.* (2020).

to texts from Lazamon's West Midlands, varieties of English diction appear not as ethno-nationalism but as the selection of a particular register. Different choices are made, for instance, for the heroicized virgin saints of the Katherine-Group, where cadenced and frequently alliterating English prose both develops an existing tradition and consorts with a lower percentage of French lexis than the companion pieces of *Ancrene Wisse* (c.1225-1240, itself extant in two thirteenth-century French versions) and the *Wohunge* group (Dor, 1992; Trotter, 2003). Towards the end of the century, the early *South English Legendary*, formerly much identified in modern criticism with a nostalgic patriotism centred on Anglo-Saxon saints, shows a relatively high percentage of French lexis (Ingham, 2017; Wogan-Browne, 2011). Also probably to be associated with the West Midlands is *Saluz e solaz*, a text with a French linguistic matrix and frequent adoptions of Latin and English for particular rhetorical tasks, including mixtures of all three languages in the apocalyptic conclusion to the text (Wogan-Browne, 2013).

Lazamon himself creates a flexible and expressive style drawing from Latin, French and English: though one of its functions is the epic representation of the English past, it is newly forged. In the already complex literary-linguistic culture of the thirteenth century, the English commonly spoken in addition to French and Latin by England's elites supports the composition of occasional high-art written English for specific occasions and patrons by tri-lingual writers. Lazamon's *Brut* can be seen alongside the stylish and witty early Middle English *Owl and the Nightingale* (Lazamon's companion in the Caligula manuscript) from near the royal palace at Guildford and the courtly devotional *Luue Ron* lyric composed by Thomas of Hales, a Franciscan advisor to Queen Eleanor of Provence (present in Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29 with the *Owl and the Nightingale*), which Susanna Fein has suggested have royal connections (Fein, 2022). Like these works and the Castilian literary production adduced in comparison with the *Brut* by Bryan (2013), such English writing, as Dora long ago knew, is neither nostalgia or the fruit of linguistic teleological inevitability, but the product of choices and opportunities in the richly various and unprovincial literary culture of high medieval Britain.

References

- AILES, M., & HARDMAN, P. (2017). *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature*. Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer.
- ALLEN, R. (2002). «Nu seið mid loft-songe»: A Reappraisal of Lawman's Verse Form. In R. ALLEN, L. PERRY & J. ROBERTS (eds.), *Lazamon: Contexts, Language, and Interpretation*. London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 251-282.
- ARENDS, E.A. (2018). *The Socio-Cultural Implications of French in Middle English Texts*. [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Edinburgh.
- BARROW, J. (1987). A Twelfth-Century Bishop and Literary Patron: William de Vere. *Viator*, 18, 175-190.
- BAYOT, A. (ed.). (1914). *Gormont et Isembart. Fragment de chanson de geste du XIIIe siècle*. Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 14. Paris: Champion.
- BECKMANN, G.A. (2017). *Onomastik des Rolandsliedes: Namen als Schlüssel zu Strukturen, Welthaltigkeit und Vorgeschichte des Liedes*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- BENNETT, P.E. (2006). A New Look at the *Gormont et Isembart* Fragment, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1^{er}, MS II, 81. *Olifant*, 25, 123-132.
- BLACKER, J. (2015). Arthur and Gormund: Conquest, Domination and Assimilation in Wace's *Roman de Brut*. In S. MARNETTE, J.F. LEVY & L.Z. MORGAN (eds.), 'Si sai encore moult bon estoire, chançon moult bone et ancienne': *Studies in the Text and Context of Old French Narrative in Honour of Joseph J. Duggan*. Medium Ævum Monographs, 33. Oxford: Modern Humanities Research Association, 261-282.
- BLURTON, H. (2007). From *chanson de geste* to Magna Carta: Genre and the Barons in Matthew Paris's *Chronica majora*. *New Medieval Literatures*, 9, 117-138.
- BRANDIN, L. (ed.). (1919-1920). *La Chanson d'Aspremont: Chanson de Geste du XII^e* (2 vols.). Paris: Champion.
- BROOK, G.L., & LESLIE, R.F. (eds.). (1963-1978). *Layamon, Brut*. Early English Text Society, 250, 277. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BRYAN, E.J. (2013). *Lazamon's Brut and the Vernacular Text: Widening the Context*. In R. ALLEN, J. ROBERTS & C. WEINBERG (eds.), *Reading Lazamon's Brut: Approaches and Explorations*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 661-689.

- BUSBY, K. (2002). *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (2 vols.). Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi.
- BYRNE, A. (2011). West is East. The Irish Saracens in *Of Arthour and Merlin*. *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 55, 217-230.
- CARERI, M., RUBY, C., & SHORT, I. (2011). *Livres et écritures en français et en occitan au XII^e siècle: Catalogue illustré*. Rome: Viella.
- CARTLIDGE, N. (trans.). (2015). *The Works of Chardri: Three Poems in the French of Thirteenth-Century England*. French of England Translation Series, 9. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.
- CHISM, C. (2019). Pagan Histories/Pagan Fictions. In J. JAHNER, E. STEINER & E.M. TYLER (eds.), *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500-1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 117-135.
- DA ROLD, O., KATO, T., SWAN, M. & TREHARNE, E. (eds.). (2010). *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220*. <<https://em1060.stanford.edu>> (last update 2017)
- DA ROLD, O., & SWAN, M. (2011). Linguistic Contiguities: English Manuscripts 1060-1220. In E.M. TYLER (ed.), *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800-c. 1250*. Turnhout: Brepols, 255-270.
- DEAN, R.J., with BOULTON, M.B.M. (1999). *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*. Anglo-Norman Text Society Occasional Publications, 3. London: Anglo-Norman Text Society.
- DJORDJEVIĆ, I., CLIFTON, N., & WEISS, J. (trans.). (2020). *Waldef: A French Romance from Medieval England*. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press.
- DOR, J. (1992). Post-Dating Romance Loan Words in Middle English: Are the French Words of the Katherine Group English? In M. RISSANEN (ed.), *History of Englishes: New Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 483-505.
- FARACI, D. (ed). (1990). *Il Bestiario Medio Inglese*. L'Aquila/Roma: Japadre.
- FAULKNER, M. (2022). *A New Literary History of the Long Twelfth Century: Language and Literature between Old and Middle English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FAUELLE, F.-X. (2017). Trade and Travel in Africa's Global Golden Age (AD 700-1500). In D.L. HODGSON & J.A. BYFIELD (eds.), *Global Africa: Into the Twenty-First Century*. Oakland CA: University of California Press, 17-26.

- FAUVELLE, F.-X. (2018). *The Golden Rhinoceros: Histories of the African Medieval Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- FEIN, S.G. (2022). The Royal Associations of Thomas of Hale's *Love Rune* and Oxford, Jesus College, Ms 29 (II). *Early Middle English* 4 (1), 1-29.
- INGHAM, R. (2017). Middle English Borrowing from French: Nouns and Verbs of Interpersonal Cognition in the *Early South English Legendary*. In T.S. FENSTER & C.P. COLLETTE (eds.), *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 128-139.
- KAY, S. (1995). *The Chansons de geste in the Age of Romance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- KERBY-FULTON, K. (2021). *The Clerical Proletariat and the Resurgence of Medieval English Poetry*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- KERBY-FULTON, K., HILMO, M., & OLSEN, L. (2012). *Opening Up Middle English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- KHANMOHAMADI, S. (2014). *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- KURATH, H., KUHN, S.M., & LEWIS, R.E. (eds.). (1952-2001). *Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Online edition: <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>>
- La chanson d'Aspremont*. (2010-2016). <<https://www.chansondaspremont.eu/manuscripts/index.html>>
- LUMBLEY, C. (2020). Geoffrey of Monmouth and Race. In G. HENLEY & J.B. SMITH (eds.), *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*. Leiden: Brill, 369-396.
- MADDEN, F. (ed.). (1847). *Layamon's Brut or Chronicle of Britain: A Poetical Semi-Saxon Paraphrase of the Brut of Wace* (3 vols). London: Society of Antiquaries.
- NUBIA, O. (n.d.). Who was the Ipswich Man? *Our Migration Story: Early and Medieval Migrations AD43-1500*. <<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/the-ipswich-man>>
- OHAJURU, M. (n.d.). *An African presence in thirteenth-century Britain. Our Migration Story: Early and Medieval Migrations AD43-1500*. <<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/an-african-presence-in-the-thirteenth-century>>

- PANVINI, B. (ed.). (1990). *Gormont et Isembart*. Parma: Pratiche Editrice.
- REEVE, M.D., & WRIGHT, N. (ed. and trans.). (2007). Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Woodbridge: Boydell.
- ROBERTS, J. (1996). Layamon's Plain Words. In J. FISIĄK with A. KIELKIEWICZ-JANOWIAK (eds.), *Middle English Miscellany: From Vocabulary to Linguistic Variation*. Poznań: Motiwex, 107-122.
- RUSSELL, D.W. (ed. and trans.). (2012). *Verse Saints' Lives Written in the French of England*. French of England Translation Series, 5. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.
- SALTER, E. (2010). *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England* (D. PEARSALL & N. ZEEMAN, eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1988).
- SHORT, I. (2007). Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II. In C. HARPER-BILL & N. VINCENT (eds.), *Henry II: New Interpretations*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 335-361.
- SHORT, I. (ed. and trans.). (2009). Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- SHORT, I. (2022). *Stonehenge en romanz*. Anglo-Norman Text Society. <<http://www.anglo-norman-texts.net/media/2023/01/Ian-Short-Stonehenge-en-romanz.pdf>>
- SPEED, D. (1990). The Saracens of King Horn. *Speculum* 65 (3), 564-595.
- SUARD, F. (ed.). (2008). *Aspremont: Chanson de geste du XII^e siècle*. Paris: Champion.
- TAYLOR, A. (2001). Was there a Song of Roland? *Speculum* 76 (1), 28-65.
- TAYLOR, A. (2017). The *Chanson d'Aspremont* in Bodmer 11 and Plantagenet Propaganda. In T.S. FENSTER & C.P. COLLETTE (eds.), *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 100-115.
- THOMSON, R.M. & WINTERBOTTOM, M. (eds.). (2019). William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*. Oxford Medieval Texts (2 vols.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- TROTTER, D.A. (2003). The Anglo-French Lexis of "Ancrene Wisse": A Re-evaluation. In Y. WADA (ed.), *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 83-101.
- TYLER, E.M. (2009). From Old English to Old French, in J. WOGAN-BROWNE, with C. COLLETTE, M. KOWALESKI, L. MOONEY, A. PUTTER

- & D. TROTTER (eds.), *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England*. Woodbridge/York: York Medieval Press, 164-178.
- TYLER, E.M. (2017). *England in Europe: English Royal Women and Literary Patronage, c. 1000-c. 1150*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- WEEDA, C. (2021). *Ethnicity in Medieval Europe 950-1250: Medicine, Power and Religion*. Woodbridge/York: York Medieval Press.
- WEISS, J. (ed. and trans.). (2002). *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- WEISS, J. (trans.). (2008). *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic: Two Anglo-Norman Romances*. French of England Translation Series, 3. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.
- WEISS, J. (trans.). (2009). *The Birth of Romance in England. The Romance of Horn, The Folie Tristan, The Lai of Havloc and Amis and Amiloun. Four Twelfth Century Romances in the French of England*. French of England Translation Series, 4. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.
- WEISS, J. (2013). Wace and Lazamon via *Waldef*. In R. ALLEN, J. ROBERTS & C. WEINBERG (eds.), *Reading Lazamon's Brut: Approaches and Explorations*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 541-560.
- WOGAN-BROWNE, J. (2011). Locating Saints' Lives and their Communities. In H. BLURTON & J. WOGAN-BROWNE (eds.), *Re-thinking the South English Legendaries*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 251-270.
- WOGAN-BROWNE, J. (2013). What Voice is that Language / What Language is that Voice? Multilingualism and Identity in a Medieval Letter Treatise. In A. PUTTER & J. JEFFERSON, with A. HOPKINS (eds.), *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520)*. Turnhout: Brepols, 171-194.
- WOGAN-BROWNE, J., FENSTER, T.S., & RUSSELL, D.W. (eds. and trans.). (2016). *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, c. 1120-c. 1450*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- WRIGHT, N. (ed.). (1988). *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth II. The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition*. Cambridge: Brewer.