La3amon's Gift

ANDREW GALLOWAY

THE LINE BETWEEN "OLD" AND "MIDDLE" ENGLISH LITERATURE is not always as clear as the massive and fundamental changes of literary culture and literary forms resulting from the invasion and occupation by the Normans might suggest. Surely the line is less clear than our divisions in teaching and research insist. Some pre-Conquest traditions even flourished, though in new ways. The Anglo-Saxon prose homilies that issued from late-tenth- and early-eleventh-century writers like Ælfric and Wulfstan continued to be copied, updated, and read, perhaps even more widely, well into the twelfth century; some are preserved only in twelfth-century copies (see Swan and Treharne). In the western midlands, by the late twelfth century a limited group of prose works and poems managed to absorb French models of fabliau, satire, saints' lives, religious instruction, and verse history while also recognizably sustaining both some of the idioms of pre-Conquest homiletic prose and, more generally, the Anglo-Saxon ideal of a distinctive literary language (manifested now in the famous AB dialect rather than in the West Saxon literary koine of Old English literature). Some of the motifs and forms of Old English alliterative poetry were preserved, but with far less fidelity to pre-Conquest tradition than the prose characteristics were (see Chambers; Turville-Petre 182). Yet the individual works of pre-Conquest poetry that we teach and study as Old English—almost all present only in single copies—were never in any sense widespread; thus, the Conquest surely carried in some ways a less profound sense of literary and textual separation for those in its wake than for us. When the author of the early-thirteenth-century *Life of St. Katherine* (written in the western AB dialect) notes that the month of July was called "efterliðe" in "ure ledene þe is ald englis" 'our language that

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is old English' (d'Ardenne 93; lines 24–25), he means a language that is nearly as old as the Roman calendar names ("mensis Julius"). The comment indeed likely derives from a statement in the Old English prose *Martyrologium*, a repository of saints' lives from the ninth century, which says that "ealde men hæðene" 'old heathen men' used the emperor's name Julius "on Lyden" 'in Latin' for the month named "Æftera Lyða" in "ure geðeode" 'our tongue' (Kotzor 137). But if that is the thirteenth-century *Katherine* author's source here, the thirteenth-century martyrologist has transferred the epithet "ald" from Roman heathen men to his own tongue and shifted the sense of "Lyden" (or "ledene") from "Latin" to "language"—a distinctive change in early Middle English—applying that term to English as well. The Norman Conquest does not visibly touch his view of the continuity of his language and genre, and the changes in meaning from Old to early Middle English (as in the shift of "ledene") in this case simply reinforce his claim about the antiquity of "our" English.

The complex sense of tradition in twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century English writing is allied to a similar complexity in social structure and ideals. Even if twelfth-century anchorites and hermits, who were the subject of much writing in England in English, French, and Latin in the period, were disproportionately Anglo-Saxons—perhaps because a life enclosed in a small cell or in a distant swamp and modeled on the ancient desert fathers was considered a safe retreat for the immediate descendants of the conquered Anglo-Saxon nobility (Holdsworth 202–04)—Anglo-Saxon written culture persisted in recognizably traditional forms, whether it was committed to aristocratic retreat from the world, pious homilies for the underclass, or eulogies of the dead founders of England's earlier glories, as in the short poem "Durham," written about 1106 in almost traditional Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter and praising a lineage of Anglo-Saxon scholars and saints entombed in Durham Cathedral. Nostalgia is, to be sure, an identifying marker of pre-Conquest English poetry; "Durham" ends with a list of deceased English spiritual heroes resting along with Saint Cuthbert, who patiently awaits the Last Judgment ("Drihnes wer domes bideð"), with no sign that the Norman Conquest has interrupted that wait (Dobbie 27; line 21).

Our view of the social and literary ideals of early Middle English poetry all too often sees abrupt and clean transformation; most of us can hardly imagine those living in the period seeing things otherwise. Absent the looming presence of *Beowulf* as, to us, the epitome of Old English culture (although preserved only in a single, early-eleventh-century manuscript), post-Conquest English literature presents to our eye the witty French and Latin style of debate poetry turned into English in the late-twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century *Owl and Nightingale*; or the first English fabliau, *Dame Sirith*; or, perhaps most innovative of all, the first of many Middle English presentations of the Arthur materials, in La3amon's *Brut*. La3amon idiosyncratically remakes the long-line alliterative style of Old English poetry to recast the Anglo-Norman account of English "prehistory" that had arrived fully grown in twelfth-century England, based on the old story of the foundation of Britain by Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, who founded Rome. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin prose and Wace's French verse translation of Geoffrey, this tradition had been extended to include the conquests and exploits of a previously little-known early British king, Arthur, the destruction of whose house by the Anglo-Saxons granted historical repetition if not some justice to the Normans' conquest. As La3amon succinctly says, in words added to his source:

> Þa Englisce ouer-comen þe Brutuns . & brouhten heom þer neoðere
> þat neofer seoðden heo ne arisen . ne her ræden funden
> . . . . . .

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Seððen comen þe Frensca . þa mid fehte heo
bi-wonnen.
. . . . . .
þus is þis eit-lond . i-gon from honde to
hond. . . . (lines 992–93, 1030, 1033)[1]

Then the English overcame the Britons and
brought them still lower,
so that never since then have they arisen or
fashioned their own counsel.
. . . . . .
And then came the French, who conquered it
in battle.
. . . . . .
Thus is this island passed from hand to
hand. . . .

The French and Latin traditions of Anglo-Norman culture included a fashion for fuller introductions or framing narratives in poetry and history writing, and these diplomatic gestures appear in early Middle English works as well. The latter may open by recounting how the narrator, strolling, happens on an *aventure* (as in *Sirith* and *Owl and the Nightingale*) or begin with a narrator's description of the labor and sources that produced a work (as in Laȝamon's *Brut*)—all features, at least in these forms, alien to pre-Conquest traditions.[2] Such introductions define complex relations, contracts, with readers; thus, insofar as a prologue is a model for modes of social negotiation and exchange in general (economic, cultural, literary, and political), the introductions suggest new terms for that exchange. But, again, these new kinds of introductory negotiations with literary materials and readers often claim continuities with tradition, albeit continuities likely more visible to the works' contemporaries than us. Laȝamon's prologue, presenting all we know with certainty about that poet's identity, announces how the English past dictates his labors, even while he labors with a sense of cultural multiplicity and unending transaction that no Anglo-Saxon poet would emphasize. Indeed, one could say that his entire prologue is about cultural transaction, for which a series of books serve as focal points:

An preost was on leoden . Laȝamon wes ihoten.
he was Leouenaðes sone . liðe him beo Drihten.
He wonede at Ernleȝe . at æðelen are
chirechen.
vppen Seuarne staþe . sel þar him þuhte.
on-fest Radestone . þer he bock radde.
Hit com him on mode . & on his mern þonke.
þet he wolde of Engle . þa æðelæn tellen.
wat heo ihoten weoren . & wonene heo comen.
þa Englene londe . ærest ahten.
æfter þan flode . þe from Drihtene com.
þe al her a-quelde . quic þat he funde.
buten Noe & Sem . Iaphet & Cham.
& heore four wiues . þe mid heom weren on
archen.
Laȝamon gon liðen . wide ȝond þas leode.
& bi-won þa æðela boc . þa he to bisne nom.
He nom þa Englisca boc . þa makede Seint
Beda.
An-oþer he nom on Latin . þe makede Seinte
Albin.
& þe feire Austin . þe fulluht broute hider in.
Boc he nom þe þridde . leide þer amidden.
þa makede a Frenchis clerc
Wace wes ihoten . þe wel couþe writen.
& he hoe ȝef þare æðelen Ælienor
þe wes Henries quene . þes heȝes kinges.
Laȝamon leide þeos boc . & þa leaf wende.
he heom leofliche bi-heold . liþe him beo
Drihten.
Feþeren he nom mid fingren . & fiede on
boc-felle.
& þa soþere word . sette to-gadere.
& þa þre boc . þrumde to are.
Nu biddeð Laȝamon alcne æðele mon .
for þene almiten Godd.
þet þeos boc rede . & leornia þeos runan.
þat he þeos soðfeste word . segge to-sumne.
for his fader saule . þe hine forð brouhte.
& for his moder saule . þa hine to monne iber.
& for his awene saule . þat hire þe selre beo.
Amen. (1–35)

A priest was among the people, who was called
Laȝamon;
he was Leovenath's son, the Lord be merciful
to him.
He lived at Areley, at a noble church,
on the banks of the Severn; blessed it seemed
to him there,

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just beside Redstone, where he recited his
missal.
There came to his mind an excellent notion,
that he would tell of England's noble men,
what each had as name and from what places
they came,
those who first possessed the land of the
English
after the flood that came from the Lord,
which killed all here living that it encountered,
except for Noah and Shem, Japhet and Ham,
and their four wives, who were with them on
the ark.
La3amon went traveling the length of this
whole land
and acquired the noble book that he took as
his exemplar:
he took the English book that Saint Bede made;
another in Latin he took, which Saint Alban[3]
and Saint Augustine—who brought
baptism in—made;
he took and set between the others a third,
made by a French clerk
named Wace, who knew well how to write;
and he gave it to the noble Eleanor,
who was the queen of Henry the high king.
La3amon laid out these books and turned the
leaf;
he gazed at them gratefully, the Lord be
merciful to him;
he took quill pens in his fingers and composed
on the parchment,
and the truer words he set together,
and those three books he pressed into one.
Now La3amon begs every noble man
for almighty God's sake
who might read this book and learn its
revelations
that he recite in the form prescribed the set of
prayers
for the soul of La3amon's father, who first gave
him being,
and for the soul of his mother, who bore him
as a man-child,
and for his own soul, that it may be the better.
Amen.

Bookish citation is alien to Old English poetry (a rare exception is the vague formula "þæs þe us secgað bec" 'as books tell us,' in *The Battle of Brunanburh* [Dobbie 16–20; line 68]), but compilation is typical in twelfth-century and later chronicles, as is a sense of multiple languages. William of Malmesbury, the most important of the Anglo-Norman historians, writing just before the Arthur materials broke everywhere into view from the pen of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 1140s, opens by presenting Bede as his chief source. William says he labored long to find other reliable sources among the benighted English but discovered only annalistic chronicles "in the native tongue" (*patrio sermone*—i.e., the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), along with a later Anglo-Latin chronicle by Æthelweard in barbarous Latin (1). Many other chroniclers cite Bede at the outset and define their role as compiler or, like Ralph de Diceto, "abbreviator" (3).

Yet La3amon's initial self-presentation allows distinctly metaphoric senses of his role and his transactions; La3amon is not simply establishing a historian's authority. Take Noah. The *Brut* story—part of the blooming of Trojan epics in twelfth-century Anglo-Norman culture, along with Benoit de St. Maure's *Roman de Troie* and the *Roman d'Eneas*—begins with Aeneas's exile from Troy and ends when Arthur's empire, having encompassed all of Europe, is in turn destroyed by the Saxon invaders. La3amon here produces an antetype to Aeneas's story of oceanic exile and rebuilding in the Noah story, whose relevance he also extends to himself. The ark's movement is continued by La3amon's wandering: as Noah has gathered his family "on archen," so this son of Noah journeys to gather books to bring aboard his vessel or, perhaps better, seeks tips of dry land to conquer and on which to begin building a new civilization on the ruins of the old. For the books that La3amon discovers and "takes" ("bi-won," "nom") are jutting fragments left after another kind of flood or, rather, series of floods—the successive conquests of England, which are his subject. The French pattern of introducing a wandering narrator who hap-

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pens on *aventure* or debate is thus expanded to a vast geographic and chronological scale.

Notoriously, La3amon actually uses only the French writer Wace, never Bede (much less the obscure "Latin" work of Augustine and "Albin"). Yet what he lists is significant, because it presents a new mode of social and historical exchange that also allows him to establish a continuity, if a complex and transactional one, with the Anglo-Saxon past. First, we note that the sources he takes up and processes are all transformed products—works glimpsed as they are being put to use. The Bede he cites is no original but a translated, "Englisca" Bede, and it is implausible that he was unaware that the translation meant an earlier redactor. La3amon would be an unlearned priest indeed—he could hardly have read the Latin historians whose pattern of mentioning Bede he follows—if he did not know that Bede wrote in Latin and was then translated into Old English. La3amon certainly knew other Latin works, such as the prophecies of Merlin, possibly commentaries on those prophecies, and probably Latin epics that present models for the astonishing similes he uses (one of which is discussed below).[4] "Seint Albin," the coauthor of his second proposed source, has been taken to mean either Abbot Albinus (mentioned along with Augustine of Canterbury near the beginning of Bede's history) or the monastic poet Alcuin (on the grounds that mention of him in the late Old English *First Worcester Fragment* is glossed as "Albinus" by the "Tremulous Worcester Hand").[5] Understood either way, or in a third way that I suggest below, the single compilation "makede" by both Saints "Albin" and Augustine, which we cannot even identify securely, brings together authors from different centuries (eighth or ninth with sixth)—again, the product of some unknown editorial intervention, a rendering of sources according to an intervening reader's needs.

These textual marks of remaking for, and use by, particular earlier audiences manifest a series of exchanges between literary makers, redactors, and translators, in which La3amon also inscribes Wace's book and his own. Likely these "sources" are chosen partly to represent the phases of English history defined by its conquests, conquests that frame history's gifts from one age to the next. "Seint Albin" may, by an easier assumption of variation than the arguments for Abbot Albinus or Alcuin, be Saint Alban, whose martyrdom (as La3amon would know from translating the story out of Wace) marked the Romans' first conquest of Britain.[6] The Anglo-Saxon prose chronicle, continued at Peterborough as late as 1154, spells "Alban" under the year 1095 as "Albin."[7] So too Saint Augustine of Canterbury "brought baptism in" to the Angles and Saxons just after they had conquered the original Britons (which La3amon, following Wace [lines 13,683–885], shows near the end of his poem [*Brut* 14,721–872]). The "Englisca" Bede represents not simply an Anglo-Saxon translation of Bede but also a Bede who epitomizes the civilization swept away by the latest conquest. That conquest is represented by the "Frenchis clerc" Wace, whose gift of a well-crafted book ("þe wel couþe writen") to a powerful patron closes the sequence of earlier transactions that each book embodies. History is punctuated and epitomized not just by the exchanges of England the island but also by an analogous series of exemplary textual transactions.

That Wace "gave" his work to Queen Eleanor (the wife of Henry II, whose death of 1189, implied by the tense of "þe wes Henries quene," stands as the poem's earliest possible date) we know only from La3amon. The claim is plausible in the light of Wace's plan to present *Le Roman de Rou* to Henry II (until Wace learned, after writing more than 11,000 lines, that Henry had given another poet the job [11,419–40]). But in the context of the models of textual use and exchange presented in the prologue, the mention of Wace's gift to Eleanor also has more than empirical importance. As La3amon's authorial labors are anticipated in the other uses and remakings of his sources—

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like the unknown translator of the English Bede, he too is a translator; like the compiler of the book of Alban and Augustine, he too is a compiler—so these parallels suggest that Wace's gift offers a pattern for what La3amon does: give a book, the product of considerable intellectual craft, to not merely one patron but all the powerful, named by La3amon as "alcne æðele mon." The preface's final lines elevate this giving to the supreme gift: priest that he is, La3amon consecrates and combines his linguistic, cultural, and historical trinity into a quasi-eucharistic unity, "þrumde to are." Then he asks for prayers in repayment, just as the Eucharist—defined, from Ambrose and Augustine on, as the human church's gifts to God and God's gift of his grace and himself to humanity—was offered to God, consecrated as *dona*, *munera*, and *sacrificia* ("gifts," "contributions," "sacrificial offerings"). Then follow prayers for the salvation of the souls of the living and the dead in the Memento of the Mass, including the priest "and all his." Innocent III in the early thirteenth century glossed that last phrase as "consanguineis vel affinibus familiaribus, vel amicis" 'blood relations and other affines, household members, and companions,' readily paralleling La3amon's call for prayers for his soul and those of his (presumably deceased) parents.[8] La3amon goes on to declare that he will present his matter "mid loft-songe" ("by a song of praise" [36], a word elsewhere referring to a hymn or a psalm), thus emphasizing the sacramental character of these offerings.[9]

Beyond the prologue, the idea of offering a gift of "counsel" or "wit" or "knowledge"—all "spiritual goods" in the nomenclature of twelfth-century and later medieval culture but suddenly controversial in a period of expanding professional medicine, law, and teaching and other commodified knowledge—unifies La3amon's work and repeatedly gives it focus. We do not know who his literary patron was, if he had one.[10] In the poem, however, gifts between patrons and those serving them are a pressing and widely implicated issue. Figures offering the gift, or seeming gift, of knowledge and counsel appear frequently, with no basis in the source, or in scenes elaborated in ways that make their value and their risk prominent.

I take first a sinister instance near the end of the poem, where the Saxon king Gurmund is about to destroy the city of Cirencester, the last stronghold held by the last British king, Carric. It is the end of the Britons in England. I excerpt first from Wace's account, and I return to this episode at the end of this essay:

> For a long time the besieged defended themselves, and for a long time they held out, and they would have held out longer, unable to be taken by force, had fire not engulfed the town, doing it great harm and damage. Those outside, through foul play never known before or since, set the city entirely afire [using sparrows to carry nuts containing burning embers all over the city]. . . . The Britons saw the town burning, flames leaping and houses falling; they prepared to fight but, because they were few, were defeated. One after the other, people left; King Cariz fled. He made his way straight to Wales. . . . The ruins, wasteland, and wilderness that Gurmunt made in many places, to rob the British of their domains, can still be seen. When he had ravaged the country, burned the towns, and seized all possessions, he gave the kingdom to the Saxons. . . .[11]

La3amon's translation shows his typical talents: it adds dialogue, scenic interest, character subtlety, and a host of secondary figures. La3amon presents these literary elaborations (which indeed pave the way for all later Middle English literature) to show, with claims to greater immediacy than his source, Wace, made, the point that this cunning scheme for destroying the town was knowledge bought and sold, speciously cloaked with the name of a gift of counsel. I excerpt only key parallels:

> Wel ofte Kariches men . comen ut of burh3en.
> and ræsden an Gurmunde . mid ræ3ere strenðe.
> and slo3en of his folke . feole þusende.

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& senden heom to helle . heðene hundes alle.
Karic wes swiðe goud cniht . and swiðe wel he heold his fiht.
and faste he heold Chirchestre . mid strengðe þan mæste.
þat ne mihte Gurmund . næuere mæren his ferde.
ar he lette heom mid ginnen . biswiken wið-innen.
Gurmund castles makede . abuten Chirenchestre.
þreo he bitahte . þreom heðene cnihte.
him-seoluen he heold þat ane . Isembard þat oðer.
Gurmund makede ænne tur . þer-inne he bulde ænne bur.
þer-inne he pleoȝede his plaȝen . þa me luuede a þeon daȝen.
þer-inne he hafde his maumet . þa he heold for his god.
Hit i-lomp on ane dæȝe . þat Gurmund mid his duȝeðe
weoren swiðe bliðe . and druncken of wine.
Þa com þer an heðene mon . a-waried wurðen he forþan.
and askede tidende . Gurmunde þe kinge.
"Seie me lauerd Gurmund . þu art swiðe riche king.
heou longe wult þu beoȝie . abuten þissere burȝe.
what wult þu ȝiuen me . ȝif ich þe burh ȝiuen þe.
and al þat is wið-inne . to don þine iwille.
þat noht no bið to leue . al þu hit slat aȝe."
Þa answarede Gurmund . þe riche heðene king.
"Ich ȝiue þe ane eorl-dom . auere to aȝe.
wið þat þu a-neoste . þe burh me bi-tache."
Þis for-ward wes imaked anan . lut men hit wuste. . . . (14,570–96)

Very often Carric's men came forth from the city
and charged on Gurmund with savage strength,
and killed many thousands of his people,
and sent them to hell, heathen hounds all.
Carric was a very good knight, and he kept up his fighting very well,
and he held Cirencester tight with the greatest strength,
so that Gurmund never was able to damage his army,
until he caused them to be betrayed from within, by a stratagem.
Gurmund made castles around Cirencester;
three of these he committed to three heathen knights;
he himself held one, and Isembard another;
Gurmund built a tower, and therein he built a chamber
in which he engaged in the games that men loved in those days;
therein he had his pagan idol, which he took as his god.
It happened on a day that Gurmund and his household retainers
were very happy and drunk with wine;
then a heathen man came there, may he be cursed therefore,
and asked tidings from Gurmund the king.
"Tell me, lord Gurmund, you are a very powerful king:
how long will you dither beside this town?
What will you give me if I give you the town and all that is within it to do with as you will,
so that nothing will be left out and you shall have it all?"
Then answered Gurmund, the powerful heathen king,
"I will give you an earldom, to possess in perpetuity,
provided that you hastily seize the town for me."
This compact was made at once; little did men know about it. . . .

"Lut men hit wuste" indeed: the deal behind the cunning scheme to burn the city with sparrows and the clever instigator of this marvelous concept are discovered and reported by Laȝamon alone. The heathen knight and Gurmund call their mutual offerings gifts, but not the narrator, who calls it a "for-ward"; and the poet's addition of the castles around the town, with their cozy pleasure chambers, seems chiefly for the purpose of staging this intimate exchange. The medieval satire against paid intellectual professionals, which develops from the notion, widespread from the twelfth century on, that

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"scientia donum Dei est, unde vendi non potest" 'knowledge is a gift of God, whence it cannot be sold' (Post, Giocarinis, and Kay), thus appears in *The Brut* clearly and perhaps for the first time in English poetry. This issue is already generalizable in La3amon (although, perhaps significantly, his targets do not include the most common one, lawyers, *lawmen*), and it yields some of his most vivid scenes and constructions of character.[12] Thus, the Saxon schemer Appas—who agrees for a fee, as in Wace, to assassinate the British king Aurelien by pretending to be a doctor and poisoning him—is given a full scene in La3amon. Dressed as a doctor, he assures the king's counselors that he will donate his skills as a physician pro bono, as, he claims, he always does. Then he is shown elaborately practicing those skills: checking urine, mixing pungent herbs into his poison, telling everyone that the king is likely to sweat heavily after taking this piously free but professionally expert medicine and counsel:

> for ich þe wulle helen . & al hal makien.
> for Cristes leofe Godes sune . ne ræche ich nan garsume.
> no mede of londe . ne of seoluere no of golde.
> ah ælche seocken ich hit do . for luue of mine Drihtene. (8838–41)

> For I will heal you and make you entirely healthy
> For the love of God's son, Christ; I care nothing for reward,
> no payment of land, nor of silver or of gold,
> but, rather, I do this for every sick person, for love of my lord.

This emphasis on pseudo-gifts of knowledge and counsel and the idealized versions of such spiritual or metaphoric gifts that La3amon also presents imply a clear continuity with, but also a fundamental departure from, the concerns of earlier heroic poetry. In Old English literature, the lord as ring giver stands at the center of a continuous circulation of honor and loyalty, a primary basis for Anglo-Saxon social cohesion (Cherniss 40–42, 51–53, 79–101; Bazelmans). "A fish in water must propagate its race; a king in hall must share out rings," as the gnomic verse collection known as *Maxims II* says ("Fisc sceal on wætere / cynren cennan. Cyning sceal on healle / beagas dælan" [Dobbie 56; lines 27–29]). God is of course the giver of the fruits of the year and of all other good things, as the same Old English poem emphasizes (*Maxims II*, line 9). The notion of the "gifts of grace," by which Paul (in 1 Cor. 12.4–12) describes the distinct talents that "the spirit" has given each person, is found throughout medieval Christian literature (see the direct translation of 1 Cor. 12.4–12 in the Old English gnomic poem *The Gifts of Men* [Krapp and Dobbie 137–40]).

But complex gift exchange between human beings and God—including how human beings barter among themselves the divine gifts of knowledge and how they negotiate with God their gifts of religious piety—is new in post-Conquest English writings. The *Ancrene Wisse*, whose AB dialect shows that it was produced not far from La3amon's time and western area, displays the centrality of complexly negotiated gifts in secular and divine transactions. This vivid treatise for guiding noblewomen anchorites elaborates the reciprocal terms of God's gifts to human beings under the maxim "Muchel 3eoue ofdraheð luue" 'Great gifts solicit love,' first describing God's gift of "al þe world" to Adam, including the gift of dominion over all the animals, then God's gift to the rest of human history "nawt ane of his, ah . . . al him seoluen" 'not only of his possessions, but of himself entirely' (197). Through rich parables (e.g., Christ is a knight who gives his life to save a lady—our soul—enclosed in a castle, our body), the *Ancrene Wisse* emphasizes that those who do not in return give love to one who has given such supreme gifts is "of uueles cunnes cunde" 'from the stock of an evil race' (199). After a section on the various kinds

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of love, the treatise describes three complex transactions in which love might be given to God: giving it outright, selling it, or having it rapaciously seized. A social hierarchy lies just under the surface of these three kinds of "given" love: the overt gift of love most easily applies to the aristocratic class; selling and rape apply, respectively, to the mercantile and servile classes (the implication is made explicit in the parallel discussion of modes of gaining sexual love at the end of the first book of Andreas Capellanus's twelfth-century *Art of Courtly Love*).[13] But in the *Ancrene Wisse* all these transactions are constrained, because all are ways in which God will inexorably force us to give him our love, including rape, which the author describes to his celibate women readers in a remarkable sentence that modulates his voice between that of a rapist and that of a selflessly loving divinity: "Ondswere nu & were þe 3ef þu const a3ein me, oðer 3ette me þi luue þe ich 3irne se swiðe, nawt for min, ah for þin ahne muchele biheue" 'Answer me now, and protect yourself against me if you can, or else grant me your love, which I long for so greatly—not for my but for your own great benefit' (204). God is the best recipient of the gift of love, the finest bargain to buy with love, and even the worthiest rapist, a climactic metaphor that paradoxically asserts the compulsion of the anchoresses' gift to him, the seizing of their "gift" of virginity, which nonetheless allows God to repay them with "þin ahne muchele biheue."

These metaphoric gifts and pseudo-gifts do not mean that thirteenth-century culture was a gift-exchange culture in some ideal and totalized way. Even in the midst of the supreme gift of lifelong love to God, a sense of the human cost is visible, a degree of concern about the nature of the gifts transacted. Marcel Mauss, founding scholar of the ideal of a gift-exchange culture (and thus the target of Jacques Derrida's derisive view that a gift in *exchange* is no gift at all [24]), uses a quotation from La3amon, from his description of the Round Table, a passage to which I also turn below (Mauss 83; for another critique and historical situating of Mauss, see Groebner 2–14). In *The Brut*, and throughout post-Conquest English literature, giving a gift is no simple or even balanced reciprocal act but an unstable center of complex interactions, emerging in a period of a growing monetary, wage-labor, credit economy and of a powerful central court. Indeed, the notion of a gift in such writings is perhaps more distinctly articulated and elaborated precisely as the "commercialization" and professionalization of English society take root (Britnell 5–151). As Pierre Bourdieu remarks of "archaic economies," "economic calculation" can occupy the territory "surrendered to the remorseless logic of what Marx calls 'naked self-interest' only by setting aside a 'sacred' island . . . left as a sanctuary for the priceless or worthless things it cannot assess" (178). Or, as the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern puts it, even in a culture entirely based on gift exchange, "social relations are alternately eclipsed and revealed, [and] the partial concealment that results makes a drama out of their potential visibility" (167).

In *The Brut*, the "island" of the traditional concept of a gift, especially one (as throughout Anglo-Saxon literature) to or from a lord, is as hemmed in and invaded as England itself—as much by denials of any quid pro quo transaction as by the frequent revelation that such gifts are precisely transactions, at least in some sublimated or transferred sense. La3amon's examples of skilled counselors or craftsmen donating to a lord their knowledge and talents for social utility or harmony—all La3amon's insertions or elaborations—show explicit rejections of repayment. A prime example is Merlin, whose counsel and historical prophecy is sought by several kings. He repeatedly spurns rewards, lest his "craft" be impaired: "for nulle ich a3æn na lond . neouðer seoluer na gold. / . . . / & 3if ich wilne æhte . þenne wursede ich on crafte" 'For I do not want to possess land, or silver or gold / . . . /

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and if I did want property, I would decline in my skills' (9444–46).[14] It would seem that for Merlin, the gift of prophecy must remain a gift to others to be efficacious. The making of the Round Table is another example. In Wace this mythical table (not mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth) is fashioned so that none of the knights from many cultures and languages whom Arthur has brought together can boast "[q]u'il seist plus halt de sun per" 'that he sat higher than his peer' (9758). In La3amon a murderous brawl over seating arrangements breaks out at dinner, but along comes a handy craftsman ("crafti weorc-mon" [11,423]) who at once contributes an ingenious way to avoid such fights henceforth. "Ich æm þin a3e mon; moni lond ich habbe þurh-gan," the craftsman declares to Arthur; "ich con of treo-wrekes ; wunder feole craftes" 'I am your own man; many a land I have traversed; / I know a marvelous number of the skills of tree [*or* truce *or* truth] working' (11,426–27). The craftsman's statements elide any claim to a reward, asserting the traditional gift of service and loyalty: *because* he is the king's own man, *therefore* he will make this gift.

As the translation suggests, those "treo-wrekes" may be skills of "woodworking," "truce working," or "truth working."[15] The craftsman's traveling resembles that of the narrator, who similarly "gon liðen . wide 3ond þas leode" to harmonize his accounts of English conquests. Mauss, as noted above, idealistically invokes La3amon's description of the Round Table at the end of *The Gift* (83). The Round Table can serve this modern nostalgia, for in *The Brut* it is precisely a utopian ideal of the gift between lords and followers, but in terms that overturn the hierarchy of the traditional lordly gift while resisting the model of monetary commerce or wages. The table is also a metaphor for poetry and poetic makers, but as such it no longer guarantees purity of their uses of its gift: its construction occasions an insertion on how many storytellers have concocted "lies" about Arthur, "feole cunne lesinge . bi Arðure þan kinge" 'many sorts of lies about Arthur the king' (11,455). In contrast, La3amon declares that his narrative presents matters strictly "alse his [Arthur's] la3en weoren" 'as his ways of life really were' (11,470). The word *la3en*, "customs" or "ways of living," offers a gentle pun on La3amon's name, further aligning him with the unpaid loyal craftsman who "con of treo-wrekes," and aligning the poet's true stories with the carpenter's harmonizing invention.

La3amon adds a remarkably quasi-eucharistic metaphor for the main meal of the table—Arthur himself, as described by Merlin:

> swa him sæide Merlin . þe witi3e wes mære.
> þat a king sculde cume . of Vðere Pendragune.
> þat gleomen sculden wurchen burd . of þas kinges breosten.
> and þer-to sitten . scopes swiðe sele.
> and eten heore wullen . ær heo þenne fusden.
> and winscenches ut teon . of þeos kinges tungen.
> and drinken & dreomen . daies & nihtes.
> þis gomen heom sculde i-lasten . to þere weorlde longe. (11,492–99)
>
> Thus Merlin, who was a famous wise man, said about him
> that a king would come from Uther Pendragon
> such that minstrels would make a table of food from the king's breast
> and many splendid poets would sit down to it
> and eat their fill, before they journeyed thence,
> and draw out wine drafts from the king's tongue,
> and drink and make merry day and night:
> this game would last for them as long as the world will.

The passage probably elaborates a prophecy of Merlin's in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin history, which Wace does not include and which La3amon may have found circulating separately: "in ore populorum celebrabitur et actus eius cibus erit narrantibus" '[the Boar] shall be extolled in the mouths of its peoples, and its deed will be as meat and drink to those who tell tales.'[16] La3amon makes Arthur em-

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phatically eucharistic in this expansion, as he does his own poem in the prologue. For these storytellers drinking and eating from his tongue and breast, Arthur is both a sacred and a festive endless gift, a fragile island of pure gift amid so many "lying" poets who make this donation into self-serving transactions. As in God's or the rapist's demand for the ladies' "gift of love" in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the ideal forms and depraved perversions of the gift emerge from the same circumstance.

Pertinent to this intense but unsteady ideal are the circumstances of the Eucharist in the early thirteenth century, that focus of human beings' offerings and God's greatest gift: himself (as dogma and practice maintained throughout medieval Europe [see n8]). If *The Brut* was composed during or shortly after the six-year papal Interdict in the early thirteenth century (1208–14), as Françoise Le Saux's and Rosamund Allen's datings of it on other grounds suggest (resp., 10; "*Eorles*" 9–11), eucharistic metaphors would have special potential for anxiety and poignancy. Pope Innocent III punished King John for trying to determine the election of the archbishop of Canterbury by forbidding any sacrament, sermon, or other clerical service except baptism to be performed in England, on pain of excommunication. No priest could give Mass to his parishioners. Yet priests continued to collect parish tithes, even after all the bishops had fled to the Continent, leaving their incomes for the king to collect. For a priest, this situation put the economy of spiritual gifts in a state of imbalance; the laity gave tithes but received no sacraments in return.

The tension this led to is clear in the laity's resentment when, in 1209, the pope allowed monastic communities to celebrate their own masses behind closed doors (Harper-Bill 304–07). King John did not leave parish churches or the English church as a whole entirely vulnerable during the Interdict: he confiscated its properties but made them available to the church for a fee, and he witnessed charters affirming various churches' traditional property holdings, including one for Worcester Cathedral, near La3amon's Arley, in the first year of the Interdict, an immediate gesture of reassurance (*Registrum* 11a). But such special protections further suggest the laity's resentment at seeing their hard-won tithes or land donations turn into one-way gifts. A priest—and why does La3amon emphasize his profession in the poem's first words?—might have felt some need to compensate for being merely a recipient of gifts. During an awkward but well-funded sabbatical, he might both have wanted, and have had leisure enough, to bring forth a poem without much direct material support from any local patron, beyond the local worthies and populace who continued to supply his tithes.

Such speculation is intriguing but unsupportable. Yet if written during or just after John's reign, La3amon's poem would have further oblique topicality, enabling exchanges between past and present in many other ways. John's loss of Normandy in 1204 would, for example, contrast with Arthur's conquest of Europe. And as King John became increasingly paranoid and separate from his magnates and people (by 1212 he made his household knights take an oath to report any rumors they heard against him),[17] so would Arthur's ability to draw men to himself be a notable contrast. King John also made a point of using money as gifts, not wages, to his knights, as the records of payment to his household knights show (money to them is explicitly marked as gifts, while more substantial payments are in land—a pattern dropped almost immediately after John's reign by the use of the "money fief" [Church 4, 11, 74–99]). What John's gifts fail to accomplish, Arthur's gifts achieve. Arthur uses gifts skillfully to generate obligation, even arranging things so that they seem to come from him while he receives them. Thus, when the Irish king Gillomar submits himself to Arthur, offering a quantity of goods, animals, and money

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as well as subservience, Arthur—in one of La3amon's large expansions—responds by accepting only half of what Gillomar offers, as a kind of gift in return, establishing fealty rather than subservience: "Her forð-rihtes biforen al mine cnihtes / for3iuen þe amare al þæ haluen-dæle / of golde & of gærsume ah þu scalt mi mon bicumen . . ." 'Here, outright, before all my knights, / let there be forgiven to you the larger part of all that half portion / of gold and of treasure; but you must become my man . . .' (11,194–96; cf. Wace 9701–02).

Equally impressive is Arthur's skill in emphasizing the giftness of the gifts he bestows on the French after he has conquered them:

> Summen he 3æf lond . summen seoluer and gold.
> summen he 3æf castles . summen he 3af claðes .
> . . . . . .
> hehte heom luuien swiðe . God in þissen liue.
> þat he an ende ful iwis . 3efen heom his paradis.
> þæt he mosten bruken . blisse mid ænglen.
> (12,032–33, 12,036–38)

> Some he gave land, some silver and gold;
> some he gave castles; some he gave clothing;
> . . . . . .
> he ordered them to love God passionately in this life,
> so that at the end most surely he [God] would give them his paradise,
> so that they might enjoy bliss among the angels.

The rhetoric defining his donations builds up gradually, indirectly, but unmistakably to show him granting the gift of heaven itself.

Arthur's skilled giving is clear in his first battle with the Saxons. Here the poem breaks into its most elaborate similes, a formal feature alien to pre-Conquest English literature yet the means here to establish Arthur's traditional belief in the gift. Geoffrey of Monmouth's laconic, pseudo-Sallustian style offers a flat, swift sweep of Arthur's battles, by which Arthur achieves swift national unification. Geoffrey claims that Arthur's initial motivation for all this fighting is that he has used up his wealth in "the normal custom of giving gifts freely to everyone." Thus, Geoffrey's Arthur attacks the Saxons not chiefly because of a claim by inheritance to kingship but mainly "so that with their wealth he might reward the retainers who served his household" ("Insignibus itaque regiis iniciatus solitum morem seruans largitati indulsit . . . statuit Saxones inquietare ut eorum opibus quae ei famulabatur ditaret familiam" [*History* 212; *Historia* 101; sec. 143]). In Wace this blunt explanation for the entire first battle of Britain is tactfully suppressed to an incidental point about Arthur's use of gifts and promises to secure mercenaries. Wace's Arthur instead passionately vows to destroy the Saxons because "Sun uncle e sun pere unt ocis / E trublé unt tut le païs" 'they had slain his uncle and his father and harried the whole land' (9035–36). La3amon, writing far from Wace's royal court, depends on Wace here as elsewhere, yet, with no sign of having consulted Geoffrey's description of Arthur's mercenary motives, he inserts the importance of repayment and gift giving into this section. As usual in La3amon, the theme expands from pragmatic economic and social calculation into a sublimated economy of historical and literary transactions.

One example must suffice to show this pervasive sublimation of the traditional idea of the lordly gift. Midway in his campaign, Arthur collects his forces to attack the German emperor Childric (thus revising Wace's description of Arthur's cautious retreat because he hears of the Germans' arrival). Childric in response swiftly devastates the north and "gives" Scotland to Colgrim and Northumbria to Baldulf, with no thought of gaining Arthur's mercy unless Arthur should want to be "his mon" (10,190–92)—all La3amon's touches, conveying Childric's crude use of the gifts of lordship. Arthur in turn sends his cousin Howel of Brittany to collect troops on the Continent, canvassing a territory that, in

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the decades of unstable English possession of Normandy, is suspiciously topical, including Poitou, Flanders, Gascony, and Tours (none mentioned by Wace but recalling John's efforts to secure continental allies). Howel gives gifts to all possible helpers "þat heo mihte þe bliðere bu3en from heore ærde" 'so that they might more gladly journey forth from their countries' (10,226; cf. Wace 9135–70). The gifts here (again, found in La3amon alone) are not a cold quid pro quo but a means of warming political love—a use diametrically opposed to Childric's gifts of lands. Howel's encouraging style is distinct from Arthur's more powerful manipulation, but both show the centrality of the mode and the importance of defining such exchanges as gifts rather than as bribes or wages. After Childric, Baldulf, and Colgrim offer hostages to gain their freedom, Arthur accepts this gift and in return gives them *grið*, peace. But before deciding on this (ill-fated) exchange of gifts and grant of their freedom, he elaborately (again, in La3amon only) savors the distress he has put them in and defines his sublimation of the entire material and political exchange, using one of the several long epic similes that La3amon is noted for inserting in the Arthur section:

"Iþonked wurðe Drihtene . þe alle domes
waldeð.
þat Childric þe stronge . is sad of mine londe.
Mi lond he hafeð to-dæled . al his du3eðe
cnihtes.
me seoluen he þohte . driuen ut of mire leoden.
halden me for hæne . & habben mine riche.
& mi cun ai for-uaren . mi uolc al fordemed.
Ah of him bið iwurðen . swa bið of þan voxe.
þenne he bið baldest . ufen-an þan walde.
& hafeð his fulle plo3e . & fu3eles ino3e.
for wild-scipe climbið . and cluden isecheð.
i þan wilderne . hol3es him wurcheð.
Faren wha-swa auere fare . naueð he næuere
nænne kare.
he weneð to beon of du3eðe . baldest alre
deoren.
Þenne si3eð him to . segges vnder beor3en.
mid hornen mid hunden . mid ha3ere stefenen.
hunten þar talieð . hundes þer galieð.
þene vox driueð . 3eond dales & 3eond dunes.
he ulih to þan holme . & his hol isecheð.
i þan uirste ænde . i þan holle wendeð.
þenne is þe balde uox . blissen al bideled.
& mon him to-delueð . on ælchere heluen.
þenne beoð þer for-cuðest . deoren alre
pruttest.
Swa wes Childriche . þan strongen & þan riche.
he þohten al mi kind-lond . setten an his a3ere
hond.
ah nu ich habbe hine idriuen . to þan bare
dæðe.
whæðer-swa ich wulle don . oðer slæn oðer
a-hon.
Nu ich wulle 3ifen him grið . & leten hine me
specken wið.
nulle ich hine slæ no ahon . ah his bode ich
wulle fon.
3isles ich wulle habben . of hæxten his monnen.
hors & heore wepnen . ær heo heonne wenden.
and swa heo scullen wræcchen . to heoren
scipen liðen.
sæilien ouer sæ . to sele heore londe.
& þer wirð-liche . wunien on riche.
and tellen tidende . of Arðure kinge.
hu ich heom habbe i-freoied . for mines fader
saule
& for mine freo-dome . ifrouered þa
wræcchen."
Her wes Arður þe king . aðelen bidæled.
nes þer nan swa reh3 mon . þe him durste
ræden. (10,392–429)

"May the Lord, who governs all judgments, be
thanked
that Childric the strong is sated with my land.
He has doled out my land to all his bold
knights;
he thought to drive me out of my native land,
to regard me as a wretch, and to possess my
kingdom,
and my kin are forever destroyed, my people
all condemned.
But it has happened to him as it does to the fox,
when he is boldest out in the forest,
and takes his full pleasure and has fowls
enough,
and because of his wildness climbs and seeks
out crags.

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In the wild regions he digs holes.
Let him travel wherever he travels, he has never a care
and thinks he is in valor the boldest of all beasts.
Then men climb up to him from beneath the mountain
with horns and hounds, with loud voices,
hunters there say 'tally-ho,' and hounds raise a ruckus,
and they drive the fox across hills and dales;
he flies to the woods and seeks out his hole:
at the first edge [of the woods] he goes down into the hole.
Then is the bold fox utterly deprived of bliss,
and men dig down to him from all sides;
then he who of all beasts was the proudest is made the most regretful.
Thus it was for Childric, the strong and the powerful:
he thought he would set all my kingdom in his hand;
but now I have driven him right about to death,
whatever I wish to do, either to slay him or hang him.
Now I will give him peace and allow him to speak with me;
I shall neither slay nor hang him, but I will accede to his prayer:
I wish to take hostages from his highest-ranking men,
with their horses and weapons, before they journey from here;
and so they must journey as wretches to their ships,
to sail over the sea to their own splendid land
and dwell there honorably in their kingdom
and tell tidings about Arthur the king,
how I freed them for my father's soul
and for my own freedom [*or* because of my generosity] helped the wretches."
Here Arthur the king was deprived of good judgment;
no man was so rash as to dare to advise him.

In Wace's aquiline perspective, this entire scene appears as "Artur ad cel plai graanté / Cungied lur ad d'aler duné" 'Arthur accepted this plea and gave them leave to go' (9219–20). La3amon's expansion glories in the skill of generous giving and sublimates a political gift into a gift of poetic simile and in turn into a mechanism ensuring a literary afterlife. The grandeur of Arthur's speech, to be sure, is undercut by his inability to apply its point: why indeed should he give freedom to a trapped fox? will not the fox take pride again in his free pleasure? The counselors, whom La3amon introduces only to silence, cannot follow Arthur's sublimation of his gift or appreciate his literary ambition. In military terms, their views are soon proved correct. But Arthur casts his venture to a time far beyond immediate circumstance, not a heavenly afterlife but a literary afterlife. He allows Childric to depart not simply for his own soul and his father's to be freed from the bonds of sin and damnation but so that Childric will take back the story that Arthur made the gift for this holy purpose: "tidende of Arðure kinge / hu ich heom habbe i-freoied for mines fader saule / & for mine freo-dome ifrouered þa wræcchen." Arthur offers himself to a time beyond him, trying to give himself the gift of his own pious and heroically generous legend, a literary register in which his elaborate simile already participates. The disjunctive relation of his speech to the immediate scene, with La3amon's addition of the cowed audience, is almost comic. Yet the raising of a lordly gift to a higher end and more historical expanse is central to the unity of *The Brut* and to its offering to a future literary tradition. Many of the several long similes introduced into this section imply the same point or pivot on the same theme.[18]

Legend and literary afterlife are gifts that even a king cannot give but that a poet and historian can. In showing this, La3amon displays a power of gifting even higher than Wace's to Queen Eleanor. La3amon's gift offers his own work to the future—an act that, like his hero's use of lordly gifting in a sublimated way, resembles but inverts the continued Anglo-Saxon literary act of reflecting on the greatness that is past. La3amon's gift to the future of his truth is, while not literally efficacious in pro-

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ducing the long, rich tradition of later Middle English literature, accurate in limning some of its most characteristic features: emphasis on character, authorial self-inscription and literary self-reflexivity, a pervasive assimilation of the mode of satire, and foregrounding of cultural and generic hybridity. His focus on an unknown future literature and his establishing of some of its foundations are as important as his invocation of a past literature.

Even in its own time, La3amon's gift was not one-way: it allowed the past to fulfill its desire for future fame, but it was also a gift exchange, allowing the past to offer topical meaning to the present. My last and briefest example of the literary properties generated by the principle of the gift again bridges the temporal expanse between present and past. The example returns to the last king of the Britons, whose loss of Cirencester meant the loss of all Britain. Just before the heathen knight bargains for gifts from Gurmund in exchange for a scheme to take the city and seal the Britons' fate, the last British king, Carric ("Careticus" in Geoffrey of Monmouth, "Cariz" in Wace), is said by Wace to have suffered the "great invasion" of England by pagans and enemies (i.e., Saxons) who "firent la destructiun / Dunt Bretaine perdi sun nun" 'caused the destruction through which Britain lost its name' (13,380–84). Although La3amon elsewhere and extensively elaborates the point that the names of England have been changed and destroyed by the language of each successive conquering people, here he says that Carric lost *his* name by this event: "Þa wes Karic biswiken . al mid heore craften. / Karic auer seoðen . Kine-ric he hehten. / al mid hokerworden . þe king heo for-husten" 'So was Carric entirely deceived by their crafts; / and ever since Carric was called "Kine-ric"; / with utterly scornful expressions they mocked the king' (14,480–82). La3amon alone mentions this, and Allen's gloss provides the solution: "Kine-ric" is "Kingdom-rich" (*Lawman*, line 14,481), a scornful way to describe a king who has lost his kingdom (it might be paralleled by the epithet of the hirsute Charles the Bald).[19]

But if King John is visible in obverse in Arthur, so he is also, and more directly, recognizable in this unfortunate king about to lose Britain forever. Kine-ric is an ironic inversion of King John's nickname, Lackland. This sobriquet was given early in John's life when his father, Henry II, could not provide for him, but it gained notoriety after John's loss of Normandy in 1204 (Warren 2, 2n). Giving Carric a nickname with this echo suggests a bold frankness between a poet counselor and his noble patrons or readers, defining a freedom of the wise servant to counsel the world of power, perhaps the poem's chief political message. The allusion makes a connection to John's political and military failure at a time that might have seemed the end of another English empire, as Carric marked the end of the first. It does not imply rebellious hatred of John in the spirit of later chroniclers (but those writing during John's reign do not imply that either [see Gillingham]): La3amon's King Carric, a "swiðe guod cniht" 'very good knight' (14,574), is more sympathetically heroic than Wace's evil Carriz. But the simultaneous insertion of Gurmund's consultation with his heathen knight in the same episode says that such counsel, from whatever source, humble or high, was a powerful and valuable resource for the powerful, for good or ill. Another touch in this episode supports such topicality: La3amon identifies the French king who joins with Gurmund—foully abandoning his Christianity, La3amon alone says—not as the "nephew" of Louis, as in Wace ("niés" [13,521]), but as the "sunne" of Louis (14,560). This identification daringly invokes John's nemesis, Philip Augustus, son of Louis VII, the new possessor of Normandy, and the sometime husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the powerful recipient of Wace's gift.

These allusions, pointed as they would be to at least some contemporaries, speak to a sense of living in a time of catastrophic endings, when the loss of the English continental

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empire of the Angevins might have seemed the end of English civilization (even though from a modern view it is but the beginning of a stronger phase of English imperialism [see Davies]). The time of the poem's composition would then be one when archaism in language was a poignant gesture, and embedding topicality in such archaic poetry an especially skillful means of offering counsel, locating it beyond any immediate economy or question of repayment like the prophecies of Merlin himself, even while the portrait of Wace presenting his book to royalty acknowledges a palpable circulation of august literary patronage and honor to which La3amon, writing in a language that the king could not understand even in its nonarchaic forms, could hardly aspire.

Yet the posture that the poet adopts is bolder still: his work offers its skillful "soð" 'truth' as a gift exchange between present and past, not a nostalgic dwelling on lost greatness but a new mode of culture and literature. With its mutual gifts of temporality, his poem becomes like the "Englisca" Bede that two moments of history have produced, or like the Latin book that, fantastically, Saints Alban and Augustine collaborated in making. Seeing his transacting temporalities in this way offers a new approach to what Daniel Donoghue has influentially assessed as the "ambivalence" of La3amon's *Brut*, in which its form and content seem to combine positive and negative judgments of the ancient Britons.[20] La3amon elaborates the gift exchanges of Anglo-Saxon heroic epic but also sublimates them into gift exchanges with history. He enshrines a central ideal of Anglo-Saxon culture while transforming that ideal to a new model of social and cultural circulation, one designed for the present and the future as much as for the past. The poem becomes the continuously generative object of its own transactions with temporality, its worth as inestimable as the elusive island nation itself, "i-gon from honde to hond" (1033).

Notes

1. I cite from Brook and Leslie, representing the medial subpunctus as simple medial dots and adding quotation marks for direct speech. I have consulted Allen's translation (*Lawman*), itself an illuminating commentary on the poem, but the translations from La3amon's *Brut*, as well as other works, are my own, except where noted otherwise.

2. Usefully canvassing a range of critical views of *The Brut*'s literary lineage are Donoghue; Johnson; and Allen, "'Nv Seið mid Loft-songe.'" For the poem's debts to Latin epic, medieval and ancient, see Salter 48–70. See also Le Saux 202–05 and Donahue 35–59.

3. On my translation of "Seint Albin" as "Saint Alban," see below.

4. For some suggestions about La3amon's use of specific medieval Latin epics for these similes, see Salter 61–66.

5. For these two claims, see Le Saux 14–23; the second was proposed by Stanley, "La3amon's Antiquarian Sentiments" 31–32.

6. *Brut* 5437–40, 9707–09. Cf. Weiss, lines 5569–93, 8891–93 (all quotations and, with minor adjustments, translations of Wace's *Roman de Brut* are from this edition).

7. *Peterborough Chronicle* 24; under the year 1095/60. Conceivably *The Brut*'s spelling "Albin," found in both copies of the poem, was influenced by archetypal error with "Albion." The second copy, Ms. Cotton Otho C. XIII, spells Saint Alban's name "Albon" at line 5437.

8. For texts and summaries of pertinent scholarship, see Daly (e.g., 19, 22); Thompson 26–91; and Bossy. Innocent III's gloss is from his *Mysteria evangelicae legis et sacramenti Eucharistiae*, noted by Bossy (38). The context and practice of the Mass as an exchange of gifts are clear in, e.g., the seventh-century *Ordo Romanus primus*, which states that the Mass was preceded by the nobility's gifts of the bread and wine and accompanied by gifts from the rest of the people (Thompson 38). Public feasts were offered at post-Lenten Easter Mass throughout pre-Reformation England, especially in rural areas (Bossy 53–54).

9. See *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *of-song*. Fuller discussions of the term in *The Brut* are Allen, "'Nv Seið mid Loft-songe'" 253, and Stanley, "La3amon" 6, 6n.

10. Allen, in "*Eorles* and *Beornes*," has compiled the best circumstantial evidence that La3amon had as patron William de Frise, who owned the living at Areley. The suggestion originated more diffidently with Salter (67). No proof exists for this patronage, however.

11. Lungement se sunt defendu
E lungement se sunt tenu,
E plus lungement se tenissent
Que cil par force nes preïssent,
Si feus la vile n'espreïst;
Grant mal e grant damage fist.
Cil defors, par grant tricherie
Que puis ne ainz ne fud oïe,

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Unt la cité tute enflambee.
. . . . . .
Bretun virent la vile ardeir,
Flambe voler, maisuns chaeir;
A cumbatre se cunreerent,
Mes vencu furent, kar poi erent.
Li reis Kariz se tresturna;
Triés un triés altre s'en ala;
En Guales dreit la veie tint
. . . . . .
Encor i perent les ruines
E les deserz e les guastines
Que Gurmund fist en plusurs lieus
Pur tolir as Bretuns lur fieus.
Quant il ot guasté lu païs,
Les viles arses, l'aveir pris,
Lu regne ad as Sednes duné. . . .
(13,583–91, 13,607–13, 13,631–37)

12. Without observing the focus on the sinful sale of the divine gift of knowledge, Parry notes that La3amon's portrait of Vortigern presents a figure who is "evil because his knowledge serves only evil ends" ("Lawman's Vortigern" 321, 333).

13. Walsh 212–23; bk. 1, chs. 9–12. Andreas's discussion is close enough to be proposed as background or source of the *Ancrene Wisse*, which does not seem to draw here on its most important Latin source, the *Moralia super Evangelia*. See Dobson.

14. Since this passage is not found in Wace, Le Saux (115) suggests it may instead show use of the Latin verse *Vita Merlini*, where Merlin refuses Rodarch's gifts: "Munus avarus amat cupidusque laborat habere. / Hii faciles animos flectunt quocunque jubentur. / Munere corrupti quod habent non sufficit illis. / At michi suficiunt glandes Calidonis amene / Et nitidi fontes per olentia prata fluentes. / Munere non capior, sua munera tollat avarus" 'A gift is what a miser loves and a grasping man works hard to get. Such men are corruptible by presents and will turn their shallow minds whichever way they are told, because what they have is not enough for them. But for me the acorns of pleasant Calidon are enough, and the sparkling streams that run through fragrant meadows. Let the miser take his gifts: gifts do not buy me' (Le Saux's trans.). The connection is broadly plausible, but La3amon's details serve to emphasize his distinctive themes. La3amon's Merlin makes the more specific point that his counsel and skill would be corrupted by payment. See also lines 8510–11, a statement likewise not found in Wace.

15. *Middle English Dictionary*, s.vv. *tre* (n.), with variants *treo*, *treu*, *trewe*, etc.; *treu(e* (n. [1]), with variants *trewe*, *trou*, *treu*, etc.; and *treu(e* (adj.), with substantival use as epithet (1c. [a]).

16. *Historia* 74; sec. 112.2; *History* 172. Le Saux explores the connection (98–99, 109–10).

17. Church 5, 58. For John's paranoia, see, e.g., the Barnwell chronicler (in Stevenson 207–08).

18. See lines 10,041–43, 10,047–48, 10,061–67, 10,609–10, 10,613–14, 10,631–36 (by Arthur), 10,638–47 (by Arthur), 10,694–706 (by Arthur, a complex of metaphor, elegy, and simile), 10,719. Likewise, in a brief, surreal allegory, elves give the "gifts" of heroic qualities to Arthur in utero (9610–15). See also Arthur's repeated metaphor of "teaching" his enemies "sorrowful songs" (10,826–28). Parry explores the related theme of Arthur's awareness of his legendary status ("Narrators").

19. Le Saux surveys the history of scholarly pursuit of the epithet for Carric (126–27).

20. For further arguments pursuing the difficult question of the poet's cultural loyalties, see Wright; Noble.

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