1 Introduction

Since the emergence of the scholarly field of book history, it has been customary to see the printed book as an agent of change. By being typeset, printed, and issued in large numbers – by being published – texts can penetrate society and change how its members perceive the world. In considering the preprint literary world, our analytical approach has tended towards the opposite direction. We look at the numbers of surviving manuscript copies of a text from the Middle Ages and we typically assess them as signifiers of the interests of the times, as cultural objects and not as evidence of an attempt to distribute a given text. Whereas Aldus Manutius, publishing classical texts in Venice around 1500, is seen as an actor who made a contribution to the diffusion of humanistic modes, the proliferation of copies of Cicero's works in the twelfth century is taken instead to indicate a growing interest in classical Latin literature. The printed book sets change in motion; the manuscript book is merely the effect of change.

Analogically, when we reflect on the literary success of a given work in the world of print, we almost reflexively think about the role publishing played in its making. In a manuscript culture, by way of contrast, the dissemination of a work is typically understood as an organic process, taking place outside the author's control and often extending far beyond his or her lifetime. To a point, this difference in perspective is valid and natural. The printing press makes of publishing a clearly defined action taking place at a specific moment; furthermore, owing to the financial burden involved in printing an edition, it also makes publishing inherently commercial and promotional. In medieval manuscript culture, publishing is not an act similarly defined by any mechanical operation or investment in large-scale production belonging to a particular point in time. As Daniel Hobbins has emphasised, publishing in manuscript culture is always a diffuse process.[1]

We should not, however, assume that this process was typically innocent or void of authorial intentions. What is the point of writing in any context – print, manuscript, or digital – if not for an audience? Printing may have

[1] D. Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 154.

raised the stakes by greatly enlarging the potential audience and making a wide distribution much easier to achieve but it did not change the fundamental rationale of publishing as an interface between an author and an audience. What is more, while a limited audience of close associates was enough for some medieval authors, narrative evidence clearly shows that others intended to make their works available in an open literary public sphere, the existence of which seems to have been generally acknowledged. That no single actor could play the distributive role of the printer should not obscure the fact that authorial publishing did happen in the manuscript context and that its fundamental goal was the same as in the age of print: making a new text available to an audience.

In what follows, I present both a methodological suggestion about how authorial publishing can be conceptualised in manuscript culture and an empirical application of this proposed conceptual framework. My key analytical proposition, around which this study is organised, is that authorial publishing in manuscript culture was about creating a task force – a publishing circle – to drive forward the distribution of a text. The publishing circle, again, operated within a wider network of literary connections and modalities of book production which provided the intellectual and material infrastructure for dissemination: in brief, a 'publishing framework'. Methodologically, I suggest that these twin concepts of publishing circle and publishing framework can provide a helpful pair of tools for empirical analysis of authorial publishing in any manuscript context.

The substance of this study consists of an application of this approach to three twelfth-century Anglo-Norman historians. The works which I will examine are the *Historia Anglorum* by Henry of Huntingdon (*c.*1088–1157), *Gesta regum Anglorum* by William of Malmesbury (b. *c.*1090, d. in or after 1142) and *De gestis Britonum* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1154/5). Besides offering a contribution to the study of publishing in manuscript culture per se, I aim to provide a better vantage point for the appreciation of these works in their historical context. All these texts attained canonical authority soon after their appearance and they came to provide the starting point for all later medieval histories of Britain, whether in Latin or in the vernacular. Indeed, they are still among the most widely read and studied twelfth-century texts from England. My analysis of their publishing

histories suggests that this success was not a simple consequence of having written attractive texts but that these authors were actively seeking an audience and literary fame. They were, it seems, also keenly aware that, by so doing, they were participating in a public discourse, one with potentially political implications.

To clarify how my approach differs from previous attempts to conceptualise publishing in a manuscript context, I shall begin by discussing previous work done on this topic. I shall then provide a survey of the wider historical framework of publishing, the key components of which were social networks and the infrastructure of book manufacture. Then, more briefly, it will be necessary to review the nature of the evidence on which this study rests. The reconstruction of the publishing histories themselves, which follows, constitutes the main body of this study, in which the authors are discussed separately. This straightforward narrative structure is necessitated by the complicated nature of the source work involved. While publishing histories are often intricate in the case of print, the disentangling of the messy threads of evidence that allows us to see how publishing took place in manuscript culture is a yet more complicated affair.

1.1 Conceptualising Publishing in Manuscript Culture

Much has been written on medieval authors and authorship and, separately, on readers and readership; but the moment in which a text passed from being an intellectual possession of the author to circulation among potential readers has received little attention until very recently. One important reason for that, as several scholars have noted, is that the words 'publishing' and 'publication' so forcefully conjure images from the world of print as to push aside consideration of what it meant to circulate a book in manuscript.[2] Some commentators, indeed, have gone so far as to question the legitimacy of the concept of 'publishing' in the context of manuscript culture, precisely

[2] See J. Crick and A. Walsham, 'Introduction: Script, Print and History', in J. Crick and A. Walsham (eds.), *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–26, at p. 19; Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, p. 153; and L. Tether, *Publishing the Grail in Medieval and Renaissance France* (Woodbridge: D.S.Brewer, 2017), p. 13.

because its associations with print are so strong.[3] This decision is part of a more general trend which seeks to exercise caution in applying 'post-Gutenbergian' concepts to medieval literature, placing its emphasis on the malleability of medieval texts and their otherness from the world of print, in which text is 'set'. Such scepticism, however, has its limits and an accumulating body of scholarship is now making a well-argued case for the usefulness of the concept of publishing in manuscript culture, not least for what it can contribute to an understanding of authors and contemporary audiences.[4] There can be no doubt, as Daniel Hobbins has observed, that 'the very notion of publishing is premodern'.[5]

While the study of publishing in manuscript has been emerging as a scholarly field, its subject has proved resistant to definition. This has much to do with the Gutenbergian undertones of how we conceive of the process. In a print culture, publishing is neatly defined by the sudden multiplication

[3] S. G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 1–10, at 6; E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 11.

[4] J. C. Laidlaw, 'Christine de Pizan – a Publisher's Progress', *Modern Language Review*, 82 (1987), 35–75; A. I. Doyle, 'Publication by Members of the Religious Orders', in J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (eds.), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 109–23; L. Earp, 'Machaut's Role in the Production of Manuscripts of His Works', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 42 (1989), 461–503; F. Riddy, '"Publication" before Print: The Case of Julian of Norwhich', in J. Crick and A. Walsham (eds.), *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 29–49; Hobbins, Authorship and Publicity; R. Sharpe,'Anselm as Author: Publishing in the Late Eleventh Century', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 19 (2009), 1–87; L. Tether, 'Revisiting the Manuscripts of *Perceval* and the Continuations: Publishing Practices and Authorial Transition', *Journal of the International Arthurian Society*, 2 (2014), 20–45; A. N. J. Dunning, 'Alexander Neckam's Manuscripts and the Augustinian Canons of Oxford and Cirencester', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Toronto (2016); and Tether, *Publishing the Grail*.

[5] Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, p. 153.

of copies of a text by the printing press and their ensuing dissemination. This typically commercially driven technical operation both turns a text into a public intellectual commodity, outside of the author's direct control, and makes it generally available as a material object. These two sides of the publishing action – the immaterial and the material – are implicit in our post-Gutenbergian understanding of publishing. While I would argue that both release and dissemination were objectives of medieval authors and editors as well, the two actions are not, in the context of manuscript publication, similarly brought together by any technological matrix.

The fact that these two fundamental elements of publishing cannot be encapsulated into a single moment has catalysed attempts to define publishing in a manuscript context by concentrating on one or the other. On the immaterial side, it has been proposed, most concisely by Paul Meyvaert, that publishing should be equated with the author's act of giving a copy of his work to someone else, accompanied by their permission to make copies of it.[6] This is a conceptually neat and economical definition of the release-of-intellectual-property aspect of publishing. It is publishing in this sense which many works of medieval literary history and prefaces to editions of medieval texts typically discuss, and certainly this was an aspect of publishing of which medieval authors themselves were conscious.[7] However, semantically justified as it is, this definition severs the act of release from any necessary connection to the actual promotion and dissemination that the work consequently had. As an analytical conceptual tool, it also fails to open new perspectives. Pinpointing publishing at the single moment of release does not really help us to understand how publishing functioned as an interface between an author and his or her audience; and yet understanding that very relationship is one of the main reasons for the study of the phenomenon in the first place.

[6] P. Meyvaert, 'Medieval Notions of Publication: The "Unpublished" Opus Caroli regis contra synodum and the Council of Frankfort (794)', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 12 (2002), 78–89, at 81 and passim. See also Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, pp. 153–4.

[7] See, in particular, Meyvaert, 'Medieval Notions of Publication', and Sharpe, 'Anselm as Author', 1–2.

Aware of such problems, other scholars have defined publishing in a manuscript context by focussing entirely on aspects of material distribution, disregarded by the release-centred interpretation. A distribution-centred definition has been most explicitly argued for by Leah Tether in her seminal work on the role of the makers of books in the promotion and distribution of the Grail romances.[8] Other scholars, too, have interpreted the late medieval urban book craftsman as the closest possible medieval equivalent to the modern publisher.[9] This is a perfectly valid angle of analysis and, indeed, such craftsmen were making a living by selling reproductions of texts, the analogue of what printers would later do. Furthermore, such an emphasis is valuable in softening the contrast between medieval and modern book cultures, still too starkly perceived outside the specialist domains of book history. Nevertheless, this distribution-centred definition is not equally helpful in analysing the case of an author (and/or editor) launching a specific work with the intention of making it widely available, i.e. the case of authorial publishing.[10]

This brings us, finally, to what I would characterise as the third, process-centred approach into conceptualising publishing in manuscript culture. To bridge the disjuncture between release and dissemination, other scholars have sought to define the ways in which the interface functioned between author and distribution. In a rare early contribution on the topic, published in 1913, R. K. Root proposed four different categories of preprint publication, which entail both release and distribution, or at least promotion: publication by presenting a text to a patron, publication by public reading, publication sanctioned by a religious authority, and commercial publication by making the text available to urban professional scribes.[11] These and similar models for the preprint author–distribution interface have been

[8] Tether, *Publishing the Grail*.

[9] H. S. Bennett, 'The Production and Dissemination of Vernacular Manuscripts in the Fifteenth Century', *The Library*, Fifth Series, 1 (1946), 167–78; Riddy, '"Publication" before Print', 30, 36.

[10] For late medieval authors conscious of their roles as publishers, see Laidlaw, 'Christine de Pizan', Earp, 'Machaut's Role', and Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*.

[11] R. K. Root, 'Publication before Printing', *PMLA*, 28 (1913), 417–31.

discussed by other scholars, with patronage and 'official', ecclesiastically approved publication typically receiving most attention.[12] Also, the possibility of a manner of publishing by non-publishing, i.e. by simply slipping a text into 'organic' circulation, has been noted.[13]

All the phenomena classified by the concepts above (except probably strictly commercial publishing) did indeed happen.[14] However, as has been implicitly recognised in the aforementioned studies and made explicit in Felicity Riddy's overview of Root's ideas, these, or indeed any, rigid categories do not adequately cover how texts were in fact made available to readers in a manuscript culture.[15] It must be kept in mind that these categories are categories of analysis – scholarly abstractions rather than contemporary conceptualisations reflecting established medieval practices – and their value depends on whether they help us to understand how real publishing happened in manuscript culture. In an empirical enquiry, they

[12] K. J. Holzknecht, 'Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (1923); Bennett, 'Production and Dissemination'; Doyle, 'Publication by Members of the Religious Orders', and Dunning, 'Alexander Neckam's Manuscripts'.

[13] Bennett, 'Production and Dissemination', 170.

[14] The idea of commercial scrivener publication depended to some extent on the so-called bookshop theory, i.e. the assumption, since discredited, that there would have been scriptorium-like workshops in late medieval cities, in which teams of scribes could have produced multiple copies of a text. The contours of the debate can be followed in L. H. Loomis, 'The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330–1340', *PMLA*, 57 (1942), 595–627; G. Dempster, 'Manly's Conception of the Early History of the Canterbury Tales', *PMLA*, 61 (1946), 379–415; T. A. Shonk, 'A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 71–91; C. P. Christianson, 'The Rise of London's Book-Trade', in L. Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 128–47, at p. 130, and M. B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes. The Lyell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford 1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 51–3.

[15] Riddy, '"Publication" before Print', pp. 30–7.

can appear potentially misleading, for it is obvious that the actual publishing of a text did not need to happen according to the model the case might appear to follow: the named dedicatee was not necessarily the key person in the promotion of a text apparently published under patronage; the force which drove to literary success a specific text published 'officially' within a religious order may have been the influence of an individual abbot or bishop, or that of a particular personal network to which the author had access; a text published by a secular clerk may have been adopted for distribution within a religious order. Needless to say, a single author (or editor) may have relied on several different mechanisms for disseminating his or her work.

This is not to say that these ways of putting texts into circulation did not exist and we shall frequently encounter the phenomena they refer to – patronage in particular – in this study. However, the nature of the present undertaking necessitates a different kind of functionally defined analytical tool. Over the following pages, I shall be studying three authors who, I argue, were actively trying to publish their works, in the modern sense of making them available to various audiences. They were concerned both to release intellectual content and to seek ways to have it materially distributed. My goal is to reconstruct empirically as much of these processes as possible, rather than seeking instances of this or that predefined method of publishing. The key concept of this study, by which I define the scope of this author-driven publishing activity, is that of a 'publishing circle'. By a publishing circle, I mean those individuals and institutions which were actively engaged in the authorial effort to spread the text. This certainly includes, in this case, many of the dedicatees but it is not limited to them, for, as we shall see, there is strong evidence that other agents were also involved in the publishing process, while the role of the apparent patron could remain very limited.

The concept of the publishing circle is also an attempt to answer a perennial question asked of publishing in a manuscript context: at what point does publishing turn into dissemination? My solution approaches this problem from a functionalist point of view. I make the assumption that the essential constituents of book publishing are the release of intellectual content on the one hand and material distribution on the other, and that

publishing is implicitly promotional. Thus, a publishing circle ends where the (in this case authorial) intention to advance the circulation of the work fades away. The circle, in other words, is a publishing task force which, in a loose sense, is recruited by the author. The focus of study for this Element falls on three particular publishing circles but, before introducing them, we need briefly to look at the framework in which all these circles took shape.

1.2 The Publishing Framework: Audiences of History and the Modalities of Book Production in Post-Conquest England and the Anglo-Norman Realm

During the reigns of Henry I and Stephen, several narrative histories were produced which came to define the perception of Britain's past for centuries to come.[16] The three authors of this study – Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, and Geoffrey of Monmouth – were the central actors in this undertaking. While they were not the only ones writing on historical topics at the time, it was their work that came to dominate the historiographical canon in Britain. Both their extensive influence on contemporary and near-contemporary historiography and their own popularity, as indicated by the number of surviving manuscript copies of their works, have been abundantly documented.[17] Thinking of the three as a group is, furthermore, not

[16] As James Campbell put it, '[t]he greatest advances in the study and understanding of Anglo-Saxon history made before the nineteenth century were those of the twelfth'; J. Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1986), pp. 209–228, at p. 209.

[17] On the influence, for Henry, see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 212, 226, 260 (n. 97), 261, 264, 363, 412, 434, 444; for William, *ibid.*, pp. 144 (n. 57), 434, 444, and W. Stubbs, 'Preface', in *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis monachi de Gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, Rolls Series, 90, ed. W. Stubbs (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), pp. ix–cxlvii, at pp. xcii–xciii; and, for Geoffrey, L. Keeler, *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Late Latin Chroniclers 1300–1500* (Berkeley:University of California, 1946); R. H. Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, Especially Those of Great Britain and France* (Cambridge, MA:

simply a later classification. Geoffrey commented explicitly on the works of Henry and William, in a manner which shows that he understood them to be members of a group participating in the same debate,[18] and the texts themselves demonstrate that Geoffrey and Henry at least had access to each other's work.[19] What is more, they shared a network of patronage. Both Geoffrey and Henry dedicated works to Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, while both Geoffrey and William offered dedications to Robert, earl of

Harvard University Press, 1906), and J. Tahkokallio, 'French Chroniclers and the Credibility of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain, c. 1150–1225', in H. Tétrel and G. Veysseyre (eds.), *L'Historia regum Britannie et Les 'Bruts en Europe': Traductions, adaptations, réappropriations (XII^e–XVI^e Siècle)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015), pp. 53–67. The numbers of surviving manuscripts: Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, 45 medieval copies (13 from the twelfth century), William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, 36 medieval copies (19 from the twelfth century), Geoffrey of Monmouth, *De gestis Britonum*, 225 medieval copies (*c.*70 from the twelfth century). For the manuscripts, see D. Greenway, 'Introduction', in Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. xxiii–clxxii; R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 'Introduction', in William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, vol. 1, ed. R. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. xiii–xxxii; J. Crick, *Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth III: A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1989), and J. Tahkokallio, 'Update to the List of Manuscripts of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Arthurian Literature*, 32 (2015), 187–203.

[18] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum*, ed. M. Reeve, trans. N. Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), §208 (p. 281).

[19] For Henry's encounter with Geoffrey's work, see N. Wright, 'The Place of Henry of Huntingdon's *Epistola Ad teksti Warinum* in the Text-History of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*: A Preliminary Investigation', in G. Jondorf and D. N. Dumville (eds.), *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays by Members of Girton College, Cambridge, in Memory of Ruth Morgan* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), pp. 71–113. For Henry's influence on Geoffrey, see J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), pp. 34, 67, 121, 281.