

**Malasree Home. *The Peterborough Version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Rewriting Post-Conquest History*. Anglo-Saxon Studies 27. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015. Pp. x + 186. Hardback £60. ISBN 978-1-78327-001-9.**

Widely excerpted and anthologised, the Peterborough Chronicle is perhaps the best-known twelfth-century English text and the star witness to the decline of Old English and the emergence of Middle English. Despite this prominence, and despite the existence of a facsimile of the manuscript and excellent editions by Cecily Clark and Susan Irvine, focussed studies of the text (as opposed to those which treat it piecemeal or as part of the larger Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tradition) are few on the ground. Malasree Home's new book, based on her 2005 Cambridge PhD thesis, aims to rectify this lacuna by treating the text in the context of its production and reception in twelfth-century Peterborough.

Home's book begins with an introduction that outlines the accepted view of the genesis of the Peterborough (or E version) of the Chronicle: the disastrous fire of 1116; the acquisition of a manuscript (\*vE) from Christ Church Canterbury with the help of their former abbot, Ernulf, then bishop of the adjacent see of Rochester; its copying at Peterborough in the early 1120s and interpolation with material of local interest; the continuation of this new manuscript throughout the 1120s; another scribe's belated addition of annals covering the years 1132-1154 in the 1150s; and its eventual abandonment. Home returns to several of these phases later in the book, with the continuations the subject of Chapter 2, the abandonment of the manuscript after 1154 a key consideration of Chapter 4, and the interpolations Chapter 1's focus, as it argues that the interpolator was sensitive to the form, structure and language of the Chronicle as he composed the five thousand words of Peterborough material with which he supplemented it. Chapter 2 makes a related argument regarding the later phases of the chronicle, suggesting that the second continuator was similarly sensitive to the work of earlier chroniclers, while teasing out some differences of focus between the first and second continuations. Chapter 3 situates the Peterborough Chronicle in the context of twelfth-century Latin historiography, while Chapter 4 examines the relationship between it and the Latin chronicle compiled at Peterborough in the years around 1150 by Hugh Candidus. The main questions the book asks are therefore literary historical: how far were the two scribes who compiled the latest surviving manuscript of the Chronicle aware of working within a two hundred and fifty year old vernacular tradition? To what extent were they influenced by contemporary Latin genres like the house history and chronicle cartulary? And why did these forms of historiography eventually supersede the vernacular chronicle at Peterborough?

These are good questions, and the book makes some telling points as it attempts to answer them. Home is certainly right that the manuscripts of the Chronicle need to be studied individually and not just as imperfect versions of a series of lost archetypes, though one might query whether this insight constitutes a 'paradigm shift' (p. 18). Antonia Gransden's view that 'the Conquest killed the Chronicle mainly because English was no longer the language of the ruling class' is justifiably questioned, with Chapter 3 showing that vernacular and Latin histories interacted in complex ways well into the first half of the twelfth century. Home's reading of the second continuation as ending with 'the expression of hope for a new era under a new king and a new abbot' and in its account of Henry II and Abbot Martin echoing 'the relationship of love and bounty between Abbot Seaxwulf and his Anglo-Saxon royal patrons' when they worked together to found the abbey in the seventh century (p. 90) is extremely refreshing after a steady diet of analyses of the Peterborough version

that have fixated on the terrors of annal 1137 and, through its lens, seen the second continuator primarily as a minority English voice heroically crying out against Norman oppression. Equally compelling is her suggestion that the emergence of a DE-type text as the twelfth-century *textus receptus* (that used not only in Peterborough, but also for the Domitian Bilingual at Canterbury, as well as by Latin historians like William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester and Henry of Huntingdon) derives from its inclusion of a preface drawn from the twelfth-century's favourite pre-Conquest historian, Bede. This might also suggest that when Gerald of Wales referred to 'the English books of Bede' in his *Descriptio Cambriae*, he meant the Chronicle.

Despite making these and other good points, the book has a number of significant weaknesses. Some of these problems might be ignored, for example the typographical errors like the renaming of Cecily Clark as 'Clarke' (p. 32 n. 44 and p. 146 n. 15), the sex change Martin Irvine has undergone to become 'Martine' (p. 133 n. 116) and the redating of Levison's *England and the Continent* from 1946 to 1966 (p. 112 n. 37). Perhaps equally venial is the occasional repetition of material, like the account of the fire of 1116 on p. 3 and p. 53, the occasions on which a spell-check programme has got at the Latin in the footnotes (e. g. 'singular' for 'singulare' in p. 157 n. 53), the difficulties with tense, and the frequent awkwardnesses of phraseology, such as when we read of 'contextual linguistic registers' on p. 72. More serious is the poor presentation of much of the material. For example, the section on p. 22 begins by misnumbering annal 963 as 973, then quotes it in such a way as to make it unclear who is the subject of the verb 'fand'. And, though Home goes on to indentify the text found as the *Relatio Heddae*, she does not explain what this is, and indeed in one subsequent reference (p. 32 n. 45), appears to accept this twelfth-century imposture as a genuine work of Hedda, a supposed early abbot of Peterborough, but who may in fact never even have held this role. Important work by other scholars is often acknowledged only at some distance from the point at which it would have been most relevant: thus Nicholas Brooks' recent arguments that some of the first continuation annals were composed not at Peterborough but at the royal court is not discussed in Chapter 2, where the continuations are analysed, but on p. 124 n. 85. More serious still is the *ad hoc* nature of much of the argumentation, for instance Home's conviction that the first continuation came to an end in 1131 because its author became 'incapacitated by death or disease' (p. 81), but the second continuation halted in 1154 because the demand at Peterborough was for a history that included details of the miracles associated with Peterborough's relics, and the chronicle form would have been 'hard-pressed' to facilitate this (p. 165), even though it had already adapted in the first quarter of the twelfth century to accommodate several documents as part of the interpolations, an accommodation that was, at that stage, 'only a matter of time' (p. 136). Nor does the book suggest Home is comfortable with the range of methods – linguistic, stylistic, palaeographical and, because the text incorporates translations of several charters, diplomatic – that this kind of study requires. The book's attempts at source criticism are equally unsatisfactory, as is apparent from its willingness to conclude from the fact that Abbot Henry of Saint Jean d'Angély's career trajectory is 'exactly parallel' in annal 1127 and Hugh Candidus's *Chronicle* that Hugh must have been translating from the Peterborough Chronicle (p. 153). He may have been, but to establish that he was requires something more than narrative similarity, since that may have been how his career actually progressed. To do so rigorously, sustained correspondences need to be identified between the wording of the texts, and, to dismiss the possibility that Hugh and the chronicler were independently using a (now lost) Latin source, one would ideally catch Hugh inadvertently echoing a vernacular idiom in his Latin.

Many of Home's claims cannot therefore be considered proven arguments and must remain merely propositions. Yet her essential approach to the E version, treating it as a product of twelfth-century Peterborough, is a good one, and deserves attention. As mentioned above, Chapters 1 and 2 attempt to show that the Peterborough additions were composed with a deep awareness of the style of the Chronicle and commitment to its maintenance. Key to evaluating his suggestion will be establishing what constitutes 'chronicle style', to borrow a term from P. J. C. Field's work on Malory, building on the important studies by Cecily Clark ('The Narrative Mode of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the Norman Conquest') and Jacqueline Stodnick ('Sentence to Story: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Formulary'), neither of which is cited by Home. It will also be necessary to acknowledge more overtly than Home, who seeks and finds unity in the Peterborough version, that the text is, as a consequence of its long gestation, messy. If any twelfth-century monk did read it from cover to cover, he would surely, on beginning the preface, have found the exclusion of the French (and perhaps the Danes) from the 'five peoples' who 'are on this island' totally anachronistic. Home's attention to possible differences in approach between the first and second continuations on the grounds that in the latter 'events are written according to topic rather than according to chronology' (p. 82) is also provocative, but the interpolation to annal 963 had arguably already done this, with its account of the deeds of the abbots down to 1042. Moreover, the received account of E's genesis, more or less taken for granted here, is due for thorough re-examination: was it the fire that prompted the borrowing of \*VE? Did it indeed come from Canterbury? Was the entirety of the first continuation composed in Peterborough, or does it incorporate annals composed elsewhere, as Brooks has suggested? Other questions also remain: what exactly is the relationship between the Peterborough Chronicle and the Waverley Annals? Who translated them into Latin? Was Hugh Candidus translating directly from the Peterborough Chronicle, or was he using a now-lost Latin source also available earlier in the century to the vernacular chroniclers? Those taking up the gauntlet will want to read this book, which for all its faults, is a welcome intervention that is sure to bring renewed attention to this surprisingly neglected text.

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