IV Sources and Explorations
How much did educated men in the Middle Ages actually know about ancient history? Medieval literature is full of allusions to events and personages of the past; are these merely stock examples, handed down from one generation to another, to point a moral and adorn a tale? Or do they reflect a genuine historical interest? The wide variations of the mediaeval mind in this as in its other manifestations make a categorical answer impossible.¹

During the reign of the British king Cassibellaunus, Julius Caesar marched into France from Rome, intending, Wace tells us in the *Roman de Brut*, “Pur conquerre vers occident / Les regions lointainnement” (“to conquer those regions far to the west”, ll. 3831-32).² Wace then inserts a