

The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220

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English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220 Newsletter

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Our Project in a Nutshell:

This Project, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), began on May 1, 2005. Funded for a period of five years, it is a collaborative enterprise between the Universities of Leeds and Leicester, directed by Dr Mary Swan and Professor Elaine Treharne.

The Project aims:

- to identify, analyse and evaluate all manuscripts containing English written in England between 1060 and 1220;
- to produce an analytical corpus of material in order to address fundamental questions about this crucial period in the evolution of English textual culture, from late Anglo-Saxon England, through the Norman Conquest and into the high Middle Ages;
- to investigate key questions including the status of written English relative to French and Latin; the identity of the producers and users of the texts; and the agenda informing the production of so many texts in English during this important period.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

The research background

Preliminary work demonstrates that there is an urgent need for a coordinated and sustained project to identify not only all the manuscripts compiled between 1060 and 1220, but also their place of origin, their contents, and the potential agenda behind their compilation. The collection of essays edited by Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne, *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (CUP, 2000), opened up new lines of enquiry about these manuscripts, which have never been considered as a group.

The English material that survives has been studied piecemeal, as a postscript to Old English or as a precursor to Middle English textual and linguistic culture, or for its idiosyncratic dialectal evidence.

In disciplinary terms, there is relatively

abundant work on social history; work on ecclesiastical history has tended to focus on Latin materials principally, and some Anglo-Norman material. Cultural, linguistic, and literary history all merit much more detailed examination. The traditional boundaries of periodisation and disciplinarity have limited scholarship to date in this important field. Interdisciplinary research into English manuscript production from 1060 to 1220 is thus exceptionally timely.

The project will examine cultural continuities and transformations; evaluate what is known and what is not known; and expand our understanding of the material. This is vital for the ongoing work of medievalists in general, and for literary and manuscript historians in particular.

What the Project will do

The Project will establish the corpus, demonstrate its validity within English literary culture, and illustrate its implications for a wholesale reinterpretation of textual production in the post-Conquest period. It will address fundamental research questions about vernacular textual culture and the strategic use of written English in a period that saw both continuity and innovation from pre- to post-Conquest England. The pressing need is for a wide-ranging study that investigates manuscripts and texts in English, situated within the wider cultural context, to examine the relationship between languages, language usage, and regional and national production of English.

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Our principal research questions:

1. The Corpus: What material was produced in English from 1060 to 1220, and how does this relate to texts in other languages copied in the period?

2. Place and Date: Where and when was this material produced? Issues to be

addressed here will include an identification of all known scriptoria; an identification of all scriptoria known to have produced texts in English; an assessment of how accurately we can date the relevant manuscripts; the ascertaining of who the scribes were (professional, amateur, monastic, other religious, secular); and an analysis of whether, how far, and for how long scribes and manuscripts might have travelled between scriptoria.

3. Agenda: Is there an identifiable programme of copying in English, or is it, in comparison to the copying of Latin and Anglo-Norman texts, a marginal activity?

Who approved of, and paid for, the copying of texts in English? What resources were given over to this activity?

4. Use and Audience: Who had access to manuscripts, and how accessible were manuscript repositories? Who, in general, are the different types of religious materials aimed at, and at whom, specifically, are English religious texts (the bulk of English texts that survive) directed?

Our aims

At the end of the Project, we will have the first ever full and accurate record of the texts, including documents, written in, or containing, English from c. 1060 to 1220. This will constitute a properly formed and exceptionally valuable scholarly resource for use by the Project and all interested researchers. The analytical work of the Project will amount to a mapping of the production of

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this material in terms of place, date, scribes and resources, and probable purpose. It will also situate English textual compilation in its full cultural context, bridging the traditional periodization of 'Old' and 'Middle' English and bringing to prominence a significant corpus of material whose importance for understanding the impact of the Norman Conquest and its aftermath has never before been investigated.

Where to find us

Our website, which has been launched in conjunction with this Newsletter, is our portal for the five years of the Project. We hope that it will become the first port of call for any scholars interested in what we are doing.

The website contains information about the Project, the team's contact addresses, and a preliminary list of manuscripts which sets out the parameters of our initial research.

As with any electronic resource, it has been conceived as a flexible tool for easy access to the Project's information and output. It will, of course, be a site subject to continuous development as the Project progresses. In the long run the portal will include working papers, symposia reports and Project updates. It will also contain the analytical corpus of manuscripts and a working bibliography. These will become available at different stages, each of which will be announced in due course.

It is envisaged that at the end of the first year an electronic sample of the catalogue will be available, which will be updated during the

remaining years of the Project, reaching completion in 2010.

While the portal marks our presence online, we are also in the process of organizing a programme of symposia and conference sessions. We should very much welcome hearing from scholars who work on the post-Conquest period in any discipline who might be willing to participate in these events in 2006-2010, or who might be interested in attending.

Our Newsletter will be another point of contact and we would like to involve

scholars, research students and any other interested parties, who may be working either centrally or tangentially on this research field. We are especially keen to involve scholars in all relevant disciplines, including Anglo-Saxon culture, Old English, Middle English, the Anglo-Latin, Anglo-Norman, material culture, history and theology of the period. Please let us know if you are interested in hearing more about the Project and would like to be on our mailing list.

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Mary's main research focus is textual transmission from the tenth to twelfth centuries. She is working on *Making Ælfric's Audience*, a book which will explore how the works of this late Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical writer seek to produce a particular kind of reading subject, and also on an edition of Lambeth Palace 487, one of the manuscripts to be studied by the Project. She has published on a range of topics related to textual culture, including concepts of authorship, homiletic prose, and traditions of Veronica, and on later medieval English women mystics. Mary is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Association of Anglo-Saxonists and of the Committee of the Association of Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland. She is particularly interested in fostering interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

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Elaine works on prose manuscripts from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, and is particularly interested in their physical make-up and use. She is working on a book entitled *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English 1020-1200*, in which she assesses the role of the native vernacular manuscript in relation to Norman hegemony. She has published widely in the field of medieval literature, most recently on *The Wife of Bath*, *Leofric of Exeter*, and *The Dicts of Cato* (separately!). Currently President of the English Association and Chair of Teachers of Old English in Britain and Ireland, Elaine is also committed to the promotion of medieval literature within Higher Education. She is an Editor for *RES*, *Speculum* and *Literature Compass*.

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Orietta's own research area is the codicology, palaeography, and language of late medieval manuscripts, in particular, paper manuscripts of the fifteenth century. She is the editor of the forthcoming *Digital Facsimile of Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.4.24 of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, a publication which combines her interests in electronic media and manuscript studies. She has wide-ranging experience on research projects, having worked with a number of AHRC-funded teams on manuscripts from the late medieval period into the Renaissance.