THE CAMBRIDGE

History of the Book in Britain

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VOLUME II
1100–1400

This period of the history of the book begins at a time when, as patrons of manuscript production, the religious houses of the various monastic orders predominated over other groups of society. From the mid twelfth century there is a shift towards a wider patronage having a greater diversity of uses and requirements for books. The establishment of schools and universities, the appearance of the orders of the mendicants, the pastoral interests of the parish clergy and increasing literacy and reading habits among the laity, all lead to demands for particular forms of text contents and formats of presentation and communication. Texts in Anglo-Norman, Middle English and Welsh increase to allow for readership and education of a wider audience. Devotional, instructional and secular literary compilations for private reading and study, both in Latin and the vernacular, responding to a diversity of demands from individual patrons, become a significant part of book production. The making of such books becomes as important as the supplying of liturgical books, patristic commentaries, scholastic texts of biblical exegesis, theology and philosophy, and books of canon and civil law, required for the Church, the libraries of religious houses and for the scholars of the universities.

As these changes take place in the market for books, and largely as a result of them, production becomes in part a town-based trade operated by laymen with increasing specialization in the tasks involved. Centres such as Oxford and London have documentation on the parchmenters, scribes, decorators and binders involved, and by the end of the period evidence for the working processes of a professionally organized trade is beginning to emerge.

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The history of the book offers a distinctive form of access to the ways in which human beings have sought to give meaning to their own and others' lives. Our knowledge of the past derives mainly from texts. Landscape, architecture, sculpture, painting and the decorative arts have their stories to tell and may themselves be construed as texts; but oral traditions, manuscripts, printed books, and those other forms of inscription and incision such as maps, music and graphic images, have a power to report even more directly on human experience and the events and thoughts which shaped it.

In principle, any history of the book should help to explain how these particular texts were created, why they took the form they did, their relations with other media, especially in the twentieth century, and what influence they had on the minds and actions of those who heard, read or viewed them. Its range, too – in time, place and the great diversity of the conditions of texts production, including reception – challenges any attempt to define its limits and give an account adequate to its complexity. It addresses, whether by period, country, genre or technology, widely disparate fields of enquiry, each of which demands and attracts its own forms of scholarship.

The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, planned in seven volumes, seeks to represent much of that variety, and to encourage new work, based on knowledge of the creation, material production, dissemination and reception of texts. Inevitably its emphases will differ from volume to volume, partly because the definitions of Britain vary significantly over the centuries, partly because of the varieties of evidence extant for each period, and partly because of the present uneven state of knowledge. Tentative in so many ways as the project necessarily is, it offers the first comprehensive account of the book in Britain over one and a half millennia.

JOHN BARNARD · DAVID MCKITTERICK · I. R. WILLISON
General Editors

BL, Royal ms. 18.C.XXVI, f.lv. The Wycliffite revision of Richard Rolle's English Psalter commentary of c. 1400, with the opening of Psalm 89 (Vulgate); this, the second volume of which Lambeth Palace Library, ms.34 is the first, is one of the more splendid manuscripts of a Lollard text. Note the threefold differentiation of Latin text, English translation and English commentary.

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Edited by

NIGEL MORGAN

and

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Preface

RODNEY M. THOMSON AND NIGEL MORGAN

The outer limits of the period covered by this book, notionally defined as c. 1100–1400, might be better expressed as c.1066–c.1425. It has a clearly demarcated beginning that can be ascribed to the Norman Conquest of England and its aftermath. On the one hand, the Conquest was an agent of dramatic change in the area of the manufacture and use of books, as in so many other areas; on the other hand, its full impact was only felt after c. 1100. The decades in between experienced a degree of destruction, dislocation and bewilderment before the cessation of hostilities and reorganization of religious life made positive advances possible. By the middle of the twelfth century the number of libraries, and the aggregate number of books in the country had increased dramatically.

The other end of the period is not so easy to justify: the date 1400 has no particular significance, save for the subsequent increase of manuscripts of vernacular texts, and it is only the introduction of printing, a half-century later, that distinguishes in a major way the world of books in the fifteenth century from what it had been in the fourteenth. And, as with the Conquest, the full impact of printing took several decades to manifest itself. A major shift *within* the period occurred over the quarter-century either side of c.1200, during which the dominance of the monastic book gradually, and almost completely, gave way to town-based commercial production for a variety of markets including the monasteries themselves, but also focussing on the universities, the mendicant orders and the secular church. Not only were books now produced in a different way and in different localities, but they differed, both physically, and in their content, from their twelfth-century predecessors.

In terms of geographical parameters, the volume covers England and Wales, but not Ireland or Scotland, the history of whose books are the subject of other publications[1]. Inevitably, the limited survival of books from Wales, and

1 For Scotland see Mann and Mapstone forthcoming; *A History of the Irish Book* is in preparation.

its relatively small medieval population, means that our book is mostly about England, though for most of the period an England closely linked with France. One of the effects of the Conquest was to bring England into closer touch with the Continent than had been the case for a long time. The king of England was also duke of Normandy; his barons had lands on both sides of the Channel; they and the new ecclesiastical hierarchy spoke French, which on the one hand alienated them from the native population and on the other put them in direct touch with a substantial portion of western Europe, at least as far south as the River Loire. In the second half of the twelfth century this process of internationalism received a substantial fillip, with the incorporation of England into an 'Angevin Empire', such that the king had more lands under his authority on the Continent than in the British Isles, and spent much time in them. Some of this newly acquired land was well south of the Loire, and a courtly culture developed that was deeply influenced by the vernacular literature and song of central and southern France. By this time, to be 'civilized' (or 'courtious') meant 'to be like the French', and to be educated meant having spent time in the schools of Paris.

At the same time the papacy was endeavouring to establish itself as a pan-European power, with the goal of welding the Western Church into a cohesive organization under its control, united (and therefore uniform) in doctrine, liturgy and law. This uniformity, achieved to an impressive degree though not completely, both required and produced uniformity of texts and reading. It is no surprise, then, to find that the relative uniformity of books in English monastic and cathedral libraries – the only libraries at the time – merely reflects a pan-European homogeneity. The same core texts, always in Latin, could be found in the libraries of religious communities, whether secular or monastic, of whatever order, in Italy or Germany, France or Scotland. Via the network of the Church as a whole, or via constituent networks such as the powerful one operated by the Cistercian Order, the writings of contemporary authors such as St Bernard of Clairvaux or Aelred of Rievaulx, Peter Lombard or Gratian, were put into circulation rapidly, and that circulation was in most cases all but universal. And as in the Carolingian renaissance, so it was seen as vital that sacred and authoritative texts, from the Bible down, should be as correct as possible, that is, at least grammatically. This correctness was necessary to underpin not just basic comprehension, but doctrinally correct and uniform understanding. Scribes may not often have recorded their names or had them recorded, but the fundamental importance of the enterprise on which they were engaged was lauded in liturgical codices illustrated with great symbolic images of the apostles and evangelists shown in the act of writing.

Geographically, Britain was at one margin of these developments, and it is tempting to see its geographic marginality as both the cause and reflection of cultural provinciality. In modern times both British and continental scholars have seen it that way, but it was not necessarily so, and certainly not in all fields. England's extraordinary precocity in the composition, reading and preservation of so much literature in Anglo-Norman French has been remarked on, and explained in terms of the tensions and interplay which operated within the unusual trilingual oral and written culture that developed there from the early twelfth century, and which would continue for almost the whole period covered by this volume.[2] The growth of local schools during the twelfth century may have lagged behind the growth, in student numbers and international prestige, of Paris and Bologna, but by the early thirteenth century England boasted two of the four *studia generalia* of Western Europe (Oxford and Cambridge), Oxford, at least, attracting students from overseas. From the 1140s on, England became an increasingly enthusiastic receptacle of one of the most ubiquitous products of a burgeoning Parisian academic booktrade: the glossed biblical book.[3] These books were either imports written and decorated in Paris, or made in England in an imitative style. In this respect, England can appear to have been part of an intellectual and cultural milieu of which the epicentre was the Ile de France. On the other hand, the decoration of English books during the twelfth century, especially of great Bibles, is both distinctive and second to nowhere else in Western Europe, either in quality or in the expense lavished upon it. This is harder to explain. And yet, it is also true that at least some of the artists responsible for this achievement worked on both sides of the Channel, and were part of an even larger world, encompassing the remote lands traversed by pilgrims and crusaders, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

During the thirteenth century this internationalism continued, enhanced by the increasing role of universities as the 'cutting edge' of European intellectual life, and by the rise and coming to England of the Franciscan and Dominican friars, themselves increasingly connected to the life and programme of the universities. This internationalism was, though, countered more and more by feelings of a prototype 'nationalism', directed especially against Henry III and his 'foreign' (that is Poitevin and Savoyard) councillors, which were expressed in the notion of the 'community of the realm'.[4] The production of books,

2 See ch. 2 below, and Trotter 2000, particularly the essays by Brand, Kristol and Jefferson, on 'multilingualism' in England and Wales.
3 De Hamel 1984.
4 For the concept of the 'community of the realm' see Morris 1943, pp. 59–73 and Powicke 1962, pp. 67, 131–7, 141–2.

then, increases quantitatively, as does the range of their contents, reflective of the translation, begun during the twelfth century, of scientific and logical texts from Greek and Arabic, and of a welter of comment on them. The script and (in the more expensive products) decoration of these books is recognizably English, even recognizably regional (for instance Oxford), but once again the intellectual endeavour involved is European. Even in the twelfth century, monasteries had sometimes employed paid 'professional' scribes and artists to make their books, and increasingly had recourse to town-based commercial products. By the next century, particularly in university towns, commercial, professional production was the norm. Books could be commissioned and made on the spot, or imported from such places as Paris, Toulouse and Bologna, either ready made, or with the decoration yet to be carried out according to the wealth and taste of the commissioner. Speed and cheapness were now important factors, given a student clientele. Slightly to one side of this commercial milieu are the generally (though not always) humble books of the friars, distinctive, the cheapest of the cheap, in small format for portability, often personally made and owned, and bearing the evidence of extensive travels between convents; sometimes with text characteristic of university collections, sometimes stuffed with sermons and helps to pastoral care.

By the time the friars came to England in the 1220s the numbers of books being made for the monasteries and the houses of the regular canons were declining. In the 150 years since the Conquest the vast majority of books that have survived were made in or for these institutions, out of all proportion to the small numbers of their membership in contrast to the other 'literate' members of society, the priests of the secular church, the clerks who staffed the government bureaucracy, university men, and the gradually increasing numbers of the laity who needed books. Of the twelfth-century institutional patrons, the libraries of the secular cathedrals continued to acquire some books, and also some of the larger Benedictine monasteries, such as Durham. Although a small quantity of books were still made 'in house', monks, regular canons and the friars (and their patrons) commissioned most of their books from secular scribes and artists. By the second quarter of the thirteenth century the number of books made for the religious orders constituted only a small portion of the total produced. Book production was no longer primarily for abbey, priory and convent libraries, as had been the case in the twelfth century.

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 called for improved instruction of the laity, and this led to an increase in books of a catechetical, devotional and pastoral nature. Many were in Latin for the use of the instructors, but some were written for lay people in the vernaculars of Anglo-Norman and Middle English,

or translated into those languages from the Latin. This pastoral reform was directed towards ensuring proper standards of worship in the parish churches and instruction of the parishioners in the essentials of the faith. Bishops issued statutes prescribing the books necessary for these churches, archdeacons on visitations checked the appropriateness of their texts, and the production of such service books became a dominant aspect of the activities of scribes and illuminators.

During the reign of Louis IX (St Louis), who was king from 1226 to 1270, the literary, artistic and intellectual culture of France, centred on Paris, achieved a prestige recognized throughout Europe. Certain books, such as Bibles and the texts required for the university curriculum in the arts, theology and law faculties, were imported in large numbers from France or Italy, and relatively few books of this sort were made in England. Books of canon and civil law came from Toulouse and Bologna, whereas those for the arts and theology faculties came mainly from Paris. In contrast, devotional books such as Psalters and Books of Hours were almost exclusively made at English centres for the 'home market' during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and very few were commissioned or purchased from France and Flanders. This situation is in marked contrast to the fifteenth century; by c.1425, large numbers of such books were being made for the English market, above all in Flanders, and to a lesser extent in Paris and Rouen.

French influence on English art and literary taste is most evident in the patronage of the higher ranks of the nobility and is at its strongest in the period from the accession of Henry III in 1215 until the early part of the reign of Edward III who became king in 1327. The move away from this taste for things French may in part be a result of the Hundred Years War, the almost continuous conflict between England and France which commenced in 1337. In that year Philip VI of France declared that Gascony was forfeit to France 'on account of the many excesses, rebellions and acts of disobedience committed against us and our royal majesty by the king of England, duke of Aquitaine'. For the subsequent hundred years and more the English struggled to maintain their presence in France, a presence which had begun with the acquisition of French domains by the king of England, as duke of Normandy at the Conquest, and as duke of Aquitaine from the time of Henry II. The royal family had remained almost exclusively French speaking until Edward III's time, and another effect of the long period of hostilities beginning in 1337 was an increasing shift away from the use of the French language towards that of the *lingua materna*. This was accompanied by a recognition of the characteristics of the English nation, different and independent from France. As an indicator of the rejection

of things French it is significant that in the visual arts from c.1340 the main external influences came from Flanders, Germany, Bohemia and Italy rather than from France. Romance literature, however, remained popular throughout the fourteenth century – private libraries contained many more imported French romances than the English versions of such literature. In this area, due to engrained reading habits, the texts read and books imported continued to come from France. This is particularly so in Richard II's reign when the political situation with France temporarily improved.

The texts of the books produced at home and acquired from Europe in fourteenth-century England differ from those of the thirteenth century. Although relatively few Bibles had been made in England in the thirteenth century compared with those imported from France, their production and import almost completely ceases in the fourteenth. The main use of Bibles was for scholars involved in theological study both in the religious houses and the universities – doubtless by 1300 the libraries of these places were well stocked with them. Only in the closing years of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries does the production of large luxury versions of the English Wycliffite Bible revive the demand for such books – in this case not primarily intended for scholars but for literate members of the laity. The importing of books of canon and civil law from Toulouse and Bologna, which had begun in the first half of the thirteenth century with the rise of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, continues through the first third of the fourteenth century but then ceases almost immediately. As with Bibles, presumably enough copies were available – also the essential new commentaries on the law texts were less frequent in the second half of the fourteenth century than in the 150 years from the late twelfth century until c. 1350, and consequently the demand for up-to-date texts declined. Devotional books, primarily for the laity (that is Psalters and Books of Hours), had been produced in increasing numbers since the early thirteenth century, and this situation continues until the end of the fourteenth century. By c.1400 Flemish illuminators were coming to work in London, and Books of Hours with texts of Sarum liturgical use began to be imported from Bruges.[5]

Although in the fourteenth century books in Middle English increase in numbers in comparison with those in Anglo-Norman, they are still a tiny minority compared with those in Latin. The number of extant manuscripts of the great poets of the last quarter of the fourteenth century, Chaucer and Gower, is negligible before 1400, and there is no reason to believe that there were ever

5 Admirably documented by Rogers 1982, 2002.

many of them until the early fifteenth century.[6] The history of their production regrettably lies outside the scope of this volume.[7]

Another important aspect of the history of the book in Britain begins as the period covered by this book closes: the rise of an organized 'book trade' in London, which can only be properly documented from the 1390s, and is discussed in the next volume of this series.[8] Certainly London, as well as Oxford, and to a much smaller extent, Cambridge, Norwich and York, are documented in chapter 8 as centres of book production in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but by 1400 London came to predominate overwhelmingly.

Although no comprehensive history of the book in Britain from the twelfth to the fourteenth century has been published before this volume, there has been fundamental groundwork in the past hundred years on the cataloguing and discussion of the palaeography, codicology and contents of the manuscript books of this period. Without the work of scholars such as M. R. James, R. A. B. Mynors, R. W. Hunt, N. R. Ker, A. G. Watson, A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, not many of the chapters of this book could have been written. We are much indebted to multi-volume publications such as the *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, and for the illuminated books the *Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*. Similarly, of lasting value are the recent indexes of texts and manuscripts of the vernacular literatures, R. J. Dean and M. B. M. Boulton's *Anglo-Norman Literature*, J. Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards' *New Index of Middle English Verse*, and the ongoing series of volumes of the *Index of Middle English Prose*. Since the nineteenth century the *Early English Text Society* has been publishing the English texts from manuscripts of the period of this book, and for the past sixty years the *Anglo-Norman Text Society* has made considerable progress in producing editions of the French texts, more numerous than those in English until the fourteenth century. In the past century a fairly high proportion of medieval Welsh texts have also been published. Systematic publication of the Latin texts began with the *Rolls Series* in the nineteenth century, and other series in the twentieth century have continued this tradition. For the liturgical texts in Latin the *Henry Bradshaw Society* has produced over a hundred volumes since it was founded in 1890. There is still a great deal to do in the publication

6 Even as this book goes to press, the debate over identification of pre-1400 texts has been informed by the identification of 'Chaucer's scribe' in Mooney 2006. A 1393 example of Chaucer's *Equatorie of the Planetis* has been identified, and also from the late fourteenth century the earliest manuscript of Gower's *Confessio amantis*: Roberts 2005, pp. 162–3, 174–5, pl. 38. Edwards and Pearsall 1989, pp. 258–9 comment 'Although we lack fourteenth-century copies of any of Chaucer's works, it seems that some must have circulated.'

7 On the early fifteenth-century manuscripts, see Doyle and Parkes 1978, Blake 1997, Emmerson 1999 and Pearsall 2004.

8 Christianson in *CHBB* III, pp. 128–47.

of carefully edited texts, for much in all these languages remains unpublished, and it is hoped that younger scholars will devote themselves to this essential but onerous task which perhaps receives less generous acknowledgment and gratitude than is its due. Detailed descriptions of the manuscripts of the period and editions of their texts are the basis of all that is said in this volume.

As we acknowledge those scholars who have preceded us in this enterprise, so we wish to express our gratitude to those who have assisted directly in the production of this book. Above all, we wish to thank all of the contributors for their efforts, and for the patience with which they have borne the long gestation of a large and complex volume. We would wish to add our own thanks to those expressed by the contributors to those scholars who assisted their labours and ours by furnishing information or criticism, and to the many libraries and institutions which permitted and facilitated the examination and reproduction of the precious manuscripts in their care. Finally, we acknowledge the support and scholarly acumen of the General Editors of the series, and the cheerful optimism and dedicated professionalism of the staff of Cambridge University Press. Unusually in our age, we find ourselves unable to thank any person or organization for special financial aid, for we required, sought, and thus consequently and deservedly, received none.