

REWRITING  
OLD ENGLISH IN THE  
TWELFTH CENTURY

Edited by  
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# 1

## Introduction

ELAINE M. TREHARNE AND MARY SWAN

The essays in this book all represent new work that reassesses and advances research on late Old English manuscript and textual studies. The title of the book itself is deliberately contentious in that composition in Old English is generally regarded as ending with the close of the Anglo-Saxon period in the eleventh century. The work included in this volume demonstrates the continuities of Old English literature and language as well as pointing up new emphases and changes of direction in the English writings included in twelfth-century manuscripts. The material that survives from the twelfth century is diverse and interesting: the majority of texts are copies of homiletic and hagiographic pieces written by Ælfric and anonymous authors.<sup>1</sup> There are also two copies of the Gospels, a copy of the *Rule of St Benedict*,<sup>2</sup> Laws,<sup>3</sup> apothegms and dialogue literature,<sup>4</sup> prognostications,<sup>5</sup> translations from Alfred's 'most

<sup>1</sup> Manuscripts containing homilies and hagiography are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 302, 303, and 367; London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A. ix, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv, Cotton Vespasian A. xxii; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 116 and Bodley 343; Cambridge University Library Ii. 1. 33; London, Lambeth Palace, Lambeth 487; and Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 14. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Twelfth-century copies of the gospels are London, British Library, Royal I. A. xiv and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 38. The *Rule of St Benedict* occurs in London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A. x.

<sup>3</sup> Laws occur in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 383; the *Textus Roffensis*; and London, British Library, Harley 55.

<sup>4</sup> *The Old English Dicts of Cato* exist in three post-Conquest manuscripts: Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 9. 17 which also contains Ælfric's *Grammar*; London, British Library, Cotton Julius A. ii and Cotton Vespasian D. xiv. The dialogue of *Solomon and Saturn* occurs in London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv (part 1); and *Adrian and Ritheus* is included in BL, Cotton Julius A. ii.

<sup>5</sup> Prognostications occur in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 115, fols. 148–55.

necessary' books,<sup>6</sup> and Psalters.<sup>7</sup> This list is by no means comprehensive, and does not include numerous individual items within twelfth-century manuscripts; neither are the very substantial numbers of twelfth-century glosses and corrections to earlier, pre-Conquest texts listed here. In total, then, there is a considerable amount of surviving material, much of which has yet to be the subject of sustained examination.

Work on twelfth-century manuscripts has, to date, varied widely in its approach and context. It has ranged from the use of these late manuscripts for the purposes of determining textual transmission, to the analysis of language in post-Conquest texts,<sup>8</sup> and to the examination of a set of manuscripts to throw light on a particular religious institution. The manuscripts compiled between *c.* 1100 and *c.* 1200 have, though, rarely been examined in their own right, as witnesses to the continuation of a tradition of written composition in the vernacular. This, then, is the first collection to bring together research by scholars which concentrates solely on English texts and manuscripts in the post-Conquest period. Each author draws on publications and dissertations written in previous decades, and as such, the overall bibliography itself is testimony to earlier scholars' work on twelfth-century manuscripts.

One cannot begin a survey of relevant work with anything other than N. R. Ker's magnificent *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*. The enormous debt that Anglo-Saxonists owe to Ker is everywhere apparent in this volume, and the importance of his work is shown in the constant reference to his volume which, some four decades after its publication, is almost always without gainsay. Ker included in his volume manuscripts that contained copies of earlier Old English texts that can be dated up to the end of the twelfth century. He accidentally omitted London, British Library, Cotton Claudius D. iii, and deliberately omitted Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 1; Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 14. 52; London, Lambeth Palace, Lambeth 487; and London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. xxii, on the basis of their 'tenuous' relationship with

<sup>6</sup> Augustine's *Soliloquies* occur in BL, Vitellius A. xv (part 1); and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* is included in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 180.

<sup>7</sup> *The Eadwine Psalter*, Cambridge, Trinity College R. 17. 1 and Salisbury Cathedral 150 both contain an Old English gloss.

<sup>8</sup> See Roy Liuzza's chapter in this collection for extensive referencing of language scholarship on twelfth-century texts.

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Old English.<sup>9</sup> Since the publication of Ker's *Catalogue*, these omitted manuscripts have formed the basis of very little sustained study by either Anglo-Saxonists or later medieval scholars, with the exception, perhaps, of Junius 1, the *Orrmulum*.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of the amount of research completed on individual manuscripts, some twelfth-century productions fare better than others. Manuscripts that contain works by Ælfric have been the subjects of detailed investigation by editors of the *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*. The work of Thorpe, Skeat, Pope, Godden, and Clemoes has been crucial to our understanding of the textual dissemination of Ælfric's works, and each manuscript has been scrutinised from this editorial perspective by these editors.<sup>11</sup> Other editorial work has focused not on the author of a series of texts, but on a specific manuscript. In the case of Warner, all the texts in London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv are edited, though the second discursive volume was never published; and the focus of Irvine's work is Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 and seven of the texts within that codex.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; reprinted with supplement, 1990), p. xix.

<sup>10</sup> For which see M. B. Parkes, 'On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the *Orrmulum*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1', in his *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991), pp. 187–200, and the references therein. Scholarship on the other manuscripts omitted from Ker's *Catalogue* includes M. P. Richards, 'Innovations in Ælfrician Homiletic Manuscripts at Rochester', *Annuaire Medievale* 19 (1979), 13–26, and 'MS Cotton Vespasian A. XXII: The Vespasian Homilies', *Manuscripta* 22 (1978), 97–103; and C. Sisam, 'The Scribal Tradition of the *Lambeth Homilies*', *RES* 2 (1961), 105–13. All of these manuscripts, and, indeed, most of the twelfth-century manuscripts containing English are listed in M. Laing's *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* (Woodbridge, 1993). Clearly, for this project, some of the scribes in these manuscripts are considered early Middle rather than Old English.

<sup>11</sup> *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: the First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici or Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. B. Thorpe, 2 vols. (London, 1844–6); *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS os 76, 82, 94, 114 (London 1881–1900; reprinted as two vols. 1966); *Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, ed. J. C. Pope, EETS os 259 and 260 (London, 1967–8); *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series, Text*, ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979); and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series, Text*, ed. P. Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (London, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> *Early English Homilies from the Twelfth Century MS., Vespasian D. xiv*, ed. R. D.-N. Warner, EETS os 152 (London, 1917; reprinted 1998); *Old English Homilies from Bodley 343*, ed. S. Irvine, EETS os 302 (London, 1993).

Other manuscripts from the post-Conquest period have been discussed during the course of important editorial and analytical work by Morris, Scragg, Liuzza, Clayton and Magennis, and Treharne among others,<sup>13</sup> and there is little doubt that the profile of the late manuscripts and their texts has been raised considerably in the last decade, in particular.

While editorial work on texts and manuscripts, including those written in English in the twelfth century, incidentally demonstrates the textual continuity between the Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest periods, it is also of great benefit to our understanding of the cultural and linguistic situation when research focuses specifically on the later material. Among the scholars who have discussed individual twelfth-century manuscripts are Handley, Richards, Schipper, and Torkar.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the methods behind the adaptation of the Old English texts contained in manuscripts of this period have come under scrutiny from Swan and Teresi, both of whose most recent work is published in this volume.<sup>15</sup> There are still, however, numerous, fundamental questions that have scarcely been addressed: among these would be where the manuscripts were produced, for what purposes Old English might have been copied in the twelfth century, and for what audience. Some of the essays in this volume speculate upon these

<sup>13</sup> *Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. R. Morris, EETS os 29, 34 (London, 1867–8; reprinted as one volume, 1988); *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, EETS os 300 (London, 1992); *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, ed. R. Liuzza, EETS os 304 (London, 1994); *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, ed. M. Clayton and H. Magennis, CSASE 9 (Cambridge, 1994); and *The Old English Life of St Nicholas with the Old English Life of St Giles*, ed. E. M. Treharne, Leeds Texts and Monographs 15 (Leeds, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> R. Handley, 'British Museum MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv', *N&Q* 21 (1974), 243–50; M. P. Richards, 'On the Date and Provenance of MS Cotton Vespasian D. xiv, ff. 4–169', *Manuscripta* 17 (1972), 31–5; W. Schipper, 'A Composite Old English Homiliary from Ely: Cambr. Univ. MS li. 1. 33', *TCBS* 8 (1983), 285–98; and R. Torkar, 'Cotton Vitellius A. xv (part 1) and the *Legend of St Thomas*', *ES* 4 (1986), 290–303.

<sup>15</sup> For Mary Swan's earlier work, see, for example, 'Memorialised Readings: Manuscript Evidence for Old English Homily Composition', in P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and Their Heritage* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 205–17; and for L. Teresi's work, see 'An electronic investigation of the language in MSS London, British Library, Cotton Faustina A. ix and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 302' in G. Owen-Crocker, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Texts and Contexts*, *BJRULM* 79.3 (1998), 133–48. K. Greenfield has examined the 'Changing Emphases in English Vernacular Homiletic Literature, 1060–1225', *JMH* 7 (1981), 283–97.



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issues, but a substantial amount of new work is still required before more than speculation can be advanced. A number of recent publications have shown by example what can be achieved by a thorough and detailed investigation of a single manuscript or a single scriptorium. In *The Eadwine Psalter*, the contributors helped to create an exemplary study of this important trilingual, mid-twelfth-century Canterbury product, and to set it within its cultural, intellectual, historical, and linguistic contexts.<sup>16</sup> The contributor on the palaeography of *The Eadwine Psalter*, Teresa Webber, also published a significant monograph on the scriptorium at Salisbury Cathedral in the half century following the Conquest.<sup>17</sup> Webber's work has demonstrated the value of a meticulous investigation within a relatively narrow chronology, and while the manuscripts produced at Salisbury appear to have been limited to Latin, the absence of English writings in their programme is of great importance for research into the production of the vernacular in this post-Conquest period. It would appear that the canons of Salisbury had no need of English texts; and this therefore begs the question, who did need English works? Other studies of specific scriptoria and their production of manuscripts containing English and Latin have also been completed by McIntyre, Waller and Richards in the last two decades.<sup>18</sup> This work has notable implications for our understanding of monastic centres within their regional and cultural contexts; indeed, it appears that it is on the monastic institutions rather than on the secular establishments that the attention of scholars working on post-Conquest English texts might usefully focus.

<sup>16</sup> M. Gibson, T. A. Heslop, R. W. Pfaff, eds., *The Eadwine Psalter: Text, Image, and Monastic Culture in Twelfth-Century Canterbury*, PMHRA 14 (Philadelphia, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> T. Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral, c. 1075–c.1125* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> E. McIntyre, 'Early Twelfth-Century Worcester Cathedral Priory, with Special Reference to the Manuscripts Written There' (unpublished DPhil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1978); K. M. Waller, 'The Library, Scriptorium and Community of Rochester Cathedral Priory c. 1080–1150' (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Liverpool University, 1981); K. M. Waller, 'Rochester Cathedral Library: an English Book Collection Based on Norman Models', in *Les Mutations socio-culturelles au tournant des xie–xiiè siècles, Colloque organisé par le CNRS, Abbaye Notre-Dame du Bec, Le Bec-Hellouin, 11–16 juillet 1982*, ed. R. Foreville, *Etudes Anselmiennes IV<sup>e</sup> session Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (Paris, 1984), pp. 237–50; M. P. Richards, *Texts and Their Traditions in the Medieval Library of Rochester Cathedral Priory*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Association* 78.3 (Philadelphia, 1988).

Examining the individual scriptoria such as those at Salisbury, or Rochester, or Worcester has proved very fruitful, but, at the moment, the books and dissertations that result from such research are relatively isolated studies that cannot yet be used to generalise about the copying of manuscripts throughout England in the century and a half after the Conquest. It is, however, possible to generalise rather more about the methods used in manuscript production, and the scripts employed by respective scribes, for it seems that particular forms of physical layout and writing were adopted relatively quickly in many scriptoria during this period. The script of Latin manuscripts produced in the twelfth century has attracted a substantial amount of research in the form of monographs, articles, and catalogue descriptions. The major work is N. R. Ker's *Manuscripts in the Century after the Conquest*, published in 1960, which, like his *Catalogue*, remains essential reading. Other scholars have written studies of individual scriptoria in the twelfth century, including those at Durham, Malmesbury and Christ Church, Canterbury,<sup>19</sup> or have compiled catalogues of manuscripts produced in St Albans, Lincoln, and Hereford that comprehensively deal with each institution's manuscript history.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the useful *Catalogues of Dated and Datable Manuscripts* in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, for example, provide excellent comparative material for the palaeographer and codicologist of this, and other, periods.<sup>21</sup> Much work remains to be done on Latin manuscripts, as it does also for codices and fragments written in English, and there are many opportunities for collaborative research on manuscripts in both

<sup>19</sup> R. A. B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1939); R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 1987); T. Webber, 'Script and Manuscript Production at Christ Church, Canterbury, after the Norman Conquest', in *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest: Churches, Saints and Scholars, 1066–1109*, ed. R. Eales and R. Sharpe (London, 1995), pp. 144–56. See also R. Gameson's essay, 'English Manuscript Art in the late Eleventh Century: Canterbury and its Context', in Eales and Sharpe, pp. 95–143.

<sup>20</sup> R. M. Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey, 1066–1235*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1982); R. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge, 1989); R. A. B. Mynors and R. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Hereford Cathedral Library*, with a Contribution on the Bindings by M. Gullick (Woodbridge, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> A. G. Watson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 435–1600 in Oxford Libraries*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1984); P. R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1988).

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these languages and on those written in Anglo-Norman. Recent excellent publications have facilitated this task,<sup>22</sup> and new initiatives such as The Research Group into Post-Conquest Old English Manuscripts<sup>23</sup> ought to enable collaborative ventures to press ahead.

The chapters in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* build on this earlier and recent scholarship described above, but also take the study of the production of Old English in the twelfth century in new directions. The collection aims to redefine the limits of Old English scholarship by studying some of the latest reworkings of texts composed earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period in order to begin the work of assembling a comprehensive overview of literary activity in English in the twelfth century.

The book as a whole covers a wide range of texts including homilies, saints' lives and biblical material. Underlying every essay in the collection is a belief in the importance of working from manuscript texts to establish the nature of the material copied and reworked in the twelfth century by comparing it with earlier versions. Late copies of Old English material have all too often been marginalised in editions and discussions of texts, or considered merely as corrupt versions of 'pure' originals. The prioritisation of notions of an 'original' text and its author is the product of a twentieth-century print-culture mentality, and does not reflect the fluidity of a manuscript culture where texts are made and remade as they are read or heard and rewritten. The contributors to *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* all show that late copies of Old English texts have their own identities as the products of a particular set of political, ecclesiastical and literary circumstances, and that their study reveals much about the attitude of twelfth-century composers and compilers towards earlier authors and traditions. Such an approach constitutes a new kind of source study, which takes account not only of the direct copying by a scribe of written material from available books, but also of the ways in which more indirect influence of textual traditions can play across later compilations and compositions. This study of influences on twelfth-century production of Old English is, fundamentally, an examination of cultural identity and transmission.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues has already published a number of excellent volumes including *The English Benedictine Libraries: the Shorter Catalogues*, ed. R. Sharpe, J. P. Carley, R. M. Thomson, and A. G. Watson (London, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> See the *Old English Newsletter*, 31.3 (Spring, 1998), 11, for details.

The chapters in the book work from twelfth-century manuscripts in a variety of ways. As is discussed in detail below, some of the essays investigate the palaeographical and thematic character of an individual manuscript or group of manuscripts; some use linguistic analysis as a means of charting changes in scribal practice and response to earlier material; others take as their focus the work of a known author and its twelfth-century re-use. Such a variety of approaches serves to open up the field of twelfth-century Old English studies, to heighten awareness of the character of twelfth-century literary activity in English, and to highlight the need to redefine our attitude to late recopying and its implications for the development of literary activity across time. These detailed studies of the relationship of twelfth-century scribes to earlier Old English texts offer rare glimpses of post-Conquest Old English readers and writers at work.

The first chapter, 'The production and script of manuscripts containing English religious texts in the first half of the twelfth century', by Elaine Treharne, is a new palaeographical survey of Old English texts copied between 1100 and c.1160. It opens up to question the nature of textual production and scribal activity and their relationship to the earlier period, and lays the ground for the rest of the collection by providing assessment and comparison of manuscript material treated in subsequent essays in the collection. The next chapter, 'The compilation and use of manuscripts containing Old English in the twelfth century', by Susan Irvine, continues the focus on manuscript material using a range of examples. Irvine debates the function of late homiletic manuscripts, their sources and influences, compilation, and evidence for antiquarianism in the twelfth century. The pair of chapters which follows examines the transmission of the work of two known authors in the twelfth century through its manuscript survival. Mary Swan's chapter, 'Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* in the twelfth century', defines attitudes to one author and two groups of texts as they are manifested not simply in the recopying, but rather in the recontextualising of Ælfric's work. The complex transmission process revealed sheds light on attitudes to textuality and authorship in the twelfth century and on the relationship of the Ælfrician corpus to the anonymous homiletic traditions; it raises questions about the form in which twelfth-century compilers had access to Ælfric's work, and about the use of memory as a composition resource. The next chapter, 'Wulfstan and the twelfth century', by Jonathan Wilcox, contrasts the abundant evidence for the transmission of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* in the twelfth

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century with the two surviving examples from the period of manuscripts containing Wulfstan's Old English homilies. The great difference in the reception and re-use of Wulfstan shows twelfth-century compilers' sensitivity to the nature and relevance of the material available to them, and this chapter continues the collection's analysis of composition methods in the twelfth century. Loredana Teresi's chapter, 'Mnemonic transmission of Old English texts in the post-Conquest period', picks up the theme of memory as a tool of composition explored with reference to Ælfric and applies it to a study of the sources of, and influences on, a single anonymous composite homily, and shows the ways in which the text is a witness to a popular twelfth-century repertoire of biblical knowledge. The following pair of chapters takes one large group of material, saints' lives, and examines its dissemination and re-use in the twelfth century. In 'Old English prose saints' lives in the twelfth century: the evidence of the extant manuscripts', Joana Proud highlights the paucity of evidence for any vernacular composition of hagiography, or recomposition using earlier Old English hagiographical texts, in twelfth-century England. Issues considered include the function of hagiography and of book production in general in this period, the range of languages in use, shifting popularity of Anglo-Saxon saints' cults and the characteristics of twelfth-century manuscripts containing saints' lives in Old English. Susan Rosser, in 'Old English prose saints' lives in the twelfth century: *The Life of Martin* in Bodley 343', makes a detailed analysis of the rewriting of one of Ælfric's saints' lives. *The Life of Martin* in Bodley 343 is the only Ælfrician life preserved in a twelfth-century manuscript to show major alterations. These are examined as evidence for the motivation of the adapter and for what they may reveal of twelfth-century attitudes to Old English saints' lives. The theme of the Bible in the twelfth century is picked up in the next chapter, 'Scribal habit: the evidence of the Old English Gospels', by Roy Liuzza, which traces the direct textual transmission of the two surviving twelfth-century copies of the Old English version of the Gospels. The highly unusual circumstance of the survival of an identifiable chain of copies of a text allows a detailed analysis of the decisions taken by the scribes of the twelfth-century copies and of the ways in which they understood and interpreted the material they transmitted. The chapter which follows, 'The Old English gloss of the *Eadwine Psalter*', by Phillip Pulsiano, provides a detailed study of the Old English layer of a particular, multilingual manuscript text. This

complex witness to twelfth-century scribal practices is examined for its relationship to other surviving glosses and for its own layers of composition and correction. The final chapter in the collection, 'The Tremulous Worcester Hand and Gregory's *Pastoral Care*', by Wendy Collier, takes as its focus one part of the extensive programme of manuscript annotation carried out by a scribe active at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century. The work of this scribe in annotating one Latin and two Old English versions of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* is examined for the ways in which it sheds light on the biblical and Latin influences on the scribe and on the wider questions of the availability of Old English texts at the very end of the period, and of the attitude of copyists to Old English when this was no longer the primary language of intellectual debate.

From the conclusions drawn by the chapters in the collection, it is clear that the latter stages of the production of Old English are characterised by their willingness to make creative re-use of earlier English and Latin texts. Issues currently under scrutiny with regard to the earlier Anglo-Saxon period are here examined at the very end of the period with the aim of extending the chronological and contextual parameters of scholarly debate on Old English. These issues include the nature of textual transmission and recomposition and its relationship to late Old English reader-response; attitudes to earlier material as evidenced in its recopying and adaptation; and the character of surviving manuscripts and what these tell us about twelfth-century scribes and scriptoria, reading and readers.

It is hoped that the work in this volume will serve to increase the interest in post-Conquest English manuscripts and writings, and facilitate future research. There is a great deal of work to be done in order to gain a more complete understanding of the methods of manuscript compilation, the use of exemplars, the purpose of the copying of English texts, and the identity of the intended audiences. Such research will prove of great importance in providing a clearer picture of twelfth-century lay and religious society; in ascertaining the role of the vernacular in England in the twelfth century; and in illustrating the cultural and literary implications of the thirty or so manuscripts that survive.