



A HISTORY OF OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

SECOND EDITION

R. D. FULK AND
CHRISTOPHER M. CAIN

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A History of Old English Literature

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R. D. Fulk
and
Christopher M. Cain

with a chapter on saints' legends by
Rachel S. Anderson



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Preface to the First Edition

(2003)

With this study we hope to serve the needs of those students and teachers who feel particularly committed to the changes that have characterized our field in recent years. The renewed emphasis on historicism and the decline of formalist aestheticism in medieval studies have rendered it desirable to have a literary history that attends more singularly to the material and social contexts and uses of Old English texts. Although the need is greater than this volume can really satisfy, we hope that the present study will nonetheless prove useful to those who, like us, see literature's relation to history and culture as our field's area of chief pedagogical interest, and the respect in which it has most to offer literary studies at large.

The Anglo-Latin context is of particular concern. Michael Lapidge has put the matter succinctly: "We should always remember that works in Latin and the vernacular were copied together in Anglo-Saxon scriptoria, and were arguably composed together in Anglo-Saxon schools. What is needed, therefore, is an integrated literary history which treats Latin and vernacular production together as two facets of the one culture, not as isolated phenomena" (1991: 951–2 n. 1). It may be an obstacle to the compilation of such a history that, as he says, "No adequate history of Anglo-Latin literature of the later period has yet been written," but the insights furnished by his own prodigious contributions to Anglo-Latin studies take us close to the goal. Still, it would not have been possible to produce so thoroughly an integrative study in a volume of this size. Although we have attempted throughout to sketch briefly the Latin background against which Old English texts ought to be viewed, we have in no sense aimed for a balanced treatment of Latin and English texts, but we have attended to the former only to the extent that they contribute to our understanding of the

latter. Also, because of length limitations, we have not been able to treat every known text in Old English; yet in our effort to cover a wider range of material than has been usual in Old English literary histories we have been obliged to treat fairly briefly some of the texts, particularly poetic ones, that have, primarily on aesthetic grounds, historically received a disproportional share of critical attention.

Although we have tried to emulate one respect in which prior histories have been most useful – in their bibliographical guidance – we have laid special emphasis on scholarly studies of the past fifteen years, because students may generally find references to earlier works in these and in prior histories. Naturally, many studies of real value are not cited here, since our bibliographical coverage has been highly selective.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the debt of thanks we have incurred in the compilation of this volume. Alfred David very generously read the manuscript and offered countless invaluable suggestions. Michael Lapidge provided timely copies of material in press, and Stefan Jurasinski furnished expert advice on legal literature. The staff of the Indiana University Libraries came to our rescue continually. Leanda Shrimpton oversaw the production of the illustrations, and Anna Oxbury's copyediting improved the manuscript immensely. We are especially indebted to Andrew McNeillie, who conceived this project and guided it from start to finish with care and understanding. To all of these generous souls we wish to express our gratitude.

*R.D.F., C.M.C.
Bloomington*

Preface to the Second Edition

Given the great volume of scholarship on Anglo-Saxon literature that has appeared in the past decade, it seemed advisable to attempt to keep this history of Old English literature current. Two trends in the field have prompted some particular changes: the ever-increasing centrality of manuscript studies to the study of the literature has persuaded us to include a chapter on Anglo-Saxon books and the scholarship on them, and the continued progress of Anglo-Saxonists in the task of deconstructing the distinction between so-called literary and non-literary texts has made it advisable to add a chapter devoted exclusively to writing in the literal and figurative margins. In addition, legal texts, on the one hand, and scientific and scholastic texts, on the other, are now given separate, expanded chapters.

Janet Moth copyedited the text with consummate skill, correcting numerous errors and making many decided improvements. Ben Thatcher oversaw the production of the images, and Bridget Jennings, Senior Editorial Assistant, managed the project expertly from first to last. To these individuals we owe a debt of gratitude, and to Emma Bennett, Publisher, who saw the wisdom of producing a revised text.

*R.D.F., C.M.C.
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Abbreviations

The titles of journals and series are abbreviated as follows:

<i>ANQ</i>	<i>American Notes & Queries</i>
<i>Archiv</i>	<i>Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASMMF	Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile (see Pulsiano, Doane, and Hussey 1994—)
<i>ASPR</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</i> (see Krapp and Dobbie 1931–53)
BL	British Library
CCCC	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
<i>E&S</i>	<i>Essays and Studies</i>
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ELN</i>	<i>English Language Notes</i>
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>English Studies</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>LS</i>	<i>Ælfric, Lives of Saints</i>
<i>LSE</i>	<i>Leeds Studies in English</i>
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>

<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>NM</i>	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>OEN</i>	<i>Old English Newsletter</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> (see Migne 1879–1974)
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Studia Neophilologica</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
<i>ZfdA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur</i>

Throughout this book, the abbreviation “DOE” is used preceding the short titles used for OE texts in the database of the *Dictionary of Old English* (Cameron, Amos, and Healey 2012). For example, “*The Battle of Brunanburh* (DOE: Brun)” indicates that “Brun” is the *Dictionary of Old English* short title for *The Battle of Brunanburh*. In addition, the following abbreviations are used:

A-S	Anglo-Saxon
OE	Old English



Some places mentioned in the text



Introduction

Anglo-Saxon England and Its Literature: A Social History

I Cultural Difference and Cultural Change

One of the aims of literary studies in recent years has been to defamiliarize the most natural-seeming aspects of our own culture, to promote awareness of how our way of life is neither natural nor inevitable. The importance of cultural studies in current literary scholarship thus arises in part from the role that an awareness of alterity has come to play, since nothing illuminates the contingencies of contemporary attitudes and ideas as much as the study of cultural difference. Within the field of English, then, Old English studies afford unique opportunities, since no literature in English is as culturally remote as that of the Anglo-Saxons, and the differences expose plainly some of the otherwise invisible assumptions on which modernity, as we perceive it, is based. To cite just one example, the very act of reading a book, such as this one, differs fundamentally from the early medieval experience, and in a variety of ways. Even when reading was a private activity, readers commonly pointed to the words and spoke them aloud;¹ but more often reading was a communal activity in which many “readers” never actually saw the page. In a modern classroom the text is

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