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Essays in Honour of Oliver Pickering

Edited by

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Editorial Introduction

I

Oliver Pickering obtained his B.A. in English from the University of Bristol in 1968 and a B.Phil. in Medieval Studies from the University of York in 1969; thereafter he studied at University College London for his Ph.D. in Medieval English, which was awarded by the University of London in 1973. During the writing-up of his doctoral thesis in 1972–73, he was a Graduate Trainee in the Library of King's College, London, showing an early ability to combine both library work and academic research, an area in which he has always excelled in his working life. In 1973–74 he studied for a Diploma in Library and Information Studies at University College London, where he had to leave one of his examinations prematurely so as to attend his interview at the University of Leeds in 1974. This clearly was a retrospectively wise decision on his part and very opportune for the University of Leeds as he stayed on the Library staff until July 2009, when he took early retirement, having successively become Assistant Librarian (1974–96), Senior Assistant Librarian (1996–99), and Deputy Head of Special Collections (1999–2009).

Oliver's varied career in Leeds University Library included spells working in the cataloguing and acquisitions departments (1974–80); as supervisor of reader services and the enquiries desk in the Brotherton Library (1980–86); as co-ordinator of arts and humanities book provision in the Student Library (1986–92); and as a subject librarian (1974–80, 1992–96). He worked half-time with rare books and manuscripts from 1986, and full-time from 1996, and from 1999 until his retirement he had what was perhaps his most fulfilling, albeit his most onerous, time in the Library in his role as Deputy Head of Special Collections (with Chris Sheppard as the excellent Head of Special Collections). Here Oliver had operational responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Special Collections department with its staff of twelve; in a major research library like the Brotherton this called for a manifold set of skills which Oliver clearly had in abundance. Not only did he undertake the routine chairing of the departmental staff meetings and act as departmental representative on the Library management team and on committees concerned with space management, digitization, and web developments, but he was also instrumental in bringing forward many new initiatives such as the manuscript cataloguing project to create computerised collection-level records for all manuscripts and archives in the Brotherton Collection and the other special collections. He had general oversight of other IT developments within Special Collections, with special responsibility for database maintenance, and particular responsibility for Brotherton Collection Manuscript Verse (BCMSV), a public, web-based

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database providing detailed information about the Brotherton Collection's 6,000 plus items of manuscript English verse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With colleagues from the School of English and the Flexible Learning Development Unit, he was the creator of interactive web-based palaeography self-tutorial packages, based on medieval and seventeenth-century manuscripts in Special Collections. In addition, he was project manager for several digitization projects, especially that of some 625 images from the illuminated medieval manuscripts, now freely available on the web, which in turn led to his being the external representative on the committee established by the John Rylands University Library of Manchester to oversee the digitization of their medieval manuscripts. And all of this was alongside having special responsibility for medieval manuscripts, the extensive Quaker archives, and the deposited Ripon Cathedral Library.

His work in the Library also involved him in various successful external research bids both in his own right and in conjunction with other colleagues. For instance, in 1999, with Hull University Library as the major partner, a grant was received under the Research Support Libraries Programme to establish the Yorkshire Quaker Heritage project; in 2001 and 2003 JISC awarded funding to enable the Special Collections department in Leeds to contribute 2,570 manuscript catalogue records to the Higher Education Archives Hub; in 2001, jointly with the School of English (with Professor Clive Upton of the School as lead applicant), a major grant was awarded under the AHRB's Resource Enhancement programme to transform the archives of the University's former Institute of Dialect and Folk-Life Studies into a web-based electronic resource; and in 2005, jointly with the School of English (with Professor Ed Larrissy of the School as lead applicant), a major grant was awarded by the AHRC under the same scheme to transform the archives of Leeds poets, 1950–80 (held in the Special Collections department) into a web-based electronic resource.

Given the responsibilities above, most people would have been too overwhelmed to do any more, but in his time at Leeds Oliver had not just one career but two. He always managed to combine his work as an academic librarian in a very busy university library with a wider academic life that involved a great deal of varied teaching, and, most impressively of all, much research. Generations of grateful students at Leeds have benefited from his expertise not just as a librarian but also as a teacher, and various members of staff have known that they could always call upon him for help and advice. From 1987–2006 he was Associate Lecturer in the School of English, and from 2006–09 Senior Associate Fellow in Medieval English, although his association with the School of English began almost as soon as he arrived at the University.

Like all his other activities, Oliver's teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level has been wide ranging, and comprised tutorials on Old and Middle English language and literature in the School of English (1975–87) and lecture-demonstrations on the computerised *Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue* to a variety of School of English courses on computers, bibliography, and literary study, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level (1983–92). From 1993 to 2009 he was one of the main tutors on the Research Methods and Bibliography module of the M.A. in Medieval Studies, contributing classes on the use of electronic resources, codicology, and editing, and assisting with planning and assessment. He was tutor on the Research Methods module of the School of English's M.A. in Renaissance English, providing classes on the Library's seventeenth-century manuscript miscellanies and teaching the use of the online Palaeography Tutorial (2000–09), and was module coordinator and principal tutor for the Palaeography module of the M.A. in Medieval Studies, including teaching the use of the online Palaeography Tutorial (2007–09). In addition, between 1997

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and 2005 he supervised five M.A. research projects in the Centre (now the Institute) for Medieval Studies, and co-supervised a Ph.D. student in the School of English from 1998 to 2002.

From his arrival in Leeds Oliver was a stalwart and enthusiastic member of the University's Medieval Group and served variously as treasurer, secretary, and president of its regular meetings. On a local level too he served as president of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society from 1998 to 2000. In amongst all this serious scholarly work, he has enjoyed the collegiality of university life. For instance, from 1975 to 1984, he was director and 'script editor' of the Brotherton Players, an acting group set up in Leeds University Library to put on plays from the York, Wakefield (twice), and Chester cycles of mystery plays on the occasion of the production of those cycles variously in Leeds, Wakefield, and Chester. Many Leeds colleagues still vividly recall the sight of one of Oliver's Library colleagues perched precariously 'in some high place' as he played God in the very *Noah* performance of 1983 referred to by Peter Meredith in the opening of his essay below.

On a national and international level too Oliver has played his part. At various points he has acted as external examiner at doctoral level at the universities of Birmingham, Bristol, London, Oxford, and Southampton, as well as being the internal examiner for two doctoral candidates at Leeds. From 1999–2008 he was editor of the prestigious journal, *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, and an ex-officio member of the Society's Council and Publications Committee. He now serves on the Council of the Early English Text Society, the Advisory Board of Middle English Texts, and on the Advisory Committee of the Index of Middle English Prose. In 2001 he was elected a Fellow of the English Association.

Taking into account just the last fifteen years or so, Oliver has given major papers at the International Conference on Middle English in Helsinki (1997) and in Dublin (1999), at the Leeds International Medieval Congress (2000, 2006, 2008), at the Early Book Society in Durham (2003) and Salford (2007), and further immediate papers are planned, for example, in London (2011). This is quite apart from a plethora of more informal papers in all sorts of contexts such as at a conference in London (2002) on 'The Future of Manuscript Studies in a Switched-on World'; a talk in Leeds on the Library's medieval manuscripts, to mark World Book Day (2006); a paper at an English Subject Centre day conference, 'Teaching Medieval and Early Modern Manuscripts', in Bangor (2008); and a paper on Yorkshire Quaker archives/history (focusing particularly on his own seventeenth-century Leeds Quaker ancestors, the Grimshaws) for the centenary of the Swarthmore Education Centre in Leeds (2009), as well as numerous talks on Ripon Cathedral Library.

As shown by calls for him to act as external examiner and the obvious respect in which he is held, Oliver has become a valued member of the wider academic world. He not only made a significant and very worthwhile contribution to the development of the research potential of Special Collections but, alongside his day job in the Library, he has published widely. It would seem that the scholarly community has much reason to thank Geoffrey Needham, Oliver's Ph.D. supervisor, who, with great prescience and an uncanny insight into how academia was to develop, advised him that he would get far more research done as a librarian than if he were to go into a straightforward university teaching job. Indeed, the amount that he has produced and the sheer range of his activities, as evident from the publications list at the end of the volume, are testimony not only to great industry but to a staggering ability to work in a wide variety of literary areas both within and without the medieval period. There can be few other practising English literature specialists or librarians who will have published in the *Transactions*

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of the *Newcomen Society for the Study of the History of Engineering and Technology* or have written equally well on everything from medieval art to Jonathan Swift.

Throughout his career, Oliver has been a scholar of the Middle Ages, although clearly not exclusively so, and he would resist being labelled a medievalist. Yet this is the field in which he has established a considerable international reputation for his work in the areas of Middle English literature, Middle English texts, and manuscript studies. Like many scholars of his generation and also as a result of the nature of his work in the Brotherton Library within Special Collections, Oliver is sensitive to the value and importance of manuscripts not only as repositories of texts but also as sites of cultural significance, and this is reflected in his publications. Manuscripts reveal much about a culture, not least of which is what texts were widely read and had a broad or narrow appeal. Medieval taste may not always match modern taste in literature, but Oliver was drawn to research on what was at the beginning of his career an almost unexplored field, namely the temporale poems of *The South English Legendary*, which were drawn from the legendary and biblical history of the life of Christ. Texts like these may have been ignored by modern scholars, but their numerous surviving manuscripts and the complexities of the textual histories argued that they were culturally important and therefore had a claim on our attention. Thus, Oliver's first book-length publication was his edition of *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*. This appeared in 1975 and was the first volume in the series *Middle English Texts* published by Universitätsverlag Winter (Heidelberg). He constantly revisited and continues to revisit *The South English Legendary*, and in 1984 produced a second book-length study, his edition of *The South English Ministry and Passion*, Middle English Texts volume 16. It is not only the desire to make sense of and make available previously unpublished texts that drives Oliver's research, but he has a keen interest in the ways in which texts and manuscripts reflect the distinctive and the personal. Thus, within the network of *The South English Legendary*, he also detected personalities, medieval scribes, and revisers with distinctive, outspoken voices, and their presence became the subject of a number of articles. The title that Oliver devised for the collection of essays that he edited for Boydell and Brewer in 1997, *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry*, says much about one kind of scholarship that he has always been eager to develop.

A project to gather materials for an index of Middle English prose to stand alongside the long established *Index of Middle English Verse* got underway in the mid-1970s, and attracted Oliver's interest from the beginning. He was stalwart in supporting this enterprise, helping to formulate policies, serving on the editorial board, and contributing two collaborative volumes, one with Susan Powell on the manuscripts held by libraries and archives in Yorkshire (1989) and the other with Veronica O'Mara on the manuscripts of Lambeth Palace and the former Sion College Library (1999). Again, we see Oliver championing the cause of manuscripts and texts important to an understanding and appreciation of medieval culture.

One of Oliver's major scholarly achievements is the series *Middle English Texts* which in effect he co-founded with Manfred Görlach and which grew out of their mutual interest in *The South English Legendary*. As has been pointed out already, Oliver's first book was the first volume in the series, and this demonstrated his faith in the enterprise which, with Manfred Görlach, he nurtured and developed for almost thirty years, and oversaw more than thirty volumes. In his work for *Middle English Texts* he was responsible for seeing through to publication the editing work of many established scholars, but the series also gave opportunities for scholars just beginning their careers to try their hands at textual criticism and the demands of that most exacting area of scholarship. It was because Oliver is such a precise

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scholar and at the same time a supportive editor that *Middle English Texts* went from strength to strength — at last count the series has published forty-three volumes — and continues to flourish under the second generation of general editors, with Oliver now a member of the Advisory Board.

Since retirement Oliver has been engaged on various Middle English projects focusing on the ‘Outspoken Poet’ of *The South English Legendary*, as well as an investigation of the manuscripts of a distant ancestor, Josiah Collier, who preserved the religious writings of the leader of the seventeenth-century Grindletonian movement, Roger Brekeley, and a study of ‘The Quakers Tea Table Overturned’, a long eighteenth-century moral satire preserved in manuscript in Leeds University Library. His future work will include a study and edition of the poems and songs of the organist of Hereford Cathedral, Henry Hall (c. 1656–1707), a continuation of the work for which he was awarded an AHRB Research Exchange Award which he took up in 2001. He maintains his links with the University of Leeds as an appointed Custodian of the Yorkshire Quaker archives held in Leeds University Library and as an Honorary Fellow in the School of English.

II

As those long associated with the University of Leeds will know, it is often the custom to use retirement as the occasion on which to present a festschrift to a colleague who has made a major impact on scholarship in his or her area both at a national and international level. In the present case, this was always the plan. However, as people who have known him over the years can testify, unlike most academics, Oliver rarely waits for the deadline to approach but always has his material prepared well in advance. So it proved with retirement, which was brought forward by some three years, leading inevitably to a belated festschrift. Nevertheless, our contributors responded with alacrity to the invitation to participate and have offered papers that are reflections of different aspects of Oliver’s career and his scholarly and critical interests.

Fundamental to Oliver’s work has been an interest in bringing to the attention of the scholarly community unrepresented and underrepresented texts. In her essay Margaret Connolly makes available a short devotional text that she discovered in the course of her research for the Handlist that she prepared of the manuscripts in Cambridge University Library for the *Index of Middle English Prose*. Oliver’s own research for the *Index of Middle English Prose* provoked an interest in chronicles, and this is reflected in Wendy R. Childs’s essay, in which she argues for the importance of investigating more fully the chronicles of the reign of Edward II for what they have to reveal about the character of Edward and the pressure under which he operated.

One of Oliver’s major interests is in the art and style of medieval poetry, and in this collection Geert De Wilde contributes a paper that explores questions of the origin and literary contexts for the stanza forms in the Vernon-Simeon lyrics. William Marx’s essay is also concerned with stanzaic verse, and the tensions between form and meaning that can arise through the processes of revision. Rory McTurk’s paper shows a similar interest in the effects of the arts of poetry, and delves into how metre is used to vary meaning in the case of the figure of Cresseid in Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*. Anne B. Thompson uses Oliver’s identification of the ‘Outspoken Poet’ of *The South English Legendary* as a counterpoint for an exploration of features of style in the life of St Mary Magdalene. Julia Boffey’s essay examines a range of evidence for the meaning and use of doggerel and what, in some contexts,

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it suggests about culturally understood standards of diction, form, and style in Middle English verse. Although not concerned with poetry as such, Catherine Batt's essay on the treatment of the figure of 'Sloth' in Henry, Duke of Lancaster's *Le Livre de seyntz medicines / The Book of Holy Medicines* is concerned with ways in which psychological allegory stretches language and generates complex levels of meaning in ways that are most often associated in the Middle Ages with poetry such as the *Roman de la Rose* or Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*.

In line with Oliver's interests in didactic literature, sermon studies have a prominent place in this collection. Joyce Hill's paper is an analysis of two late eleventh-century manuscripts in Durham Cathedral Library containing recensions of the homiliary of Paul the Deacon, the relation between them, and the light that they shed on sources for Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*. Mary Swan takes up the subject of revision, here post-Conquest rewriting of Anglo-Saxon homilies and what these have to reveal about reading, preaching, transmission, and reception in the changed political and cultural climate of England. Susan Powell also explores revisions, here in John Mirk's *Festial*, specifically the nature and extent of the most substantial additions that come in the sermons for St Katherine and the Nativity of the Virgin. Veronica O'Mara contributes a prospectus for a new edition of Thomas of Wimbledon's Paul's Cross Sermon which will take into account the full range of known witnesses. As Oliver himself so often highlighted in his own work, editorial projects frequently uncover unforeseen complexities to challenge the editor.

The Brotherton Collection, for which Oliver had responsibility during his career, is represented in two papers. Katja Airaksinen examines the Bouer Hours, Brotherton Collection, MS 8, to assess the contribution of Bourges to the development of manuscript culture at the end of the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance period. Paul Hammond uses a book recently acquired by the Brotherton Collection to discuss the juxtaposition in one volume of manuscripts and printed texts in the Early Modern period. Oliver's interests in the Early Modern period find expression in two other essays. Tom Lockwood's paper explores in fine detail the implications of evidence of reading notes in two Early Modern manuscripts held in the Special Collections of the Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham. Hermann J. Real's essay on Jonathan Swift — a figure on whose work Oliver has published, as noted — is a thorough investigation of possible historical connotations of the image of the egg, which is central to book I of *Gulliver's Travels*, for which he offers a new interpretation.

As all of the papers in this collection demonstrate, a scholar is like a detective, and Peter Meredith uses his investigative and deductive skills to assess evidence for the staging of the Noah Play in the Chester cycle. Kari Anne Rand's contribution is a piece of bibliographical detective work on questions of authorship and attribution of a widely disseminated medieval plague tract. A. S. G. Edwards's essay is also in the nature of an investigation, but this takes us behind the scenes of the production of one of the monumental editorial projects of the twentieth century, Eugene Vinaver's edition of the *Morte Darthur*.

The range of contributions to the volume is thus testament to the amount of support for, and interest in, individual researchers that Oliver has always shown. In presenting these essays now we are trying to give something interesting to him in return for all the interesting things that he has shared with us over the years.

In bringing together this collection of essays the editors have incurred various debts. First of all, we are very grateful to the Board of *Leeds Studies in English*, who, with amazing efficiency, managed to set this festschrift in train without the knowledge of one of the Board members (Oliver Pickering). Particular thanks in this respect are due to Andrew Wawn, the then editor

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of *Leeds Studies in English*, who guided both the Board members and the editors in the initial stages. In the latter part of the project we have received much help from the current *Leeds Studies in English* editor, Alaric Hall, who has had primary responsibility for the final layout of the text. At every stage in the process he has acted with his customary enthusiasm, patience, and good humour. He in turn would wish to acknowledge the help of *Leeds Studies in English's* editorial assistant for 2010, Victoria Cooper. We are most thankful to them both for all their hard work. However, we would not have got to the stage of producing the final copy without the dedicated help of Janet Burton's postgraduates, Alix Morley and Samantha Hunt, who worked so hard and so diligently on technical matters. We are grateful also to Chris Sheppard, Head of Special Collections at the University of Leeds, who from the very outset of this venture has been an inestimable support and has acted with his usual spirited engagement and great kindness. For generous and selfless assistance offered at a crucial time we are grateful to Martin Butler. We acknowledge too the help given us by Nigel Walsh, Curator of Contemporary Art at Leeds Art Gallery, and to the Art Gallery and the Bridgeman Library for permission to reproduce the frontispiece. Finally, we should like to thank all our contributors with whom it has been a pleasure to work and in particular Tom Lockwood, Rory McTurk, and Sue Powell for special advice.

We hope that Oliver will accept these essays now from his friends and colleagues, presented after the official retirement date though they may be, as an earnest token of the wide respect and deep affection in which he is held by all. We preface the collection with Atkinson Grimshaw's 'On the Tees, near Barnard Castle' of c. 1868, from Leeds City Art Gallery, which we hope he will enjoy, given his connections with the locale and with Grimshaw, a descendant of the seventeenth-century Grimshaw/Collier family that is the present subject of enthusiastic study by another descendant, Oliver Pickering.

Janet Burton, William Marx, and Veronica O'Mara
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