# WHAT IS ANGLO-NORMAN?[1]

My purpose in asking this question is to examine the contexts in which the term "Anglo-Norman" is used or may be appropriate, and particularly to consider its application to language, literature, and manuscripts. The discussion will show that there are areas in which it is not yet desirable to define the term narrowly. But a working definition will allow us to consider the character of the literature called Anglo-Norman and the scope of the studies that can be devoted to this area. This is not the place for an exhaustive account of Anglo-Norman studies, nor shall I attempt a comprehensive survey of Anglo-Norman literature. I wish rather to stress the problems that need to be worked on in order to improve our understanding of the culture that we call Anglo-Norman. A language, a literature, an architecture, a form of law and government developed after the Conquest, flourished for nearly three centuries, and then dwindled away before the renascence of the native character. Yet all those elements are part of English culture and the literature forms an important part of French culture as well.

The question "What is Anglo-Norman?" is one that I have addressed to a number of people. Shortly after the second world war I had a disconcerting experience in connection with defining Anglo-Norman. I called on Sir Sydney Cockerell, to take him a message from an American friend. He asked me what I had come to England to do, and to my reply that I planned to study Anglo-Norman manuscripts he retorted sharply; "Anglo-Norman? there is no such thing." Sir Sydney was a distinguished connoisseur of medieval literature and particularly of medieval manuscripts. He had been Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Moreover, his opinion of Anglo-Norman is shared by a number of people. I said as firmly as I dared that I was setting out, for practical purposes, to examine manuscripts in the French language, copied by English scribes during the period between the Conquest and Chaucer. He did not argue the point further with

[1]The substance of this article was given as the Strub Lecture upon the kind invitation of the Graduate Department of English at Duquesne University on 18 October, 1964. I am indebted to a number of friends and colleagues for discussing various aspects of it with me, especially Elizabeth Francis, Dominica Legge, and Louise Stone.

me, but inquired about my training in paleography and, satisfied about that, showed me some of his beautiful medieval manuscripts. I hope it indicates no lack of respect for his judgment that I have continued for more than fifteen years to apply the term "Anglo-Norman" to the field in which I work.

One person of whom I more recently asked the question "What is Anglo-Norman?" is an American professor of English literature, a specialist in Shakespeare. He said it was a term he had never given any thought to, and he immediately fell into what nineteenth-century writers would have called a brown study. Emerging from his reflections, he said carefully, "I think it means to me anything in England that falls within the period which began with the Norman Conquest and ended about the time of Henry IV." This definition sets satisfactory chronological boundaries and corresponds to the one I drew up for paleography. I suppose that for purposes of history it is reasonably appropriate, although as soon as you begin to attach the term "Anglo-Norman" to individual aspects of England in that period you pause. Would historians, for instance, be willing to call the Angevin kings, especially after John, Anglo-Norman? How English were they? And the Frenchness of their life and court—how Norman were these? (Some would prefer to apply "Anglo-French" to the period that follows the loss of Normandy—we shall come back to this term presently.) And when, if at all, did Normans and other French people transplanted to England become English in their own thoughts?[2] Or take art: by convention we call Romanesque art in England "Norman", whether or not it closely resembles continental Norman. But this art is not usually called "Anglo-Norman". And by the thirteenth century art in England, as on the continent, moves into Gothic and the term "Norman" is no longer considered applicable at all, although of course French influence continues in English Gothic.

Another person of whom I asked my question was a young English graduate student who had taken an honours degree in history and who is now working on eleventh-century scholasticism. She likewise had not previously given the question any thought, and the result of her reflection was that she would apply the term to what she called a blank period between the Conquest and about

[2]Alice Beardwood discussed legal aspects of Englishry in *Medievalia et Humanistica*, XVI (1964), 64-76.



1135, a period during which book-production by English scribes fell off and Norman scribes were gradually established in England. She was thinking chiefly of her knowledge of Christ Church, Canterbury; in the books preserved from that center one can see a difference in both writing and format between those made before 1066 and those made after 1135. Questioned about language she confessed that she had been considering only Latin. Here was a limitation of the term in time and content that had not occurred to me. Another limitation is set by those Latinists who have a particular use for the term "Anglo-Norman": they apply it to English authors of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries writing in Latin.

The term "Anglo-Norman" first confronted me when I began to study Old French and to learn about dialects. According to the syllabus, two of the Romance dialects seemed to have particular importance, for one could take special work in them. They were Provençal and Anglo-Norman, and they were considered important because each had a fairly extensive literature. There were in fact people who distinguished Anglo-Norman and Provençal as languages rather than as dialects, precisely because both had literatures. This is a distinction that is hardly acceptable in present-day linguistics, considering the number of languages that have now been studied which have no literature and which themselves embrace dialects.

At all events, here was the term "Anglo-Norman" used to describe a language and its literature. In spite of Sir Sydney's annihilation, the term is convenient and is used by so many people with approximate agreement as to what they mean by it that to seek another one would seem pedantic. Moreover, any recognizable alternative term merely raises further questions of ambiguity and definition. "Anglo-French", for instance, which some people prefer for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has the advantage of indicating that the French language used in England at that time shows as many characteristics of other dialects as of purely Norman. But insular French was not pure Norman in the twelfth century either, for there were Angevins and Picards as well as Normans in England that early; indeed, all three centuries are sometimes described as Anglo-French. On the other hand, the latter term is used and needed by scholars working in other periods as well, in order to describe Anglo-French relations in various domains, regardless of the language employed and

without indicating a special form of the French language. (The term might even have been used for the present state of French had not Etiemble so scornfully coined the word *franglais* to describe it.) All things considered, it is practical to reserve the term "Anglo-French" for the wider historical use and to restrict "Anglo-Norman" to the Middle Ages, even though it may have somewhat varied applications within that period.

A quite different meaning of "Anglo-Norman" existed briefly. G. T. Flom employed it to describe a *script* introduced into Norway from England and used there for transcribing Latin rather than vernacular texts. This script combined Carolingian and Insular traits. Naturally, it does not enter into consideration of the consequences of the Norman Conquest in England, and the term "Anglo-Norman" in this sense does not seem to have persisted later than 1929, at least not in quarters where it causes any confusion with the use we are considering. Of course, if we should come to the conclusion that a script exists for the French transcribed in England that is different from the script used there to transcribe Latin or English, we should want to use the term "Anglo-Norman script", and then these conflicting interpretations would give us trouble. But I have not yet found any real evidence that distinguishable handwritings were used for the different languages. It is true that a page written in French looks different from one written in English or Latin even when there is reason to believe that the same scribe is writing. But such a difference in general appearance is not caused by differing forms for individual letters. This kind of difference between a page of French and one of Latin or English can be seen in handwriting of any period and likewise in print. It comes from the fact that in the several languages letters are used in different frequencies, different letters are juxtaposed, and words are of different lengths.

A conventional and accepted meaning is therefore generally attached to the term "Anglo-Norman". Chronologically it refers to the period that extends from the Norman Conquest, when French became the official language in England, to the latter half of the fourteenth century, when it ceased to be. Dynastically it refers narrowly to William of Normandy, his two sons and one grandson, more broadly to his dynasty and to the Angevin one descended from William's granddaughter. Linguistically it refers to the form that French took as it was used in England from the



Conquest to Chaucer, regardless of which traits of that French came from Normandy and which from other regions. For paleographical study those manuscripts may be considered Anglo-Norman that were copied by an insular scribe in the French language. This is a visual identification—but even if the language is essentially continental the scribe is likely to introduce insular spellings that probably represent his pronunciation, and he may introduce other native speech habits as well. In all of these areas, then, we can provide a good working definition for the term "Anglo-Norman."

As a term for literature, however, "Anglo-Norman" presents some difficulties. Clearly, works which have insular dialectal traits distinguishing them from continental compositions are Anglo-Norman. But shall we include no others? Shall we reject works like Marie de France's *Lais, Fables,* and *Purgatory of St. Patrick,* written for people in England, even if the language shows no insular dialectal traits? Shall we not accept a work if the author, Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, born in the Ile-de-France, wrote on an English subject, Thomas Becket, and came to England to obtain material for his work—particularly if we consider that his French did not remain as free of Anglo-Normanisms as did that of Marie de France? Is Jofroi de Waterford an Anglo-Norman author? He seems to have been born in Ireland, he joined the Order of Preachers which sent him at one period to Paris, at another *in regiones orientales* (probably Greece or the near East), and he was reputed to be accomplished in Latin, Greek, Arabic, and French. He probably came from insular Norman society but there is no evidence that he wrote for it although his work may have been known in Ireland.[8] What shall we say of a work on a continental subject by a continental poet, apparently composed for a continental audience, of which the oldest and best extant manuscript is in the hand of an insular

[8]On Jofroi see: Victor Le Clerc in *Histoire littéraire de la France,* XXI (1895), 216-229; G. L. Hamilton in *Romanic Review,* I (1910), 259-264; C. V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au moyen âge,* III (Paris, 1927), 76-81; O. A. Beckerlegge, *Le Secré de Secrez . . .,* Anglo-Norman Texts, V (Oxford, 1944), xxii; J. Monfrin in *Ecole Nationale des Chartes: Positions des thèses . . .* (Paris, 1947), pp. 93-99; C. Pinchbeck in *Medium Ævum,* XVII (1948), 8-11; M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 78-80, and *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), p. 304. Guernes and Marie are both treated in this last book, passim.

scribe who allowed some of his own linguistic habits to appear in his transcription? You have recognized the Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland* and there are other similar examples.

The question of what constitutes Anglo-Norman literature has for us at this distance some of the complications that the literature of the present English-speaking world might have for people of other languages. If American language and literature are distinguishable from British, so too Irish and Scottish are distinguishable from English, while the form of the English language and the literature written in it in Africa, Australia, Canada, India, and New Zealand vary among themselves and from the others just mentioned. Yet a person taking as his field the literature and civilization sprung from the British Isles might include all of these and others in his purview. He would also have the problem of classifying writers born in one English-speaking country who do all or part of their writing in another. My own feeling regarding Anglo-Norman literature has always been against being linguistically narrow about its limits and I am pleased to find my view supported by Miss Legge in her recent important book, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background.*[4] She inclines to consider as part of the Anglo-Norman literary scene all works which appear to have been composed or copied for use in England, and she consequently discusses a number of works formerly excluded from Anglo-Norman literature on the ground that their language lacks distinct Anglo-Norman traits or that their authors were born on the continent.

We may ask how we know what Anglo-Norman traits are, and it is clear that we have no way of knowing them except from the literature.[5] The first step in any attempt to establish dialectal characteristics is to find texts that can be assigned to a region on other than linguistic grounds. If a date can also be assigned, so much the better. Sometimes the date is available and not the region. When enough texts have been localized, dated, and analyzed, there is material for comparison, and a beginning can be made in describing the language and in remarking how it differs

[4]See note 3, ad fin.

[5]A number of works have dealt with Anglo-Norman dialectal traits. The characteristics were summarized by Johan Vising in his manual, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (London, 1923), and analyzed in greater detail by Mildred K. Pope in her grammar, *From Latin to Modern French with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman* (Manchester, 1934, 1952, 1956), Part V. Both of these books list earlier bibliography.



from those of other regions which have already been described. Others texts lacking clear indications of place and date can then sometimes be fitted into the pattern because they are similar to those being used as guides, or because they supply missing steps where there is a gap in the course of development. An example of one of the datable texts that serve as guide-posts is the Anglo-Norman version of the voyage of St. Brendan.[6] Its author, Benedeit, dedicated his poem to a Scottish princess, a great-niece of Edward the Confessor, Maud (or Matilda), who became the first queen of Henry I. Since this marriage was celebrated in 1100 and Henry married his second wife Aalis in 1121, the composition of the poem can be dated within twenty years. Although Benedeit probably came of a Norman family and may even have been born in Normandy, his language shows enough difference from continental Norman to suggest that when he composed the work he had lived in England for some time; it also gives us some idea of what was happening to Norman French in England within forty to fifty years of the Conquest.

I have already suggested that the handwriting of manuscripts can help in dating and placing a text, but scripts, like dialects, can be identified only within a known context of manuscripts that can be dated and placed. The name of an author or patron, as Benedeit and the queen, will furnish merely a *terminus a quo*—the copy cannot have been made before the author or patron lived, and it may have been made at any time later. We need some evidence about the scribe or the actual transcription, and from time to time we do find a scribe giving in a colophon one or more helpful details, such as his name, his status, where he lived, and the date at which he finished his task. (Some scribes finish with a sigh of relief and write: "Hoc opus est finitum, da mihi potum"; but then they usually do not give their names.) The place and date are of course the most useful, but with the scribe's name and status we can sometimes trace his identity in documentary records and thus learn when and where he lived. Calendars and annals also help us to date scripts, for they often have entries from year to year, where the change of hand assures us that we are looking at contemporary scripts and not at a copy of earlier

[6]E. G. R. Waters, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St. Brendan by Benedeit* (Oxford, 1928).

entries.[6a] In short, when scripts written in England can be distinguished from continental, we have two guides for recognizing works of French literature that circulated in England: the language and the handwriting.

Obvious as these two techniques for literary studies may now appear, they are in fact relatively modern. It is true that systematic paleography began as early as the seventeenth century, but it was first applied in the domain of ecclesiastical history. Somewhat later it was extended to the criticism of biblical and classical texts, and later still to manuscript problems in the vernacular literatures. The study of Anglo-Norman literature was launched at the end of the eighteenth century by a professor of history in the university of Caen, the Abbé de La Rue, who published essays on Norman and Anglo-Norman poets. The early nineteenth century saw the publication of a number of Anglo-Norman texts in various genres but no one made a truly linguistic study of a text that might be considered Anglo-Norman until 1876, when *La Vie de Seint Auban* was printed. There are reasonable grounds for considering its dialectal features to be Anglo-Norman: it deals with an English subject, St. Alban, it appears to be in an English script, and it is attributed to an English author, Matthew Paris. Even so, its editor, Professor R. Atkinson of Dublin, called it Norman-French. The German philologist, Hermann Suchier, immediately wrote a long essay based on this text in which he assembled some criteria for judging Anglo-Norman dialect. He classified certain vowel-changes as characteristic of Anglo-Norman and drew up a list of Anglo-Norman works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in chronological groups. In 1882 Johan Vising of Sweden devoted a study to the Anglo-Norman dialect. By this time a number of scholars were working in the field. I have surveyed the period in some detail elsewhere[7] and at this point I need mention only that in 1923, nearly half a century after Atkinson and Suchier had studied *La Vie de Seint Auban,* enough texts and studies had appeared for Vising to be able to draw up a catalogue of over

[6a]Similarly, the mortuary role for Abbot Vitalis of Savigny is useful to the saleographer for its more than two hundred specimens of writing from houses in both England and France, all of the year 1122 (facsimile edition by L. Delisle, Paris, 1909; a few specimens in N. R. Ker, *English Manuscripts in the After the Norman Conquest,* Oxford, 1960, pl. 14, 15).

[7]*Romanic Review,* XXX (1939), 4 ff.



three hundred titles of literary works that showed Anglo-Norman linguistic traits and that were extant in manuscripts written in insular hands.[8] In the past forty years more texts have been published and more manuscripts have been examined, so that we can now add many works and manuscripts to Vising's lists.[9] What is more important than the bulk of Anglo-Norman material available for study is that we now have a critical guide to Anglo-Norman literature as a whole in the book by Miss Legge referred to above.[10] This gives us a discussion of Anglo-Norman literature in its historical development and provides studies of many individual works classified according to genre and analyzed in relation to the people or circumstances that evoked them. And in case anyone thinks that this means that the Anglo-Norman field has now been pretty well exhausted, let me recommend that he study this book. It mentions at least seventeen texts of which critical editions are needed and a dozen areas in which study ought to be undertaken. Nor should one automatically assume that whatever is already printed is incontrovertible or even that a scholar will not modify his judgment: Miss Legge, for example, has modified hers on some points since she published *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh, 1950).

The question of dating compositions is often delicate, as the French say, and the conclusions are constantly under revision. A change in the dating of a text may affect problems of source and influence in literature, problems of sound-change and syntax in language. Thus some of the conclusions that Tanquerey came to in his book on the Anglo-Norman verb[11] have had to be altered because the chronological order of the texts he based them on has been changed by other people's work. The dating of Chrétien de Troyes' romances has been under discussion for some time and it is not certain now that the *romans d'antiquité* preceded his. Consequently it is no longer possible to date Anglo-Norman romances simply by reference to borrowings from continental works. The Anglo-Norman ones may indeed be more independent than has been thought.[12]

[8]This catalogue is in his manual; see note 5.

[9]A revision of Vising's catalogue by the present writer is nearing completion.

[10]Cited in note 3, ad fin.

[11]F. J. Tanquerey, *L'Evolution du verbe en anglo-français, XIII$^e$-XIV$^e$ siècles* (Paris, 1915). See, for instance S. H. Thomson in *Romantic Review,* XXIX (1938), 112-119.

[12]Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature,* p. 372.

Nor is dating the only area in which further study may alter earlier opinions. Miss Legge and I had an experience in this domain ourselves. As loyal Anglo-Normanists we set out to edit a prose translation of the *Rule of St. Benedict* that we assumed to be twelfth-century Anglo-Norman, since Vising had so listed it in his catalogue (No. 26), and we thought that the Anglo-Norman Text Society would undertake to publish it. But when we had transcribed the text and studied the script and the language, we could not accept either the date or the dialect of Vising's classification. Both script and language belong to the thirteenth century, and the dialect seems to be continental. (We had to find another sponsor for the publication.[13]). I am still prepared to say that the scribe may as well have been English as continental: the paleographical evidence is not so clear as the linguistic.

Having mentioned this aspect of the importance of examining manuscripts personally, I must enter a caveat which particularly affects those of us who want to work on materials extant only in libraries across the sea. The ready availability of photographic reproductions may tempt us to rely on photocopies for study and even for the editing of a text. But there are details in manuscripts (and in early printed books) which photocopies do not always bring out or which they falsify. A hole in the page may allow a letter to show through from the leaf underneath. Often the photocopy does not show the hole and the extraneous letter may confuse the reading. Thin parchment which shows writing through from the verso and erasures which have been written over are other sources of confusion that photocopies do not always reveal. Again, something in a photocopy may look like a letter or abbreviation-stroke which turns out on direct examination of the manuscript to be a blemish in the parchment or an ink-mark not of the scribe's making.

We have considered in a general way what Anglo-Norman is. Let us now look more particularly at the people and their literature. Since people, then as now, crossed the Channel frequently, French influence continued to affect the dialect of French used in

[13]*The Rule of St. Benedict: A Norman Prose Version,* edited by Ruth J. Dean and M. Dominica Legge, Medium Ævum Monographs, VII (Oxford, 1964).



England, and we cannot expect to find the same degree of insularity in the language of all Anglo-Norman authors. Education and other cultural factors also modified the use of language. In brief, the distinctive Anglo-Norman dialectal features of the literature are more or less numerous according to the background of the individual writer.

Even before the Conquest, Englishmen and Normans had visited each other's countries. Edward the Confessor's court was cosmopolitan, with a strong Norman tinge. He himself was Norman on his mother's side; childless, he at one time named William, Duke of Normandy, to succeed him as king of England. When William landed in England and disposed of Harold's claim to the throne he had a well organized occupation plan—a plan that worked the better because there were Normans already living in England, whether or not they served William as what twenty-five years ago we called a fifth column. For example, Edward had imported Norman clerks during his reign and William was able to take these over into his government at Winchester. Three severe battles in 1066 caused the death of a large majority of the English aristocracy, others were killed in sporadic revolts, and many emigrated to Scotland or to the service of the Eastern emperor. Their lands were given to Norman barons; Norman clerics were placed in key positions in the English church.[14] These men, both laymen and ecclesiastics, established households in England, but those who held lands in Normandy returned there from time to time. Sometimes one son would inherit in England, another in Normandy. Thus families continued for several generations to be both English and Norman, literally Anglo-Norman. No doubt such families visited one another from time to time, even as the royal court frequently travelled about both in England and across the Channel.

Since William had justified his conquest on the strength of having been named Edward's heir, he wished to reign in that role and to preserve as far as possible the English land-owning system. Some of the surviving English came to terms with him and stayed at home; a few affirmed their position by marrying Norman ladies. Occasionally a Norman baron acquired a fief by marrying an English heiress.[15] The Normans got on as well as

[14]F. M. Stenton in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 4th Ser., XVII (1944), 1-5.
[15]Stenton, p. 5.

they could with the local population and some means of communication were soon found. Probably stewards served as liaison officers, and for practical purposes all ranks must soon have picked up a bit of the language of the other group. For official affairs, Latin was of course the common language. But both law and history had long since had vernacular forms in England and quite soon the newcomers also were using a vernacular—their own—in these fields.

At the same time as the new life of the Norman kings and barons and their households and followers was being organized, their language began to assume a character of its own. At first it was basically Norman. But the invasion did not stop with the Conquest. Colonizers came after that event, among them people from neighboring parts of France, and naturally their dialectal features were blended with the Norman. This blending is one of the aspects that distinguishes Anglo-Norman from other dialects. Some changes in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar were peculiar to Anglo-Norman, others took place in continental dialects also, although some of them at a different pace: rapid development in some aspects, the preservation of archaic forms in others constitute another feature of the Anglo-Norman dialect.[16]

As life in England settled down, the Normanno-Angevins needed diversion, moral support, and even instruction. Songs and romances, drama, history, translations from the Bible, sermons and lives of saints, practical and scientific material—all of this soon began to appear. Who composed these works? Clerics largely, of course, since education was dispensed by the church, but not by any means all pious men. These early authors perhaps followed the barons or were born in transplanted households and educated in England. While many display their formal Latin education, quite a number show acquaintance with a merry life and a decided interest in the worlds of action and romance. Chardri, for instance, who wrote in the early years of the thirteenth century, has been described as having traits of Villon, of Rabelais, and of Montaigne.[17]

Among the earliest Anglo-Norman writers were three nuns who composed lives of saints in Anglo-Norman verse. Two were of Barking Abbey: one anonymous, the other called Clemence; of

[16]Pope, *From Latin to Modern French*, p. 425.

[17]Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 200.



the third we know only her name, Marie. Echoes of courtly literature in Clemence's hagiographical work suggest that she, like some of her confrères, was not immune to worldly interests.

Courtly literature indeed abounds in Anglo-Norman. Undoubtedly the most famous example of it is the version of *Tristan* by Thomas. Beroul's version of the Tristan story may also count as part of Anglo-Norman literature because it seems to have been written for an audience living in England and Beroul may have been living there himself when he wrote. But his language is Norman and so is the one surviving fragmentary manuscript.

Another high point of Anglo-Norman imaginative literature is the *Voyage of St. Brendan,* mentioned earlier for its linguistic importance. It is written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, later the standard form for romances, and it may be the first poem in that form written in any dialect of French. In spite of its apparently hagiographical subject it belongs in the category of romance, for it is essentially a good story told for a courtly audience. Although it does not include a love theme, it contains some of the habitual elements of romance and in addition that wonderful whale which sailors mistook for an island until it swam away when they built a fire on it to cook their Easter dinner.

Anglo-Norman writers produced a number of readable romances which combine adventure with sentiment, such as *Amadas et Ydoine, Partenopeus de Blois, Ipomedon, Protheselaus,* and others. Romance figures in other settings, too. Among late twelfth-century pieces is an ironic little treatise that contains an assortment of sentimental episodes concerning famous lovers. The episodes are used as *exempla* by a pedantic lover trying to persuade a maiden to grant him her favors. The girl is more than a match for him in disputation and proves that most of his *exempla* fail to fit the case.[18]

There are many "firsts" in Anglo-Norman literature, besides the first women to write French verse. Fifteen years before Wace wrote *Le Roman de Brut,* Geoffrey Gaimar wrote the earliest history in the French language of which any part survives. He mentions a still earlier work which may have been historical—a song about Henry I, composed by one David—but as it is not extant we do not know what language it was in nor how historical it was in intent. History continued to interest the

[18]Legge, pp. 128-132.

Anglo-Normans for many generations and although Wace's *Roman de Brut* and earlier Latin works usually furnished the beginning of their accounts, writers such as Peter of Langtoft and Nicholas Trevet provide authoritative material when they come to their own lifetimes. The *Scalacronica,* written by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton in the 1350's, is full of lively scenes from his father's lifetime as well as his own, and would repay a modern editor's time.

A form of history which particularly appealed to Anglo-Norman society was biography. Some of the lives of saints are factual and belong in this category. A prose chronicle such as *The Crusade and Death of Richard I* may also be considered to be biography since its aim was to portray Richard in action. The conspicuous works in this genre are *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* and *La Vie du Prince Noir.* Both are in verse and were written by men from the continent, but clearly for English patrons. The earlier author was Norman; the later one may have been from Hainault, but there is no certain evidence. Miss Legge is preparing a new edition of *Guillaume le Maréchal,* and the *Prince Noir* needs a new edition, too. Both were edited long ago, but critical principles have changed and, in addition, a new manuscript of the *Prince Noir* has been found since the edition appeared.[19]

Anglo-Norman circles liked romance blended with history as well as with hagiography. Somewhat in the spirit of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae,* which seems to have been written to provide Henry I in his role as king of England with predecessors going back beyond even the Anglo-Saxon kings, semi-historical romances were composed apparently designed to give Norman families transplanted to England a sense of belonging to the past of their new country. These works begin to appear in the latter part of the twelfth century and continue into the fourteenth. Miss Legge has felicitously named them "ancestral romances."[20] Particularly interesting is her decision to include among them the much discussed *Guillaume d'Angleterre.* While agreeing that its author Crestien was continental—and was not Chrétien de Troyes—and pointing out that no Anglo-Norman manuscript of the work is known, she supports the conclusion that *Guillaume d'Angleterre* was written for a branch of

[19]Legge, pp. 308-309.
[20]Legge, chapter VII.



the Lovel family.[21] By the larger definition we have discussed, this romance therefore belongs to Anglo-Norman literature. *Fergus* is another continental product lacking Anglo-Norman copies which she includes in this group, because some of its action is set in Melrose and the Border country and because the author displays firsthand knowledge of the topography of Scotland. The other "ancestral romances" are well known as Anglo-Norman works: *Waldef, Boeve de Haumtone, Gui de Warewic,* and *Fouke Fitzwarin.* These romances are uneven in interest, but all have their good points and some have definite historical interest. *Gui de Warewic* offers examples of the entry of fabrication into history. The Beauchamp family of Warwick later adopted the name Guy and thus acquired a famous ancestor. Langtoft put the fight between Gui and the Dane Colebrand at Winchester into his version of English history and this addition was copied for four centuries as fact.[22] *Fouke Fitzwarin* has more real history in it than the others and when it distorts truth there may be a definite purpose behind the distortion.[23] This is a romance which might well tempt a historian to further study: Mary Giffin has suggested that there is more of Welsh border history to be illuminated from it than has yet been recognized.

Another "first" in Anglo-Norman literature is the *Mystère d'Adam,* written in the middle of the twelfth century in England according to the best conjecture. If we may indeed claim this work for Anglo-Norman it is one of the masterpieces which the island contributed to the general body of French literature and it precedes anything similar on the continent. Anglo-Norman literature includes other serious drama, notably a Resurrection play which may in its original form have been as early as the *Adam* and which likewise has no counterpart on the continent. Both of these plays are important for the history of staging. There exist also fragments of two bilingual plays, English and Anglo-Norman; and Robert Raymo has recently found a page of an Anglo-Norman comedy.

In the compass of this paper there is not time to touch on all the attractive authors and genres of Anglo-Norman literature.

[21]Elizabeth A. Francis in *Studies in French . . . presented to R. L. Graeme Ritchie* (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 68-71.
[22]Legge, p. 168.
[23]E. A. Francis in *Studies . . . presented to A. Ewert* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 322-327.

The important point to emphasize is that many problems still await discussion and, it is to be hoped, solution. I have already indicated some possible lines of work and shall now suggest a few more. They are varied in scope and may appeal to differing tastes.

The Irish Dominican Jofroi de Waterford, mentioned earlier, was particularly conscious of the problems posed by translation, experienced as he was in several languages. One of the texts that he put into French had been translated into Latin from Greek and Arabic, and Jofroi writes at some length about his method of handling this work. It would be instructive to collect what medieval translators have said about their work and to study their principles and their results.[24]

A beginning has been made on Anglo-Norman lyric poetry, but the material has not yet been thoroughly studied. The political songs have been edited,[25] and a group of other lyrics has been undertaken by Alan Wilshere at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Miss Legge's chapter on the subject in her recent book is the first extensive treatment to appear and shows in what variety Anglo-Norman lyrics are found, ranging from all attitudes toward love through religious poems to satire and drinking-songs. Prosody is another open field. Anglo-Norman versification is a large problem which has provoked a good deal of discussion because of its variation from continental French rules.[26] The subject would profit by having someone attack it who is at home in Middle English verse as well as in continental French and Anglo-Norman; knowledge of medieval Latin prosody would be helpful, too. There are a good many observations on it throughout Miss Legge's book. More analysis like hers is needed of individual works, and eventually the results should be gathered into a general study.

Familiarity with the three languages of England (Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Latin) is valuable equipment. Someone who possessed it could make a thorough study of Edmond of Pontigny's *Merure de l'Eglise,* which has versions in all three languages. A text which could attract someone devoted

[24]On Jofroi see note 3.

[25]Isabel S. T. Aspin, *Anglo-Norman Political Songs,* Anglo-Norman Texts, XI (Oxford, 1953).

[26]See, for instance, Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature,* pp. 79-88, and Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters,* pp. 137-141.



to the history of ideas is Pierre de Peckham's *Lumere as Lais (Light for Laymen).* It is a unique attempt to make scholastic teaching available in French in a systematic way. A topic which some people might find more engaging would be a comprehensive study of the continental and insular French sources of Middle English romances, and the manners of adapting them. Limited areas of this study have been treated in unpublished dissertations. Would that some of their authors might enlarge and deepen their work!

The Anglo-Norman element in our English vocabulary has been treated briefly.[27] It is important in the study of culture, but it is only one aspect of the total linguistic investigation which has still to be made, both for Anglo-Norman alone and for the contact of the two languages. Without such a study, which Dean Petit described as a wood needing clearing, our knowledge of both English and French is handicapped.[28] This field is vast and calls for many workers; no one has the time and strength to encompass the task alone.

While we are considering ambitious enterprises, let us not forget that no detailed general history of Old French literature exists, so that comparisons of Anglo-Norman literature with continental have at present to be fragmentary.[29]

On the other hand, there are smaller studies which individuals or seminar groups might undertake and which would contribute to some eventual larger synthesis. The study of the vocabulary or the syntax of an author or of a group of related works is instructive for those who make it and for those who use it afterwards. Careful editing of a text provides new material or confirms old in various areas, especially in vocabulary, spelling, and syntax.[30] A seminar group might investigate technical terms used in various contexts in relation to the history of Anglo-Norman vocabulary.

[27]Mildred K. Pope, *The Anglo-Norman Element in Our Vocabulary . . ., The . . . Deneke Lecture . . . Oxford . . .* May, 1944 (Manchester, 1944); John Orr, *Words and Sounds in English and French* (Oxford, 1953), passim; idem, *Old French and Modern English Idiom* (Oxford, 1962), passim; M. Dominica Legge in *Studies in Medieval French presented to Alfred Ewert . . .* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 214-231.

[28]Herbert H. Petit, "A Wood Needing—Clearing", paper presented to the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference at Lexington, April 26, 1957, printed in *Annuale Mediaevale,* I (1960), 102-107.

[29]Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature,* p. 372.

[30]Resulting glossary slips are likely to be useful for the Anglo-Norman Glossary which is being edited by Louise Stone of London.

This is a field in which there could be fruitful cooperation between students of Middle English and Anglo-Norman. The relation of a work to its surrounding social history, of which Miss Legge's latest book gives so many examples, could tempt one for whom history seems more compelling than literature.

Anglo-Norman literature is varied in spirit as in genre. In several areas it precedes continental French developments, and it fills a gap in the history of English literature as well. Its works were copied in various regions of France and in the Low Countries, and material from them was used not only by English and French writers but also by Italian and Spanish, German and Norse. Anglo-Norman manuscripts are now distributed in nine or ten countries. Whether one prefers verse or prose, history or husbandry, religion or romance, he will find something to his taste in Anglo-Norman. The wood still needs clearing. The field continues to be fair and has room for many folk.

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## *The Wife of Bath and the Three Estates*

All readers of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* are aware that the object of the Wife's strategy with her husbands, and of the old hag of her Tale with the knight she marries, is to obtain sovereignty. But Chaucer has made the Wife rather circumspect in saying why she wishes sovereignty and what practical effects she hopes to obtain thereby. She gives reasons in some places which she denies, implicitly or explicitly, in others. It is clear in the first place that she hopes to get control of the goods of her first three husbands, and to regain control of the goods she had given over to her fifth. But the refusal of the old hag of the tale to be satisfied with mere goods, and Alisoun's own claim to her first three husbands that she could obtain more goods by selling her "bel chose" outside of marriage,[1] would seem to indicate that such control, while definitely a benefit of sovereignty, is not its ultimate rationale. She wishes secondly to be trusted by her husbands. She encourages her first three husbands to "know"[2] her for a true wife, and she gets Jankyn to give her responsibility for her honour (III [D] 821); the old hag of the tale promises her knight to be as true as any wife (III [D] 1240-1244). Such responsibilities and such promises are, considering the Wife's professed indiscretion, a fine comic touch. The wife who is "known" for a true wife has license to behave as she wishes. But the Wife, in her Tale, although agreeing that women will be held wise and clean of sin no matter how vicious within (III [D] 935-944), does not make such a condition the chief desire of women. The Wife, in the third place, attributes to women's sovereignty the perfect peace of marriage; but it is also obvious that a woman's willingness to obey would bring about the same result. Although all of these effects of sovereignty are doubtless important considerations in the Wife's mind, her tantalizing coyness will not allow her to say that they are her final reasons for desiring the control of her husbands.

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[1] *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. F. N. Robinson. 2nd Edn. Cambridge, Mass., 1957. *Canterbury Tales,* III (D) 447-448. All references from the *Canterbury Tales* will be to this edition, and will be cited by fragment and line numbers in the text.

[2] *Canterbury Tales,* III (D) 318-320:

> "Thou sholdest seye, 'Wyf, go wher thee liste;
> Taak youre disport, I wol nat leve no talys.
> I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys.'"