



THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO

Medieval English Culture

Edited by
Andrew Galloway

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Chronology

1066–87 King William I

- 1066 Battle of Hastings. King Harold II killed. Coronation of William I.
- 1078 White Tower (Tower of London) begun.
- c. 1080 *Chanson de Roland* apparently written (earliest surviving copy c. 1150); other *chansons de geste* written.
- c. 1086 “Domesday Book,” surveying the goods and tenants of much of England.

1087–1100 William II “Rufus”

- 1091 600+ London houses destroyed by winds.
- 1098 St. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, writes *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God became Man*) to define the justice of the Incarnation (Latin).

1100–35 Henry I “Beauclerc”

- 1101 Robert of Normandy, Henry’s brother, invades England.
- 1114 Henry mounts expedition into north Wales, stopping Prince Gruffydd.
- 1127 Barons swear to accept Henry I’s daughter Matilda as heir (but many later reject her).
- c. 1135 Henry of Huntingdon, *History of the English* (Latin chronicle).

1135–54 Stephen versus Matilda

- 1135 Stephen elected by London citizens; Matilda claims throne; beginning of “the Anarchy” (civil war).
- 1138 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* (Latin).
- 1147–49 Second Crusade.
- c. 1100–50 Various copies of Old English homilies (e.g., Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D.xiv etc.).
- c. 1140–54 English chronicler makes final entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* at Peterborough Abbey.

1154–89 Henry II “Curtmantel”

- c. 1155 Wace, *Roman de Brut* (French translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*).
- c. 1158 Peter Lombard, *Sentences* (Latin: central text for university teaching).
- 1161 Canonization of Edward the Confessor.
- c. 1160–80 Chrétien de Troyes (French poet) active at Marie de Champagne’s court.
- 1160–75 Alan of Lille (Latin theologian and poet) active; *De planctu Naturae* etc.
- 1166 Assize of Novel Disseisin (new procedure to insure that heirs could remove hostile lords from lands due to them) and other new legal procedures for more efficient and just transmissions of property.
- c. 1170 John of Salisbury, *Polycraticus*, *Metalogicon*, etc. (Latin).
- 1170 Thomas Becket killed in Canterbury Cathedral (canonized 1173).
- c. 1180 Marie de France (French poet) active at Henry’s court.

1189–99 Richard I “Coeur de Lion”

- 1190 Richard I leads Third Crusade to the Holy Land; massacre of Jews at York.
- c. 1190 *Owl and the Nightingale*.

1199–1216 John “Lackland”

- 1204 Loss of Normandy.
- 1208 Founding of Cambridge University.
- 1208–13 England placed under papal interdict (no burials or masses allowed) because John refuses to accept Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1215 Magna Carta sealed. Fourth Lateran Council, adopting a range of new Church plans (from requiring annual confessions by all the laity, to formulation of doctrine of Transubstantiation, to sharper identification and treatment of Jews and heretics).

1216–72 Henry III

- c. 1220 Layamon’s *Brut*.
- c. 1235 Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose*.
- 1236 Henry marries Eleanor of Provence.
- 1238 Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, secretly marries king’s sister, against king’s wishes; barons take sides amid general baronial discontent with the king.
- 1250 Matthew Paris, Latin chronicler at St. Albans Abbey, ceases his *Chronica Majora* (*Great Chronicle*) since the present “age” of the world has reached its completion in round numbers (i.e., the Second Coming is at hand).
- 1251–59 Matthew Paris quietly resumes his chronicle, continuing it until his death.
- 1257–58 Crop failure and widespread famine.
- 1258 King forced to agree to Provisions of Oxford, giving power to fifteen barons, and insuring three parliaments per year.
- 1264 Henry captured by Simon’s troops at battle of Lewes, giving counties representational power, substantially weakening royal power.
- 1265 Defeat of Simon of Montfort at battle of Evesham, where royal forces return to power, execute many rebellious barons.

1272–1307 Edward I “Longshanks”

- 1274 Death of Thomas Aquinas.
- c. 1275 Jean de Meun’s continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*.
- 1282–84 Conquest and settlement of Wales.
- 1290 Edward expels all Jews from England.
- c. 1290 *Havelok*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Beves of Hamtoun* and other early English romances.
- 1290–92 Struggles over Scottish succession; Edward decides in favor of John Balliol as King of Scots.
- 1294 War between Edward and Philip IV of France.
- 1294–96 Welsh revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn.
- 1295 “Model” parliament; alliance formed between France and Scotland.

1307–27 Edward II of Caernarvon

- 1312 Execution of Piers Gaveston, favorite (presumed lover) of Edward.
- 1314 English defeat at Bannockburn.
- 1315–17 Widespread famine.
- 1320 Declaration of Arbroath (Scottish barons assert principle of popular sovereignty).
- 1327 Edward deposed and murdered by Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer.

1327–77 Edward III

- 1328 Edward’s claim to French throne (via his mother Isabella) is rejected in favor of Philip VI.
- c. 1330–49 William of Ockham, radical critic at Oxford of “realism,” writes commentaries on Aristotle and other authorities, and polemical works against papal authority over secular empire.
- 1340 Edward assumes title of King of France; English ships beat French ships at battle of Sluys; beginning of Hundred Years’ War (1340–1453).

- c. 1340–49 Richard Rolle, self-appointed hermit and mystic, writes Latin and English treatises evoking the “song” of his religious fervor.
- 1346 Scots defeated at Neville’s Cross; Philip VI defeated at the battle of Crécy.
- 1348 Order of the Garter established, with mysterious and variously interpreted motto, *Honi soyt qui mal y pence* (“shame to anyone who thinks ill of this”).
- 1348–49 Black Death (plague): 30–50 percent general mortality.
- 1351 Statute of Laborers, legislating penalties for laborers demanding higher wages.
- c. 1352 *Winner and Waster* (alliterative poem): beginning of “alliterative revival.”
- 1357 First record of Geoffrey Chaucer (as page to countess of Ulster).
- 1360 Peace of Bretigny between France and England.
- c. 1360 *Prick of Conscience* (didactic English poem preserved in 114 copies, the most popular work in English of Middle Ages).
- 1362 Winds destroy thousands of trees.
- c. 1362 *Piers Plowman*, A text.
- c. 1370 Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*.
- 1375 Widespread return of plague.
- 1376 “Good” Parliament; first Speaker elected for Commons; impeachment of king’s mistress and financial associates; death of the Black Prince.

1377–99 Richard II

- 1377 Richard accedes to throne, age 10.
- c. 1377 John Gower, *Mirour de l’Omme* (30,000-line French allegory of vices and virtues).
- 1378–1417 Great Schism: rival popes at Rome and Avignon.
- c. 1378 *Piers Plowman*, B text.
- 1380 John Wyclif, inspirer of the Lollards, condemned for heresy at Blackfriars.
- 1381 Rebellion of “peasants” (and many others), June 12–15.

- c. 1378–82 John Gower, *Vox clamantis* (“voice of one crying out”) (30,000-line Latin poem satirizing a wide range of social estates and professions; after 1381 an opening dream-vision of the Rebellion in which the rebels appear as monstrous beasts was added).
- c. 1385 Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*.
- c. 1385 Thomas Usk writes allegorical self-defense for charges of treason, *Testament of Love*.
- c. 1387 John Trevisa translates into English Ranulph Higden’s Latin universal chronicle, in which Trevisa declares that the English nobility no longer know French any more than “their left heel.”
- c. 1370–1400 John Gower: *Cinkante Balades* (fifty-one French ballads on love, dedicated in final form to Henry IV).
- 1388 “Merciless” Parliament, conviction and execution or exile of king’s close advisors; Thomas Usk convicted and executed.
- 1389 Richard retakes control of government.
- c. 1390 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and other alliterative poems (e.g., *Siege of Jerusalem*, *Pearl*, *St. Erkenwald*).
- c. 1392 John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* (English with Latin).
- 1394 Death of Queen Anne of Bohemia, Richard’s queen; Richard destroys palace at Sheen (where Anne died). Richard begins rebuilding Great Hall of Westminster Palace.
- c. 1395 Second version of the Wycliffite Bible.
- 1397 “Lords Appellant” convicted of treason.

1399–1413 Henry IV

- 1401 Statute *De Heretico Comburendo* (For the Burning of Heretics); William Sawtry burned for heresy (first Lollard burning).
- 1402–8 Glendower’s revolt in Wales.
- 1405 Percy revolt; execution of Richard Scrope, archbishop of York.
- 1410 Lollard Disendowment Bill.

1413–22 Henry V

- 1414 Rebellion of the Lollards under Sir John Oldcastle.
- 1415 Henry's first expedition to France; battle of Agincourt.
- 1420 Treaty of Troyes between England and France; Henry marries Catherine of France and is recognized as heir to her father, Charles VI ("the Mad").
- c. 1420 Margery Kempe's *Book* written.

1422–61 Henry VI

- 1422–37 Henry VI crowned as infant, England ruled by dukes of Gloucester and Bedford (to 1435).
- 1429 Joan of Arc defeats English; Charles VII crowned.
- 1431 Joan of Arc burned.
- 1431–38 John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*.
- 1455 Reginald Pecock, bishop of St. Asaph and Chichester, writes English prose works against the Lollards, appealing to reason and Scripture.
- 1457 Reginald Pecock condemned for heresy in denying the primacy of Church authority and relying only on reason and Scripture; reprieved from burning by public recantation.

1461–83 Edward IV

- c. 1470 *Wisdom, Mankind* (morality plays); Robert Henryson flourishes (Scotland).
- 1471 Former king Henry VI murdered.
- 1477 Blind Harry, *The Wallace* (Scottish verse historical epic).
- 1478 Thomas Malory, *Morte d'Arthur*.
- 1478 First print of *The Canterbury Tales* (William Caxton).

1483 Edward V

- 1483 Edward V accedes as king, but immediately opposed by Richard of Gloucester; Lord Rivers, Edward's guardian, is arrested and executed; Edward, lodged in the Tower, vanishes from records.

1483–5 Richard III

- 1485 Henry Tudor lands in Wales; Richard III defeated and killed at battle of Bosworth.

1485–1509 Henry VII

- 1487 Yorkist rebellion (defeated).
1497 Cornish rebellion (defeated).
1499 Skelton's *Bowge of Court*.

Abbreviations

CCSL	<i>Corpus christianorum, series latina</i> (Turnhout, 1953–)
DNB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 61 vols. (Oxford, 2004, and online edition 2004–)
EETS	The Early English Text Society; ES: Early Series; OS: Original Series
MS	manuscript
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64, and online edition 1996–)

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References in notes with * are given in full in Guides to Further Reading.

Contents

List of illustrations page vii

Notes on contributors viii

Chronology x

Abbreviations xviii

Introduction: medieval English culture and its companions

ANDREW GALLOWAY 1

Part One Theaters of culture: political, legal, material 15

1 From court to nation

SCOTT WAUGH 17

2 The legal revolution and the discourse of dispute in the twelfth century

PAUL HYAMS 43

3 Archaeology and post-Conquest England

DAVID A. HINTON 66

Part Two Cultural ideals and cultural conflicts 85

4 Social ideals and social disruption

RICHARD KAEUPER 87

5 “Celtic” visions of England

DAVID N. DUMVILLE 107

6 The idea of sanctity and the uncanonized life of Margery Kempe

REBECCA KRUG 129

Part Three Literacies, languages, and literatures 147

- 7 Visual texts in post-Conquest England
LAURA KENDRICK 149
- 8 Literacy, schooling, universities
RALPH HANNA 172
- 9 Anglo-Latin literature in the later Middle Ages
DAVID CARLSON 195
- 10 The vernaculars of medieval England, 1170–1350
ELAINE TREHARNE 217
- 11 English literary voices, 1350–1500
DAVID LAWTON 237

Part Four Legacies and re-creations 259

- 12 Literary reformations of the Middle Ages
HELEN COOPER 261
- 13 Re-creating the Middle Ages
CLARE A. SIMMONS 279

Guides to further reading 299

Index 318

Introduction: medieval English culture and its companions

This “companion” is designed to introduce a range of materials deemed to constitute the culture (or, perhaps better, cultures) of medieval England, from approximately the Norman Conquest to roughly the Reformation. The fields presented here may offer a rather unusual fit with standard courses and disciplines, but the pressures on modern frameworks are intended. It is not unusual, however, for study of early periods to offer some combination of “literature,” “history,” “archaeology,” “art history,” or other fields. Studies in antiquity and the Renaissance do this regularly, and medieval studies from the outset was defined in an equally capacious framework. Partly this is because times more distant from our world make obvious the need for a more varied set of tools yet more synthetic angle of view. To be sure, the history of scholarship shows that studies in particular disciplines need the context of their own conversations, debates, and long-cultivated tools and strategies. But scholarly history also suggests that work in particular fields flourishes in an environment of other pursuits in the same period. Scholars and students in any one field need the companionship of others pursuing related kinds of work, to broaden perspectives and inspire new ways of carrying out particular endeavors, and to advance our understanding of how issues and materials that we treat separately were in their own period related.

A portable guide with such goals can only introduce and provoke, aiming for a significant variety of approaches, as well as a significant range of disciplines. The fields treated here include political and legal history, archaeology, social history, art history, religion, history of education, and, especially, the literatures of medieval England: Latin, French, and English. A general chronological sequence is followed