PREFACE

> We began to laugh as Roman augurs
> did, according to Cicero.
> LERMONTOV, *A Hero of Our Time*

Over half the amount of medieval writing in Anglo-Norman which still awaits publication is of a general prognostic nature. It thus represents a significant corpus of material, previously confined to little known manuscripts, and wholly uninvestigated, which accordingly forms the subject of the following pages in which a wide range of texts is edited with commentary in an attempt to illustrate as fully as possible the medieval preoccupation with prediction and what is popularly known as 'fortune-telling'. Like medical writings, prognostic texts range from short prescriptions[1] to full-length treatises[2]. It is clear that the persistent copying of such texts exemplifies a constant concern of medieval English culture, the study of which calls for no apology or special justification. Indeed, it has aleady been acknowledged that "although medieval treatises on prognostication have largely escaped the attentions of scholarship, such texts circulated widely in late medieval England in both Latin and the vernaculars."[3] Since these words were written disappointingly little work has been done, despite the stimulus that was always there in Lynn Thorndike's magisterial survey[4], which should have alerted cultural

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1   *Cf.* T. Hunt, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1990) esp. p. 16.
2   *Cf. id, Anglo-Norman Medicine*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1994 & 1997).
3   L.E. Voigts, "The Golden Table of Pythagoras" in L.M. Matheson, *Popular and Practical Science of Medieval England*, Medieval Texts and Studies 11 (East Lansing, 1994) [p. 123-38] 123. See also her earlier article "The Latin verse and Middle English prose texts on the Sphere of Life and Death in Harley 3719", *The Chaucer Review* 21 (1986), 291-305.
4   "Latin Astrology and divination: especially in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries" in *id.*, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* 1 (New York / London, 1923), ch.xxix,

historians to the notable intellectual investment of the Middle Ages in prognostication. It is clear that Anglo-Norman regularly turns out to be the missing link between pseudo-scientific writings in Latin and those in Middle English. Insufficient incentive to further investigation may be the unfortunate legacy of the lack of enthusiasm displayed by Paul Meyer, who despite his normally unquenchable curiosity, confessed "L'étude des divers arts de divination n'a rien de bien attrayant et l'on ne s'étonne pas que le sujet ait été jusqu'ici peu exploré."[1] In contrast to Meyer's negative verdict, however, the pre-Conquest period has attracted renewed interest and excited a resurgence of research, leading to a thorough revision of our knowledge. This has occurred thanks largely to the recent work of László Chardonnens[2], who, building on the celebrated achievements of his predecessors Cockayne[3], Max Förster[4], and Henel[5], together with the collateral efforts of R.M. Liuzza[6], has collected 174 prognostic texts containing Old English, gathered from 37 manuscripts. His view is that the main body of prognostics was copied in a small number of religious foundations, notably those of Canterbury, Winchester and Worcester. The majority of the prognostics he collects are in Latin (114 out of the 174), though of course there are also Latin ones glossed in Old English and texts entirely written in Old English. Much depends on the language of the predominant context. For example, calendars are overwhelmingly Latinate and freestanding, whereas prognostic texts are often assembled as sequences favouring the vernacular. In addition to the work of Chardonnens, Liuzza has now furnished an edition and study of a collection of prognostic texts found in an eleventh-century manuscript from Christ Church, Canterbury[7]. The principal absentee from these investigations has been Anglo-Norman, and to demonstrate

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p. 672-91 and Appendix 1, p. 692-4.

1   *Romania* 32 (1903), 96.
2   L.S. Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100* (Leiden / Boston, 2007).
3   T.O. Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England…* 3 vols. (London, 1864-66), rev. edn. by C.W. Singer (1961), and discussion in Chardonnens, p. 17-20.
4   See Chardonnens (bibliography), p. 573 and ch. 1, p. 22-3. He describes Förster's categories on p. 12.
5   Particularly "Altenglischer Mönchsaberglaube", *Englische Studien* 69 (1934-5), 329-49.
6   R.M. Liuzza, "Anglo-Saxon Prognostics in Context. A Survey and Handlist of Manuscripts", *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (2001), 181-230.
7   *id*., *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics. An Edition and Translation of Texts from London, British Library, Ms Cotton Tiberius A.iii.* (Woodbridge, 2011) with rich bibliography.

how many pieces were still missing from the Insular jigsaw I assembled a short survey of the materials, by coincidence in the very same year that Chardonnens published his study[1], and so, here too, the time is ripe for the provision of carefully edited texts. These are essentially Anglo-Norman, but I have tried to keep in mind the trilingual context in which they were copied[2], which is therefore illustrated by the provision of analogues composed in Latin and Middle English. I have avoided revisiting the extensive Middle English material which has already been edited by Laurel Means (Braswell)[3].

It is not necessary to anticipate the future in order to thank Professors Yan Greub, Richard Trachsler and Stefano Rapisarda, who have shown me much kindness and expert assistance in the preparation of this study.

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1   T. Hunt, "Les Pronostics en Anglo-Normand: méthodes et documents" in R. Trachsler (ed.), *Moult Obscures Paroles : Études sur la prophétie médiévale* (Paris, 2007), p. 29-50 and P. Pahta & I. Taavitsainen, *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English* (Cambridge, 2004).
2   See D.A. Trotter (ed.), *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2000).
3   *Medieval Lunar Astrology. A Collection of Representative Middle English Texts* (Lewiston / Queenston / Lampeter, 1993).