

EDITING AND INTERPRETATION  
OF MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS

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EDITING AND INTERPRETATION  
OF MIDDLE ENGLISH TEXTS

Essays in Honour of William Marx

Edited by

Margaret Connolly  
and Raluca Radulescu



BREPOLS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- BL            British Library
- BnF            Bibliothèque nationale de France
- Brie            *The Brut or the Chronicles of England*, ed. by Friedrich W. D. Brie  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1906–08)
- CUL            Cambridge University Library
- BodL            Bodleian Library
- DIMEV*        *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Linne R. Mooney,  
Daniel W. Mosser, and Elizabeth Solopova  
<<http://www.dimev.net/>> [accessed 1 May 2016]
- EC*            *An English Chronicle 1377–1461: A New Edition, Edited  
from Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 21068 and  
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lyell 34*, ed. by William Marx  
(Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003)
- EETS            Early English Text Society
- e.s.            Extra Series
- IMEV*        *Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Carleton Brown and Rossell  
Hope Robbins (New York: The Index Society, 1943)
- ISTC            Incunabula Short Title Catalogue  
<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/>> [accessed 1 August 2017]
- LALME*        *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. by Angus  
McIntosh, Michael L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin, 4 vols (Aber-  
deen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986)

- MED* *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath and others  
(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001)  
<<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med>> [accessed 1 July 2017]
- MEPB* Middle English Prose *Brut*
- MET* Middle English Texts
- NIMEV* *New Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Julia Boffey  
and A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2005)
- NLW* National Library of Wales
- ODNB* *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*  
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- o.s.* Original Series
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary*
- s.s.* Supplementary Series
- STC* *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and  
Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, first  
compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd edn revised  
and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, Katharine F. Panzer,  
and others, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91)
- STS* Scottish Text Society
- TEAMS* Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages  
<<http://www.teamsmedieval.org>> [accessed 1 August 2017]



William Marx.  
Photo: Janet Burton.



## PREFACE: CARL WILLIAM MARX

Derek Pearsall

When William Marx arrived at the University of York in 1974, he had already completed a Master's degree at the University of Toronto, and so he was enrolled almost immediately for the D. Phil. The name that he went by at this time was Carl Marx, but the predictable monotony of professorial humour on the subject soon persuaded him that change was necessary, and he emerged as William when he left York to take up his post at Saint David's University College, Lampeter, in 1979. During the time that he was working for his doctorate at York, Elizabeth Salter provided the inspiration for much of his work on the complex traditions of Passion and Redemption narrative, and her absence and illness in the two years before she died in 1980 meant the loss of his main supervisor. He had to make do with me. He was a wonderful graduate student, soon enough employed as an undergraduate teacher, and I learnt a lot from him. He had already decided what he was going to work on — an edition with commentary of the early fifteenth-century poem known as *The Devils' Parliament*.

His thesis was a pioneering attempt to deal fully with a lively and dramatic poem that had baffled scholars, both for the complex relationship of the different manuscript versions and also for the enigmatic version that it gave of the popular theology of the Atonement. William sorted it all out, and in the process established himself as an authority on the subject, replying definitively to views that had achieved wide currency. He subsequently published an authoritative monograph on the subject, called *The Devil's Rights* (1995), which carried the story up from Anselm to the fifteenth century. There was also an edi-

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tion and study (1990) of the twelfth-century Latin *Conflictus inter Deum et Diabolum*, in which many of the ideas later taken up by vernacular writers were first adumbrated, and a meticulous edition (1993), for the series called Middle English Texts, of *The Devils' Parliament* itself.

In fact, his work on this poem proved to be the foundation of a life's career, for William's interest in popular theology, in particular the understanding among the laity of the theology and doctrine of the Redemption, became for him a subject of absorbing interest. The edition of the *Parliament* was accompanied by an edition of the *Harrowing of Hell and the Destruction of Jerusalem*. The coupling of the two works was not an arbitrary choice, nor are the two works taken from the same manuscript, nor is it simply that the one followed the other, so to speak, in the Redemption narrative. It was rather that William wanted to set two kinds of understanding of the story side by side, the imaginative and the 'historical', and to give respect to both. This important idea went back to an earlier edition, also published in the Middle English Texts series, with Jeanne F. Drennan as co-editor, of *The Complaint of Our Lady and the Gospel of Nicodemus* (1987). In this case it was in the original manuscript that the historical story was juxtaposed with the affective Marian devotion which was another and more fashionable strand of medieval piety, less attentive to the legal status of the Redemption. In a much later book, the edition of the *Liber aureus* and another version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (2013, also for the Middle English Texts series, of which William was now one of the general editors), he returned to the same contrastive juxtapositions, concerned, I think, to restore works like *Nicodemus* to their proper place in the history of Middle English religious writing, where they had tended to be dismissed as anachronistic, their legalism contrasted unfavourably with the affective devotion of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* (the *Liber aureus* is a version of some chapters from the latter). The vigour and continuing importance of this kind of non-elite religious writing is decisively demonstrated in *Piers Plowman*, the subject of an excellent chapter in *The Devil's Rights*. These contrastive themes appear also in his contribution to the collection of studies of the Vernon manuscript (1990), and in the important essay he wrote for the Festschrift in honour of Manfred Görlach (2002), as also in an essay for the Festschrift for Hans Sauer (2011), significantly called 'The Edge of Orthodoxy'.

Throughout this body of scholarship, which constitutes the core of William's work, he was building up his expertise in the study of manuscripts: in his early essay on debatable text-boundaries in Middle English manuscript miscellanies, in studies of individual manuscripts such as the Sherborne Missal

(2002), and in several studies of the manuscripts of particular works, such as *Nicodemus* (1991, 1994, 1995) and the prose *Brut* (1991–92, 1997, and 2003). Sometimes an essay or study would be prompted by holdings in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, such as the edition of the *English Chronicle* 1377–1461 (2003), parts of which are peculiarly interesting, and the study of a Welsh-English bilingual manuscript (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 12). A handsome proportion of William's research and writing can be put into the category of 'service' to the scholarly community, such as his volume on the holdings of the National Library of Wales in the *Index of Middle English Prose* (1999), and his unselfish work on the Founders' Library at Lampeter (1994, 1997). This kind of professional service is represented too in his editing of Festschriften for R. C. Rider (1997), with Janet Burton; for David Selwyn (2004); and for Oliver Pickering (2010), with Janet Burton and Veronica O'Mara, and in his organization of an immensely successful conference of the Early Book Society at Lampeter in 1997. His subsequent edition of the proceedings (1999) was in a Lampeter journal, *Trivium*, that he also helped on other occasions to edit. Amid all this, it is refreshing, especially to me, that William still found time to talk about form and structure in literature, as in his essay on rhyme and stanza-linking in *The Devils' Parliament* (2010).

William was taken ill, quite unexpectedly, in February 2006, a cardio-myopathy having resulted in heart failure. His condition was serious, and he had to give up his job for a time; when he returned in 2007, after a remarkably rapid recovery, it was on a much reduced part-time basis. In all this time, he had, as always, the devoted support of his wife Janet (Janet Burton), herself a distinguished scholar of medieval English monastic history. He gradually improved in health, and returned to his job for a while, but soon took early retirement. He declared himself to be slowing down on all fronts, but in fact probably worked harder than ever. In readiness for retirement, he and Janet had bought a flat in Headington, Oxford, where they spend more and more time and are eventually to settle. All wish them a happy and productive retirement there.

William's career, resumed after such a serious and worrying illness, was celebrated at a conference in his honour at the University of Hull, organized by Veronica O'Mara, in 2015. It was a tremendous success, and very well attended. Here William fell naturally into the role of honoree, his scholarly stoop, always distinguished, now more authoritative than ever.

