

# **Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020-1220 (Oxford Textual Perspectives)**

Elaine Treharne

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Oxford Textual Perspectives is a new series of informative and provocative studies focused upon literary texts (conceived of in the broadest sense of that term) and the technologies, cultures and communities that produce, inform, and receive them. It provides fresh interpretations of fundamental works and of the vital and challenging issues emerging in English literary studies. By engaging with the materiality of the literary text, its production, and reception history, and frequently testing and exploring the boundaries of the notion of text itself, the volumes in the series question familiar frameworks and provide innovative interpretations of both canonical and less well-known works. Living through Conquest is the first ever investigation of the political clout of English from the reign of Cnut to the earliest decades of the thirteenth century. It focuses on why and how the English language was used by kings and their courts and by leading churchmen and monastic institutions at key moments from 1020 to 1220. English became the language of choice of a usurper king; the language of collective endeavour for preachers and prelates; and the language of resistance and negotiation in the post-Conquest period. Analysing texts that are not widely known, such as Cnut's two Letters to the English of 1020 and 1027, Worcester's Confraternity Agreement, and the Eadwine Psalter, alongside canonical writers like AElfric and Wulfstan, Elaine Treharne demonstrates the ideological significance of the native vernacular and its social and cultural relevance alongside Latin, and later, French. While many scholars to date have seen the period from 1060 to 1220 as a literary lacuna as far as English is concerned, this book demonstrates unequivocally that the hundreds of vernacular works surviving from this period attest to a lively and rich textual tradition. Living Through Conquest addresses the political concerns of English writers and

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