IAN DOYLE

Anthony Ian Doyle

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elected Fellow of the British Academy 1992

by

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A.I. Doyle was one of the leading British palaeographers during the latter half of the 20th century. His work on the many thousands of codices containing the surviving writings in Middle English was a major contribution to a more general revolution in medieval manuscript studies that took place over the period, and continued well into the present century. He spent much of his working life as Keeper of Rare Books at Durham University Library, also contributing widely to the study of early printed materials, and to the establishment of standards in the care of special collections.

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A. J. Doyle

I

A.I. Doyle, whose outstanding contributions to the palaeographical, historical and literary study of medieval English manuscripts spanned over 75 years, was born in Liverpool on 24 October 1925. His parents were Norah and Edward Doyle, and his father was employed for most of his life by the Liverpool firm of Vincent Murphy & Co, timber merchants. The family, which included a younger sister, lived at this time in the residential neighbourhood of Waterloo, near Crosby, a few miles north of Liverpool itself. Doyle, who was never to marry, always remained conscious of what he regarded as the privilege of a comfortable and happy upbringing. Together with his strong Catholic faith, it was certainly an underlying element in his exceptional and lifelong generosity to charities and other good causes, which stood in marked contrast to the frugality of his personal habits. He was educated under the exacting eye of the Christian Brothers at St Mary's College in Crosby, and upon the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939 he elected to remain there, rather than accept evacuation to north America along with his sister. Owing to a chronic asthmatic condition Doyle was considered not fit for military service, and was able to contemplate wartime study at university. He applied to read English at Cambridge, 'swotting through the Blitz on Liverpool', and sat the entrance examination for Downing College in December 1941.[1]

English at Downing was by this time the stronghold and personal fief of F.R. Leavis, already a controversial figure, who had established himself as a leading literary critic and cultural commentator during the 1930s, partly through his own publications and partly through his dominant role in the establishment of *Scrutiny*, a periodical whose influence extended far beyond Cambridge. Notwithstanding Leavis's overtly agnostic and secularist outlook, his reputation as a teacher, the conspicuous success of his students in the English Tripos, and the distinctive critical voice of *Scrutiny*, clearly held an appeal to Catholic educational establishments, a number of which (including St Mary's, Crosby) encouraged promising pupils for English to apply to Downing.[2] Among the same intake

Note on sources: Doyle's personal papers, which include autobiographical writings, together with files chiefly concerning research on subjects connected with Durham and north-east England, are in Durham University Library ([DUL], Archives and Special Collections, AID/A–G. Research files concerned with palaeography, bibliography and other fields of academic enquiry, including much correspondence, are now in Cambridge, University Library [CUL], Additional MS 10301. The most recent bibliography of his publications is in Saunders *et al.* (eds), *Middle English Manuscripts and their Legacies* (see n. 21 below), 393–409.

[1] 'A. I. Doyle (1942) recalls wartime life in Downing', *Downing College Association Newsletter* (2005), 22–3 at 22.

[2] Of the eight Firsts awarded in Part I of the English Tripos in 1938, for example, four had gone to candidates from Downing, and in 1939 Leavis's pupils took four of the seven Firsts awarded in Part II English; *Cambridge University Reporter* (18 June 1938), 1116; (17 June 1939), 1157. It was an era when First Class degrees at Oxbridge were published in *The Times*, and keenly noted in the more competitive schools.

as Doyle in 1942, for example, was T.A.C. Birrell of Downside, who went on to pursue a similarly distinguished career in bibliographical scholarship, and remained a lifelong friend.[3] Leavis, though slightly mystified by his following among Catholic schoolmasters, and by the Catholic priests and monks studying at other colleges who applied to him for supervision, nonetheless seems to have valued the intellectually committed, principled, and well-read pupils he attracted from such backgrounds.[4] Throughout his time as an undergraduate and graduate student at Downing, Doyle thus belonged to something of a Catholic and high Anglican coterie within, or associated with, the English school at the college. As well as Birrell, it also included others who went on to significant scholarly careers in the humanities, notably the flamboyant American critic Marius Bewley, Maurice Hussey (another medievalist), Geoffrey Strickland, Dom Sebastian Moore (of Downside), John Farrelly (later a theologian), and the brothers Peter and Godfrey Lienhardt (later social anthropologists). Doyle's group were later recalled by a contemporary as 'the most impressive people around'.[5]

Even before the public announcement of his success in the college entrance examination (in which he excelled, and was awarded a Scholarship worth £60 p.a.),[6] Doyle had entered into correspondence with Leavis, requesting guidance as to what he should read before coming up to Cambridge. Leavis replied promptly, congratulating him on his success, and recommending that he begin with any back numbers of *Scrutiny* that he could find, read widely among the major English novelists from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf, consolidate his Shakespeare, and work hard at French.[7] Leavis took a keen personal interest in what he considered the correct intellectual development of those whom he taught, powerfully reinforced by his wife Queenie on the many occasions when he entertained his pupils at home. In return, many of them developed a strong personal allegiance to his style of thinking, teaching and expression. As we shall see, Doyle undoubtedly went on to participate, in some ways, in this tendency; but subsequent events also show that he succeeded in preserving a certain distance, and a degree of clear-headedness in relation to his formidable director of studies, that some of those who passed Leavis's way were to lack. In later life he freely and loyally acknowledged that he had learned much from Leavis's teaching, and that he remained privately committed to his literary and critical values. At the same time, he would also insist that he was not someone who would describe himself, or who could be described (in the proselytising sense), as a Leavisite. He felt that his move into a career

[3] Doyle contributed a memoir of Birrell to the *Downing College Association Newsletter* (2012), 58–60.
[4] See the extended discussion of this point in C. Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The* Scrutiny *Movement* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 82–4.
[5] P. Harrrison, 'Downing after the War', in I. MacKillop & R. Storer (eds), *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, (Sheffield, 1999), pp. 244–63 at p. 255.
[6] *Cambridge University Reporter* (13 January 1942), 397.
[7] Cambridge, Downing College Archives, DCPP/LEA/2/44, Leavis to Doyle, 7 January 1942.

in librarianship and bibliographical scholarship meant that (unlike many others) he had been able to remain on good terms with his former mentor, with whom he continued to correspond; and as we shall also see, he was heavily involved in the abortive scheme to produce a festschrift to mark Leavis's retirement in 1962.[8]

Doyle arrived to begin his undergraduate course in Cambridge in October 1942, shortly before his seventeenth birthday, and notwithstanding some difficult wartime conditions, went on amply to fulfil Leavis's high expectations, achieving first class honours in Part I of the English Tripos in 1944 and in Part II in 1945. His literary aptitude soon came to the attention of the editors of *Scrutiny*, for which he began to review academic publications and recent poetry from his second year onwards, readily adopting the characteristic critical posture and mode of expression favoured by Leavis and his followers.[9] In the extensive mythology of post-war 'Downing English' he came to be remembered as 'the austere Doyle', and his high-mindedness and air of intellectual aspiration did not go unremarked by easier-going contemporaries, who on occasion quoted with bemusement his *obiter dicta*, or gently lampooned his precociously donnish demeanour, in the college magazine, *The Griffin*.[10] It is important to recognise that, down to the time he accepted appointment as an assistant in the University Library at Durham in October 1950, and for some time afterwards, Doyle's ambition was to become a university lecturer in English literature. Many of his early publications were directed towards that end, alongside those in medieval studies, for which he had registered as a research student. As well as reviewing for *Scrutiny*, he ensured that his critical voice was heard in a number of new, left-leaning 'little magazines', mostly representing the work of younger dons and students, that began to appear in Cambridge and London as the war drew to an end. His searching comparative revaluation of the literary and political reputations of John Cornford and Rupert Brooke, published in the newly-founded but short-lived periodical *Sheaf* in 1945, might be judged a remarkably accomplished production by an undergraduate in any period.[11] In the first issue of *The Bridge*, in 1946, Doyle appears alongside the Marxists Raymond Williams and Wolf Mankowitz, writing a closely-

[8] Oral comment to the present writer.

[9] *Scrutiny*, 12 (1944), 236–8, 13 (1945), 143–53, 13 (1946), 311–16, reviews of Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, and various contemporary English and French poets. For remarks on the characteristic *Scrutiny* style, 'the journal's "watermark": its patterns of vocabulary, quotation and allusion', see Hilliard, *English as a Vocation*, 13. Certain features of it remained part of Doyle's characteristic mode of expression, both in print and private communications, for the remainder of his life.

[10] Harrison, 'Downing after the War', 249; *The Griffin*, 43 (Michaelmas 1948), 9, 'I've seen Mr D — with that suit on he | Wears writing reviews for "Scrutiny"'.

[11] *Sheaf*, ed. Balachandra Rajan & Wolf Mankowitz (Cambridge, n.d. [1945]), 9–15. Some idea of the milieu Doyle sought to identify himself with at this time may be gleaned from *Sheaf*'s editorial manifesto, which promised 'hard-hitting criticism' from a magazine that 'does not pull its punches'; 'We will not be coquettes in a critical fantasia' (p. 2).

argued critique of the work of the French poet and communist intellectual Louis Aragon, much lionised at the time by Cyril Connolly and others in *Horizon*.[12] A crisply dismissive review of Gerald Bullett's *George Eliot: her life and books* (1947) in the first issue of *The Critic* ('such writing about literature which maintains no principle of comprehension and utility can only be judged irresponsible'), was followed up by Doyle's uncompromising rejoinder to the author's reply in the next number of *Politics and Letters*, an issue that otherwise included contributions by the likes of J-P. Sartre, Raymond Williams, Leavis, Harold Laski, Lionel Elvin and G.D.H. Cole.[13] Articles and reviews in similar vein continued for a few more years, before his publications became exclusively focused on medieval and bibliographical studies. They give grounds for speculation as to the kind of literary critic A.I. Doyle might have become.[14]

Doyle's graduation in 1945 was also marked by his induction into the very small group of his former pupils whom Leavis considered fit to engage in the supervision of Downing undergraduates reading English. Leavis's own teaching by this time took the form of large classes (effectively impromptu critical lectures) in his college rooms, and to Doyle was delegated the supervision of individual and paired undergraduates for their weekly essays, particularly on medieval literature and Shakespeare, but also as small groups being prepared for the Practical Criticism papers central to both Parts of the English Tripos. The time-consuming and exacting demands of teaching for Downing continued until Doyle's departure for Durham in 1950 (when his rôle was taken over by H.A. Mason), and were a significant factor among the difficulties he was to encounter in completing his PhD thesis.[15]

A less conspicuous but no less significant influence than Leavis on Doyle's future was his tutor at Downing, the Fellow-Librarian W.L. Cuttle, a classical archaeologist of modest scholarly accomplishments, but a figure central to the academic and cultural development of his college in the 1930s and 1940s.[16] He was especially reputed for the care he took to see that his pupils found positions suitable to their abilities after graduation.

[12] 'Aragon: Opium for the Intelligensia?', *The Bridge*, 1 (April 1946), 51–9; Doyle was also given ample space to review two recent collections by Aragon, together with a critical study, in *Scrutiny* 13 (1946), 311–16.

[13] *The Critic*, 1 (1947), 70–1; *Politics and Letters*, 2–3 (1947), 93–4.

[14] He was, for example, unsparing of Charles Williams's posthumous *Arthurian Torso*, including its accompanying commentary by C.S. Lewis (*Downside Review*, 67 (1948), 225–7), having already (pseudonymously, as E.K.T. Dock) published a somewhat acidulous analysis of Lewis's claims to be a literary theologian, in *Scrutiny*, 14 (1947), 53–9, a review of *The Great Divorce* (1945).

[15] D. Matthews, *Memories of F. R. Leavis* (Bishopstone, 2010), pp. 6, 7, 12.

[16] W.L. Cuttle (1896–1958) served for long periods as Tutor, Senior Tutor, Dean and Librarian. He had been the prime mover in bringing Leavis to Downing as a college supervisor in English in 1931, and securing his promotion to a fellowship in 1936. For his obituary notice (partly by Leavis) see *The Griffin*, 54 (Michaelmas 1958), 3–4.

In Doyle's case, knowing that he wished to continue academic work in Cambridge, his tutor immediately engaged him as his assistant in the library.[17] Cuttle had interested himself only superficially in the college's historical collections and archives, and as well as involving him in routine library work, delegated to Doyle tasks such as marshalling Downing's contributions to on-going bibliographical projects, such as the revision of Pollard and Redgrave's *Short-Title Catalogue of Books ... 1475–1640*, and Adams's *Catalogue of Books printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501–1600, in Cambridge Libraries*. More importantly, he encouraged Doyle (in parallel with his application to begin a PhD on medieval literature) to investigate the neglected fragments of medieval manuscript material that had been left to Downing in 1813 by the Cambridge bookbinder and antiquary John Bowtell. The result, within a couple of months, was the first of in a series of minutely researched and technically exact scholarly publications, entirely different from the *Scrutiny*-inflected critical essays and reviews that Doyle was energetically publishing elsewhere at the same time.[18] One strand of these enquiries was later concluded in a highly accomplished contribution to the newly-inaugurated *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* in 1949, 'Two Medieval Calendars and other leaves removed by John Bowtell from Cambridge University Library MSS.', the work of this research student still in his early twenties sitting comfortably alongside that of several more senior practitioners of the time (and already of his acquaintance) in manuscript studies: N.R. Ker, R.A.B. Mynors, R.W. Hunt, and his research supervisor, Bruce Dickins, one of the editors of the journal.[19] A second strand of Doyle's work on the Downing calendar fragments was published shortly afterwards as 'Borley and the Waldegraves in the Sixteenth Century', and constitutes an earnest of the style of the resourceful but time-consuming prosopographical investigations into manuscript provenance that were to become another significant aspect of his scholarly identity.[20] Articles of this kind, rather than his other quite different publications at this time, typify the kind of work upon which his reputation subsequently came to be established.

[17] *The Griffin*, 43 (Michaelmas Term 1945), 2, notes the appointment of A.I. Doyle as Assistant to the College Librarian. His medical unfitness for military service meant that he was subject to the wartime Direction of Employment still in force, and ineligible for full research funding.

[18] 'Notes on a Medieval Kalendar', *The Griffin*, 43 (Lent Term 1946), 8–12.

[19] *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 1:i (1949), 29–36. Other contributors to this issue were some the most illustrious bibliographers of the time: E.P. Goldschmidt, F.J. Ferguson, J.B. Oldham, H.M. Adams, Sir Geoffrey Keynes, John Carter and J.C.T. Oates. One important outcome of Doyle's contribution was the restoration to Cambridge University Library of the leaves abstracted from its manuscripts by Bowtell.

[20] *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 24 (1951), 17–31. Doyle's innate aptitude for enquiries of this kind is very evident from his initial publication on the Downing MSS (see n. 18), and it developed rapidly, at first under the influence of his correspondence with their most accomplished practitioner at the time, Hope Emily Allen, of whom more below.

Doyle's appointment as Cuttle's assistant in the library at Downing not only gave him experience of academic librarianship that would be of use when he came to apply for a career post in the field, as he eventually did at Durham in 1950. It also gave him his first opportunity to engage with the primary materials of medieval palaeographical and bibliographical scholarship, where he was to find his true métier, notwithstanding his more overt ambition at the time, shared with a number of contemporaries who read English at Downing under Leavis, to become a teacher and critic in the *Scrutiny* mould. Throughout his working life Doyle preferred to publish relatively short or small-scale writings (including many searching reviews), often of cumulative significance, and often with far-reaching but latent, or unadvertised implication for bibliographical, palaeographical and codicological studies in general. Like the great 19th-century Cambridge scholar-librarian Henry Bradshaw, with whom he possessed several affinities, Doyle famously never wrote a book.[21] By nature and aptitude his inclination quickly developed towards circumspect and carefully qualified analytical description of the particularities of what he observed in, or concerning the histories of, medieval manuscripts and early printed books. In his published work he was conspicuously wary of synoptic or generalised statements. In lectures and classes he never uttered them without immediately entering a series of qualifications and caveats. It is against this background that both the protracted gestation and the fraught examination of his PhD thesis should be understood. Likewise, so should the paradox of its subsequent celebrity, as it became one of the most oft-consulted and cited, but obstinately unpublished dissertations ever produced in the field of medieval English scholarship.[22]

Having completed his double First in English in June 1945 Doyle immediately embarked upon the process of applying to begin work upon a doctorate, where he at once seems to have found the requirement to frame the necessary plausible general topic of enquiry at odds with his empirical instincts. Moreover, the *Scrutiny* school of literary-critical thinking, in which he had acquired his intellectual formation, together with its idiosyncratic style of expression, were in certain ways not well adapted to address his chosen topic, 'to investigate the importance of the clergy in the production, consumption, promotion and development of Middle English literature during the fourteenth and

[21] Doyle held Bradshaw in high regard, and placed a print of his portrait over the fireplace in his study; see R. Beadle, 'Bradshaw, Durham, and Doyle', in C. Saunders, R. Lawrie & L. Atkinson (eds), *Middle English Manuscripts and their Legacies: A Volume in Honour of Ian Doyle* (Leiden, 2022), pp. 295–315, esp. pp. 295–6.

[22] The course of this challenging episode in Doyle's academic career may be traced in the formal documentation retained in the records of the Board of Research Studies (now the Board of Graduate Studies) and the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English (Cambridge University Library, University Archives, BoGS 1, 1952–3/64), here supplemented by oral comments he made about it in later life.

early fifteenth century'.[23] Nor could Doyle have been ignorant of Leavis's oft-expressed and contemptuous view of literary research (notwithstanding his own doctorate), as 'the higher navvying'.

Doyle's initial research proposal was promptly returned to him for re-formulation by the Faculty of English's Degree Committee, and his formal acceptance in October 1945, for the customary two-year period as a student for the degree of MLitt, was delayed by the intervening Long Vacation. Early in the Michaelmas Term the Committee accepted a revised proposal, albeit still couched in the applicant's idiosyncratic style. It would encompass large undertakings, including an estimate of 'the extent and conditions of literacy' and 'the history of vernacular manuscripts': '[E]ach class of Middle English literature (didactic, encyclopaedic, homiletic, devotional, discursive, allegorical, romances, courtly verse etc.') would be examined, together with the 'social constitution and functions of the clerical classes' within their various milieux ('local, court, noble, household, monastic, ecclesiastical etc.'). Though its focus was to shift and narrow as the project developed, it is not difficult to see behind Doyle's proposal, at this stage, a well-established local tradition of scholarship, involving intensive and methodical study of selected primary sources within a broader context of the social and intellectual history of the later medieval period. It was essentially that pioneered at Cambridge by G.G. Coulton, lecturer in the English Faculty from 1919 to 1934, and it found expression in a distinguished series of publications, by his own students and others of his circle, the Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, which included weighty and influential works such as Eileen Power's *Medieval English Nunneries*, G.R. Owst's *Preaching in Medieval England*, and Margaret Deanesly's *The Lollard Bible*. 'Life and Thought' indeed was a formulation enshrined in the titles of the period papers of the English Tripos in which Doyle had so recently excelled, and was now preparing to teach: 'Literature, Life, and Thought, 1066–1350', and so on.[24]

The supervisor appointed to oversee Doyle's ambitious programme of enquiry was H.S. Bennett, a student of Coulton's, whose extensive research into the social background of later medieval English literature seemed, on the face of it, suitably matched to Doyle's avowed interests, thus expressed.[25] The association with Bennett however was

[23] In a conference paper published 55 years later Doyle remarked of this episode ' ... I started in English literature, by trying to discover who were the earliest readers and hearers of the late fourteenth-century alliterative poem *Piers Plowman*, and when I decided I could not find enough direct and indirect evidence about that work, I extended my research to a much wider audience of Middle English verse and prose'; 'Recent Directions in Middle English Manuscript Study', in D. Pearsall (ed.), *New Directions in Middle English Manuscript Studies* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 1–14, at 1.

[24] In the Preface to his dissertation Doyle emphasises the foundational importance to own project of the work of Owst and Deanesly, and elsewhere makes careful use of Power's.

[25] Basil Willey, 'Bennett, Henry Stanley, 1889–1972', *Proceedings of the. British Academy*, 58 (1973), 551–67, warmly attests to how widely he was liked and respected in the Faculty and across the University. Doyle

short-lived. Within a year, in August 1946, Doyle was transferred to supervision by the philologist and textual scholar Bruce Dickins, who had arrived to take up the post of Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon the previous January, under whose guidance he remained until the award of his doctorate in 1953.

Bennett, one of the founding lecturers in the Faculty of English, was known chiefly for his books *The Pastons and their England* (1922, many times reprinted, and still perhaps the most accessible introduction to its subject), and *Life on the English Manor* (1937), both published in Coulton's Medieval Life and Thought series. Though he possessed extensive first-hand acquaintance with many of the primary sources for late medieval English social history (particularly manorial documents), and though he pursued historical bibliography in its enumerative, sociological and non-technical aspects, Bennett perhaps proved not to be an ideal supervisor for a research student whose interests were rapidly coming to include the more intricate aspects of palaeography, and what we now refer to as codicology, areas where Dickins possessed acknowledged expertise.[26] Doyle was however grateful to Bennett for his initial guidance, which included a recommendation that he begin by reading Rossell Hope Robbins's Cambridge PhD dissertation 'On the Medieval English Religious Lyric' (1937, the last in the Faculty to be supervised by Coulton), which among other things became one of the invisible foundations of the indispensable *Index of Middle English Verse* (1943). Robbins's impressive two-volume work was based on first-hand consultation of around 2,000 poems scattered through about 400 manuscripts. As well as transcribing many of them for the first time, it addressed questions of authorship and audience within the context of the religious life of the time, sermons, and the liturgy.[27] Its influence on the shaping of Doyle's project is very clear. He later said that while Robbins gave him a useful template for exploring the manuscript sources for other kinds of religious verse more germane to his own work, it was also a sobering earnest of the dimensions of the subject he had proposed. Had he been able to read them, Doyle might have been given further pause by the reports on Robbins's work. While suitably impressed by the scale and reach of Robbins's research, the examiners (Kenneth Sisam and Hilda J.M. Murray) emphasised the difficulties inherent in dealing with the fragmentary, discontinuous and often

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however is likely to have been aware that Bennett, a former friend and college colleague of Leavis and his wife (who generally made no secret of their personal and professional antipathies) had become the object of implacable rejection on their part, because of an imagined slight in the early 1930s; see I. MacKillop, *F. R. Leavis: a Life in Criticism* (London, 1995), pp. 128–9.

[26] A contrast in approach between the two may be observed in Doyle's somewhat sharply worded review (the tone of which he later said he regretted) of the first volume of Bennett's series of studies of *English Books and Readers* between 1474 and 1603; *The Cambridge Review* (18 October 1952), 42, 44 (with a somewhat nettled response by Bennett, and an unrepentant rejoinder by Doyle, *The Cambridge Review* (8 November 1952), 112).

[27] Cambridge, University Library, PhD 914–5.

inconclusive nature of the evidence afforded by the Middle English manuscript record, adumbrating criticisms that were to be writ large by the examiners of Doyle's own less successful submission a dozen years later.[28]

Bruce Dickins belonged to a tradition of scholarship unrepresented at this time in the Faculty of English, quite different from Bennett's, and indeed from that of anyone whom Doyle had so far encountered in Cambridge. Widely erudite in many branches of medieval scholarship, including the philological study and editing of Middle English manuscripts, richly endowed with the restless curiosity of the British antiquarian tradition, and preferring to publish in short forms rather than monograph, Dickins in various ways represented the kind of scholar Doyle himself was to become. Demanding and astringent in manner, he arrived in Cambridge with a reputation as an effective supervisor of those research students who were able to meet his exacting standards.[29]

Doyle's period as a candidate for the MLitt came to an end a year into supervision under Dickins, in the autumn of 1947, and he applied for registration for the degree of PhD, by thesis due for submission by the end of September 1949. In doing so, he submitted a much less elaborate scheme for his dissertation than he had done two years previously. It was to be limited to an assessment of 'the agency of the clergy in the composition, reproduction and use of writings in English during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries … principally by investigation of all the available evidence of manuscript production, ownership and associations'. At the same time Dickins wrote to the Degree Committee, recommending that Doyle be registered, but adding perceptively, with both foresight and foreboding, 'I am not responsible for the subject, which is one that will tax his qualities to the utmost, but he has now worked under me for a year and I have found him man of determination and critical ability, who has the makings of a scholar'.

Aside from formal supervision, Doyle had also been making himself known to authorities in his field outside Cambridge. In 1946, at the suggestion of R.W. Hunt of the Bodleian, he entered in to correspondence with the independent American scholar Hope Emily Allen, a member of G.G. Coulton's circle who, after a period at Cambridge in the 1920s and very numerous visits to British libraries thereafter, had established herself as a preëminent authority on manuscripts containing Middle English religious writings.[30] He went on to correspond extensively with her, and her influence on his methods of

[28] Cambridge University Archives, BoGS 1 1937–8, Box 95.

[29] R.I. Page, 'Bruce Dickins, 1889–1978', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 64 (1979), 341–56.

[30] J.C. Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen: Medieval Scholarship and Feminism* (Norman OK, 1989), 28–9. Allen's formidable reputation rested on her research into manuscripts containing devotional, contemplative and mystical writings, and she had devoted a major monograph to the establishment of the canon of Richard Rolle's writings, which was to be an important model for Doyle's own investigations. Her identification of the manuscript of *Book of Margery Kempe* in 1934 ranks among the most sensational discoveries in medieval English studies in recent times.

enquiry was later explicitly acknowledged in the preface to his thesis.[31] No less significant at this time was the initiation of his close and lifelong friendship with N.R. Ker, appointed Reader in Palaeography at Oxford in 1946, to the first edition of whose *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (1941) Doyle almost immediately began to send additions, corrections and other information, as his own research advanced.[32] At the same time as making contact with senior authorities in his field Doyle also sought out contemporaries embarking on enquiries in fields close to his own. The most enduring of such associations was with a research student from Bedford College, London named Elizabeth Jones, who later, as Elizabeth Zeeman (while a lecturer at Cambridge), and Elizabeth Salter (as professor at York), went on to have a significant influence on teaching and research in medieval literature in Britain, in which the kind of work being pioneered by Doyle at this time was to play an important part.[33] Her then unpublished work on Middle English prose lives of Christ is repeatedly acknowledged in his thesis.

When Doyle first embarked upon his postgraduate research there were only limited opportunities for formal instruction in palaeography and the study of books in manuscript.[34] Like some others who have gone on to succeed in these fields he was to some extent self-taught through his own practice, with informal advice from senior scholars who happened to be on hand while he was a beginner.[35] It might be thought that things

[31] For Allen's correspondence see Hirsh, *Hope Emily Allen*, 168; the very long letter from Allen to Doyle concerning the provenance and relationships of the Vernon and Simeon MSS, of which Hirsh quotes part (23 November 1947), must have struck him as something like a masterclass in this kind of research. Sometimes a harsh judge of younger scholars, Allen later noted that she had been dismayed to find Doyle guilty of a misreading (of a single letter) in an ownership inscription in the Simeon MS, and having thus found his scholarship 'not 100 per cent satisfactory', decided to become more sparing of her advice. She was however heartened to learn that he was being supervised by Dickins. Philadelphia PA, Bryn Mawr College Library, Hope Emily Allen Papers, Hirsh Box 1, Doyle to Allen, 1 September [no year, ?1948]; Allen Papers, Box 1 'English Recluses', draft by Allen, to an unidentified correspondent, 9 November 1955. I am grateful to Dr Helen Leith Spencer for these references.

[32] A.I. Doyle, 'Neil Ripley Ker 1908–1982', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 80 (1979), 349–59.

[33] Elizabeth Salter, whose engaging personality and brilliance as a teacher and critic of medieval literature endeared her to a wide circle of colleagues and pupils, died prematurely at the age of 55 in 1980, and her loss was keenly felt. Doyle recalled that he first met her in 1948, at the University Library in Cambridge, to confer over its Additional MS 6578. It contained the most authoritative text of the *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, the subject of her dissertation ('Reflections on some Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*', *Essays in Memory of Elizabeth Salter*, *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 14 (1983), 82–93 at 82). In 1949 he presented her with an inscribed copy of L.F. Powell's scarce *editio princeps* of the text (Roxburghe Club, 1908) (*ex inf.* Prof. Nicolette Zeeman).

[34] In the Lent Term of 1947 J. Conway Davies lectured in the Faculty of History on the 'Palaeography and Diplomatic of the English Chancery'; *Cambridge University Reporter* (4 October 1946), 87. The Faculty of English did not provide regular courses in palaeography and codicology until the 1980s.

[35] Sir Roger Mynors, for example: 'Two Medieval Kalendars' (see n. 19), 31, n. 1. Doyle privately acknowledged that he also learned a great deal about how to trace the later histories of manuscripts through sale catalogues and other records of the book trade from A.N.L. Munby, who arrived from Sotheby's to take up

would have looked up from the Michaelmas Term 1947, when T.A.M. Bishop, appointed to a newly established post of Reader in Palaeography and Diplomatic in the Faculty of History, announced an annual cycle of weekly 'Classes in Palaeography and Diplomatic', for which Doyle and seven other students duly enlisted.[36] Bishop however proved to be an uncompromising teacher, who made little or no attempt to adapt his classes to the naturally varying needs of beginners in several different branches of medieval studies. Working through the plates in Steffens's *Lateinische Palaeographie* (1909), 'by the end of the term he had only got to Merovingian cursive, and had lost all but one of his students'.[37] More germane to Doyle's enquiries at this time were W.A. Pantin's Birkbeck Lectures in the History Faculty during the Lent Term of 1948, on 'The English Church in the Fourteenth Century', later a widely read and influential book of the same title, of which Doyle went on to write an appreciative and well-informed review eight years later.[38]

Unrelieved commitment to college teaching, and a looming deadline for the submission of his thesis on 30 September 1949, combined with periods of ill health to make the last eighteen months of Doyle's time in Cambridge difficult. The real dimensions of the task he had set himself were gradually becoming apparent, and in April 1949 he applied to the Board of Research Studies for an extension of the time allowed to finish his dissertation. In reply he was warned that the grounds on which he applied (essentially that he had underestimated the scope of his enquiry) were unlikely to be found adequate. However, a supporting letter from Dickins, noting that notwithstanding poor health and the burdens of teaching, Doyle was making good progress, and also beginning to publish important work (some of which Dickins himself was editing for publication), was sufficient to swing the balance in his favour. A yet more limited prospectus for the dissertation accompanied the application, and leave to defer its submission until 30 September 1950 was eventually granted in the autumn of 1949.

Submission a year later was, perhaps inevitably, a fraught affair, with Doyle in the meantime intermittently distracted by applications and interviews for teaching fellowships and lectureships, all unsuccessful. Volume I, the discursive body of the thesis, limited to 60,000 words, was presented in the nick of time on 30 September 1950, accompanied by a promise that Volume II, the remainder of the work, consisting of a rather larger body of ancillary material (extended notes, appendices, an index of sources)

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appointment as librarian of King's College in 1947. Munby was among the first to recognise Doyle's remarkable expertise in provenance research; see *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 1:iii (1951), 284.

[36] *Cambridge University Reporter* (4 October 1947), 88.

[37] D. Ganz, 'Terence Alan Martyn Bishop 1907–1994', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 111 (2001), 397–410 at 400; whether the remaining student was Doyle does not appear.

[38] *Cambridge University Reporter* (4 October 1947), 88; *Review of English Studies*, ns 7 (1956), 418–19.

would be ready for submission 'in a week's time'. Doyle, unpractised at the keyboard, had unfortunately found it necessary to type parts of the text himself, including the whole of Volume II, a feature of the thesis that proved to be a considerable obstacle to the examiners.[39]

Having submitted his thesis Doyle immediately left Cambridge for interview, leading soon afterwards to an offer of employment, at Durham University Library, beginning on 17 October 1950. As well as his thesis, he left behind in Cambridge some significant academic business. During the summer he had had the distinction of being invited by the Faculty Board of English to give a course of lectures during the coming academic year, and at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term 1950 his name appeared in the Lecture List scheduling a course of eight lectures in Lent on the 'The Alliterative Revival'. His taking up a full-time post at Durham however rendered the plan impossible, and the lectures had to be cancelled.[40] Ties to Cambridge nonetheless remained strong, and whenever possible Doyle lodged at Downing and dined at high table when visiting. For the remainder of his life he kept open his current account at the branch of the National Westminster Bank in Trumpington Street, and every September ordered from the University Press a copy of *The Cambridge Pocket Diary* for the forthcoming academic year, invariably produced from the top pocket of his jacket when an appointment was to be made.

When he eventually submitted his thesis Doyle was aware that, notwithstanding the successive diminutions in its scope for which he had applied, he had still accumulated a very large amount of original material from primary sources, which had proved to be rather more than he could easily control or organise. In spite of a year's extension, he had still not found the necessary time to shape his findings into an argument, and to present them in a state fit for public inspection. The cumbersome title he arrived at was 'A survey of the origins and circulation of theological writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and early 16th centuries with special consideration of the part of the clergy therein', accompanied by a second volume entitled 'Appended Notes & Bibliographical Index to a survey of Later Late Middle English Theological Literature'. Not unexpectedly, the examiners found it a perplexing submission, with much to admire, and much to criticise. They were H.S. Davies, who since 1936 had shared with H.S. Bennett the teaching of medieval literature in the English Faculty, and (as external) G.R. Owst, the leading

[39] Pages from this execrably typed first version of the thesis, the versos of which supplied Doyle with blank sheets for notes and drafts for some years afterwards, survive among his papers now deposited in Cambridge University Library. By contrast, his handwriting was at first a neat Italic, in the Fairbank style taught in some schools at the time; in later life it became more current, but retained its Italic aspect.

[40] *Cambridge University Reporter* (3 October 1950), 93; (4 January 1951), 513. The Board of English, (which at this time included both his supervisors, Bennett and Dickins, and also his future internal examiner, H. S. Davies), in extending the invitation, implied that they regarded Doyle as a potential candidate for a lectureship in the Faculty.

authority on late medieval English preaching and sermon literature, whose knowledge of manuscript sources closely complemented that of Doyle's field of enquiry.[41]

Doyle divided the substantial body of material he had accumulated into two volumes, the first consisting of the discursive survey promised in the title, the 'thesis' proper, and the second a rather larger ancillary body of 'Appended Notes', lying outside the word-limit for the dissertation, but deemed necessary to its understanding and documentation. The first volume dealt serially with the manuscript sources for a generous, but not exhaustive account of 'theological' works in Middle English (theological being widely interpreted), under three broad headings, 'Dogmatic and Moral Theology', 'Scriptural Paraphrase and Exegesis', and Devotional and Ascetic Theology'. A short conclusion followed. The 'notes' in the second volume, to which constant reference was made in the first, digested a very large quantity of miscellaneous bibliographical and prosopographical detail concerning respectively the manuscripts, and their earliest owners and users. Though described as notes, these pieces were in fact discursive and descriptive essays of varying lengths, ranging from a few lines to many pages, of no consistent internal organisation. They were set out in three series, the first consisting of 'Collective Volumes' (numbering 61) listed under arabic numerals, the second of 'Special Cases' numbered I to XXXI in roman numerals, and the third an alphabetical series, 'Some Lay Book Owners' (A–O: Lay-men, P–X: Lay-women). A bibliography of authorities and sources concluded the second volume, but did not include a consolidated list of the many hundreds of manuscripts cited, scattered across most of the major repositories in the British Isles (together with others on the Continent or in the USA), most of which Doyle had consulted at first hand. Notwithstanding the scholarly tenor of his project, Doyle's still tended to address his material in a style markedly inflected by the tortuously inflated critical idiom that he had picked up as an undergraduate from Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group. Some of the first volume and all of the second he had, as we have seen, been obliged to type himself, and in haste, as his submission date arrived, and then passed. Circumstances had thus conspired to present the examiners with an unusually challenging task.

In their independent reports both examiners amply acknowledged the impressive scale of Doyle's industry, and the undoubted value of the new information that his far-reaching investigations had revealed concerning many details of the primary sources. They were however equally in agreement on his dissertation's shortcomings, which

[41] Hugh Sykes Davies' academic career tends to be overshadowed by his variegated reputation as a poet, novelist, surrealist, Cambridge Apostle and communist. He had excelled in both the Classical and the English Tripos, and later contributed to serious scholarship on authors as diverse as Lucretius, Laȝamon, Wordsworth and Trollope. His Faculty lectures on Chaucer were especially popular. Owst, yet another of Coulton's circle, was the author of *Preaching in Medieval England* (1926) and *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (1933), both amply acknowledged by Doyle in the Preface to his thesis.

included its stumbling and repetitive organisation, aggravated by the confusing system of cross-reference from one volume to the other; the too-frequent lapses into obscurity of expression; and especially the weakness of the conclusion, which appeared to add little to what was already known concerning the general issue to which the thesis was addressed. There was an abundance of new and minutely detailed information on offer, but its fragmentary character, its discontinuities, and its inconclusiveness had defeated the candidate. This was not altogether his fault, inasmuch as such features were inherent in the haphazard survival of Middle English writings generally, as the examiners of R.H. Robbins's thesis had recognised a decade or so previously. Though in one sense it was certainly possible to view Doyle's dissertation as a 'contribution to knowledge' sufficient to meet the requirements for the award of the degree, the manner in which the fruits of his research were set out fell short of regular expectations. In any case, as one of the examiners made very clear, with abundant illustration, the work was presented in too poor a physical state to be accepted by the University, and Doyle, who was prone to pointing out the mistakes of others, was guilty of plenty himself: 'In its present condition, the volume could not be deposited in a public place, where anyone might see it—it would be very unfriendly to Mr Doyle to let him expose himself in this way'. The viva, in January 1951, did little to mitigate the issues identified by the examiners in their reports; indeed, confronted with several obscure passages from his thesis '[Doyle] himself was unable to suggest any meaning for them'. There remained no alternative but to allow him to submit a revised dissertation, within a year.

Though at the time naturally disappointed at the outcome of five years of research, Doyle in later life freely admitted, with hindsight, that the examiners had been quite right to refer the first version of his thesis. When the invitation to resubmit came through early in February 1951, however, he had for some months been immersed in full-time employment in the university library at Durham, '9 am–5 pm Mondays to Fridays and 9 am–1 pm on Saturdays', as he was to point out in a letter to the Board of Research Studies. A month after the viva his external examiner, G.R. Owst, took the opportunity of a visit to Durham to meet Doyle, and advise him on his resubmission. Both examiners had recommended that he consider reformulating his account of the manuscripts he had surveyed more systematically, in the form of a descriptive catalogue or *répertoire sommaire*, which would have made the work more likely to be publishable, and of greater utility to future researchers. Doyle however evidently judged such an undertaking beyond him, in the prevailing circumstances, and, after further supplications to the Board, negotiated an extension of the time allowed for resubmission until December 1952. Not elaborately revised in point of substance or structure, but purged of most its former stylistic obscurities, re-typed throughout to a professional standard, and even complete with up-to-date references to works published during the year, the resubmission arrived in Cambridge by the end of 1952. The examiners re-read the work, and reported that they were now

content to recommend the award of the degree, Owst more enthusiastically than Davies, who included in his report a shrewd but sympathetic analysis of the inherent intractability of the material Doyle had chosen to study, and of the nature of his difficulties in arriving at consequential or conclusive arguments based upon it.

The troubled saga of the completion and examination of Doyle's thesis is chiefly of historical interest. Its afterlife and its influence on medieval English manuscript studies is however of abiding significance. Though by far his single most extended piece of research and writing, it was never published as a whole, though parts of it were already in print when it was deposited, and he continued to draw on it in many subsequent articles. Notwithstanding the genuine problems the examiners had encountered in attempting to read it consecutively, and exacerbated by the absence of any apparatus that would assist the reader in in accessing the wealth of information that it contained (lists of sources, indexes etc.), the thesis nonetheless began to be widely consulted, at first on deposit in Cambridge University Library, and later (with excruciating difficulty, because of the two-volume arrangement) on microfilm. Such a development is superficially surprising, inasmuch as many of the Middle English texts that Doyle surveyed were repetitive and pedestrian expositions of basic dogma and doctrine, often unpublished (with some still remaining so), of little or no literary merit or appeal. As his examiners had observed, Doyle's research added many details to the understanding of how such writings were created and circulated, but did little to alter it.[42] It gradually became clear however that the real importance of the thesis lay elsewhere, essentially in the originality of the palaeographical and bibliographical methods Doyle had brought to his task, features of the work lost on his examiners, whose significance was perhaps only beginning to dawn upon the author himself.

Underlying many of Doyle's observations concerning the manuscripts he investigated was the novel assumption, nowadays widely articulated, and taught in courses on palaeography and bibliography, that comparative analysis of the various physical manifestations in which texts of the past were transmitted is an essential component in a full understanding of their cultural significance. In many cases Doyle's research involved comparing multiple copies of one and the same work, attending to their contrasting material supports, the different types or grades of script in which they might be written, the scribe's level of expertise, the extent of punctuation and rubrication (perhaps with signs that it was designed for prelection as well as private reading), the varying styles of

[42] In the Preface to his thesis Doyle placed the class of writings he was surveying under the heading of 'vernacular theology', but he did not claim that it possessed any originality of thought, and concluded that it was 'largely unofficial, informal, and supererogatory' (Thesis, vol. 1, pp. 5, 283). His coinage was revived in the 1990s, and transformed into a vogue term applied to more advanced kinds of Middle English religious writing; see Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology' in P. Strohm (ed.), *Middle English* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 401–20.

mise-en-page in which the text could be disposed, the differences in the apparatus or metatext that might accompany it, and the significance of other works alongside which a given text was copied, or with which it was bound. Evidence of revisions, redactions and adaptations of specific works often emerges in the course of such investigations into the material circumstances of their transmission, and may have significant implications for how they should be edited, and understood by modern readers. Integral with these concerns might be inferences concerning the different kinds of readership suggested by bibliographical variations among multiple copies of a particular work. Evidence of the interests of the earliest readers, in the form of marginal annotations, together with marks of early and subsequent ownership of books, provide important contexts for the interpretation of these purely bibliographical observations.

Innumerable aperçus involving one or more of these issues are scattered throughout Doyle's thesis, but are especially concentrated in the 'notes' that make up the second volume. The submerged revolution that they imply in scholarly attitudes to the material forms in which Middle English literature was transmitted is clearly manifest if one compares Doyle's thesis with R.H. Robbins's survey of other forms of religious writing from only a decade or so earlier. Where Robbins seldom attended to palaeographical or codicological features of the manuscripts from which he extracted texts, for Doyle, the observation of such features is well on the way to becoming an end in itself, a new kind of evidence of how the writings of the past were originally received, and part of how they should now be understood. Doyle's methods, when more fully developed and displayed in his publications, were to play a dominant role in determining the direction of medieval English manuscript studies during subsequent decades.

Doyle's thesis was also important because it began to focus on other issues that have since become significant preoccupations in the study of medieval English manuscripts generally. Throughout his survey Doyle took care to remark cases where the work of a single scribe was to be found in two or more manuscripts. Though he was not alone in making such observations, he was perhaps the first to make them a matter of systematic record, and for many years accumulated a list of examples, which he drew on to advance his own enquiries, or to assist the increasing number of scholars who applied to him for information. In 1980, Angus McIntosh, who had sometimes arrived at similar identifications through his work of the dialects of numerous Middle English scribes, proposed that he and Doyle unite their lists. From 1987 the material they had collected was consolidated and extended by Jeremy Griffiths (1955–1997), and, after Griffiths's much-lamented early demise, developed by Linne R. Mooney and others to assemble an online database documenting the work of scribes who appear in more than one manuscript.[43]

[43] Correspondence between McIntosh and Doyle initiating the project, and later inviting Griffiths to take it forward, is in CUL Add. MS 10301/18/9A. A. I. Doyle, 'Ushaw College, Durham, MS 50. Fragments of the

In his thesis he also remarked other patterns that became apparent as a result of reviewing multiple manuscript copies of Middle English works, notably the geographical locations of certain clusters, for example in London, the north of England and East Anglia, and also the tendency of certain kinds of vernacular writing to be promoted and disseminated by particular religious orders, notably the Carthusians and the Bridgettines. The thesis also marked the inception of a lifelong preoccupation with the oeuvre of the 14th-century Yorkshire contemplative writer Richard Rolle.

Doyle's nascent sense that manuscript studies could play an important part in constructing some sense of a 'literary geography' of Middle English writings was soon strongly reinforced through extended personal contact with Angus McIntosh, Professor of English Language at the University of Edinburgh, and the moving spirit behind the great project in Middle English dialectology that was to become the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (1986). For over thirty years, Doyle went on to contribute extensive information concerning the location and palaeography of the *Atlas*'s primary sources. Largely as a result of this work, the study of Middle English writings in their regional contexts was to become a central concern of manuscript studies, and continues to be a productive area of ongoing investigation.[44]

Doyle's thesis also became the basis of his subsequent status as a leading authority on the production and circulation of manuscripts (and, in respect of those containing vernacular writings, the leading authority) among the many religious orders active in late medieval England.[45] As he observed in the Preface to his thesis, his research to date had enabled him to contribute around 100 additions and corrections to the listings to the first edition of N.R. Ker's *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, a pattern of activity he sustained until the end of his life.[46] The concentration in his thesis on Carthusian and

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Prick of Conscience, by the Same Scribe as Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201, of the B Text of *Piers Plowman*', in V. Gillespie *et al.* (eds), *The Medieval English Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths* (London, 2000), pp. 43–9 at 43, is a typical example of his procedure. The 'Late Medieval English Scribes' database is available at www.medievalscribes.com

[44] Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels *et al.*, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols (Aberdeen, 1986), vol. 1, p. ix. Doyle in turn emphasised how important of work towards the *Atlas* was for his own research in 'Manuscripts and Literary Geography: A Palaeographer's View', in M. Laing & K. Williamson (eds), *Speaking in our Tongues: Proceedings of a Colloquium on Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines* (Cambridge, 1994), 93–7. Frequent and often very detailed correspondence between McIntosh and Doyle began (after N.R. Ker introduced them) in March 1953 and continued until the 1990s; much of both sides of it is preserved in CUL Add. MS 10301/18/9A–B.

[45] 'Publication by Members of the Religious Orders', in J. Griffiths & D. Pearsall (eds), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 109–123; 'Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England', in L.L. Brownrigg (ed.), *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence* (Los Altos Hills CA, 1990), 1–19.

[46] Doyle, Thesis, vol. 1, p. 20; N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (London, 1964), xxix; A.G. Watson, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: Supplement* (London, 1987), 'Certain long-standing debts of gratitude are at once recognizable, ... the greatest probably being to Dr Ian Doyle', p. x.

Bridgettine book production also remained an abiding concern, and eventually became essential to several definitive publications.[47] He also kept open his file of additions and corrections to Hope Emily Allen's magisterial *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, and Materials for his Biography* (1927), destined to become (with the assistance of Ralph Hanna) his final publication, in the year after he died.[48]

II

Ian Doyle's professional career as a special collections librarian at Durham University Library extended from 1950 until 1985 (Senior Library Assistant to 1959, thereafter Keeper of Rare Books, and concurrently from 1972, Reader in Bibliography). Any estimate of his contribution to scholarship and research must acknowledge his immersion in both the day-to-day routines of library work, and in the larger problems and projects that institutional libraries invariably generate. Fortunately, Doyle's life as a professional librarian has recently been so amply documented, with both sympathy and candour, by his colleague and successor in post Elizabeth Rainey, that a brief outline only is called for here.[49] Cataloguing early printed books (especially the Cosin, Routh and Bamburgh collections) and embarking upon a descriptive catalogue of the medieval manuscripts in the Cosin Library were the relatively congenial parts of his job, and often provided material for the numerous bibliographical notes and short articles that he published in the *Durham Philobiblon* (1949–69) and other periodicals. On the other hand, attention to the maintenance and alteration of ancient buildings that housed the library, the planning of extensions or new buildings, with consequent stock-takings and book moves, the organising of endless repairs to the older books themselves, and various menial tasks too numerous to list, were often time-consuming and frustrating. Co-operation with the entirely separate libraries of Durham Cathedral and Ushaw College also fell to Doyle's lot, and for well over a dozen years he worked almost single-

[47] Christopher de Hamel, *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns* (Roxburghe Club, 1991), see p. 134; Vincent Gillespie & A.I. Doyle (eds), *Syon Abbey, with The Libraries of the Carthusians* (Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 9; London 2001), see p. ix. Doyle's extensive files on these subjects are preserved in CUL Add. 10301/9/1–41 (Bridgettines), and Add. 10301/10/1–23 and 11/1–7 (Carthusians).

[48] A.I. Doyle, *Hope Allen's* Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle*: A Corrected List of Copies*, edited and extended by Ralph Hanna (Turnhout, 2019). An informal account of Doyle's contribution to Rolle studies by Hanna, 'with cavils and comment from Doyle in response', is in DUL, Archives and Special Collections, AID/A8.

[49] 'Ian Doyle in Durham', in Saunders *et al.* (eds), *Middle English Manuscripts and their Legacies*, 337–65, drawing directly on Doyle's autobiographical notes (DUL, Archives and Special Collections, AID/A1–3) and the Library's archives. I am particularly grateful to Beth Rainey for her personal reminiscences of Doyle, and for guidance concerning his personal and research files.

handedly, until a special collections assistant eventually was appointed. Like other librarians who achieved the highest distinction in the fields of palaeography and bibliography (Sir Frederic Madden and Henry Bradshaw are notable examples), Doyle could sometimes be explicit, in conversation or correspondence, about how he found his day job an irksome hindrance to his scholarly endeavours.[50] Notwithstanding occasional grants of short periods of study leave, he was sometimes tempted, or encouraged by others, to apply for academic posts elsewhere that would give fuller scope for the development of his research. Though (as Beth Rainey and other colleagues attest) he never defaulted in prioritising and fulfilling his professional duties, it is notable that he was eventually unable to bring to publication those major projects—his London lectures of 1965, his Oxford Lyell Lectures (1967), and his catalogue of the Cosin manuscripts—which would most justly have reflected the exceptional reach and significance of his research.

On the whole, however, Doyle found Durham, with its spectacular ensemble of ancient buildings and its historic centrality to the life of the north-east, a congenial place to live and work. Coming from Cambridge, he was attracted by the collegiate organisation and atmosphere of Durham University, and for many years appreciated the advantages of life as a resident bachelor don (though with pastoral responsibilities for a time) at University College, housed in the Castle, facing the Cathedral across Palace Green. He was an active committee member in the affairs of both the university and of the city of Durham, especially as they concerned its ancient buildings and its cultural heritage. When he at length moved out of university accommodation in 1976 and took up residence in the Old Elvet neighbourhood of the city, he became an authority on the tradition of recusancy in the parish, where St Cuthbert's, the Roman Catholic church at which he worshipped for over 60 years, was situated. Editorial and committee work in connection with northern learned publications (notably those of the Surtees Society, of which he was Vice-President for over 50 years, and Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland) also occupied his leisure. Time spent on leave from his duties at Durham was hardly spent 'on holiday' as such, but rather on research visits to libraries elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, or on the Continent, the dissemination of medieval English books abroad forming a particularly important strand in his research.[51] When travelling, especially on the Continent, he often looked for opportunities to lodge in religious houses of his faith, rather than stay in hotels.

[50] Doyle sometimes wrote with feeling in his annual report of being quite overwhelmed by the extent of his tasks, and the scale of his responsibilities in the library; Rainey, 'Ian Doyle in Durham', 346.

[51] CUL Add. MS 10301/1/51–70 contain Doyle's notes on English manuscripts held in libraries in most European countries; those in the United States and other parts of the world are in files 2/1–14. Notes on the circulation of works of English authorship abroad are in files 12/1–2.

There are clear signs that Doyle did not, initially at least, plan for an extended career in librarianship, and in an autobiographical note he even went so far as to remark that he had taken the job at Durham in the belief that it would suffice 'at least as a stop-gap'.[52] Some years were to pass before he entirely shook off the desire to become a university lecturer in some branch of English studies. His inclination to remain in touch with the world of literary study expressed itself in a variety of ways, not least as a frequent reviewer, until the early 1960s, of books devoted to the criticism of medieval English literature. Its most marked manifestation, however, were his contributions to Volume I of *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature* (1954) a highly successful and remarkably durable publishing project organised by Boris Ford, who had graduated from Downing in English shortly before Doyle's arrival there.[53] Though the object of this innovative eight-volume series was never articulated explicitly, its undoubted effect was to create a mass readership for the literary and critical values, and the modes of reading promoted by the editors and contributors to *Scrutiny*, many of whom, like Doyle, appeared as contributors to the *Guide*. The series went on to be widely circulated, especially in schools and universities in Britain and further afield across the Commonwealth, and it was reprinted almost annually over the next 25 years, going into a completely revamped second edition in 1982. Thus it was that Doyle's adjacent chapters on 'The Social Context of Medieval English Literature' and 'English Prose in the Middle Ages' in the *Pelican Guide*'s volume devoted to *The Age of Chaucer* became for many years the most widely read of his writings, standing in marked contrast to the often highly technical studies in palaeography and bibliography upon which his reputation now rests. Both essays are strongly marked by Doyle's experience both of reading English literature at Cambridge, and of teaching medieval literature to undergraduates. The essay on social context of medieval literature (what in Doyle's undergraduate days was called the 'Life and Thought' of the period) is an introductory survey of precisely the kind once provided by G.G. Coulton and H.S. Bennett for students reading for the Cambridge English Tripos. That on medieval English prose includes exemplars for accomplished close readings of passages from the *Ancrene Riwle*, *Hali Meidenhed*, Richard Rolle and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, of the kind which a fortunate examiner might still see, until fairly recently, in the best Tripos scripts. Doyle's concern with the *Guide* continued with the 1959 revised reissue of Volume I, where the revisions consisted almost entirely of a complete overhaul of the long bio- and bibliographical Appendix, surveying the principal writers and works of the medieval period, which he carried out in collaboration with Elizabeth Salter, by this time a lecturer in English at Cambridge.

[52] Cited by Rainey, 'Ian Doyle at Durham', 338.
[53] B. Ford, 'Round and About the *Pelican Guide to English Literature*', in D. Thompson (ed.), *The Leavises* (Cambridge, 1984), 103–112.

It should also be noticed here that Doyle's association with F.R. Leavis did not altogether cease with his departure from Cambridge. They corresponded from time to time, and Doyle was involved in bringing Leavis to lecture at Durham on more than one occasion in the 1950s and 1960s. During the autumn of 1959 a proposal emerged that there should be a festschrift to mark Leavis's retirement from his university and college teaching posts, due to take place at the end of September 1962. From files of correspondence and other papers which Doyle later deposited at Downing College it is clear that, as secretary to an editorial committee formed for the purpose, he played a leading role in initiating the project, and in canvassing possible contributors. He also undertook the extremely delicate task of writing to Leavis for permission to put the project in hand, and the proposal initially met with a favourable but characteristically wary response. Within a week, however, Leavis somehow discovered that he had insurmountable objections to the scheme, and withdrew, whereupon to Doyle's regret it was abandoned.[54]

By the early 1960s Doyle had ceased to toy with the idea of an alternative academic career involving literature and criticism, and had settled for good into special collections librarianship. At the same time his standing as the leading authority on the circulation of Middle English literature in manuscripts and early printed books was becoming widely recognised, and his name began to be mentioned as a possible candidate for a place on the Council of the Early English Text Society (EETS). Founded in 1864 by F.J. Furnivall, the EETS had published hundreds of editions of Old and Middle English writings, and had managed to survive the Second World War just about intact. Though the Society, whose programme of publications was overseen by its Council, liked to think of itself as setting the standard for editing early texts, there were some who thought that certain of its publications were not up to scratch.[55] Among them was Doyle, and he had said so emphatically, in a review of a recent edition, while still a graduate student at Cambridge.[56]

[54] Cambridge, Downing College Archives, DCPP/LEA/2/7–6, LEA/3/10–3/11. The idea for a festschrift seems to have evolved during 1958–9 in correspondence involving Doyle and one of Leavis's closest associates, L.C. Knights, co-editor of *Scrutiny* from 1952 to 1963, and by this time Professor of English at Bristol University.

[55] The state of the EETS after the war has been amply documented by H.L. Spencer, 'The Early English Text Society 1930 to 1950: Wartime and Reconstruction', in V. Gillespie & A. Hudson (eds), *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century* (Turnhout, 2013), 15–35; among those who had reservations about the quality its editions was its senior member of Council, W. A. Craigie, third editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (32).

[56] *The Cambridge Review* (13 May 1950), 528, a review of the EETS edition of *Sir Degrevant* by L.F. Casson (1949, for 1944), a Middle English romance that had already been printed several times. Though the transcription appeared to Doyle to be accurate, the lengthy philological description of the language, and other apparatus, was disproportionate to the significance of the text: 'it is, unfortunately, necessary to say that in this and in its very publication the volume is an example of the misdirection of the policy and the funds of the Society that has issued it'. Also, the price (£2 12s. 6d.) was excessive, and 'not wholly excusable by contemporary material conditions'. Doyle forwarded his review to C.T. Onions, Honorary Director of the EETS, and correspondence ensued.

By 1957 his name was well known to members of EETS Council, which included not only his palaeographical mentor N.R. Ker and his former supervisor Bruce Dickins, but also other major figures such as Sir William Craigie, W.W. Greg, and J.R.R. Tolkien. The retirements of Craigie and Greg gave scope for new recruits, and Norman Davis, by this time Honorary Director, ensured that 'Doyle of Durham' (as he referred to him in correspondence) be kept in mind: 'he is very well informed on MSS etc.'.[57] When, in April 1961, the EETS Council agreed unanimously to invite Doyle to become a member, he must finally have felt a sense of arrival in a scholarly cadre commensurate with his ambitions and abilities.[58] Thereafter he almost never missed a meeting, advising on hundreds of proposals and editions, and was still contributing incisively until physical infirmity prevented him from attending after 2015 (his ninetieth year)—a 53-year record of service that seems unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future.

III

Doyle's unrivalled authority in his chosen field became fully consolidated during the 1960s, and in succeeding decades the style and substance of his enquiries became widely influential, and eventually much imitated, especially in British and North American universities where medieval English studies were pursued. Alongside many short bibliographical and historical notes on the Durham collections, and very numerous and often detailed reviews, his most significant publications tended to be quarried from his oft-cited thesis, or prompted by passing observations in it. They sometimes took the form of succinct and densely documented studies of particular individuals who had played an important part in some aspect of medieval manuscript culture: Thomas Betson, the early 16th-century librarian of Syon Abbey; William Ebesham, a scribe employed by the Paston family; and John Shirley, the 15th-century London *littérateur* who concerned himself especially with the transmission of Chaucer's writings, for example. Contributions such as these provided foundations upon which others were later to erect monographs and other full-length treatments of their subjects.[59]

[57] Norman Davis to Robert Burchfield (Secretary to the Council), 2 July 1957: 'I have an interesting letter from Doyle of Durham, suggesting that the Society ought to consider commissioning more work than it does, instead of just accepting things casually offered. ... I should like to get Doyle on the Council…'. London, King's College, Archives, Archives of the EETS, Box 5/3, Folder 16. I am grateful to Helen Leith Spencer for guidance in relation to the EETS archives, and to the Council of the EETS for permission to quote from them.

[58] London, King's College, Archives, Archives of the EETS, Box 10/2, Minute Book, December 1921–April 1961.

[59] 'Thomas Betson of Syon Abbey', *The Library*, 5th ser., 11 (1956), 115–18 (cf. Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*, as cit. n. 46 above, *passim*); 'The Work of a Late Fifteenth-Century English Scribe: William Ebesham', *Bulletin*

It is however to the mid-1960s that we should look for the period in which Doyle began at least to speak in general terms, and with magisterial authority, on the field of enquiry that he had almost single-handedly created, even though, as we have seen, he was never to publish a fully extended study or monograph on the subject. The cue to formulate his thoughts on the palaeography of Middle English manuscripts as a discrete area of study within the field Latin palaeography came in the form of an invitation from Julian Brown, newly appointed as Professor of Palaeography at King's College, London in 1962, to give a course of lectures on the subject. Brown's own inaugural lecture, 'Latin Palaeography since Traube' (1963), an important *tour d'horizon*, had concluded by offering a tentative agenda for specific lines of concentrated enquiry. Having remarked that '[t]he palaeography of the Gothic hands used in innumerable MSS. of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries is still a rough and ready affair', he continued: 'In general, the use of particular texts, or groups of texts, to form manageable units of palaeographical study offers a promising means of reducing the vast mass of late medieval MSS. to some sort of order. ... the vernacular manuscripts of each country could well be studied as a whole'.[60] It was in this context that Doyle was recruited to give a course of three Special Lectures in Palaeography at King's, London in 1965, on a subject simply entitled 'Later Middle English Manuscripts', and in them he made a number of allusions to Brown's inaugural that suggest he kept the latter's agenda specifically in mind.

Doyle introduced his subject in the first lecture with an overview of the study of later medieval English literature and language from the 16th century down to the foundation of the Early English Text Society in 1864, relating it simultaneously to the activities of the collectors and antiquarians who had shown a special interest in Middle English manuscripts—a subject that to this day still calls for comprehensive treatment.[61] He then sought to define the extent of his field, asking questions that, in the absence of a detailed inventory, have likewise still to be answered—'How large and complex is it? How many Middle English manuscripts are there, and how are they divided?'—and moving on from there to the complex issue of their rates of survival. How was it affected by their content

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of the John Rylands Library, 39 (1957), 298–325 (cf. G.A. Lester, *Sir John Paston's 'Grete Boke'* (Cambridge, 1984)); 'More Light on John Shirley: Part I', *Medium Aevum*, 30 (1961), 93–101 (cf. M. Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth Century England* (Aldershot, 1998)). Large sections of Doyle's fourth and fifth Lyell Lectures of 1967 (see below) were devoted to his continuing work on Shirley, but Part II of his study never appeared.

60 *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 3 (1963), 361–81 at 374, 375–6; reprinted in *Codicologica*, 1 (1976), 58–74, and J. Bately *et al.* (eds), *A Palaeographer's View: Selected Writings of Julian Brown* (London, 1993), 17–37.

61 The following account of Doyle's London lectures is based on a photocopy of the typescript in the author's possession. It consists of 52 pages of foolscap, with manuscript revisions and annotations providing for upwards of 230 footnotes, draft contents for which are in CUL Add. MS 10301/7/16–19; many are detailed and extensive.

or literary form, or their material support, or by the circumstances of their early ownership, or by regional factors rooted in social and economic conditions? What were the causes and consequences of the different kinds of attrition to which such manuscripts were subject in the post medieval period?

> The particular scope of this series of lectures should be to consider later Middle English manuscripts as artefacts, sheets of certain materials covered with groups of signs, and decorated and assembled in various ways, with subsequent alterations—but meaningful objects, related to complicated human interests and environments—what has come to be called in Belgium and France the archaeology of the book, or codicology, but which we in England, as Professor Brown said in his inaugural lecture, are content to lump under palaeography.[62] I referred earlier to certain questions which the palaeographer might well be asked, and should attempt to answer: questions I have been steadily begging in my comments on the statistics of survival. Where, when and how were these manuscripts made? By whom and for whom? How can we tell?

The many questions with which Doyle prefaced his London lectures effectively served to define a new field of study, the palaeography and codicology of Middle English manuscripts, and the broader cultural contexts within which these questions are pursued is the abiding concern of the numerous scholars and students who have followed in his footsteps.

In the remainder of his first lecture, addressed to the question of 'Where?', Doyle developed the idea of Middle English manuscripts as a distinct category in the vast field of Latin palaeography. Drawing upon the fruits of his long collaboration with those engaged in compiling the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, he explored the significance of the fact that very many such manuscripts were copied according to distinctive, and often localisable sets of graphemic conventions, which scribes acquired simultaneously with the basic ability to write. If one can establish, even roughly, the localities in which a large proportion of surviving manuscripts were copied, then the scope for further enquiries into matters of material form, script, decoration, contents, textual affiliation and readership are much enlarged. Lecture II, devoted to 'When?', was concerned with later medieval English handwriting, its acquisition as a craft, the rapid changes of fashion in script that occurred throughout the later 14th and 15th centuries, and their uneven regional distribution. Using illustrative slides, Doyle set out his understanding of the taxonomy of later medieval English scripts, and their significance for the

[62] Doyle's early adoption of the term codicology, reflecting his openness to Continental scholarly developments in his field, is notable, but he had few followers at the time. It was officially admitted to the English lexicon, with an air of reluctance, in the *Supplement* to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1972: 'Used mainly by continental writers, when writing in English, as a calque on G[erman] *Handschriftenkunde*'. Originally a French coinage (*codicologie*), it is usually attributed to Alphonse Dain, *Les Manuscrits* (Paris, 1949), pp. 76–93.

dating of manuscripts, in a narrative that in many respects adumbrated that which his Oxford colleague (and later collaborator) M.B. Parkes was soon to put forward in his handbook on *English Cursive Book Hands, 1250–1500* (1969).[63] In Lecture III, 'By whom, for whom?' and 'How?', Doyle expatiated on the evidence for book production in various localities, especially London, and in various social milieux (monastic, clerical, lay, 'commercial'). Finally, emphasising the importance of Mabillon's dictum *non sola scriptura*, he concluded by considering the material properties of late medieval English manuscript books, their typical sizes, shapes and make-ups, their mise-en-page and para-textual features, and the clues they evince as to their commissioning, ownership, circulation and early readership.

Many expressed the hope that Doyle's London lectures would be published soon after their delivery, and had they been, the revolution effected by his approach to the study of Middle English manuscripts—usually dated to the decades after *c.* 1980—would certainly have come about rather sooner.[64] As things stood, however, he was otherwise engaged, not only by his day-to-day library responsibilities at Durham, but also by an invitation from Bodley's Librarian to deliver within two years the Lyell Lectures in Bibliography, preparation for which had to begin immediately.

Doyle's six Lyell Lectures were delivered under the general title 'Some English Scribes and Scriptoria in the Later Middle Ages', in the avant-garde architectural surroundings of the new St Cross Building, Oxford, on 13, 15, 20 and 22 February, and 1 and 3 May 1967. The lectures, amply illustrated with slides, were given individual titles, though these do not appear on the typescripts, which again survive in a state of on-going revision: I. Prospective: Obstacles and Openings; II. West and North; III. South and East; IV. Metropolitan and Suburban; V. Commerce and Religion; VI. Retrospective: Doubts and Discoveries.[65] Doyle began Lecture I by referring back to the lectures he had given in London two years previously, continuing to address the questions he had formulated there—the when, where, how, by whom and for whom of medieval English manuscripts. Here, however, he intended to proceed by means of specific case studies, rather than in generalities. His focus would be on the procedures adopted by persons involved in producing particular groups of manuscripts, using specific codicological and palaeographical observation selectively and evidentially, rather than as an end in itself. Such persons

[63] Parkes's nomenclature for later medieval English scripts, now accepted as standard in many quarters, originally took shape in his Oxford BLitt thesis, under the supervision of N.R. Ker. Doyle alludes to discussion with both Ker and Parkes in his second London lecture.

[64] See for example a long letter from Julian Brown to Doyle, in the aftermath of the lectures, encouraging him to publish; CUL Add. MS 10301/7/15. In the same file is correspondence with several prospective publishers down to 1980, and Doyle continued to speak of completing such a book; 'Retrospect and Prospect', in D. Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1983), 142–46 at 143.

[65] CUL Add. MS 10301/7/21–22. The files also include correspondence with editors at Oxford University Press down to 1973, concerning possible publication of the lectures.

might operate solo, or in various forms of co-operation with one another. Scribes inhabited a spectrum extending from highly skilled, full-time professional craftsmen, through many shades of part-timer, down to occasional amateurs. 'Scriptoria' in his general title was to be loosely understood: not necessarily as a specific place, but more a body of evidence suggesting various religious, lay and 'commercial' arrangements, whereby more than one person was involved in the common purpose of producing manuscript books, which were thus often of a collaborative or accretive character. Continuity with the concerns first enunciated in Doyle's London lectures proved to be very evident throughout the five Lyell lectures that followed this introduction. It is again a matter for regret that this second set were not find their way into print in a timely manner. However, whereas the substance of the London lectures was to remain relatively unknown, important segments of the Lyells were eventually published in refined and elaborated form, and stand as landmarks in the development of later medieval English manuscript studies.

Doyle rounded off Lecture I by introducing his first case study, placing the Vernon manuscript, an immense compendium of Middle English religious writings, and one of the glories the Bodleian, at the centre of a wider investigation of book production in the west midlands towards the turn of the 14th century. It was the fulfilment of work that he had begun as a graduate student, standing as it were on the shoulders of Hope Emily Allen, a debt which he repeatedly emphasised, though he was never to meet her in person. Lecture II (West and North) continued the story of Vernon, analysing its make-up, scribal features, textual character, patronage, provenance, and affiliations to regional congeners. It was effectively a report of on-going work which eventually came to fruition in Doyle's magisterial introduction to a facsimile of the whole manuscript. Published in 1987 this was, like its original, a vast and weighty 450-page elephant folio, almost two feet high and over a foot broad, and for Doyle the culmination of over 40 years of study.[66] For the remainder of Lecture II Doyle turned to the north of England, where he had identified and begun to study a group of interconnected manuscripts with a variety of features in common: a similar range of textually related religious writings composed in later 13th- and 14th-century Yorkshire; similar *mise-en-page* and decoration, suggesting common exemplars; similar orthography and handwriting; and other evidence of a group of scribes co-operating with one another. Lack of time meant that he had been unable to pursue these enquiries to a conclusion, and nor did he subsequently have the opportunity to do so. In the end, with characteristic generosity, he handed over his annotated text of the northern section of 'West and North' to Ralph Hanna, Professor of Palaeography at

[66] *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. poet. a.1* (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1987). This remarkable publication was made possible by the generosity of Doyle's former pupil Toshiyuki Takamiya, of Keio University, Tokyo.

Oxford, who had begun work along similar lines, one result being the latter's seminal British Academy lecture of 2003, 'Yorkshire Writers'.[67]

It was the third of Doyle's Lyell lectures, however, that proved to be the centrepiece of the series. The consequences of the discoveries there first announced still resonate in palaeographical study of London book production around the turn of the 14th century, and more widely in textual, editorial and interpretative work on the major vernacular writers of the time. Doyle's initial focus was on the production and dissemination of John Gower's writings, partly under authorial supervision, in a stereotyped *mise-en-page* which lent itself to collaborative reproduction by groups of scribes, using divided exemplars distributed among them for simultaneous copying. He went on to concentrate on one little-known and rather haphazardly executed copy of the *Confessio Amantis* produced in this way (now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge), and was able to show that one of its five scribes was none other than the poet Thomas Hoccleve, self-styled disciple of Geoffrey Chaucer and a Clerk of the Privy Seal, whilst another was in all likelihood also the copyist of the two earliest and most authoritative manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, Hengwrt (National Library of Wales) and Ellesmere (Huntington Library, San Marino, CA). Another prolific member of the team proved to be identifiable as a copyist not only of Chaucer and Gower, but of other major writers of the time, William Langland and John Trevisa. These remarkable revelations on Doyle's part gave a new focus to the investigations of his younger Oxford contemporary Malcolm Parkes into the minutiae of late-medieval English handwriting, and the two soon entered into a decade-long collaboration, which culminated in their revolutionary study, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the early Fifteenth Century' (1978), aptly published in a festschrift dedicated to the palaeographer who had done most to inspire both of them, N.R. Ker.[68] It was in the wake of this article that Doyle's style of investigation into the nature and circulation of Middle English manuscripts entered the mainstream of medieval English studies, becoming (for better or worse, as he saw it) a mainstay of graduate courses and professional conferences, and opening up a new avenue of academic advancement for aspiring younger scholars.

Most of the fourth and fifth of Doyle's Lyell Lectures were devoted to aspects of commercial book production in London during the 15th century. Work he had already

[67] *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 121 (2003), 91–109, repr. in *Patient Reading / Reading Patience: Oxford Essays on Medieval English Literature* (Liverpool, 2017), 161–81 (p. 162, n. 5 acknowledges the debt to Doyle's Lyell lecture); see also Hanna's 'Some North Yorkshire Scribes and their Context', idem, 182–208 (likewise, 182).

[68] M.B. Parkes & Andrew G. Watson (eds), *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts & Libraries: Essays presented to N. R. Ker* (London, 1978), 163–210. Doyle's collaboration with Parkes is aptly described in Vincent Gillespie's memoir of the latter in these pages: 'Malcolm Beckwith Parkes, 26 June 1930 – 10 May 2013', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy*, 17 (2018), 71–87 at 82.

published in 1961 concerning the prolific copyist and *littérateur* John Shirley was much extended, and he elaborated on other earlier work on groups of manuscripts descended from Shirleian exemplars, again often produced by teams of scribes. Much of the information and inference in these sections remained in Doyle's notes, later communicated, with characteristic generosity, to others to pursue for publication. Parts of Lecture V and Lecture VI, however, were devoted to the role of the Carthusian order in the production and circulation of manuscripts, a subject on which Doyle went on to publish a great deal. Outstanding were preliminary sketches for his later studies of the scribes Stephen Dodesham (published 30 years later in the festschrift for M.B. Parkes) and William Darker (in a festschrift for R.H. and M.A. Rouse, 2011).[69]

IV

Recognition of Doyle's academic standing came in 1972 in the form of his appointment to a Readership in Bibliography at Durham, where he nonetheless continued to work full time in the University Library for many years, before taking early retirement from his Keepership (in 1983) and his Readership (in 1986), in order to devote himself to research. During the 1970s he became a regular visitor to the University of York's innovatory Centre for Medieval Studies, housed in King's Manor, formerly the abbot's residence of the Benedictine abbey in the city centre. Established on interdisciplinary lines, and offering a one-year preliminary graduate course (BPhil) providing training in (among other things) the elements of codicology, palaeography and medieval Latin, it was soon widely imitated elsewhere. It was the essentially the brainchild of Doyle's former Cambridge colleague Elizabeth Salter, assisted by Derek Pearsall, the distinguished medieval historian Barrie Dobson, and others in art history and archaeology. Many graduates at the Centre benefited from Doyle's occasional lectures, or were encouraged to visit him in Durham, to be shown more extensive primary materials than were available in York. His example and influence are manifest in the work of the many now distinguished medievalists who graduated from the Centre in the 1970s and 1980s, and he was invariably present at the biennial York Manuscript conferences initiated by the Centre in 1981. Proceedings of the event held in 1991 constituted the first of the three volumes of essays that were eventually to be published in honour of Doyle's contribution to English manuscript studies.[70]

[69] 'Stephen Dodesham of Witham and Sheen', in P.R. Robinson & R. Zim (eds), *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers: Essays presented to M. B. Parkes* (Aldershot, 1997), 94–115; 'William Darker: The Work of an English Carthusian Scribe', in *Medieval Manuscripts, their Makers and Users: A Special Issue of Viator in Honor of Richard and Mary Rouse* (Turnhout, 2011), 199–211.

[70] A.J. Minnis (ed.), *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission: Essays in honour of A. I. Doyle* (Cambridge, 1994).

Though plainly haunted by the sense that his London and Lyell Lectures of the 1960s ought to be in print, Doyle in his later years readily reverted to his favoured short-form publications. While his stream of notes and articles on northern, and especially Durham subjects continued undiminished, he turned his attention to authoritative lengthier studies of Middle English and related manuscripts in a variety of forms and contexts. Among many examples, one might single out his accounts of the manuscripts associated with the Alliterative Revival, or with the medieval English court and its courtiers, or those containing the writings of important authors such as Nicholas Love and William Langland, or with the manuscripts produced by monastic and by other religious orders, or in the varied circumstances of provincial book production. Manuscripts containing the writings of Chaucer and his contemporaries continued to occupy his attention. In 1979 he renewed his collaboration with M.B. Parkes to provide a definitive introduction to a facsimile of Hengwrt, the earliest copy of the *Canterbury Tales*. A close study of the same scribe's work in Ellesmere, the most finished copy of the *Tales*, executed not long after Hengwrt, was designed to accompany a lavish, full-colour facsimile of the whole manuscript.[71] In 2002, in collaboration with J.A. Burrow, Doyle provided the introduction to a facsimile of the three surviving autograph manuscripts of Thomas Hoccleve's poems, a foundation of much subsequent work on manuscripts of this writer's varied output.[72] Though Doyle's name tended to be most widely associated with the study of Middle English manuscripts, there were also other significant strands to his work, including several that broach new avenues of enquiry that remain to be fully explored. Conspicuous among them were his detailed investigations—always underpinned by minute bibliographical observation—of the Continental circulation of Latin writings by late medieval English authors (notably those of Richard Rolle), and of the part played by the English recusants in preserving the literature of medieval English spirituality. He continued to publish frequently, and with no diminution in the reach and penetration of his work, until well into his eighties.

Alongside his own research, Doyle was exceptionally active behind the scenes in promoting his field of study through work on learned committees and support for major projects in palaeography and bibliography. A few examples of his contribution must suffice. Dismayed when the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) disbanded its Manuscripts Group, he was to the fore in the creation of a new Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections (AMARC), becoming its Chairman (1992) and subsequently its first President (2000), seldom absent from

[71] 'Palaeographical Introduction', in P. Ruggiers (ed.) *The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and a Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript* (Norman OK, 1979), xix–xlix; 'The Copyist of the Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales*', in M. Stevens & D. Woodward, *The Ellesmere Chaucer: Essays in Interpretation* (San Marino CA and Tokyo, 1995), 49–67.

[72] *Thomas Hoccleve: A Facsimile of the Autograph Verse Manuscripts*, EETS, SS 19 (Oxford, 2002).

its annual meeting. The British Academy's Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues project, which began publication in 1990, benefitted not only from his membership of its steering group, but also from his input into many of its publications; as mentioned above, his own contribution to the series was *The Libraries of the Carthusians* (2001). His membership of the Comité International de Paléographie (to which he had been elected in 1979) meant that he was influential in bringing to London its 2004 conference on a topic close to his heart, a project (still unrealised) to agree upon standardised nomenclature for codicological description, an enlarged and elaborated English version of D. Muzerelle's *Vocabulaire Codicologique*, and its Italian and Spanish congeners.[73] The appearance in 1992 of the fourth and final part of N.R. Ker's monumental *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, completed by Doyle's Durham colleague A.J. Piper, precipitated a pressing need for a further volume containing indexes, involving him (with Piper and A.G. Watson) in lengthy discussion and experimentation over the form that it should take. It was eventually published in 2002.[74]

The lives of most keepers of rare books tend to be relatively uneventful, and their retirements usually more so, but in December 1998 Doyle, still usually at Durham University Library on Palace Green every day, shared fully in the shock and distress of his successors then in post at the theft of several of its rare books and manuscripts. They included two medieval manuscripts from the Cosin collection, on whose catalogue he was still working, but above all the library's copy of the Shakespeare First Folio, which John Cosin had probably acquired sometime between 1623 and 1632. Doyle felt the loss especially keenly, since it was a book which, for upwards of thirty years, he had exhibited annually while teaching classes in bibliography. Ten years later, in the United States, a First Folio appeared in suspicious circumstances, crudely mutilated in attempt to disguise its origins, but still disclosing sufficient evidence to suggest that it was the Cosin copy. Soon afterwards, in 2010 Doyle, by this time aged 85, and no longer in the best of health, stood as an expert witness for the prosecution during the trial at Newcastle Crown Court of a local man, Raymond Scott of Washington (Tyne and Wear), who had been charged with theft and possession of stolen goods in the case. The sometimes bizarre behaviour of the defendant before and during the trial attracted widespread press and media attention, and though his responsibility for the theft of the volume could not be proved, he was convicted of its possession, and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. Doyle later wrote about the minute, copy-specific details of the volume to which he had

[73] Doyle's annotated copy of Denis Muzerelle's *Vocabulaire Codicologique: Répertoire Méthodiuque des Termes Français relatifs aux Manuscrits* (Paris, 1985), together with much other material concerning codicological nomenclature, are in CUL Add. MS 10301/16/1–19.

[74] *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1969–2002); see also CUL Add. MS 10301/18/6–7.

been able to testify, which formed some of the most important evidence in securing the conviction.[75]

Doyle's thirty years of active retirement enabled him to travel more widely, often in connection with conferences and symposia, and to examine manuscripts in special collections—particularly those in the United States—that had hitherto been beyond his reach. A particular highlight was a visit to Japan in 1995, where as well as participating in an important conference on his favourite Carthusian writer Nicholas Love, he was entertained at the Tokyo home of his former pupil Toshiyuki Takamiya, spending a day studying items in Takamiya's noted collection of medieval manuscripts (numbering upwards of 70 at this time), mostly in Middle English.[76] Doyle's attendance at conferences was much in demand, and his overviews of the progress and prospects of what by this time had come to be called, in some circles, 'manuscript studies', were particularly valued.[77] By this time a household name in such quarters, Doyle continued to add to his long list of scholarly contacts and acquaintances, many of whom wrote to him for information about manuscripts, in particular for his opinions on their dates and scribal identities. Such enquiries could elicit lengthy typed replies, heavily documented and referenced, often with additional information inserted by hand, some of which must have taken him considerable time to compile from his files and notes. He retained carbon copies of many of his more informative communications, now among his papers in Cambridge University Library. It was also typical of Doyle to keep a mental note of what others were working on, and to pass on relevant references as he came across them during his own enquiries.

It is therefore not surprising these extensive but invisible services to scholarship formed an explicit part of the case for Doyle's election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 1992. It was an honour that followed upon his Sir Israel Gollancz Prize from the Academy in 1983, and his election as a Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America in 1991. Shortly afterwards, colleagues honoured him with the formal presentation of a festschrift, at Cambridge, on the evening before his seventieth birthday, in October 1995. Two copies of the book were presented to him, one finely bound, and a

[75] 'Bibliography and Detection', in R. Gameson (ed.), *All's Well that Ends Well: The Story of the Durham First Folio* (Durham, 2011), 23–26; for further details of the evidence produced by Doyle see A.J. West, 'Proving the Identity of the Durham First Folio', *The Library* 7th ser., 14 (2013), 428–40 at 437–40. The other books and manuscripts stolen at the time however have still not been recovered.

[76] Toshiyuki Takamiya,'An Homage to Ian Doyle from a Former Student', in Saunders et al. (eds), *Middle English Manuscripts and their Legacies*, 380–86 at 385.

[77] 'Introductory Address', in Minnis (ed.), *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, 1–7; 'Recent Directions in Medieval Manuscript Study', in Pearsall (ed.), *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies* (see n. 23 above) 1–14.

second interleaved, for his inevitable additions and corrections.[78] Other forms of recognition followed: Honorary Fellowship of University College, Durham, in 2004; the Chancellor's Medal of Durham University in 2010; and in 2014, the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society. In October 2015, in the same week as his ninetieth birthday, a day conference, reception and dinner were held at Durham in celebration of the event, leading eventually to a volume of papers that effectively constituted his third festschrift.[79]

V

Ian Doyle was slightly built, pale of complexion, and (after his friends persuaded him in the early 1970s that it would be in his long-term interests to move out of College accommodation and acquire a property) he lived alone, in somewhat austere surroundings, in a terraced house in Gilesgate, Durham. He dressed soberly, and though his mien was typically formal and reserved, he enjoyed the companionship of an academic community, and serious conversation in congenial company, occasionally spiced with humour in the form drily ironic observation, rather than wit or bon mots. He was especially particular in matters of scholarly courtesy, and the formalities of hospitality in academic life. Notwithstanding his unvaried, self-effacing manner, he made a distinct impression on all with whom he came into contact, leaving no doubt as to his remarkable intellectual energy and focus. He was deeply concerned about many things in his immediate environment, from the care of the libraries in and around Durham, through preservation and conservation of the city's older buildings, to the traditional ethos and good government of his College. He sat on numerous committees both locally and elsewhere, and was always forthright in articulating his views. It sometimes pained him when things did not go his way, since (as others have also observed) an insistence on getting, or putting things right, in matters small or large, was so important to him as to constitute a character trait.[80] The same tendency also featured conspicuously in his contributions to academic discourse, in his verbal interventions when commenting on papers given at conferences, or in print, notably in the many book reviews he wrote, where rigour (mingled, very occasionally, with traces of an acerbity acquired in his Downing days) was always to the fore.

[78] R. Beadle & A.J. Piper (eds), *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle* (Aldershot, 1995).
[79] Saunders *et al.* (eds), *Middle English Manuscripts and their Legacies* (see n. 21 above).
[80] N. Barker, 'Ian Doyle' [obituary], *The Book Collector* 67 (2018), 361–64 (364); Rainey, 'Ian Doyle at Durham' (see n. 49 above), 360.

As a palaeographer and codicologist, accuracy in the reporting of minute detail was of the first importance to him. His own powers of observation and precise recollection were extraordinary, enabling him to retain not only details of the contents and constructions of innumerable manuscripts, but also mental images of their handwritings. They enabled him to recognise the same hand in manuscripts scattered across widely dispersed repositories, a gift rare even among the most practised palaeographers. But such powers proved to be a mixed blessing. They led him to remarkable discoveries that continue to resonate in the subject, furnishing at the same time an example to which others could aspire, but they simultaneously instilled in him a haunting sense of the ineluctable contingency of knowledge in the field of enquiry that he had done so much to illuminate. No investigation could ever quite be completed, further observations might yet be made, other information might turn up. Where others, impatient or anxious for clarity or certainty, appealed to him about such matters as the dating, scribal identity or provenance of a manuscript, he was instinctively tentative, or reticent. Speaking, for example, about the increasingly contested matter of scribal identification, he invoked a perhaps unexpected, but certainly telling model for the way he understood his procedures:

> In the last resort we can only point and persuade in the manner of literary criticism, as proclaimed by my master F. R. Leavis ... 'these are the details I see, combined in these ways, leading to my judgements. Aren't they like that? Isn't that more likely to be true than any alternative?'[81]

It is probably fair to say that Doyle never regarded any piece of work he produced as finished, and he seems never to have diverged from the spirit of the parting advice he gave to his audience at the conclusion of his 1965 London lectures: 'to look at the manuscripts themselves, and more of them, again and again, is the best way to keep one's hypotheses from hardening'.

Ian Doyle died at Durham on 4 February 2018. The onset of severe weather a fortnight later made travel very difficult, preventing many from attending his Requiem Mass at St Cuthbert's, and his committal (during a thick flurry of snow) at Bow Cemetery. In later years he had been sorely tried by diminishing mobility (after a fall), and drastic deterioration of both his hearing and his eyesight. He bore his afflictions stoically, and repeatedly emphasised that 'he had been graced to retain his faculties to the end'.[82] In September 2016, aged ninety-one, he gave his last paper at a symposium in Cambridge,

[81] 'Introductory Address', in Minnis (ed.), *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission* (see n. 70 above), 1–7 at 4; for the allusion see F.R. Leavis, *English Literature in our Time and in the University* (London, 1969), 47.

[82] His parting words to Ralph Hanna in September 2017; see the Preface to Doyle, *Hope Allen's*, Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle (see n. 48 above), xv.

speaking perforce without notes on CUL MS Dd.1.17, a manuscript not much smaller and no less complex than Vernon.[83] The final publication of his lifetime appeared in a festschrift for Ralph Hanna a year later, a characteristically searching demonstration that the contents and provenance of Bodleian MS Ashmole 750 were more complicated matters than had hitherto been thought.[84] Ian Doyle's achievements were amply recognised and celebrated towards the end of his life, but the words that expressed most appropriately the spirit of his scholarship had already been found by A.J. Piper, his close friend and academic collaborator at Durham, some years previously:

> Few live out so clearly, and with such deep-rooted conviction, the ideal of an academic community where it is not the pursuit of personal reputation, but the advancement of sound learning that holds sway.[85]

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[83] Ralph Hanna took up the story where Doyle had left off: 'Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.1.17: Some Historical Notes', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 16:2 (2017), 141–60.
[84] 'The Migration of a Fifteenth-Century Miscellany', in S. Horobin & A. Nafde (eds), *Pursuing Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts: Essays in Honour of Ralph Hanna* (Turnhout, 2017), 113–23.
[85] 'Preface', in Beadle & Piper, *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle* (see n. 78 above), xi.