

SOAR Research Proposal: Summer 2017 Pt. 2: Project Proposal

Title of Project: *Contextual Study, Translation, and Pedagogical Application of Selected Works by Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 1000 CE)*

Faculty Mentor: Dr. John Black, Associate Professor of English

Student Researcher: Max Kraft '18. BA History and English, Secondary Education Certification Candidate.

Dates: May 29th, 2017 – Aug. 4th, 2017. 10 weeks.

Description of Project:

This proposed SOAR project focuses on the study of previously untranslated works by Ælfric of Eynsham, an Anglo-Saxon abbot and scholar of the late tenth and early eleventh century who represents the pinnacle of learning in England during the Benedictine Reform – a 'native' scholarly and literary revival in late Anglo-Saxon England during an era of Scandinavian threat and before the advent of French hegemony under the Norman Conquest. The core of the project will be a researched, contextual study of the works, situating them within their historical, cultural, and authorial milieu. This primary focus will be accompanied by translation of the works themselves from Old English into Present Day English and by a pedagogical framework that would encourage the study of the texts among students of literature.

The importance of Ælfric's work has been solidly established. He occupies a unique position in the history of English as "the most erudite, prolific, and influential author in English before Chaucer" (Kleist, "The Ælfric of Eynsham Project: An Introduction," *Heroic Age* 11: 2007). As one of the final major authors in the Old English language before the Norman Conquest, his work provides students with important reference in the development of literary form and themes that would have continuing influence across generations.

Despite this position of prestige in the history of English, students of literature seldom read the work of Ælfric; his influence is relegated largely to the fields of religious, medieval, and Old English language studies - and primarily for advanced students and scholars. Even within the former two fields, the language barrier of Old English has made Ælfric inaccessible to most scholars and students (Kleist).

It is for this reason that Max aims to translate a selection of works including "Theodosius and Ambrose (addendum to *Catholic Homilies* II:xxxiii)" and "Wyrddwriteras us secgað ða ðe awritan be cyningum" (which have been edited in Pope's *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*), establish their contexts, and incorporate them into a pedagogical framework. In so doing, Max intends not only to introduce these previously untranslated texts to a wider literary audience, but also to add to the existing scholarly community in a quantifiable way. Max's project dovetails with my own scholarship in Old English language and literature, most notably in my previous work on Ælfric, on Anglo-Saxon historical and literary contexts, and on early medieval hagiography.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Timeframe:

In the weeks leading up to the start date of this multi-faceted SOAR project, Max will be responsible with familiarizing himself with the selected texts and with the conventions of Old English, while also reviewing the scholarship on Ælfric, late Anglo-Saxon literary culture, the 10th-century Benedictine Reform, and translation theory. With the supervision and direction of Dr. Black, Max will build a working vocabulary and grammatical understanding of Old English necessary for translation. As the project begins in earnest, Dr. Black will take a more direct role in supervising Max's translation of texts. After translations are complete, Max will take the lead in researching and constructing the contexts for the texts and then in developing a plan for pedagogical implementation - both of which will draw upon Dr. Black's research in Anglo-Saxon Studies and his experience in instruction of medieval literature. With the help of Dr. Black, Max will culminate his project by developing an article based on his findings and translations to be presented at the upcoming Medieval and Early Modern Studies Conference and suitable for submission for potential publication in a subject-appropriate journal. Having worked with Max in several courses and projects, I feel confident that he can be successful in his proposed SOAR undertaking.

Weeks 1-3: Develop facility with Old English grammar and lexicography; review of scholarship on Ælfric, late Anglo-Saxon literary culture, and Benedictine Reform; literature review or annotated bibliography

Weeks 2-7: Translation of "Wyrðwriteras us secgað ða ðe awritan be cyningum" and "Theodosius and Ambrose (addendum)"; readings in translation theory

Weeks 5-7: Research for contextual study

Weeks 7-8: First draft of contextual study

Weeks 8-9: Reflect on project; review translation choices; re-evaluate findings

Week 10: Final draft of project; synthesis; preparations for dissemination

Student Engagement in Discipline Appropriate Scholarly Research:

The study of medieval literature is multifaceted. It often relies on direct work with primary sources, a task which is being facilitated and undertaken through the translations, as the initial step in Max's project. In addition, the study of medieval literature routinely analyzes the contexts (e.g., historical, cultural, linguistic, thematic, authorial, etc.) within which the literary text was created, an approach that constitutes the core of Max's project. Furthermore, given the 'otherness' (both historical and ideological) of medieval texts, their study increasingly attends to dissemination and pedagogical applications among modern audiences, efforts reflected in the other auxiliary components of Max's project.

Max's project would constitute fundamental research in the humanities. The core work (i.e., developing a contextual study) would be consistent with long-standing paths of research/scholarship in the humanities in general and in literary studies specifically. His proposal also seems consistent with CUR's definition of undergraduate research ("An inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline").

Translation (especially translation from a 'dead' or relatively inaccessible medieval language) is also understood as 'scholarly' in the humanities because it makes a new contribution to a field through the intellectual work required to learn the original language and its historical/cultural contexts and through the creative work required to produce a meaningful version of the ideas/content in a new language/context, thereby introducing the original work to a new, broader audience. Translations from medieval languages often serve as a kind of a basic research or 'discovery' in that they open up access to the knowledge/content of the work translated to a wider range of study and 'application' in other fields of the humanities. (For example, the translation of a medieval Latin treatise on cosmology invites study not only from Latinists, but also from historians of science and religion.) The Modern Language Association, the primary professional association for literary studies in the US, provides a statement on translation as scholarship

(<https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Executive-Council/Executive-Council-Actions/2011/Evaluating-Translations-as-Scholarship-Guidelines-for-Peer-Review>).

Student Contribution to the Discipline:

Max's work would contribute directly to the study of medieval English literature in several aspects: by adding to the breadth and variety of the corpus for one of Old English's greatest authors; by making the works more accessible to students of medieval England and English intellectual history; and by providing a background and framework for better understanding the content, purposes, and relevance of the writings. Furthermore, given the interdisciplinary nature of medieval studies, Max's work on the Ælfric would find appeal beyond literary studies, in fields such as religious studies and Old English linguistics. Finally, by implementing his translation into a post-secondary educational context, Max is facilitating learning and interest about the field of medieval studies among young audiences. Conventional historical surveys of English literature "jump" from *Beowulf* (c.750 CE?) to Chaucer (c.1400 CE). The fruits of projects such as the one Max proposes would work to correct this oversight of a gap of almost 700 years in the typical syllabus.

Max should find multiple opportunities for presenting his work - at December's Undergraduate Conference in Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Moravian, at Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors Day, and at other national and regional conferences within the discipline, such as NCUR. It's also readily conceivable that publication venues such as *Allegorica* or *The Heroic Age* or journals devoted to undergraduate research and scholarship would find Max's work of interest.

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Pt. 3: Student Statement of Purpose

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On Campus Housing: No

Discussion of Rationale:

Literature is a vehicle by which to understand the collective consciousness of people and their culture; it serves as a gateway into the hearts and minds of those who passed it down. Through the themes and presentation of writing, readers are able to understand not only the concerns and preoccupations of an individual writer, but also the conventions of the society in which the writer lived. It is because of this rich cultural value assigned to literature that the work I intend to do in this SOAR project is so crucial.

Ælfric of Eynsham is the most important writer of the Benedictine Reform and potentially the most influential writer in English before Chaucer (Kleist, "The Ælfric of Eynsham Project: An Introduction," *Heroic Age* 11: 2007). This position of prestige affords his writing an important place in the study of medieval English literature and culture, as it provides scholars with an insight into the concerns and considerations of readers of the day. Furthermore, Ælfric's significance as a religious figure also allows medievalists and religious studies scholars to use his writing as a case study for the lives of those in monastic orders in England in the 11th century.

The tragedy, however, is that most scholars and students do not have access to the full range of Ælfric's writing. Any untranslated works by Ælfric are forced out of consideration for any scholar or student without a working knowledge of Old English. It is for this reason that I hope to translate selected texts and provide a contextual analysis for them, so that they may be added to the wider scholarly conversation on medieval literature.

There are also many personal benefits to this SOAR project. As a potential graduate school candidate, this research gives me an introduction to graduate level work while expanding my knowledge and understanding of English literature. Furthermore, as an interdisciplinary project, my work of translation and contextualization draws upon my background in History and English, allowing me to apply the skills I have developed during my education here at Moravian. The value of this kind of applied experience is immense, as it helps me to more clearly define my professional and educational goals after my undergraduate education is complete.

Expected Outcomes:

The primary contribution I expect to make with my SOAR project is the introduction of previously untranslated works by Ælfric of Eynsham into the wider scholarly conversation. By translating and contextualizing selected works of Ælfric, I am building on the pre-existing body of scholarship regarding Ælfric. Furthermore, by developing a plan of pedagogical application, I hope to introduce our translations to a wider body of students who would not otherwise have access to them. I also hope to share my work at Student Scholarship and Creative Endeavors Day, The Undergraduate Conference in Early Modern and Medieval Studies, and any other regional conferences within the discipline. Finally, I hope to seek publication in an undergraduate research journal appropriate to the subject matter.

Aside from the contributions I stand to make to the discipline, the SOAR program is also an opportunity to develop my academic repertoire. The extensive work load required of the SOAR program stands to help me exercise skills in research and graduate level study. This, paired with an opportunity for publication, affords me a unique opportunity to develop an academic history that will aid me in applying for graduate school.

Academic benefits aside, this SOAR project is a unique chance to develop on a personal level. My interest in medieval and early modern literature stems from a deep fascination and curiosity concerning people and their inner intellectual lives. I have always believed that the words of our ancestors hold an inherent value, and provide an insight into the human condition. This is a philosophy that has guided my education here at Moravian to this day. In light of this philosophy, the chance to not only analyze but also translate, contextualize, and promulgate the work of an important author in the Old English canon is the ultimate expression of my educational goals.

The SOAR program and Dr. Black have given me the opportunity to investigate the intellectual history of medieval England while contributing directly to the existing body of knowledge, and it is an opportunity I cannot pass up. To be able to contribute to the working body of scholarship while developing my own skills as a student and contributing to the discipline of medieval studies is, quite frankly, a dream come true. The SOAR program would serve as the ultimate capstone to my educational experience here at Moravian, all the while helping me continue my education past the undergraduate level.