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MODELS OF CHANGE IN MEDIEVAL TEXTUAL CULTURE

Edited by Jonatan Pettersson and Anna Blennow



MODES OF MODIFICATION

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Models of Change in Medieval Textual Culture

Modes of Modification: Variance and Change in Medieval Manuscript Culture



Edited by
Karl G. Johansson

Volume 3

Models of Change in Medieval Textual Culture



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Jonatan Pettersson and Anna Blenow

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Jonatan Pettersson

1 Change, Textual culture, and Models

Change is the unfolding of difference, manifested as, for instance, emergence, alteration, replacement, modification, exchange, decline, growth, or erosion. It is a fundamental aspect of our experience of time and the world, “so pervasive in our lives that it almost defeats description and analysis” (Mortenson 2020). In philosophical discourse, the concept has posed a challenge from pre-Socratic times to the present day, sometimes expressed in intricate paradoxes that contest the possibility of change.¹ However, for the historical sciences, it becomes natural to accept change as a *temporal* process, as time and chronology are indispensable categories for this field of knowledge.

Change is central to the field of historical sciences, as captured in the words of the historian Peter Burke: “Historians are professionally concerned with change” (1979: 1). Just like the word itself refers to both a process and the result of a process, this special interest in change in history encompasses its various aspects from the ongoing processes to the outcomes, its causes and consequences. However, it appears to be used more often to indicate or delineate a subject rather than being thoroughly discussed in its own right. When theoretically approached, it is typically accompanied by a contrasting concept within the frame of a dichotomy. In the field of history and other disciplines it is continuity and change, and in diachronic language studies, it is typically variation and change. In both cases, one might observe the tendency that its counterparts – continuity and variation – actually receive more theoretical attention than change.²

1 The philosophical problem of change concerns sameness and difference, as a changing object displays incompatible properties and yet is expected to be the same object, the so-called inconsistency problem. One standard solution is to accept that change is allowed through time, that the different properties are separated by different moments in time (Wasserman 2006). For a presentation of the philosophical discussion on change and the inconsistency problem, see also Mortenson (2013: 913–915, 2020).

2 Theoretical discussions on change within historical studies are scarce, at least when it comes to meta-disciplinary reflections with a wider scope than the method of a specific investigation or the view on change within a certain theory. Examples tend to belong to the time around the 1970s, perhaps because

Note: This volume is part of the research programme *Modes of Modification. Variance and Change in Medieval Manuscript Culture 2018–2025* (from hereon “MoMod”), financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. It is based on presentations at a conference that took place August 22–23, 2022, in Stockholm, with the same title as this book, to which the authors were invited. The programme, outlined in Horn & Johansson (2021), aims at forming a new synthesis in the view of texts in transmission, primarily of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, but as part of European textual culture. It furthermore aims to contribute to general theoretical and methodological discussions regarding the history of texts from the perspective of philology.

This book explores historical change in medieval textual culture from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. Its core chapters showcase different facets of the medieval textual culture of Western and Northern Europe along with different ways of understanding and interpreting historical change. The topics range from change situated in context, such as how books are physically affected in the hands of readers, to textual change, such as genre change and changes in manuscript transmission, and change in the medium of texts, such as the form of the letters. From their varied observation points, they fashion a composite image of medieval textual culture and its unfolding processes of change.

A theoretical view on the subject is introduced by inviting “model thinking”, described below, and by reflecting on the concept of change and the contributions of the book in retrospect in the final chapter. Are there different kinds and forms of historical change? What constitutes historical change, and what are its criteria? When does variation turn into change? In the last question it becomes obvious that there are more important issues at stake here than merely a matter of related terms. To use an urgent example: is the climate *changing* or are we merely witnessing *variation*? Speaking of *change* in history implies making a claim concerning how the world and its past should be understood, whereas, for instance, *variation* typically lends itself to neutral and relativistic descriptions.³ Hopefully, the interplay between specific historical examples and theoretical reflections will contribute to insights regarding historical change in general and within philology and the history of texts in particular.

Medieval textual culture is the common ground for the investigations that follow, and textual culture is here understood as virtually anything connected to writing and what is written: reading, writing, performing, using and listening to texts, producing

it was a time when grand theories involving change caught interest from ideological viewpoints. Continuity and change are classic topics in the field of history, and some examples of analytical discussions appear in Nisbet (1972), Burke (1979) and Cohen (1983). Variation and change appear in the title of numerous publications within historical language studies, and the different subbranches of (historical) linguistics, dialectology, and sociolinguistics exhibits divergent views on the mechanisms and processes of language change. A recent project exploring computational and corpus-based methods for investigating semantic change is *Change is key* (www.changeiskey.org, accessed 18 July 2024). However, in language studies change is often technically described and defined rather than theoretically investigated; a brief analytical discussion of different conceptualisations of change in linguistics can be found in Joseph (2012: 414–415). In the MoMod programme, a similar pair of concepts – variance and change – represent two fundamental aspects of the diversity that characterises medieval textual culture and unfolds within it. Variance is understood as described in footnote 3, but the notion of change is addressed and explored in this volume to meet a perceived lack of discussion of the nature of change from the viewpoint of philology.

³ In the context of the MoMod research programme, it is important to add that variation, indeed, can be an important interpretative concept as well in contrast to stability and uniformity. Variance became fundamental to the understanding of medieval manuscript culture in the approach formulated in Cerquigni (1989) and Nichols (1990), which also played a key role in the MoMod research programme, see Horn & Johansson (2021:1–2).

and using the material objects used to write with and to write on, as well as the texts themselves.⁴ Taking inspiration from anthropology, textual culture could be understood as ideas, behaviours and products related to the written word.⁵ Alternatively, a more specific definition comprises: *the acts, practices, and ideas of producing, using, and understanding texts including the content expressed through texts and the texts themselves*. It involves material, semiotic, and ideological aspects of texts, but at the centre of interest is human involvement with texts and writing.

The risk associated with such an open concept is that its inclusive virtues may lead to a loss of explanatory value. However, *textual culture* is not necessarily approached as an analytical concept in this volume aimed at, for instance, distinguishing one textual culture from another. Instead, it could be perceived as an expression of a research interest in the human culture surrounding texts that invites communication between different philological subdisciplines.⁶ In other words, it entails an interest in epigraphy as well as texts on parchment and paper, in literature as well as pragmatic texts, in vernacular as well as Latin texts, in both the materiality of texts and their semiotic resources – regardless of language and cultural context.⁷ It is our conviction that such an

4 In certain research traditions, the concept of text is used in a wider sense than just that of the written word, either in the sense that multimodal texts include different modalities, such as script, images, etc. (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996), or, more metaphorically, in the sense of any organised set of signs (see an overview of different semiotic extensions in Posner 1989). However, the current discussion views *texts* as primarily made up of written language including both its linguistic and material aspects, and without excluding the possibility of including other modalities (ways of signification) in the same way of reasoning.

5 Culture is a fundamental concept in anthropology, yet it lacks a universally accepted definition (Vivanco 2018: “culture”). It’s typically understood as referring to human beliefs or ideas and behaviour, but in the case of textual culture it is natural to also include products in line with Naylor’s (1996, especially 17–19) theoretical work on cultural change: “Culture is a collective and integrated whole consisting of learned ideas, behaviors, and products, all related to the needs of human groups. It is a coherent system in which ideas are generated out of people’s concerns, a set of behaviors is tied to those ideas, and products (physical or social) result from them” (1996: 18–19).

6 “Textual culture” was formulated as the focal point of a new intellectual field by a collaborative research group, as presented in Bray & Evans (2007). This initiative brought together “intellectual history, literary criticism, critical theory, linguistics and critical discourse analysis, history of the book, and publishing-as-process” (2007: 1). The current approach to textual culture intersects with theirs to some extent but is articulated from the standpoint of philology. Another closely related approach that has been an inspiration is formulated in the works of Simon Franklin (2002, 2019), and textual culture aligns closely with Franklin’s concept of the *graphosphere*, with, however, some different emphases.

7 National scopes in textual history, which to a large extent has defined philology and literary history in the past, has been challenged in various recent approaches, such as in global, world, hemispheric, transregional, and transnational literary studies as well as in studies in pragmatic writing explored in groundbreaking monographs such as Casanova (2004), Pollock (2006), Beecroft (2015), and in influential projects and anthologies such as Levine & Levine (2007), Mostert & Adamska (2014a–b), Pollock et al. (2015), Wallace (2016), Hoogvliet et al. (2023), and David Wallace’s on-going project *National Epics*. The MoMod research programme participates in similar exploratory work of a new philology.

intra-disciplinary exchange between the different branches of philology is key for the development of the field.

The research interest in textual culture also entails a quest for knowledge on a more generalised level. While our understanding of historical textual cultures hinges on grasping historically unique phenomena, there are valuable insights to be made from recurrent patterns. This was the reason for the choice to make *models* a reference-point in the discussion behind this volume, as thinking and reading through models is a way to formulate generalised knowledge. Within the strong ideographic tradition of historical humanities, generalisations and models have not always been favoured. As the literary scholar Caroline Levine (2017) points out in a theoretical discussion on generalisations in humanities, it is knowledge about singularity that has been featured, “valuing that which is local, resistant, exceptional, nuanced, situated, concrete, embodied, and historically specific” (2017: 633). In contrast, Levine advocates for research that seeks commonalities within the multitude of cultural expressions, and she refers to this approach as model thinking, aiming to identify what is shared and common.

Generalisations are actually less discredited in other research fields and traditions within the historical humanities than in those discussed in Levine (2017), such as, for instance, philology and its younger sibling, linguistics. Grammar is an obvious example of a generalisation, but recurrent patterns in texts understood as genres also represent a form of generalisation. Cultural generalisations differ from those within the natural sciences, both in terms of their range – their direct relevance might be limited to a certain cultural spacetime – and their validity – they are not expected to be confirmed in every instance (as physical laws in principle must be), but rather provide insights into what *might* be expected. One way to formulate a cultural generalisation in the form of a recurrent pattern is to speak about models.

Models are means of knowledge and understanding that extend beyond the single and unique example. It is a word and a concept with many definitions, but one that might serve as useful here is a “simplified and usually idealized and imaginary representation of a phenomenon” (Colman 2015: “model”).⁸ Models also include what we

⁸ Models have a certain relation to theory, and as Duranti (2017: 417–418) points out, they are sometimes not held clearly distinct from one another in the humanities – partly because *theory* is also understood in different ways. Here, models are seen as typically closer to empirical reality than theories typically are, in line with the view that models are “go-betweens between two counterposed domains – the domain of “things” and the domain of “theory”” (Fox Keller 2000: S74). If theories can be described as *systems of thought which help us understand, explain, and predict*, models can be building-blocks of theories. The centre-periphery-structure can be seen as a model; it is not a theory in itself but is used by different theories to describe and explain difference and change. It can also be informative to contrast models with concepts. Both are representations of phenomena, but models are more typically mimetic and relational than concepts. Models show some aspect of the world in an abstract way, while concepts rest on a definition, and the value of a concept relies very much on how this definition covers what it is meant to denote and how well it excludes other cases. Concepts can also

believe are essential features of their object (Chesterman 2012: 1). Furthermore, as pointed out in the often-quoted conceptual distinction by Geertz (1973: 93–94), models might be descriptive “models *of*”, as well as prescriptive or applicable “models *for*”. As a result of an analysis, models are mainly descriptive (models *of*) showing what might be generalised. However, their true value lies not just in their descriptive adequacy but to what extent they function as tools for interpretation and aids for our thinking (Morrison & Morgan 1999). They offer a special value through their transferability, when they become applicable to new contexts and phenomena. “Models are made to repeat, to move across materials, media, scales” (Levine 2017: 643), where transferability enables coordination of observations from different historical contexts in a deeper synthesis.

For this book, it is important to acknowledge what can be understood as two basic kinds of models. One is what might be called a “type” or *type model*, namely what can be understood as a representative of a phenomenon, which helps us to identify and understand other representatives of the same or similar kind.⁹ Such a model could be a person, one manuscript, a scriptorium, one kind of behaviour, or one example of a process or an event that is considered to have a representative potential. The other basic kind of model does not take its starting point in one single representative but instead in an abstract, relational structure that describes how different phenomena or sequential parts are connected to one another. In contrast to the type-model, it might be referred to as a *structure-model*.¹⁰ Such models might be visually presented, often with three medieval social classes (bellatores, oratores, laboratores) or the s-curve, but might also be described in plain words, like the centre-periphery-model or stages in a historical process.

Most of the contributions in this book use historically specific examples to approach a more general phenomenon offering type-models, while some end up in structure-models of different kinds. The reader is also encouraged to a “model reading” (and, to be clear, not as a derivation from Umberto Eco’s (1979) concept model reader) to actively be aware of analogies, recurrences, and parallels.

The chapters of the book bring us on a journey through medieval textual culture, departing from the contexts and the interaction between contexts, texts and the human experience of texts. As is captured in the concept of *aurality* (Coleman 1996), it

be building-blocks of models, such as, for instance, the concepts “centre” and “periphery” in the model that combines them. In this understanding of the two, one might – with a simplification – argue that models describe, concepts denote.

⁹ This kind of model has been discussed from various scientific perspectives, see Creager et al. (2007), and is related to the concept of “case” in psychology and sociology and the “model system” in biology.

¹⁰ The concepts of type and structure are employed in mathematical model theory; however, although there are resemblances between the concepts in the present context and in that of mathematics, no further analogy between them is asserted. Other typologies of models might target, for instance, the kind of claims a model makes about the phenomena it represents, like the one presented in Chesterman (2012), which distinguish between comparative, causal, process, and nexus models.

was typical for medieval textual culture to experience texts through a “shared hearing”. Such a culture of hearing texts performed has a number of implications for textual history, and one aspect granted less attention in previous research is the physical space of the performance, its architecture and acoustic conditions. In what rooms were texts listened to, and how did they affect the formation of texts and literary traditions? Mary Franklin Brown (Chapter 2) investigates how the Latin and the vernacular literature and the architectural spaces of southern France provide us with an example of how space and acoustics might interact with the emergence of a literary tradition.

Texts were not only heard, performed, or read; in their physical form of manuscripts, codices, and books, they served various purposes in medieval textual culture, as illustrated in Kathryn Rudy’s contribution (Chapter 3). Through numerous visual examples, Rudy reveals wear patterns on specific motifs and texts, offering interpretations in relation to the cultural practice of oath-swearing, which was integral to various contexts within medieval society. The method of use-wear analysis documenting traces of peoples’ engagement with manuscripts offers insights into the history of manuscripts as well as the diverse processes and cultural practices that employed manuscripts for various purposes, thereby transforming them.

The physical and sensory dimensions explored in the first two chapters find further depth in a cognitive direction in Stefka G. Eriksen’s contribution (Chapter 4). Eriksen investigates the perception and the meaning and function of sounds in the Old Norse culture and their transformative potential. Her analysis illustrates the pivotal role of sounds, experienced within a multimodal context, in shaping characters and plot development, a narratology grounded in the characters’ perception and cognition rather than rhetorical structure or perspective. The analysis primarily unfolds within the fictional world and its narrative, yet it also echoes the sounds of the real-world interpreted through the lens of a multimodal cognitive theoretical framework.

At the core of textual culture are the texts – without which there would be no textual culture – and its main medieval character, the scribe. Sometimes assigned a role in the background as mere copyists while their texts were on stage, Benjamin Pohl (Chapter 5) brings forth a scribe who consciously manipulates a text on his pulpit for reasons to be explained. The analysis evokes questions about the agency of author and scribe in medieval manuscript culture and also, by extension, the notion of what constitutes a work. The extent of the manipulations in this specific case is perhaps unusual – if not extreme – but the example illustrates the active transformative role that scribes could assume in their creation of manuscripts, forming a history of texts in motion.

Texts seek their readers, but the reader is not necessarily the passive and obedient recipient that the text-producer might anticipate. Much like how physical manuscripts were repurposed for uses beyond their original intention, as demonstrated in Kathryn Rudy’s chapter above, the reader and book collector of Leah Tether’s contribution (Chapter 6) appears to redefine his texts for his own purposes. The example

highlights a crucial aspect of the concept of genre and genre change, that it can be based on the reader's idea of texts and their classification as much as the author's intention and the textual patterns. Readers and the reception of texts play a fundamental role in the history of texts and manuscripts, and the example underscores that both reader and scribe can be equally active agents in an evolving textual culture.

Texts are mediated semiotically through language, sound, and script. The sounds of texts have been addressed in the chapters by Mary Franklin Brown and Stefka G. Eriksen, but two contributions address language and script respectively. As to language, the textual culture of medieval Western Europe was split by the division between the Latin language and the vernacular, and similar diglossia can be found in almost all early textual cultures. The relation between the two languages was stable over long periods of time, but it was also subject to change, when the vernacular took on roles previously reserved for Latin. Jonatan Pettersson's analysis of the language shift in documentary writing in the medieval Swedish realm (Chapter 7) illustrates the speed and the phases through which a redistribution of language for different functions might take place.

Vincent Debiais (Chapter 8) delves into the visual interface of texts – the letters – in a discussion of the change in usage of epigraphical letter forms, particularly the emergence of the gothic minuscule. He challenges fundamental assumptions about how to understand the history of epigraphy and questions the rationale behind the notion of continuous palaeographic development, with theoretical implications for the comprehension of the history of textual culture at large. To what extent does our material make up an integrated evolution, or rather represent a series of separate communicative events? Debiais' material brings us back to the rooms and spaces where the tour through medieval textual culture began, as epigraphic texts sometimes reveal themselves in the open and sometimes remain concealed in hidden spaces for no living creature's eyes to see, with evident significance for the rich and profoundly varied epigraphic textual culture.

In what can be seen as an epilogue (Chapter 9), a more general reflection on the concept of historical change is included, where Jonatan Pettersson discusses different forms and categories of change against the background of the topics of the different chapters.

In each separate way, the authors address changes in textual culture: poets' interaction with contextual conditions, transformations of manuscripts in use, narratological change, the scribes' rewriting of their texts, the readers' reinterpretation of their texts, and the changing preference for languages and scripts. Each of them is a subject suitable for an anthology of its own, but here they jointly present a multifaceted image of changes in medieval textual culture.

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Mary Franklin Brown

2 Singers in Hall and Chamber: The Changed Song of the First Troubadours

Let us begin this investigation of song, architecture, and acoustics with the corner of a door. In the Middle Ages, the great collegiate church of Saint-Sernin stood just outside the walls of Toulouse. Townsfolk passing through the city's northern gate arrived at what might have been an awkward spot part way down the church's nave, but here the architects had interrupted the wall with a large portal (Figure 1), the only one at the site to receive a sculpted tympanum (c. 1090–1120). It shows the Ascension of Christ. Below on the lintel appear the twelve apostles. The ensemble is flanked by large reliefs of Saints Peter and James. These figures, illuminated morning and afternoon by southern light, would have been visible to anyone approaching the church. However, not until the moment that visitors pass the threshold can they decipher the figures carved into the consoles that carry the lintel. Here those who crane their necks see King David seated on the backs of two lions (Figure 2).¹

David was a popular iconographical motif. He was revered as the author of the psalms, which were central to the liturgy of the medieval Church, and so he appears in church decoration and liturgical books as a slender, elegant figure playing his strings. The David of Saint-Sernin, on the other hand, is a battered warrior-musician, a creature of the flesh. Hair grows low on his forehead and is pushed behind an ear, which is framed by thick sideburns and a curly beard. Even among the riot of hair, his heavy features stand out: a large nose that looks as if it has been broken more than once and a gigantic, fleshy ear. His hands dwarf the rebec and bow. The drapery of his mantle appears to be supported by a significant belly. His long tunic has ridden up on one knee, so that the tip of the rebec nearly touches the skin of his thigh. Like the man, this instrument has a belly, hidden in the folds of fabric. The curve of its body and the deep grooves that outline its strings recall the drapery of the garments. The sculptor represents David as if his attention has been drawn away momentarily from his own practice. He mutes the strings and gazes intently – listens – at the door. The depth of the lintel and angle of his head prevent the southern sun from fully lighting his face. Only the glow from within the church could illuminate his brow and the hand that holds the rebec, but for this the great doors must be thrown fully open. At such a moment, the forest of columns in the church's vast nave would draw visitors' eyes, and they might miss David altogether. Those who did notice the king would

¹ See Cazes & Cazes (2008: 224–89). The iconography of the portal as a whole has been discussed many times, but the integration of the two consoles into it remains unclear. For the most complete discussion of the problem, see Testard (2003).



Figure 1: The Porte Miègeville of the Collegiate church (now Basilica) of Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, c. 1090–1120. Photo: The author, 2022.

likely take him for a fellow seeker, gazing into the church just like them. At all other times, the door is literally closed in his face.

I have long wondered whether the liminal position of the Saint-Sernin David was influenced by the personalities and events of the period when the sculptural program



Figure 2: King David holding his rebec. Console of the Porte Miègèville. Marble, c. 1090–1120. Photo: Caroline Léna Becker for Wikimedia Commons.

was produced.² These were years of innovation in Romanesque sculpture, and they were also the years when the troubadour Guilhem de Peitieu (1071–1126), ninth of that name as duke of Aquitaine and seventh as count of Poitiers, was asserting a claim to the county of Toulouse.³ In 1094, Guilhem married Philippa, the only surviving legitimate child of count Guillem IV de Tolosa, who probably died in the same year. Over the next quarter century, Guilhem de Peitieu would repeatedly lay hold of Philippa's inheritance, against the claims of her uncle, Ramon de Sant Geli. Enduring success would have allowed the ducal family of the Aquitaine to establish itself in the capitol of the

² Testard and Cazes & Cazes argue that David's liminal position was influenced by an association with the threshold of the temple in the Psalm 23:7, 9. Testard also considers the theme of the repentant sinner (Testard 2003: 34–36, 51, and 59; Cazes & Cazes 2008: 248).

³ For the life, activities, and context of Guilhem de Peitieu, see Taylor (2006). For the claim to Toulouse, see Martindale (1989: 35–37), and Harvey (1998: 123–25). For Guilhem's place in the context of Latin poetry of his day, as well as his representation in the chronicles, see especially Bond (1995a: 99–128). I agree with the view formulated by Bezzola (1960: 243–316) that Guilhem must have been the first to develop a practice of vernacular court lyric that conceptualizes love service in terms borrowed from religious and feudal practices. Nonetheless, Bezzola has overstated Guilhem's creative synthesis in a way that obscures the innovations of Eble de Ventadorn/Cercamon.

old Carolingian kingdom of the same name. Guilhem and Philippa controlled the city from 1098 to 1100 and regained it c. 1112, but lost it definitively in 1123. During their tenure in Toulouse, they supported the canons of Saint-Sernin in their observation of the Augustinian rule and their celebration of the Aquitanian liturgy, unlike Philippa's father and the city's bishop, who had wished to subject them to Cluny. The canons must have been grateful for the respite, but they could not have been unaware of the duke's philandering, and his relationship with ecclesiastical authorities was often antagonistic. His first seizure of Toulouse while Ramon was on Crusade brought him close to excommunication. The taxes he imposed on the church in Poitou to fund his second Toulouse expedition earned him his first excommunication, and he earned his second for establishing his mistress in his palace at Poitiers while Philippa was renewing her acquaintance with her natal city. Even Guilhem's songs divided churchmen, as we see in the accounts of English monastic chroniclers. Orderic Vitalis, tolerant on this point, described him as 'daring' (*audax*), 'witty' (*lepidus*), and 'very funny' (*nimum iocundus*), a man whose jests (*facetiae*) proved more entertaining than many court performers (*Historia aecclesiastica* 10.21, 342).⁴ William of Malmesbury, hostile, called him 'a prattler and a lecher' (*fatuus et lubricus*) whose performances of lyric trifles (*nugae*) distorted the faces of his audience with laughter (*Gesta regum Anglorum* §439, 467–468). For his worldly power, his susceptibility to the temptations of the flesh, and his musical creativity, Guilhem was a living reminder of David, the psalmist-king. The analogy would have been encouraged by medieval techniques of moral exegesis, which involved drawing parallels between biblical figures and those of the present day. The duke's presence in the minds of the canons may have had much to do with the ambivalent representation of David at the threshold of their church.

The analogy between the psalmist-king and the troubadour-duke would have called attention to elite musical practice at a moment of considerable change in vocal music. In the preceding centuries, southwestern France had distinguished itself for innovations in the liturgy. New songs, called tropes and sequences, had been composed to add embellishment between the venerable chants. By the later eleventh century, however, the Cluniac movement was sweeping the region, placing a renewed emphasis on the chanting of the psalms. The successful resistance to Cluny by the canons of Saint-Sernin was unusual. The Benedictine monks of another great church of the region, Saint-Martial in Limoges (Figure 9), had already been brought to heel several decades earlier. Toward the end of the eleventh century, a new musical form appeared at Saint-Martial, the *versus*, strophic compositions with no direct link to the liturgy, as if the creativity of the monks had been forced to find a new channel.⁵

Outside the church, a new court song appeared, the lyric of the troubadours. From the turn of the twelfth century, only the songs of Guilhem survive, but for the

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this essay are by the author.

⁵ On these changes, see especially Fuller (1979) and Grier (1994, 2000).

early decades of the 1100s, we know of one other troubadour, Eble II (c. 1085–c. 1149), the second son of the viscount of Ventadorn in the Limousin (now department of Corrèze). Eble was trained for a career in the church but inherited his father's title after the death of his older brother in 1106.⁶ The Limousin chronicler Geoffroi of Vigeois identified Eble II as one “who loved song (*carmina*) greatly all his life”, a man “most beloved for his songs (*cantilenis*)”. Geoffroi reported that Eble's music earned him the favour and rivalry of Guilhem as each man attempted to cast shade on the other in marks of courtliness (*in urbanitatis nota*).⁷ Scholars have long lamented the total loss of Eble's songs, which seemed inexplicable given his prominent position, his influence on troubadours of the following generations, and the fact that his music was still remembered by a chronicler of the 1180s. However, a recent proposal by Luciano Rossi that Eble composed under the name Cercamon, an otherwise mysterious individual whose name appears in the manuscript rubrics for nine subtle and graceful songs, may help us understand what has happened. Eble's songs may not have been lost at all, only the awareness of the link between the name under which he composed and his historical identity.⁸ Such a link cannot now be proven, yet whoever Cercamon was, his presence at the courts of Ventadorn and Poitiers is evident in his lyric, as are his position at the very beginning of the troubadour art and his engagement with religious song. Likely due to his lack of a colourful biography, Cercamon has always received less scholarly attention than the other early troubadours, but the quality of his songs and the possible association with Guilhem suggest that we should read the lyrics of the two troubadours alongside each other.

The representation of David at Saint-Sernin and the musical careers of Guilhem and Eble/Cercamon invite us to conceive this historical moment as one of movement across multiple thresholds, literal and figurative: between religious communities and lay households, between Latin and the vernacular, and also the literal threshold that marks the body's passage into an interior space with a specific volume and acoustic.

⁶ The best introductions to the troubadours are now Zink (2017) and Le Vot (2019). For the music, see Aubrey (1996) and Chaillou (2013). There is a superb introductory album of troubadour music by Camerata Mediterranea (1991).

⁷ *La chronique de Geoffroi de Breuil*, 1.24, p. 25, and 1.69.6, p. 81. For Eble II, see Stroński (1914: 163–65) and Pousthomis (2014: 20).

⁸ The proposal was initially developed by Rossi in two articles (1996, 2000) and a new edition of Cercamon's lyric (2009). Rossi's re-evaluation of the evidence has been met with caution by scholars, who have pointed out the weaknesses of the argument in the introduction to the new edition. See Billy (2010), Tortoreto (2010), Beltrami (2011), and Meliga (2011). Zink has shown greater openness to Rossi's proposal (2019: 106–8). For Rossi's response to his critics, see (2011) and his clearest and most compelling treatment of the problem (2013). It is worth noting that already in 1958 Mouzat proposed attributing two of Cercamon's songs to Eble II, along with three others whose manuscript attributions were implausible. His proposal was based on an analysis of language and style that anticipates some of the points made about one of Cercamon's other songs by Camproux (1965), another perceptive interpreter of Occitan lyric. Mólk (1968: 25–35) accepted the attribution of the two Cercamon songs to Eble. Rossi has drawn the logical conclusion from the convergence of the arguments by these scholars.

Thus the pages that follow will revisit a venerable thesis for the origins of troubadour song: the liturgical thesis, launched by Hans Spanke (1934, 1936) and Jacques Chailley (1955) and treated most recently by Gianluca Valenti (2014).⁹ I take Aquitanian church song as already established, along with Classical and medieval Latin poetry, local popular songs, and the court music of Al-Andalus, as a major inspiration for troubadour lyric. But I want to formulate the question differently: not “What was the influence and in what texts does it appear?” but “What relationship did the earliest troubadours entertain with church song and how did they distinguish their own practice?” These are questions of perception, continuity, and differentiation with regard to the Latin language, the liturgy, and its sources in scriptural texts and their exegesis from Augustine to Anselm of Canterbury and Bernard of Clairvaux. In other words, we must examine in detail one subgroup within what Brian Stock called the “textual community” that had formed around Christian scripture (1983). But we will consider a phenomenon that Stock did not anticipate, for perception involves physical sensation. The Saint-Sernin David’s corporeality suggests that we must think about how the human body produces a song that resonates within an architecture and is heard by human ears. At a moment when scholarship has begun to take account of the sound of medieval churches, of how we hear this extraordinary architecture, and how its particular resonance shaped the practice of liturgical music, we should ask similar questions of contemporary court architecture and music.¹⁰ How was the acoustic of the lay hall and chamber different from that of the church? What did it do to the human voice and hence how did it shape what Paul Zumthor would have called these lyrics’ “vocality”, that is, their sound as something more than simply the bearer of text and melody (1987: 21).

Nothing remains above ground of the residence of the counts of Toulouse, the *Castel Narbones* on the city’s southern gate, nor of the palaces of Guilhem de Peitieux in his great capitols of Poitiers and Bordeaux.¹¹ However, Ventadorn offers a useful case study for reflecting on the typical spaces of troubadour performance: the small halls of most of the lords of the Aquitaine, as well as the intimacy of the lord’s chamber, be it in one of these small fortresses or the great palaces of the dukes of Aquitaine. The stronghold of Ventadorn, rebuilt in the later Middle Ages, now lies in ruins, so there

⁹ Related to this thesis is the study of other religious influences on the troubadours. See especially, in addition to Bezzola (1960: 243–326), Scheludko (1935 and 1937) and Guida (1995). For a discussion of troubadour origin theories in general, see Bond (1995b).

¹⁰ For church architecture, see Manaud (2013: 195–243) and Manaud & Barrandon (2023). The sound of architecture is now receiving attention from medievalists. See for example Pentcheva (2017). Discussion of lay spaces remains rare, but see Lawson (2006). For a broader introduction, see Blesser & Salter (2009).

¹¹ See Macé (2019). The palace of Poitiers, entirely rebuilt since Guilhem’s day, is the object of a new archaeological study at the time of this essay’s writing, which may reveal the relation of the present walls to earlier foundations. The palace of Bordeaux has been completely razed.

can be no question of recording measurements in the space. Nonetheless, archaeology has revealed the history of building on the site and recent research on aristocratic architecture in the region makes it possible to deduce the kind of acoustic it would have offered. (The acoustic experience of the large hall, of which the Aquitaine would have offered only the few cited above, is quite different. Performers must have adapted in ways that I cannot adequately treat here, and I must defer the question to a later publication.) In the pages that follow, I shall develop a contrast between the hall and chamber of Ventadorn and other strongholds of the Aquitaine and the churches where scions of these same noble families went to devote themselves to the Divine Office. Onto these contrasting acoustic spaces, I will suggest, can be mapped the first troubadours' awareness that they were creating a changed song, operating a transformation on monastic verses. These spaces made sound more ephemeral, but the troubadours valourized that transience in complex texts rich with polysemy and allusion. In song of this kind, the words must remain fully recognizable even within dense phonemic textures, as they would have been in the most common performance spaces. A clear perception of the words is to be followed by meditation in the mind, where possible meanings can be weighed, for I will show through close reading of one song by each troubadour how the play of syntax and semantics invites exegetical hesitations. This hesitation coincides with a surprising shift in rhyme, an acoustic disjunction that reminds us that the sound of words is as important as their meaning.¹²

Spaces of song

Ventadorn (Figure 3) has become something of a pilgrimage site for modern devotees of the troubadours. Justin Smith, professor of Modern History at Dartmouth College and author of *The Troubadours at Home* (1899), a tour of surviving stones and imagined domestic *tableaux*, waxed lyrical about his visit, describing ruins filled with birds and overrun with vines and wildflowers (155). Smith had been drawn there by the association, not with Eble, but with Bernart de Ventadorn (c. 1125–c. 1200). The latter prominently features in the *chansonnières* (manuscript anthologies of troubadour lyric), where more than forty songs are attributed to him, nearly half recorded with their melodies. His limpid style and decorous admiration for his lady made him popular among scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well. If the troubadour Peire d'Alvernhe's malicious teasing had any truth to it, Bernard was the son

¹² This essay offers an examination of vocality at the beginning of the troubadour tradition to complement my earlier study on the end of the tradition (Franklin-Brown, 2012). Scholars of medieval French and Occitan literature have recently shown increasing interest in questions of song and the voice. See most recently Kay (2022). For recent interest in the voice more broadly, see *La voix au moyen âge* (2020).



Figure 3: Aerial view from the south of the ruins of the fortress of Ventadorn in the Limousin (now department of Corrèze), built of granite in the eleventh–sixteenth centuries. Photo: Office de Tourisme Ventadour Egletons Monédières / Kodebar.

of an archer at Ventadorn, but he must have shown early talent, for he benefited from the teaching of Eble II and the patronage of Eble III.¹³ Another young troubadour associated with Eble II was Jaufre Rudel (c. 1100–c. 1147), a nobleman from Gascony who may have found refuge for a time at Ventadorn after Guilhem had razed the stronghold of the Rudel family at Blaia. Several generations later, Maria (c. 1170–c. 1222), daughter of another Limousin viscount, Raimon II de Torena (Turenne, also in Corrèze), became viscountess of Ventadorn as wife of Eble V. Maria was celebrated by the troubadours of her day, but she was not content simply to be the object of song. She initiated a *partimen* (a dialogue song) with Gui d’Ussel, who may have been a cousin of her husband. It is possible that, while the line of eldest sons had continued at Ventadorn, two of Eble II’s younger sons had gone on to establish branches of the family just to the northeast at Ussel. Four troubadours hailing from that fortress (the Gui who accepted Maria’s challenge, as well as Eble, Peire, and Elias) were active in the years around 1200. The family controlled several small strongholds, but their high mountain region did not generate much wealth.¹⁴ One can imagine frequent visits to

¹³ See PC 323,11, lines 19–24. Peire d’Alvernhe, *Poesie* (1996: 47–59). All troubadour songs are identified by Pillet & Carstens (PC) number from Pillet & Carstens (1933). Line numbers are from the editions cited.

¹⁴ The connection between the Ventadorn and Ussel families is made by Billet (1982), but the evidence is incomplete. For Ussel in the Middle Ages, see also Lemaître (1969).

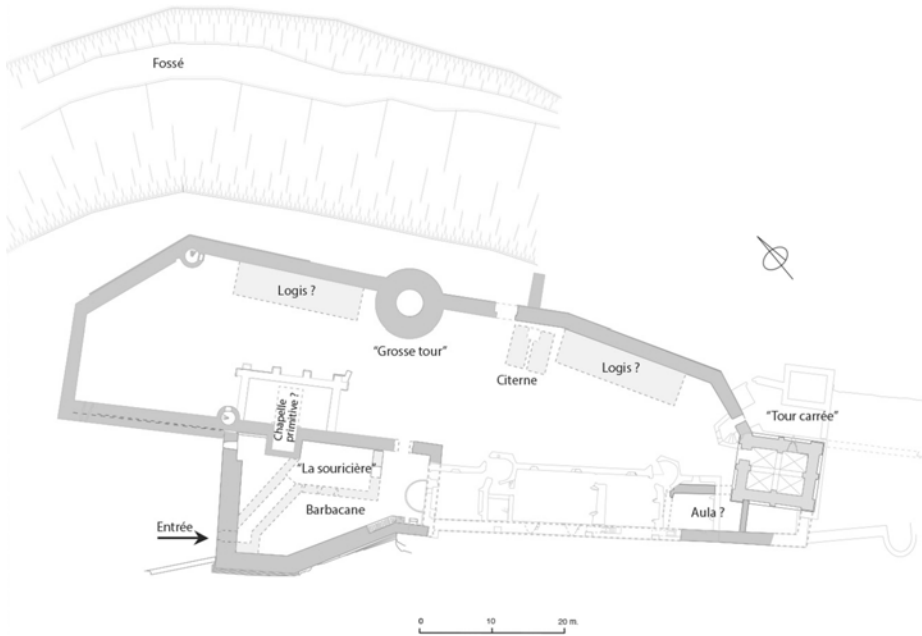


Figure 4: Plan of Ventadorn at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Drawing from Bernard Pousthomis, ed., *Ventadour en Limousin* (2014).

their more comfortably established relations. This means that from c. 1100 to c. 1220, Ventadorn must have been a centre of troubadour performance.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the modern attachment to the site comes at the cost of misconceptions. Almost all the stones that make up the distinctive, wedge-shaped granite fortress were set in place after Maria's death. When Bernard Pousthomis and his team conducted an archaeological survey in 2005–2006, the only construction that they were able to attribute to the twelfth century was the base of the central, square tower, where bits of wood could be carbon dated to c. 1050–1150 (Figure 4) (Pousthomis 2014: 40–47).¹⁶ Since the viscontal family arrived at the site in the mid-eleventh century, it may be possible to date the tower to that moment, or else Eble II himself may have had it built. The remaining medieval walls, a rectangular building that may have served as a hall, the barbican, chapel, and circular tower, were all created in a major campaign in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. However, the curtain wall makes some use of repurposed stone, including finishes, even, in one case, a corbel sculpted in the shape of an angular human head. This raises intriguing questions about what stone buildings might have been sacrificed for the new campaign.

¹⁵ For the Ventadorn family, see Stroński (1914: 166–69) and Pousthomis (2014: 21–22).

¹⁶ I follow Pousthomis (2014) in my description of the site below.



Figure 5: Ashlar of the square tower at Ventadorn (c. 1050–1150). Exterior of the northwest wall viewed from the courtyard. On the left is a central buttress, on the right, the buttress encasing a corner. Photo: L. D’Agostino during the archaeological campaign of 2005–2006.

The tower received a new masonry facing in the later Middle Ages, but within that shell rise the vestiges of an edifice in a style distinct to western France, especially the Limousin: slender and nearly square, with shallow clamped buttresses encasing the corners and another flat buttress running up the centre of each wall. The masonry is especially fine: large blocks of faced granite (Figure 5).¹⁷ The buttresses would likely have joined into huge blind arcades at the top of the tower, as they do at the only such building to survive at nearly its full height, Chasteau Chervic (Figure 6), a stronghold of the viscounts of Limoges.¹⁸ Since the original design of these towers would have involved interior stone vaults only on the ground floor, if at all, the buttresses are not a structural necessity.¹⁹ Their function must have been decorative, or else they were intended as a visual representation of strength and power, which was a primary purpose of the tower itself. At Chasteau Chervic, as at other Limousin towers

¹⁷ For these towers, see Châtelain (1973), Gardelles, (1985), Mesqui (1991–93, 1: 96–105), and Rémy (2006: 71–79).

¹⁸ For this tower, see Rémy (2004).

¹⁹ For the preference for wood floors and ceilings, see Mesqui (1991–93, 2: 98–101), and Poisson & Schwiien (2003). At Torena, these were later replaced by stone vaults. See Rémy & Séraphin (2005: 399–404).

of this kind, the ground floor lacked fenestration and would have been used only for storage or holding prisoners. Ventadorn had a door at ground level, but more typically the entrance would have been on the floor above, accessed by an exterior wooden stair. At each new level the walls would become thinner, creating interior shelves for the placement of oak joists to carry the floorboards. At Chasteau Chervic, only the third floor has fenestration, suggesting a residential function. Holes in the masonry held supports for balconies extending from the exterior walls at this level, which could have accommodated seating, latrines, or hoardings. The extra space must have been welcome because the total internal area of the third floor is only 45.6 m². This is large by the standards of the region; not without reason did Jean Mesqui liken the Limousin towers to belfries.²⁰ The tower of Ventadorn was larger, with interior dimensions 46 m² (7.8 x 5.9 m) on the ground floor. It would have offered more space in the upper stories. Even so, this format is not large by present-day standards for residential accommodation.

The largest Limousin towers are sometimes called a *tour maîtresse* or *donjon* in the French scholarship, but if we translate with the word *keep*, readers accustomed to the Northern French or English context are likely to imagine a larger building accommodating a fuller range of activities. It is hard to imagine a noble family living exclusively in a space of this size, especially because the few whose upper stories survive, such as Chasteau Chervic, lack fireplaces. On the other hand, sources and sometimes even subsisting foundations make it clear that the towers were usually associated with other buildings, sometimes in stone and decorated with buttresses, but lower in profile and with entrances on the ground floor. Documents related to Chasteau Chervic refer to a hall, and stone foundations for such a building survive at Lastours, the ancestral stronghold of one of the most powerful families in the region. At Lastours the interior dimensions of the buildings (4.45 x 4.3 m for the tower, or 19 m², but 9.85 x 6.45 m, or 63.5 m², for the lower building) and the significantly thinner walls of the latter suggest that it served as the hall (Rémy 2004: 82). What, then, was the purpose of the high tower rooms?²¹ One cannot exclude the possibility that they served merely as a sheltered space for keeping watch. Nonetheless, the size and beauty of the tower at Ventadorn suggest that its upper floors provided one or more high chambers, heated with braziers or a central hearth in crisp weather and lit by windows that offered views of the surrounding forests and mountains. It might have constituted the lord's apartment, and he might have been expected to give it to his overlord during the duke's visits.

In light of this architecture, we can propose another possible meaning of the name Cercamon. It has long been taken as "Cerca-mon", "he who travels the world", and this reference to poetic wandering was probably its primary meaning. However,

²⁰ Mesqui (1991–93: 1: 96).

²¹ See the discussion by Rémy (2006: 71–75).



Figure 6: A Limousin tower that survives in original form and nearly full height: Chateau Chervic (French “Château-Chervix”, department of Haute-Vienne), built for the viscounts of Limoges in the later twelfth or early thirteenth century. Exterior 12.9 x 9 m, height nearly 30 m. Photo: Jadith Iacelle, 2022, for Wikimedia Commons.

Rossi has pointed out that the name can also be read “Cerc’amon”, “he (who) seeks on high” (or “seek on high!”) and associated, not only with the theme of amatory and spiritual elevation in Cercamon’s lyrics, but also with the position of the stronghold of Ventadorn on a high rock outcrop.²² Architecturally, this second reading of the name associates the troubadour with the lord of that stronghold, he who resides at the top of the tower.

What, then, of the hall at Ventadorn? The next oldest stone foundation at the site, a rectangular building abutting the tower with interior dimensions of 9.6 x 4.75 m (45.6 m²), dates to c. 1300, so we must accept that we will never know anything of Eble II’s hall. If the later building was intended as an improvement on an earlier hall, it is notable that its total floorspace is no greater than the tower, but the elongated form would better suit a hierarchical arrangement of seating. Geoffroi of Vigeois recounts a surprise dinnertime visit at Ventadorn by Guilhem, meant as playful revenge for

²² See Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique*, 7–28, as well as Rossi’s subsequent comments (2013).

Eble's surprise dinnertime arrival at the hall of Poitiers. Geoffroi claims that Guilhem brought 100 knights with him on this escapade (*La chronique de Geoffroi de Breuil*, 1.69.6, pp. 81–82). Eble's hall would not have easily accommodated that number. Geoffroi's source may have exaggerated, but the whole point of Guilhem's prank was to inconvenience Eble while reminding him of the difference in wealth and power between the two men. We must conclude that the hall at Ventadorn was of such a size that the duke's retinue overwhelmed the space.

It is true that the troubadours' visits to the great lords, the dukes of Aquitaine or counts of Toulouse, would have given them entry into vaster halls. But the day-to-day performance spaces of the many troubadours who were minor barons or knights were modest in size and likely crowded, if not with 100 knights, then at least with a family, a garrison, and hangers on. Nor should we assume that troubadour lyric was only sung in the hall. Perhaps especially at the busy palaces of Poitiers or Toulouse, the quieter retreat of the chamber may have provided the peace needed to work on a song, or a chance to share music with an inner circle. Most visual depictions of troubadour performance, which appear in manuscripts of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, provide no architectural framework, but one of the Chertsey tiles gives a sense of the intimacy of encounter possible even in royal chambers (Figure 7). Replicating the iconography of the young David harping for Saul, the tile depicts the famous lover Tristan harping for his uncle, Mark. Perched at the foot of the king's own bed, the base of his harp nestled in the bedclothes, the young man plucks the strings. The Chertsey tiles were probably originally commissioned by King Henry III of England and Eleanor of Provence (Eames 1980: 163). Henry's chambers were larger than most of the halls of the Aquitaine, but within this space he showed special distinction to guests by inviting them to sit next to him on the bed (Carpenter 2020: 368–69, 397, and 400). If the identification of Eble de Ventadorn with Cercamon is correct, then the codename would emphasize the same kind of musical play in the intimacy of the lord's chamber, rather than a more formal performance in the hall.

These spaces would have been filled with bodies (humans, hounds, hawks), textiles, and wood furniture. A bed would have meant a canvass mattress filled with straw or wool, perhaps a featherbed and pillows, linens, blankets or furs, and curtains. Chests would have held the family's clothes, books, and treasures. In the hall, long trestle tables, benches, or chairs would have provided seating. Floors remain a puzzle: glazed floor tiles such as Figure 7 do not appear till the late twelfth century in northern France, and not until a century later in the south, although epic and romance accounts refer to paved floors.²³ Most likely at sites such as Ventadorn, floors in the twelfth century would still have been of beaten earth at ground level, of wood for the upper stories. They would have been covered with rushes or rugs. While all the

²³ For glazed tiles in France, see Norton (1990). For literary accounts of pavements, see Mesqui (1991–93; 2: 247) and Macé (2019).



Figure 7: Tristan harping for King Mark. This series of floor tiles recounting the story of Tristan was probably made at Chertsey Abbey in England, 1260–1280, from moulds likely created in the 1250s to pave the chambers of a palace of Henry III and Eleanor of Provence. Earthenware, lead-glazed, frame 315 mm square, roundel 235 mm diameter. London, British Museum, 1885,1113.8847. Photo: British Museum.

soft things at floor level would have dampened the sound, it would have resonated off the hard surfaces above: the walls (probably covered with a render finish, an early version of plaster), the wood furniture, and ceiling. Architectural historians, increasingly interested in the preference for wood (ceilings, partitions, paneling) within aristocratic dwellings of stone, tend to cite the material's insulating qualities, but its acoustic qualities should also be noted. Not without reason are woods chosen for the sound board and resonator box of musical instruments, including those likely played in these settings: the harp, fiddle (Occitan *viola*), rebec, or gittern (a small instrument with a round belly like the rebec, but played by plucking the strings).²⁴ There is, then, an analogy and sympathy between the musical instrument and the room itself.

The instrument analogy is valuable for another reason: these rooms were relatively small, resonator boxes of a sort themselves. Direct sound waves would have reached listeners almost instantaneously, while the space between bodies, furniture, and ceiling – the high chamber at Chateau Chervic had ceilings eight meters high –

²⁴ The question of whether troubadour song was accompanied by instruments remains fraught; see Aubrey (1996: 254–62).

would have allowed for the briefest of reverberation, just long enough to enhance the sound without creating discernible echoes or impeding the ear's ability to identify the voice with the body that had produced it. The high-frequency sounds that are most quickly lost in more voluminous spaces, such as consonants and the textural detail or timbre of the individual voice, would have been fully audible. This was not a space of angelic voices, but of embodied ones, each different from the last, articulating texts whose every nuance mattered.

Such *castra* also had small chapels, yet when the scions of these families committed themselves to the religious life, they did not stay at home. They made their way to prestigious sanctuaries. We do not know where Eble II received his training, but something is known about the careers of his grandsons and great-grandsons. A younger brother of Eble IV, also called Eble, was reported by Geoffroi de Vigeois to have been a monk at the great abbey of Cluny in Burgundy; perhaps this was the brother who later became abbot of the Cluniac Abbey of Saint-Sauveur in Figeac. His brother Gui was recorded as canon at the cathedral of Maguelonne in Languedoc. Another brother, Ramon, was canon of the Cathedral of Limoges and cantor of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Martin in Tulle. Eble V's brother Bernard became abbot at Tulle. Eble V's first son by the name of Bernard became bishop of Le Puy in neighbouring Auvergne, while his second son by that name was archdeacon of Limoges and eventually chaplain to the pope.²⁵ Gui d'Ussel is reported to have been a canon at Brioude and Montferrand (Billet 1982: 41).

Gui was just one of a number of troubadours who hesitated on the threshold of the religious life. The learned practice of Marcabru (fl. 1130–55) suggests that he may have been a cleric.²⁶ Peire d'Alvernhe (fl. 1149–1170), whose musical gifts were the object of enduring admiration, was accused of having left the life of a cathedral canon for that of an itinerant performer.²⁷ The Monge de Montaudon (fl. 1193–1210) took his vows at the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Géraud at Aurillac but was then granted a small priory, although he continued composing troubadour songs and traveling to perform them. The *vidas*, Occitan biographies of the troubadours drafted in the early thirteenth century, recount that many more troubadours retired to monasteries at the end of their lives, most notably Bernart de Ventadorn, Bertran de Born, and Arnaut Daniel. The reform movements of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (Étienne de Thiers and the Grandmontines, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercians, Robert d'Arbrissel and the Order of Fontevrault) had aimed at the conversion of adults, whether religious or lay, to a more fervent, indeed, transformational spiritual practice. The troubadours responded alongside their contemporaries.

²⁵ Here I follow Pousthomis (2014: 21–22). See also Stroński (1914: 166–69).

²⁶ See the editors' comments in *Marcabru* (2000: 5)

²⁷ According to the later Occitan biography, Peire created the best melody ever composed. See *Biographies*, 218–20. The accusation was made by Bernart Marti, PC 63,6, lines 31–36 (*Il trovatore Bernart Marti*, 101–114).



Figure 8: The collegiate church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande, Poitiers (eleventh–early twelfth century), looking toward the chancel. The interior is 57 m long. Photo: The author, 2020.

Gui d'Ussel is particularly significant for the discussion of architecture because, in Brioude, he would have joined his spiritual brothers in song within the largest church of Auvergne at the time, the collegiate church of Saint-Julien. The church was renovated in Gothic style in the thirteenth century, and the rest of these churches have undergone changes or been destroyed. Visitors today cannot share the acoustic experience of the twelfth-century singers or congregations. However, others that have survived in their twelfth-century form, such as Notre-Dame-la-Grande in Poitiers (Figure 8), may serve as comparisons. The expanse of the stone surfaces (even when covered with a render finish) would have created a different quality of sound, and the barrel vaults would have intensified it. Unlike the lay halls, these were also geometrically complex interiors with many large surfaces. The closest analogue to the hall was the rectangular nave, but rows of columns usually divided the latter into a central vessel and side aisles. The chancel, often bordered by an ambulatory, provided a semi-circular culmination to the rectangle, and a transept might also have extended perpendicular to the nave.

Most of these churches were also large, although they remained modest by comparison to the exceptional cases. The total interior length of Notre-Dame-la-Grande is 57 m. The construction of Saint-Sernin, where Guilhem and Philippa heard services, was progressing westward to a planned length nearly twice that measure. Saint-Martial, an abbey where the Duke of Aquitaine served as the lay abbot (Figure 9), would already have been about that length. To the architects' aspirations in length corresponded their aspirations toward the heavens. The interior height of the chancel of Notre-Dame-la-Grande is 13 m at its highest point. The vaults of the nave and tran-

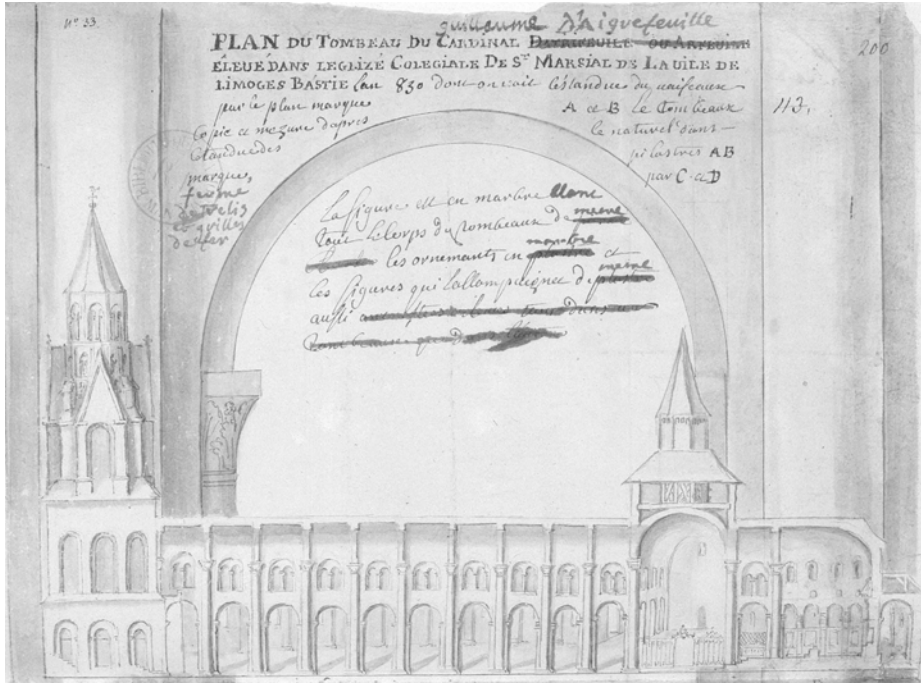


Figure 9: The abbey church of Saint-Martial in Limoges (eleventh century), lateral view and cross section of one of its barrel vaults. Total exterior length 102 m, width nave 21 m. Pen and wash drawing executed for Bernard de Montfaucon, 1726. Paris, BNF MS lat. 11907, fol. 200v. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

septs of Saint-Sernin rise to 21 m.²⁸ All these dimensions are important because, in normal air conditions, one can only hear the reverberation of one's voice as a distinct echo when situated at least 17.2 m from the reverberant surface. The length of these churches, and the height of some, exceeds that number, while the lay halls we have considered come nowhere near. Moreover, I have cited only the dimensions that can be known: length, width, sometimes height. Such measures allow the reader to imagine space visually, because the eye understands it in terms of dimension. But the ear perceives space in terms of volume, which determines reverberation (Blessner & Salter 2009: 21). This means that even what may appear to be a modest increase in one of the dimensions can produce a significant difference in the way the ear perceives sound in the space. The contrast in surface area between the largest hall I have cited so far, Lastours (63.5 m²), and Notre-Dame-la-Grande (which must exceed 900 m²), as

²⁸ Measurements of Notre-Dame-la-Grande and Saint-Sernin from *Structurae*, “Église Notre-Dame-la-Grande” and “Basilique Saint-Sernin de Toulouse” (URLs in bibliography).

well as the fact that the former must have had a lower covering than the latter, indicates what different acoustic experiences these two buildings would have created.

Long reverberation times have the effect of layering sound upon sound. One hears direct sound from the singers, but also the echoes of what they have already sung, arriving at different moments depending on one's position.²⁹ This creates three effects for the listeners' experience. First, it renders the source of sound difficult for the ear to locate, divorcing the voice from the human body that produced it. Second, it erodes the intelligibility of words, for the same reason that it becomes more difficult to distinguish what one person is saying when others are talking at the same time. Plainchant, which involved intentionally slowing the enunciation of a text so that each syllable had enough time to decay before the next was given, was developed in the church setting partly to restore intelligibility to texts that could not be understood when they were merely spoken (Rasmussen 1959: 225–30). Third, the space transforms sung monophony (only one pitch at a time) into heard polyphony by making each new pitch harmonize with the reverberation of pitches that had come before. Thus Romanesque churches produced what Olivier Manaud and Cécile Barrandon have called an “echo-system” that embraced singers, building, and listeners. Within such spaces, even the restrained liturgy of the Cluniacs or Cistercians would have acquired richness and complexity. The musical experience created by these churches suggested the singing of angels and came to signify the grandeur of the City of God.

Versus, vers, and plain chant

I have sketched this contrast between sacred and secular performance spaces because it offers a framework to grasp the specificity of lay performance spaces. I will not pursue developments in liturgical music or church architecture through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But the historical coincidence between the creation of a repertoire of *versus* and early troubadour song raises the question of how – or whether – the former fits into the architectural binary. Unlike plain chant, sequences, or tropes, the *versus* were neither a regular part of the liturgy nor linked to any identifiable part of it. In a Cluniac community such as Saint-Martial, they are unlikely to have found a place in the Divine Office. James Grier has suggested that they might have been an informal recreation for the monks (1994). Might they have been performed in other sectors of the conventual complex, such as the refectory or the chapter house – rooms that had been designed to enhance the *speaking* voice of the reader or the abbot? There is no way to know. They thus elude the architectural contrast between lay spaces and the church.

²⁹ This description is particularly indebted to Manaud & Barrandon (2023).

Nonetheless, the composition of the *versus* runs parallel to troubadour composition for a century among an Aquitanian elite that moved back and forth between monastic and secular spaces. And it is in the *versus* repertory that some of the first notated songs appear in Occitan, although the overwhelming majority of the *versus* are in Latin. They must have represented a monastic counterpart to troubadour composition. The relationship is implied in the terminology. The term *versus* comes from the rubrics for the religious songs of this kind in the manuscripts of Saint-Martial. Guilhem most frequently referred to his work of composing/performing as “far un vers”, ‘doing a verse’, and from this derived the first term given to troubadour lyrics.³⁰ As Guilhem defined it, a *vers* was the union of melody (*sonet*) and words.³¹ Poetically, the Aquitanian *versus* and the troubadour *vers* shared a versification based on the count of syllables, rather than their relative length. The line endings were highlighted by rhyme, and the lines were grouped into larger units, strophes, which the troubadours called *coblas* (from the Latin *copula*, a binding together). Latin writers described the two bodies of song in similar terms. Orderic Vitalis wrote that Guilhem recounted his experiences “rhythmicis versibus cum facietis modulationibus” (*Historia*, 10.21, p. 342) ‘in rhythmic verses/strophes with pleasing cadences’.³² The two kinds of song also shared what Jeremy Llewellyn, writing of the *versus*, describes as a “ludic delight in words and word games” (2018: 158–60).³³ Because of the nature of musical notation at the time, the *versus* melodies surviving from c. 1100 are closely coordinated to the articulation of the words, and this is also a feature of troubadour song (Switten 1993). However, there are significant differences that have been neglected in studies linking the *vers* to the *versus*. They relate to the distinct effects of rhyme made possible by the morphology of the two languages and to the different objectives and audiences of monastic and court song.

Although the monks showed occasional flexibility about idiom, the troubadours defined their linguistic practice in opposition to Latin. They composed in *roman*. The language happens to be Occitan, but the term emphasizes the distance from Latin rather than a specific regional idiom, as we see when in his leave-taking song Guilhem entreats Foulques d’Anjou to pray to Jesus for him: “en romans et en son lati” (PC 183,10, line 24) ‘in *roman* and in his Latin’. “Roman” here refers to Foulques’ mother

³⁰ See Zumthor (1955), Marshall (1962), and Bourgain (1989).

³¹ For the expression *far un vers*, see PC 183,3, lines 1 and 37, PC 183,7, line 1, PC 183,12, line 1, and PC 183,10, line 2. For the definition of *vers*, see PC 183,11, lines 37–42. Guilhem de Peitieu, *Poesie* (1973). All quotations are taken from this edition.

³² Technically, *rhythmicis* here refers to the syllable count of lines rather than the alternation of word stresses often associated with poetic “rhythm”, but I prefer to reserve the word *syllabic* for a style of melody.

³³ For the Aquitanian *versus*, see especially Grier (1990, 1994) and Carlson (2003, 2006). The comparison to troubadour song has been studied by Switten (2007). Sequentia has recorded two albums of this repertory (1996, 1997). The later album of Ensemble Beatus (2006) juxtaposes the *versus* to the songs of Bernart de Ventadorn.

tongue, French, but it is the same word that the troubadours employ for Occitan, while the possessive adjective “son” distances Jesus’ language, that is, the Latin of the Church, from the *roman* of this worldly milieu of counts and dukes. Because the morphology of Occitan is different from Latin, rhyme is created less frequently by syntactic markers (i.e., noun/adjective and verb endings) and more frequently by word roots.³⁴ Meanwhile, the development of Occitan had reduced distinct Latin nouns to Occitan homophones. For example, the words *corpus* ‘body’ and *cor* ‘heart’ both became *cors* in the subject singular, much to the delight of troubadours and their audiences. Rhyme therefore creates different effects in Latin and Occitan, as we can see if we compare a strophe from a *versus* to a *cobla* from Guilhem:

Nobilitanda,
 clarificanda,
 hec dies est amanda,
 hec dies conlaudanda,
 hec dies recitanda,
 in qua nobis patent poli palacia,
 in qua Christi claret misericordia,
 clemencia,
 potencia,
 unde nouantur et congaudent omnia.³⁵

Ennobled, celebrated must be this day, and loved, praised, and retold, when the halls of the heavenly city open to us and there shines forth Christ’s mercy, his clemency, his power, so that all things rejoice and are renewed.

Ieu conosc ben sen e folhor,
 e conosc anta et honor,
 et ai ardimen e paor;
 e si-m partetz un juec d’amor
 no suy tan fatz
 no-n sapcha triar lo melhor
 d’entre-l malvatz. (PC 183,2, lines 8–14)³⁶

I do know sense and folly, and I know shame and honour, and I possess courage and fear, and if you start a game of love with me, I am not such a nitwit that I can’t pick the best from among the bad.

The Latin rhyme highlights grammar (the gerundive, the nominative), and hence the lyric’s many parallel constructions, which circle back again and again to the day that must be praised, before listing the gifts of Christ. The strophe performs linguistic *copia*. The Occitan rhyme heightens the dissonance of meaning within consonance of

³⁴ This contrast is little discussed, but see Ferrante (1982).

³⁵ Text from Grier (1994: 1040). Recording by Sequentia (1997).

³⁶ Text from Guilhem, *Poesie* (1973: 165).

sound by juxtaposing four nouns in their shortest form, inviting listeners to consider the relation between *folhor*, *honor*, *paor*, and *amor*, to ask which is *melhor*, even though the syntax of the sentence accords different roles to these words. The sense of dissonance is heightened by the fact that each of the first three lines ends with a pair of antonyms, while the possibility that this *cobla* is a riddle arises from the speaker's boast that he has the ability to distinguish these things from each other, before he has told us what the song is about. Later in the twelfth century, troubadours would respond to these affordances of verse in Occitan by developing poetic styles that create rich phonemic textures or present extreme difficulties of sense (*trobar braus*, *trobar ric*, *trobar clus*, etc.), styles that found no parallel in the Latin *versus*.³⁷

There is also a difference in musical style between the two repertoires. The troubadour tunes that have come down to us are always monophonic and usually syllabic (each new note is coordinated with a new syllable, although some syllables are sung across multiple notes). Some *versus* have a similarly simple setting. However, even in this early period *versus* can be polyphonic, and their text setting can be neumatic or melismatic (that is, it may involve considerable musical embellishment of individual syllables). Let us compare two examples. First, the opening strophes of a celebration of the nativity from the earliest collection of Aquitanian *versus* (c. 1100) (ex. 1):

I.
 Resonemus hoc natali
 quantu quodam speciali.
 Deus ortu temporali
 desecreto virginali
 processit hodie
 cessant argumenta perfidie.

II.
 Magnum quidem sacramentum
 mundi factor fit ficmentum
 sumens carnis indumentum
 ut conferat adiumentum
 humano generi
 cetus inde mirantur superi.³⁸

I. Let us resound on this day of birth with a certain special song. God by a temporal birth has come forth today from the Virgin's chamber, and the arguments of heresy cease. II. Great indeed is the mystery: the maker of the world becomes a thing made, assuming the garment of the flesh so that he may bring aid to the human race. At this the citizens of heaven marvel.

³⁷ For these styles, see Mölk (1968) and Paterson (1975).

³⁸ Text quoted from Carlson (2003: 629). Transcription from Fuller (1971: 178). Recording by Sequentia (1996).

Versus, *Resonemus hoc natali* (Paris, B.N. fonds lat. 1139, f.50^v)

Melody B

Melody A

Re - so - ne - mus — hoc — na - ta - li /

quan - tu — quo - dam — spe - ci - a - li / de - us —

or - tu — tem - po - ra - li / de — se - cre -

to — vir - - gi - na - li / pro - ces - -

sit — ho - di - - e — ces - sant — ar - -

gu - men - ta — per - fi - di - - e

*MS a third higher to end.

Example 1: First strophe of *Resonemus hoc natali* as transcribed by Sarah Fuller, 1971.

Jaufre Rudel, “Quan lo rius de la fontana”

Cobla I.

A.

(1) Qan lo rius de la fon - ta - na (2) s'es-clar-zis si cum far sol,

A.

(3) e par la flors ai-glen - ti - na, (4) e'l ros-sig-no - letz el ram

B.

(5) volf e re-fraing et a - pla - na (6) son doutz chan-tar et a - fi - na,

(7) dreitz es q'ieu lo meiu re- frai - gna.

Cobla V.

A.

(1) Se - nes breu de par-ga - mi - na (2) tra-met lo vers en chan - tan

A.

(3) plan et en len-ga ro - ma - na (4) a'N Hu - gon Brun per Fi - llol.

B.

(5) Bon m'es, car gens Pei-ta - vi - na, (6) de Bei - riu et de Bre-tai - gna

(7) s'es-gau per lui, e Gui-an - na.

Example 2: First and last *coblas* of Jaufre Rudel’s “Quan lo rius de la fontana” (1130s or 40s). Melody taken from Katie Chapman, *Troubadour Melodies Database*, 2023, from *chansonnier R*. Text taken from Rupert Pickens, *The Songs of Jaufre Rudel*, 1978 (song 2 version 1).

This can be set next to the first and last *coblas* from a *vers* of Jaufre Rudel (ex. 2). Jaufre is one of the earliest troubadours to whom tunes are attributed in the *chanson-niers*. The song was composed several decades after *Resonemus*, but it has much in common with the scrap of melody that survives from Guilhem and a tune that may have been composed by Eble.³⁹

I.
 Qan lo rius de la fontana
 s'esclarzis si cum far sol,
 e par la flors aigentina,
 e-l rossignoletz el ram
 volf e refraing et aplana
 son doutz chantar et afina,
 dreitz es q'ieu lo mieu refraigna.

[. . .]

V.
 Senes breu de pargamina
 tramet lo vers en chantan
 plan et en lenga romana
 a-N Hugon Brun per Fillol.
 Bon m'es, car gens Peitavina,
 de Beiriu et de Bretaigna
 s'esgau per lui, e Guianna.
 (PC 262,5 lines 1–7 and
 29–35)⁴⁰

I. When the stream from the spring grows clear as it is wont to do, and the flower of the sweet-briar appears, and the little nightingale on the bough turns and modulates and polishes and perfects its sweet song, it is right for me to modulate my own. [. . .] V. Without a letter on parchment I send the verse by singing *plan* and in the vernacular language to Sir Hugh the Swarthy/Chagrined by Godson. I am glad, for he (Hugh)/it (the verse) delights the Poitevin people, and those from Berry and Brittany and Guyenne.

Both example melodies employ the simplest version of the bar form, *AAB*, with two repetitions of the melodic line in the first part of the strophe, the *frons*, followed by a

³⁹ For the only scrap of melody that survives from Guilhem, a counterfact for PC 183,10 used in a later play, see *Troubadour melodies database*, 183010 (URL in bibliography). For the tune that may be Eble's, PC 461,197, see *Troubadour melodies database*, 461197 (URL in bibliography). For the attribution of this song to Eble, see Mouzat (1958).

⁴⁰ *The Songs of Jaufre Rudel* (1978), song 2, version 1, pp. 100–2. Melody transcribed by Katie Chapman for *Troubadour Melodies Database*, 262005 (URL in bibliography). Recording by Hillier (2000). For the second line of the final *cobla*, a significant variant appears in the later manuscripts, *en plana lenga romana* (*CEMae*), probably a *lectio facillior* produced by the transmission of the text in written form, without its melody. *R*, which gives the melody, unfortunately omits the final *cobla*. Manuscript *sigla* from Zufferey (1987: 4–6).

distinct but related melodic line in the *cauda*. The form was already well known from Gregorian chant and hymns and it is used in the majority of troubadour melodies composed before 1150.⁴¹

Within that common structure, the two examples take a different approach in setting words to music. The *versus* exemplifies neumatic setting (each syllable is sung on a sequence of several notes), especially its upper, organal voice. It may have been on the cutting edge of musical composition, or at least of notation, because it is among the earliest polyphonic compositions to survive from the Aquitaine. For these the scribe had to develop a new method, employing the heightened neumes that he already knew to notate one voice at a time: the lower voice for strophe 1 and the organal voice for strophe 2.⁴² The combination of heightened neumes and successive notation means that the place of the syllable within the verse line – a feature of poetic rhythm – determines the coordination of the two voices. The combination also renders the consonances and dissonances of the polyphony impossible to analyse with any precision (Fuller 1971: 192).⁴³ We can certainly say that the two voices create an effect of constant movement, usually in contrary motion, that calls attention to their shifting harmonies, to the multiplicity of voices, and to the specialness – to borrow the poet's own word – of the new composition.

In the interpretation of these neumes by both Sarah Fuller and Rachel Golden Carlson, the opening word *resonemus*, 'let us resound', begins on the perfect fifth, the Pythagorean interval *par excellence*, and moves through a sixth, octave, fourth, and third, before resolving into a unison, as if exploring the most pleasing ways in which two voices can resound together before venturing into intervals that the ear perceives as more dissonant: seconds or sevenths. On the final syllable of *processit*, 'came forth', the organal voice soars up to its highest point while the lower voice moves down. They arrive at the interval of an octave, the widest interval they ever assume according to Fuller's assessment of a plausible counterpoint in this period. They then shift up one step. They continue to move parallel to each other, an octave apart, for the first syllables of *hodie*, 'today', as if to emphasize the octave, an unusual moment of parallel motion in octaves in this repertory (Carlson 2006: 632–33). The editions by Fuller and Carlson diverge at this point, but Fuller's version ends with a major second, an interval that creates an effect of dissonance, resolving into a unison, as if to figure the silencing of heresy by bringing the two voices back together. The same counterpoint embellishes a new set of significant words in the second strophe: the consonant intervals occur on *magnum quidem*, 'great indeed', the high point and octaves on *humano generi*, 'the human race', the

⁴¹ See Brunner (2001). For the forms preferred by different generations of troubadours, see Aubrey (1996: 148–49) and Chaillou (2013: 55).

⁴² The manuscript of this song, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS lat. 1139, fols 50v–51r, may be viewed in *Gallica*, BnF, "Prosae, tropi, cantilenae, ludi liturgici ad usum Sancti Martialis Lemovicensis." (URL in bibliography).

⁴³ Compare Fuller's transcription, reproduced in Example 1, to that given by Carlson (2006: 631).

dissonance resolving into unison on *superi*, ‘the citizens of heaven’. Thus, in a response, perhaps, to the heard polyphony of the Romanesque church, the composer has begun to shape a polyphony of his own.

In contrast, even though Jaufre’s text alludes to three distinct voices, the nightingale serves only as predecessor, inspiration, and model for the singular singer, while Fillol, the minstrel who will take the song to its addressee, is yet to sing. The present of the song is dominated by first-person singular verbs, voiced by a single singer. The melodic lines commence with a syllabic setting and a recitative (a series of syllables sung to the same pitch: F, G, and then C), before moving into a series of short neumes.⁴⁴ In this way, the early *vers* remains closer to the style of singing used for the plainchant of scripture readings and psalms, which would have been recitative to encourage focus on the words (with, for the psalms, embellishment at beginning, middle, and end of each verse).⁴⁵ Such a setting unfolds the *vers* with greater simplicity and speed than in *Resonemus*, binding melodic motion more rigorously to the articulation of the text and maximizing the clarity of individual syllables.

The link to plain chant is made explicit with the adverb *plan* in the final *cobla*. Jaufre seems to expect that his audience will know what it means to sing *plan*, and his subsequent specification about language implies that he is adapting a style that exists in Latin. The word recalls the verb *aplana* that had described the bird’s compositional work in the first *cobla*, an echo that makes clear the musical import of *plan* when it appears at the end of the song. However, *aplana* is set at a point of neumatic embellishment in the melody, while *plan* is not, and so the lyric suggests a difference between the song of the bird and that of the man. It is poetic enjambment that makes possible the simple, syllabic setting of *plan* (“en chantan / plan et en lenga romana”) and also allows the word *lenga*, ‘language’, to be set syllabically, while the neumes ornament *chantan* and, above all, *romana*. Enjambment involves a syntactic linkage across a metrical division (the verse line), and also, in this case, across the division between the different parts of the melody, for *plan* is set at the moment when the A tune recommences, as if to link the word *plan* not only to the syllabic setting but also to the AAB form. The placement of the expression *chantan plan* across two verse lines will be replicated several decades later by Giraut de Borneil in a song whose melody has not survived: “anava chantan / plan e clus ades” (PC 242,42, lines 48–49), ‘I was singing *plan* and ever more obscurely’.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Comparison of the notation is not straightforward because Jaufre’s tune survives only in the square notation of a manuscript of the early fourteenth century, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 22543, fol. 63v, see *Gallica, BnF*, “Chansonnier provençal (Chansonnier La Vallière)” (URL in bibliography). This system of notation is not contemporary to the early troubadour compositions. For a discussion of the problem, see Switten (1993).

⁴⁵ See “Style”, in Levy et al. (2001) and “Latin Monophonic Psalmody”, in Troelsgård et al. (2001).

⁴⁶ Quoted from *Sämtliche Lieder des trobadors Giraut de Bornelh* (138–49). Kolsen accepts the *lectio difficilior* of *chansoniers RZ*. He understands this line to refer to texts composed in both the *clus* and

To Jaufre's association between song that is *plan* and the vernacular, Giraut adds a connection to the new *clus*, or intentionally difficult, poetic style.

In a new acoustic environment, this kind of melody will not have the same effect as in a church. There will be no reverberant prolongation of the individual syllables. Likewise, the solo voice measures its difference from the string instrument: a string once plucked continues to vibrate even as others are plucked, but the voice can produce only one pitch at a time. Song is brutally ephemeral, almost like speech. In fact, short reverberation times allow the melody to be sung at greater speed without compromising the comprehensibility of the words. This would suit a kind of song that Guilhem and his successors conceived as a performance of wit, for a certain speed of delivery is necessary to elicit laughter. As Giraut would articulate, it also suits texts that offer complexities of sense, and although we associate such complexity principally with later troubadours, Guilhem and Cercamon developed their own styles of difficulty. Listeners cannot begin to unravel meaning until they hold the entirety of one of these *coblas* in their memory. From its earliest days, then, troubadour lyric exploited a tension between the sequential articulation of ephemeral words and the meanings they offer once the whole *cobla* is known.

Strange Latin

The union of continuity and discontinuity between singing *plan* in church and in the chamber was an object of fascination for the earliest troubadours. In their subtlest lyrics, Guilhem de Peitieux' song of the hawthorn branch and Cercamon's song of change, they reflected on the relationship between their song and the music and discourse of the Church. Unfortunately, neither melody is preserved, so we must focus on the music of the words alone.

Of the two songs, Guilhem's has received more scholarly attention. Before the late twentieth century, when interest swung toward Guilhem's more bombastic creations, there had been discussion of its religious and classical intertexts.⁴⁷ Scholars had puzzled over the syntax and meaning of the final *cobla*, which has seen diverse commentaries and translations. What is needed now is an interpretation that reveals Guilhem's innovations for what they are. This means measuring the song's divergence from its intertexts and resisting the temptation to read it in light of the imitations or further developments by later troubadours, which make its inventions appear to be common-

the *leu* (here expressed as *plan*) styles. Sharman has rejected this manuscript reading in her edition, in favor of "chantan / plan e plus ades", which appears in the majority of manuscripts (she translates: "singing more and more simply") (*The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil*, 168–74).

⁴⁷ Scheludko (1934: 139–40 and 1935: 411).

places. The sheer number of borrowings by later troubadours – or indeed, Latin poets – is only a measure of Guilhem’s influence. Above all, our interpretation must trace the way allusion and syntax together unfold divergent possibilities of meaning in the time of the performance. For in its focus on language and discourse, the song comes full circle without returning to the same place. The repetition of the lexeme *chan* in the first *cobla* frames the word *lati*. *Chan* will be repeated in the final *cobla* so that it frames the song as a whole, but it is words for spoken discourse that proliferate in the closing statement. This shift in emphasis is subtly enhanced by a regression of the rhyme sounds between strophes II and III (*aabcbc* becomes *bbcaca*):

I.
 Ab la dolchor del temps novel
 foillo li bosc, e li aucel
 chanton chascus en lor lati
 segon lo vers del novel chan;
 adonc esta ben c’om s’aisi
 d’acho don hom a plus talan.

[. . .]

III.
 La nostr’amor va enaissi
 com la branca de l’albespi
 qu’esta sobre l’arbr[e] creman,
 la nuoit, ab la ploi’ ez al gel,
 tro l’endeman, que l sols s’espan
 per la fueilla vert el ramel.

[. . .]

V.
 Qu’ieu non ai soing d’estraing lati
 qu’m parta de mon Bon Vezi,
 q’ieu sai de paraulas com van,
 ab un breu sermon que s’espel:
 que tal se van d’amor gaban;
 nos n’avem la pess’e l coutel.
 (PC 183,1, lines 1–6, 13–18, and 25–30)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Guilhem, *Poesie* (1973: 241–66). There is a recording on a borrowed melody in *Camerata Mediterranea* (1991). The song survives in two separate versions in *chansonnier a* (the second attributed to Jaufrè Rudel), compiled by Bernart Amoros at the Angevine court of Aix at the end of the thirteenth century, and two versions in *chansonnier N*, made in Venice or Padua at about the same time. The *cobla* order is invariable. In other ways, all manuscript versions are problematic, inviting variation in the many modern editions and translations. I find Pasero’s text preferable because of his openness to the *lectiones difficiliores* of *a*. I have emended his reading of the third line of the third strophe in accordance with Jensen’s comments about the syntax of the *estar* + gerund locution (Guilhem, *Provençal Philology*, 287–88). This validates the reading of the antepenultimate syllable in both of the Bernart Amoros copies, as against

I. In the sweetness of the new season the woods leaf out and birds sing, each in its Latin, according to the measures of the new song; and so it is good for a man to undertake what is most desired . . .
 III. Our love goes thus, like the branch of the hawthorn that remains on the tree through the night, burning in rain and ice, until the morning, when the sunlight spreads through the green leaves and boughs . . .
 V. For I don't care about strange Latin that would separate me (or: I don't care about strange Latin, that it separate me) from my Good Neighbour, for I know about words, how they go, with a brief sermon/discourse that opens up/signifies, for so-and-so goes bragging about love, but we have the piece (of bread?) and the knife.

In the first *cobla*, we must allow the trope of *lati* for birdsong its full effect of surprise.⁴⁹ In earlier Occitan texts, *lati* had been employed literally to refer to the learned language: the poet of the *Canso de sancta Fides* found his material in a *libre latin* (*La Chanson de Sainte Foi*, 1998, line 2). Guilhem uses the word in only two other songs. We have already seen one example, which is literal. The other occurs in Guilhem's anecdote of sexual bondage, where the troubadour claims to have been walking along a road when he encountered two ladies, who, believing him to be a mute pilgrim, take him home and have their way with him. One of the ladies initially hails the troubadour "en son latin" (PC 183,12, line 19), 'in her (vernacular) idiom'. However, *latin* is made to rhyme with *pelerin* in the next line and takes its place in a song that reminds everyone of clerical sexual proclivities and the transgressions of those who profess devotion. The song begins by criticizing women who take clerics rather than knights as their lovers, and the women hail the troubadour/pilgrim in the name of St Leonard (the patron saint of prisoners, whose shrine in the Limousin was a popular pilgrimage destination).⁵⁰ In the songs of Guilhem, then, the word *lati* continues to resonate a relation to the Church even when its primary sense is metaphorical.

those in *N*. However, I do not follow Jensen and most other editors in reproducing *tremblan* from the second version in *N* and the first version in *a* (frequently a poor copy). There is no doubt that the end of this line posed problems for those who transmitted the song – greater problems than one would expect if the original version had been something as simple as *tremblan*. The second version in *a* gives *larbre treman*. The first version in *N* gives *larbren trenan*. All things considered, *tremblan* strikes me as a *lectio facillior* of the kind we find elsewhere in *N*'s copies of this song (see line 25, where both versions in *N* give *de lor lati*, which is clearly reproduced from line 3 to replace something a copyist found too difficult). Pasero's emendation of the second version in *a* from *treman* to *creman* is paleographically sound: a *c* in the book hand of c. 1300 could easily have been taken for a *t* by the late-fifteenth-century copyist of the *chansonnier* of Bernart Amoros, unaware of the eleventh-century religious poetry to which Guilhem was alluding. Moreover, this copyist's comments about difficulty reading Bernart's manuscript indicate that the parchment was darkened or the ink faded (Zufferey 2023). As Pasero notes, the reading *creman* is further justified by the Latin intertext, first identified by Scheludko (1935: 411).

⁴⁹ Müller (1963: 53–55) discusses the various developments of the word *latin* in the Romance languages, but his treatment of the word in French and Occitan begins with the multiple attestations in the twelfth century, specifically with Marcabru's borrowing from Guilhem and Cercamon.

⁵⁰ On this song and the other two in which Guilhem alludes to saints, see Valenti (2014: 32–49). Guilhem's likely parody of pilgrimage to St-Leonard de Noblat was explicated by Lejeune (1973).

In “Ab la dolchor”, *lati* is first associated with sweetness, innovation, desire, and song, none of them foreign to the liturgy of the Church. The spring scene would become a troubadour commonplace (we have already seen an adaptation by Jaufrè Rudel). Here Guilhem’s intertext is the association of spring and birdsong with erotic love in the Song of Songs:

Behold my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: The fig tree hath put forth her green figs: the vines in flower yield their sweet smell. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come. (Canticle of Canticles 2:10–13)⁵¹

That Guilhem’s opening *cobla* makes direct allusion to the Canticle is confirmed in his final *cobla*, where he calls his mistress *Bon Vezi*. Peter Dronke has connected the name to the expression *proxima mea* that the bridegroom uses for the bride in pre-Vulgate Latin translations of the Song of Songs, a translation replaced by *amica mea* in the Vulgate but still preserved in numerous Patristic and liturgical texts (1979: 237). The Canticle had inspired paraphrases and adaptations in Latin verse beginning in the Carolingian period (Dronke 1965: 268–72), and it received still more attention in Guilhem’s lifetime. In the monastic context, a new population of adults taking their vows after having lived in the world drove a new affirmation of sense experience, for which this text was uniquely suited. Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons (1135–1153) would constitute only the most famous of the many exegetical treatments in the twelfth century. Despite the mysticism of some passages in Bernard’s sermons, the emphasis of this exegetical literature was largely ethical: the transformation of the believer into a better image of God, through the daily practice of religion and participation in the prayers and liturgy of the church.⁵² By taking the Canticle as a starting point for his song, Guilhem evokes not only sensuality, but also the Church’s ethical teaching and musical practice.

Religious discourse also lies behind the image of the hawthorn branch in the medial *cobla*. The branch, which we can assume to be flowering, recalls the flower of the field in Isaiah, emblem of the flesh and the world, whose ephemeral nature is contrasted to the enduring word of God: “All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field (*flos agri*). The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen, because the spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it” (Isaiah 40:6–7). In the Psalms, the image of the grass is also associated with the passage of night and day (Psalm 89: 4–6). Medieval religious poets elaborated the metaphor of the plant exposed to the elements, and in their work the consonances of rhyme provide further definition to the image. In his *Carmen de*

⁵¹ Quotations of the Bible in English are from the Douai-Rheims translation of the Vulgate.

⁵² The scholarship is vast. See especially Astell (1990) and Matter (1990). For the emphasis on ethics, see Bell (2008). For the relation to medieval love lyric, see Dronke (1979).

contemptu mundi, Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) played on the proximity of *creavit* and *cremavit*:

Res hujus mundi, quotquot natura creavit,
sunt quasi flos agri, quem frigus et aura cremavit,
sicut enim flores autumni tempore nati,
frigore marcescunt in ventos ire parati:
sic cito deficiunt, quae mundus habet pretiosa,
in quibus infelix hominum mens est studiosa.⁵³

The things of this world, all that nature has created, are like the flower of the field, which the cold and wind have burned, as indeed autumn flowers born into time are withered by the cold and the winds, prepared to depart, thus quickly do those things fail which the world holds dear, the objects of zeal for the wretched minds of men.

Guilhem exploits the filiation of Occitan *cremar* with Latin *cremare*. But the troubadour is not merely translating the Latin poetry. Instead, he reverses its values, showing the beauty of the cyclical temporality of natural processes. Just as spring returns anew each year, so day follows night and the sun melts frost. The hostile elements are ephemeral, just like the hawthorn flowers and the *lati* of the sweet spring birdsong. Thus the medial simile, with its religious resonances, transforms the relation between the speaker and *lati*. The troubadour's song no longer parallels the songs of the Church. It expresses its own values.

This shift prepares the return of *lati* in the fifth *cobla*, as a *strange* idiom that poses a danger to the sexuality that Guilhem has just affirmed (“Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan / c'aia mas mans soz so mantel!”, ‘may God let me live long enough to get my hands under her mantle!’, 23–24). Now *lati* is brought into proximity with *sermon*, another word whose use is not straightforward at this turn of the twelfth century. It does not make a frequent appearance in the songs of the early troubadours. It is absent from the lyric of Cercamon and Jaufrè Rudel. Marcabru alone picks it up, using it twice to refer to a moralizing discourse and once to slander. The fear of slander makes frequent appearance in the songs of later troubadours, but Guilhem flaunted his liaisons and never employed the term *lausengier*, which would become the chief term for a person who retails damaging gossip.⁵⁴ Prior to Guilhem, the Occitan *sermo* is attested only in the *Boeci*, where it refers to Boethius' discourses condemning the evils of his day.⁵⁵ All this would suggest that the *breu sermon* and *estraing lati* are the moralizing discourses of the churchmen. In this context, we can appreciate the outrageousness of the troubadour's choice of *Bon Vezi* as a *senhal* (a codename) for his lady. *Senhals* for ladies in the masculine form would become normal among later troubadours,

⁵³ Anselm of Canterbury, *Carmen de contemptu mundi*.

⁵⁴ PC 293,5, line 32, 293,32, line 54, and 293, 37, line 49. Marcabru, *A Critical Edition* (2000: 88–97, 402–14, and 464–73).

⁵⁵ *Boecis* (1950: lines 1–12 and 20–27).

but in Guilhem's day nothing is yet fixed by tradition. What the masculine form of the word does do is to give the *senhal* another scriptural echo: the commandment to love thy neighbour, which, along with the lawyer's question in Luke ("quis est meus proximus?", 'who is my neighbor?', 10:29) and the answering parable of the Good Samaritan, is a perennial topic for sermons. Guilhem, who elsewhere makes no mystery of the identity of his conquests, is inviting his audience to ask, "quis est meus proximus?" It is not difficult to see why so many churchmen found the duke indigestible. Likely the feeling was mutual, and his attitude toward clerical remonstrance may explain the alienation indicated with the word *estraing*. Or it may refer to the language of preaching, which was, in fact, not Latin. Since the Carolingian reforms, sermons were supposed to be pronounced to the laity in the vernacular.

Interpretation of this final *cobla* is further complicated by syntax. The Latin conjunctions *quia*, *quid*, *quod*, and *quam* had all become *que* in Occitan, and the paradigm of relative pronouns had been simplified, also in favor of *que*. This multi-purpose word appears five times in the final *cobla*. Some uses are clear, others ambiguous. At the beginning of the second line, *que* may function either as a relative pronoun or as a conjunction, positioned after the subject of the relative clause, a common stylistic device of Guilhem's.⁵⁶ More puzzling is the sense of *que* at the beginning of the penultimate line. If the word again functions as a conjunction with the sense "for", then the notion of someone bragging about love must be a logical development of what had gone before. Has everything that has come before referred, not to an ecclesiastical discourse that would police sexuality, but to discourse about love by lovers, to be associated with the verb *gabbar* 'to boast'? This would require us to reinterpret *sermo*. It would also mean that this very love song, initially identified with the sweet *lati* of the birds, risks becoming a *breu sermon* in *estraing lati* of the kind the troubadour disavows. Guilhem is entirely capable of such self-irony, as exemplified in the song cited in the previous section.⁵⁷ However, two editors, Nicolò Pasero and Frede Jensen, understand *que* to function pronominally, as an introduction to the *sermon*, which they identify with the closing two lines of the song. In other words, the discourse in question would be the troubadour's own wisdom about love. Two lines would indeed make a short discourse, but this reading forces us to take *ab*, which is most naturally construed with *van*, as a contorted complement to *sai*: "I know (how words go) with what I am about to say".

Whatever the sense, what really matters is the way the different possibilities unfold themselves in time, the reassessment occasioned by the last of this sequence of *ques*, the hesitation about whether it makes the word *sermon* refer backwards or

⁵⁶ See Guilhem, *Provençal Philology* (293–94).

⁵⁷ PC 183,2. Guilhem, *Poesie* (157–86).

forwards.⁵⁸ The interpretive problem focuses the mind on the sense of the expressions *estraing lati* and *breu sermon* at the same time that listeners are reminded how Occitan syntax differs from Latin. What, then, is the thing the troubadour knows about “how words go”? Is it that *estraing lati* does not matter, or that discourse about love does not matter? Or is it something more profound about the nature of language? The enigma remains unresolved, as befits a song that would be heard and discussed time and time again.

Changed song

Cercamon’s lyric “Assatz es or’oimai q’eu chant” offers a suitable companion piece to Guilhem’s song of the hawthorn, for it, too, commences with an echo of religious texts and ends with a statement that marks its difference from Latin discourse. The speaker begins by declaring that he must sing again:

I.
 Assatz es or’oimai q’eu chant;
 tant ai estat acondurmitz
 c’anc mos chanz non fon lueing auzitz,
 mas era-m vau ja reveilhant
 e irei mon joi recobran
 contre l’ivern e-l freg aurei (PC 112,1c, lines 1–6).⁵⁹

I. From this moment I must sing; I have been asleep so long that my song was no longer heard afar, but now I begin to awake and I will work to recover my joy in the face of winter and the cold wind.

He then declares that he has never troubled himself about outward displays of his joy, but it is within his desiring heart, so that he goes among people sighing with desire and does not sleep or wake or hear or see (*cobla* II). With odd insistence, he will again refer to keeping awake at the beginning of *cobla* III. As Rossi has observed, these repeated references to sleep and waking are consonant with “I sleep and my heart watcheth (*vigilat*)” in the Song of Songs (5:2).⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the season is different, the allusion more distant.

Perhaps more significant is the way this insistence on the thematic of sleep and waking echoes the parable of the wise and foolish virgins from the Gospel of Matthew.

⁵⁸ This is, of course, true of all poetry; see Fish (1980). The aural reception and repetition of troubadour songs in performances over many evenings would heighten the effect, as would the particularly enigmatic nature of the songs examined here.

⁵⁹ Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique* (154–56). All quotations are from this edition, which is to be preferred because it remains closest to the manuscript. The song is preserved only in *chansonnier a*.

⁶⁰ Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique* (75).

In this text, Jesus tells his listeners that the kingdom of heaven is like ten maidens, who take their lamps and go out to meet the bridegroom. The five wise virgins take oil with them, but the five foolish ones do not. All sleep while the bridegroom tarries. When, at midnight, his arrival is announced, the foolish virgins cannot light their lamps, and while they are away seeking to purchase oil, the bridegroom arrives, the other virgins go into the wedding with him, and the doors are shut. “But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch (*vigilate*) ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour” (Matthew 25:11–13). This important intertext for Cercamon’s song would have been kept present in his mind by the parable’s frequent representation in Aquitanian art, poetry, and music. Because this unique regional tradition lends meaning and depth to the song, it requires a few pages of description.

The wise and foolish virgins were such a popular iconographical motif that they appear in the mural painting and sculptural programs of Romanesque churches across Europe. In the Aquitaine beginning at least by 1120, a cluster of small churches distinguished themselves by depicting it on an archivolt above the west door.⁶¹ Examples from Cercamon’s lifetime include Saint-Pierre de la Tour in Aulnay, Notre-Dame-de-l’Assomption in Fenioux (Figure 10), and Saint-Gilles in Argenton-Château, churches of Poitou and Saintonge. There, the parable was associated with depictions of the battles of the virtues and vices and mounted triumphal figures. Linda Seidel (1981) has argued that these extravagant portals were inspired by Roman triumphal arches, or by those arches’ reproduction in miniature on Carolingian reliquaries, shrines, and altar frontals. In Seidel’s account, the Aquitanian portals’ disproportion both with the surrounding built environment and with the church itself (usually a parish church for a small community) served as a celebration of Christ’s victory over death, writ large on the landscape. At the same time, their foregrounding of the eucharist through various figures, such as that of a woman holding a wafer at Aulnay, functioned as an invitation to the liturgy and encouraged devotion among a warrior aristocracy who were summoned to pledge themselves to crusade.

In these sculptural programs, the door of the parable, usually depicted framing the figure of Christ, is almost always associated visually with the church door below it (Seidel 1981: 51–54). At Fenioux (Figure 10), Christ is centred in the fourth archivolt. This places him beneath the signs of the zodiac on the fifth archivolt – the vault of the fixed stars, signifying the created world. He stands between two jambs that recall in miniature form the strong, plain jambs of the door below. Despite the damage the sculpture has sustained, it is clear that his hands extend across the miniature jambs, the left in a gesture of prohibition, the right in a gesture of welcoming. Arching down and away from him, the virgins are each positioned within an arcade of their own

⁶¹ The two earliest of these churches, and perhaps more, predate the use of this iconography on archivolts at Saint-Denis (to be followed by Laon and Rheims).



Figure 10: The church Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption of Fenioux, in Saingonge, an eastern region of the Aquitaine (now Department of Charente-Maritime). The western façade is dominated by the jambs and archivolts of its single door. The uppermost archivolts depict the signs of the zodiac. Below them, Christ, positioned within a doorway, welcomes the wise virgins on his right and forbids entry to the foolish virgins on his left. Photo of portal: Jochen Jahnke for Wikimedia Commons.

that recalls the arching form of the archivolts. The door to the church is thus associated with the door to heaven, a door between this present world and the next. The individual has only to light the lamp of the wise virgin and pass through.

The frequency and placement of this sculptural motif in the Aquitaine may have been inspired by the diffusion of a religious play of the late eleventh century, the *Sponsus*, which is also preserved in the same St-Martial manuscript as the earliest *versus*. This text likewise recounts Christ's victory over death in its opening lines. It goes on to blend the narrative from the parable of the wise and foolish virgins with influences from the Song of Songs and the gospel account of the Annunciation.⁶² The *Sponsus* includes lines in both Latin and a northwestern dialect of *oc*, the dialect of Poitou or the Limousin (Henrard 1998: 18–24; Banniard 2014: 132). The exhortation

⁶² *Nine Medieval Latin Plays*, 3–23. All quotations are from this edition. There is also an edition by D'Arco Silvio Avalle, *Sponsus* (1965), which includes a transcription of the musical notation by Raffaello Monterosso. The influence of the play is plausible because southern Poitou and Saintonge, as well as Poitiers itself, were at that time part of the Occitan linguistic zone (see Zufferey 2011).

Vigilate! from the end of the parable is shifted forward to the beginning of the text. At nightfall the angel Gabriel repeatedly warns the virgins: “Gaire no-i dormet!”, ‘Sleep not here!’. In a departure from the Gospel version, the wise virgins of the drama heed Gabriel’s warning and keep vigil as their foolish sisters slumber. On awaking, the foolish virgins voice their own refrain: “Dolentas! Chaitivas! Trop i avem dormit!”, ‘Miserable wretches! We have slept here too long!’. They ask that their sisters lend them oil, that the merchants sell it to them, and that the bridegroom open the door to them. They meet rejection from all quarters. Christ’s response is structured through Latin rhymes that highlight the link between the door and remedy (*ostium, remedium*) and, in a felicitous chiasmus, between light and the threshold (*lumine, limine*):

Fatue:

Audi, sponse, voces plangentium,
aperire fac nobis ostium
cum sottiis: prebe remedium!

Christus:

Amen dico, vos ignoso, nam caretis lumine,
quod qui perdunt procul pergunt huius aule limine.
(lines 80–85)

Foolish virgins: Hear, oh bridegroom, the weepers’ voices: let the gate be opened to us as for our companions. Offer us a remedy! *Christ:* Amen, I say. I know you not, for you have no light. Those who lose it must depart from the threshold of this hall.

As Peter Dronke has observed, the bridegroom’s closure of the door is a reversal of the trope of the door familiar from the Song of Songs: “The voice of my beloved knocking: open to me (*aperi mihi*), my sister, my love . . . I opened the bolt of my door (*pessulum ostii aperui*) to my beloved, but he had turned aside and was gone” (5:2, 6). In the play, the lover just beyond reach of the Song of Songs has been transformed into the Christ of Judgment.

The play’s interweaving of the two languages reflects no clear hierarchy either in the characters to whom the lines are assigned or in the level of language employed. Michel Banniard has shown that Latin formulations are sometimes calqued in Occitan and that the two languages are equivalent in their simplicity of style, the *sermo humilis* from which these lines derive their emotional power (Banniard 2014).⁶³ It is as if the poet wished to make use of the contrast of languages when representing this story of contrasting attitudes but was unwilling to reproduce an ideology that would associate Latin with learning, prudence, and salvation and the vernacular with their opposite. That approach concords with the sympathy that the poet seems to share with the foolish virgins,

⁶³ I concur with the understanding of both Banniard (2014) and Dronke (1994: 3–7) that the Latin and Occitan components of the text are mutually dependent and must have been composed together.

which makes the wise virgins and Christ appear surprisingly harsh. The affecting speech of flawed characters highlights a tension between religious absolutism and human experience or emotion. If there is ever a rationale for the choice of Occitan, it may be an attempt to heighten the emotional response of the congregation at certain moments: not only Gabriel's exhortation, but the final rejection by the wise virgins and Christ are voiced in the mother tongue.

Thus the opening *coblas* of Cercamon's song repeatedly evoke a parable that, in the Aquitaine, was commonly represented in art intended to enhance popular devotion, and also in poetry and music. In the latter medium, this parable had already been associated with the Occitan language. Perhaps the troubadour is also responding to the dramatization in the *Sponsus* of the tension between the demands of religious devotion and other kinds of human emotion. However, by claiming to awaken, Cercamon is associating himself with the foolish virgins, the only ones in the play who slept. This means placing himself just outside the threshold of the church and implying that he shares their spiritual peril. By the same gesture, he associates himself with characters whose command of two languages allows them to make a strategic choice between them, characters placed in the position of supplicants who prove capable of powerfully affecting – but not efficacious – song. Then, when he echoes the allusion in the second *cobla* – “ni dorm ni veil, ni aug ni vei”, ‘I do not sleep or wake or hear or see’ (line 13) – the negation obscures his spiritual position in relation to the bridegroom and his physical position with relation to the door at the same time that he disavows sense experience. The troubadour has shifted into a zone of undecidability.

The third appearance of the theme of waking is formulated in different terms: through the trope of being kept awake by physical desire, familiar from Ovidian poetry and, again, the Song of Songs.⁶⁴ The troubadour then elaborates a more difficult conceit:

III.

S'anc per amor anei veillian,
ni·n fui anc fols ni trassailitz,
ni cambiatz per chamjairitz,
era·n lau Dieu e saint Joan,
C'ab tal amor vau amoran
c'anc no·m chamjec per autre mei (PC 112,1c, lines 13–18).⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See Ovid, *Amores* 1.9, line 8: “pervigilant ambo” ‘(the lover and the soldier) both watch through the night’.

⁶⁵ Rossi's editing makes a significant difference to the final line of this *cobla*. In the manuscript, the first person speaker is expressed through two different pronouns, the direct object of the verb (the weak, clitic pronoun of *no·m*) and the object of the preposition (the strong pronoun of *per autre mei*). Other editors emend *nom* to *non* while retaining the direct object pronoun in their translations, as if understanding *mei* to play that role (for example, the editions of Jeanroy, 1922: 8–10 and Tortoreto, 1981: 111–21). The separation of the pronoun from the verb by what would be a complete prepositional phrase (*per autre*, where the second word would be a pronoun rather than an adjective) makes that grammatical role unlikely. More sensitive to word order, Meliga (2011: 431) has proposed that *mei*

III. If ever love robbed me of sleep, or if ever it made me crazy or agitated or changed because it (love)/a woman creates change, from this moment I praise God and St John that I am loving with such a love that it has never changed me into/exchanged me for another me.

For Charles Camproux, the allusion to St John is a reminder of the apostle most closely associated with love, but also with intelligence and wisdom, author of the most mystical of gospels. The evangelist stands as the patron saint of a love rooted in the troubadour's interior, which allows him to be most fully himself (1965: 28). I am struck by the cluster of repetitions into which the allusion is embedded: *cambiatz*, *chamjairitz*, and *chamjec*, *amor*, *amor* and *amoran*, *no-m* and *autre mei*. In the context of the allusion to John, the folding of a single lexeme back upon itself within the syntax of the sentence recalls the repetitions in the opening lines of the gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:1–5).

In addition, the decidedly odd formulation of the danger that the speaker might be transformed into an *autre mei* comes together with the rejection of exterior signs in favour of interior experience and the emphasis on the changeability of men and women to recall a passage of the *Confessions*. As a spiritual seeker, the young Augustine had read extensively, but his readings did not lead him to conversion. He approached closer when he set his books aside “et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intraui in intima mea duce te”, ‘and admonished to return to myself, I entered into my interior with you as my guide’. At this point, he had a glimpse of the glorious light of God, an experience of truth and eternity and love (*caritas*). He realized then that he was far from God in a region of dissimilitude.⁶⁶ The notion of a *regio dissimilitudinis*, which Augustine had taken from Plato, would attract the attention of later writers, who would theorize it. In his *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, completed shortly before 1128, Bernard of Clairvaux argued that the similitude in question is the image of the creator in the creature, an image that consists in the three-fold freedom with which Adam was created, which he lost in large part when he fell. Only Christ makes it possible to restore the similitude, but its recovery is a long and difficult process for each individual. This idea would be reprised in some of

should be understood as a variant form of the adverb *mai/mais* [ever], to coordinate with *anc*. As he acknowledges, this means supposing that Cercamon erred in versification, attempting to make the open *e* of *m̄ei/mai/mais* fit a rhyme in closed *e* (*aurei*, *vei*, *q̄ei*, *dei*, *desplei*). Such a reading is difficult to justify given that the manuscript's version of line 18 can already be understood as correct in both grammar and prosody. Since the quality of the *e* would have been essential in the spoken language for distinguishing the pronoun *m̄ei* from the adverb *m̄ei* (not to mention the common adjective/noun *m̄ei* [middle]), the pronoun is what audiences must have understood.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *Confessions* (1925: 7.10, vol. 1 p. 162).

Bernard's sermons on the Canticle, which placed particular emphasis on the monastic activities of prayer, song, and study as means to restore the image of God.⁶⁷ This discourse of conversion may well lie behind the difficult formulations of Cercamon's *cobla*.

These lines are deeply concerned with similitude and transformation: of the speaker, but also of language itself. As in Augustine's *Confessions*, the exile of the human from God has something to do with the very nature of the language with which we try to reach or understand him.⁶⁸ For ultimately human language is a phenomenon bound to time. Speech unfolds sequentially. When Augustine, reflecting on our struggle to conceive of the eternity of God, asks himself what time is, he begins with the measurements of the heavenly bodies but ends with language, the voice resounding, the measured syllables of a hymn.⁶⁹ Cercamon reminds us of temporal progression by returning to the same lexemes, making them assume a different form with each reprise. His *cobla* is a performance of similitude within transformation or transformation within similitude, all within the sequence of syllables that makes the *vers*. Only God and St John escape the verbal metamorphoses, and yet John's description of God, of the Word, provided the model for it. Cercamon marks his difference from the Biblical model by highlighting the otherness (*autre*) that distinguishes the direct object pronoun (the clitic pronoun *m*) from the object of the preposition (*mei*). The song's rhyme scheme of *abbaac* has allowed each *cobla* to conclude with a new rhyme sound (called a *rim estramp*) that seems to shift it into a different acoustic register, and here this shift calls attention to the difference of *mei* from what had come before. Even more effective in distinguishing this *cobla* from religious discourse is the way it exploits the word *change* itself, subjecting it to the most diverse syntactic manipulations: the past participle (masculine, subject case), the agent noun (feminine, object case) and the conjugated verb. The emphasis is more on the universal human affinity to change than on any specific change event. But change is, of course, the condition to which all of creation is subjected. The creature's mutability in time separates it from God.

Entirely opaque in all of this is the degree to which the *amor* that is supposed to make the speaker less mutable is *caritas* or *eros*. For there is most certainly a lady in this song, who first appears in the first word of the next strophe, *cesta* (line 19) 'she', but she remains indistinct. The soul of discretion, Cercamon never named his lady, even in code, so now it is impossible to tell whether he has set her aside for the Virgin Mary. Whoever this mysterious lady is, she has inspired a devotion that is mute, inso-

67 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gratia et libero arbitrio tractatus*, esp. chs. 3 and 9–10, and *Sermones in Cantica Cantorum*, esp. sermons 7, 36, and 82. For the monastic ideal of conversion, see Bynum (1980).

68 This topic is too complex for satisfactory treatment here. See Ferguson (1975), who also shows how this *topos* is connected to a theory of language, especially poetic language. For the influence of the *Confessions* in the period, see Pollmann & Otten (2013), particularly the chapters by Otten and Weber (23–39 and 167–74). For the influence of Augustine on the early troubadours, see Scheludko (1940).

69 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.11–28 (vol. 2, pp. 305–24).

far as the troubadour declares that he is not fool enough to solicit her affection or ask anything, good or bad, of her (*cobla* IV). Nonetheless, she has inspired his enduring devotion:

V.
 Tant la sei coinda e prezan,
 e-l faigz de leis es tant eslitz,
 qe sai me tenc per enreqitz,
 e lai a Jhesu la coman
 la nueg e-l jorn e-l mes e l'an,
 c'aissi soi sieus con esser dei. (PC 112,1c, lines 25–30.)

V. I know her to be so gracious and worthy, and the action/deed of her is so exquisite, that here I consider myself enriched, and over there I commend her to Jesus night and day and every month and every year, for thus I am hers, as I ought to be.

Rossi has translated the *faigz* of the second line as “the gift of herself”. This is a more suggestive formula than we find in earlier translations, which transform the singular noun and odd use of *de* + pronoun (not ‘hers’ but ‘of herself’) – both locked in by the versification – into some version of “her actions”. Rossi justifies his translation by reference to the singular *factum*, which functions as a euphemism for the sexual act in the Classical elegiac poetry that would have been well known among the *litterati* in this period. Cercamon used the expression in only one other song, where it refers to an undefined amorous deed in the context of a faithful though adulterous sexual relationship.⁷⁰ I can find no equivalent use in the lyrics of Guilhem, Jaufre, or Marcabru. *Faigz* seems, therefore, to have been part of the Cercamonian lexicon, where it served as an unspecified term permitting divergent understandings. Thus the song lends itself to two interpretations. It can be the renunciation of the love of earthly women in favour of Marian devotion, created in a period when the influence of the Song of Songs was eroticizing religious discourse. This reading lies behind Alfred Jeanroy’s tentative classification of this lyric as a *chanson pieuse*, a characterization that has not been wholly invalidated.⁷¹ Conversely, the song could be a powerful new formulation, in terms borrowed from both religious discourse and Classical amatory poetry, of love for an earthly lady superior to others, a love that will make the speaker a better man. In this case, it is the inaugural statement of *fin’amor*, the “perfect love” of the troubadours. This is the reading of René Nelli and Camproux, forcefully reiterated by Rossi.⁷²

⁷⁰ PC 112,1a, lines 8–14. Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique* 164–69, and see the discussion of this passage in the introduction, p. 80.

⁷¹ Cercamon, *Les poésies*, 8.

⁷² See Nelli (1974: 220–21, 265, 310–13), Camproux (1965: 31), and Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique* (74).

The proliferation of possible meanings continues into the final strophe, where the troubadour entrusts his verse to those who can make it heard from afar. This strophe makes a statement of Cercamon's aesthetic ideals, in which he distinguishes himself from his contemporaries and introduces key terms.

VI.

Plas es lo vers, vauc l'afinan
 ses mot vila, fals, apostitz;
 et es totz enaissi noiritz
 c'ap motz politz lo vau uzan;
 e tot ades va-s meilluran
 s'es qi be-l chant ni be-l desplei. (PC 112,1c, lines 31–36)

VI. Clear/smooth/plain is the verse/truth, and I am refining it, without a word that is crude, false, or factitious/out of place, and it has been conceived so that I am making use of polished/polite words, and it will ever improve if it finds one who will sing it well and well unfold (i.e., perform or explain) it.

The affirmation that none of the song's words are *vila* may be a criticism of the obscene *doubles entendres* of Guilhem de Peitieu or the explicit vocabulary that Guilhem shared with Marcabru. *Apostitz*, from *appositus*, refers to a factitious replacement for an original component within an assembly. It affirms the lexical suitability of each word and its reasoned placement within the verse line – a warning, perhaps, to performers inclined to improvise or copyists inclined to emend. However, the word resonates ironically in relation to the traditional definition of figurative language, for all tropes are by definition *apostitz*, “alieno in loco”, alien in their new linguistic context.⁷³ The concern with *motz apostitz* therefore confirms Cercamon's preoccupation with the working of language. The song is not particularly dense in tropes, but it does have some, not least its final word, *desplei*, a fitting final trope, for to unfold a thing is to work on its matter in a certain rhythm, exposing one portion at a time. Nowhere is the effect of the final *rim estramp* more striking than here, where the rhyme sound seems to inaugurate a new singing in a new voice.

Yet the most multivalent line in this final *cobla* is the very first. The interpretations “plain is the truth” and “simple is the verse” are the first to present themselves, but both are belied by the enigmas we have already examined. Subsequent development makes it clear that *vers* here does refer to the song. Because that particular word indicates the whole song rather than just its linguistic component, *plas* may be functioning as a musical term, a usage that we have already traced in later songs by Jaufre Rudel and Giraut de Borneil.⁷⁴ This *cobla* of Cercamon's may mark the first attestation of the usage. Different from the later examples, however, and dissonant with relation to

⁷³ Figurative words are “eis quae transferuntur et quasi alieno in loco collocantur” ‘those that are carried over and placed together with others, as if in an alien place’. Cicero, *De oratore*, 37.149, p. 118.

⁷⁴ Rossi also sees this as allusion to plain chant. Cercamon, *Œuvre poétique*, 226.

its Latin antecedents, is the use of the word as an adjective to describe *vers* rather than an adverb to describe singing. *Plas* may well describe Cercamon's *vers*, the innovative vernacular song of his day, but *planus* cannot describe the most innovative of the *versus*. Fittingly, the statement of aesthetic ideals by Cercamon, this troubadour so aware of Latin letters and the Sacred Page, would open with a claim that makes sense only in the vernacular. "Plas es lo vers" is a performance of what makes the troubadour's art different from the monk's: its simple, traditional style of musical setting, distinct from the innovation and complexity of the monk's informal song, and its vernacular language, distinct from his liturgical song. The troubadour's vernacular is also distinct from the Occitan poetry in the Saint-Martial *codex* (the Occitan *versus* and the *Sponsus*) because Cercamon has cultivated and polished the language, creating the vernacular high style that would come to define the troubadour art.

A vocality of difference

This chapter began with a psalmist-king on the threshold of a church, who by a typical gesture of moral exegesis could represent at once David and the Duke of Aquitaine. I proposed that we examine the first troubadours in light of thresholds both literal and figurative. The literal thresholds were points of entry into specific kinds of architecture: the small halls of Aquitainian strongholds, the high chambers of their towers, for which Ventadorn served as an example, and the Romanesque churches of the region, exemplified by Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, Saint-Martial in Limoges, and Notre-Dame-la-Grande in Poitiers. The movement of elite individuals back and forth between lay and religious spaces would have given them ample experience of the different acoustics of the two kinds of building and the way song could be adapted to the architecture to create specific effects. Lay spaces created an experience of intimacy, of song emanating from bodies proximate to the audience, of crystalline words sounding and passing swiftly away. Sacred spaces disjoined voices from bodies and allowed sounds to linger. Adaptations such as slow recitation could permit words to be understood, but they also made possible nonlinguistic effects, the layering of new notes onto echoes to create a mysterious polyphony. The music of the liturgy exploited such possibilities. I then set the two major new song genres of c. 1100 next to each other and considered how the *vers* and the *versus* diverged despite shared syllabic, strophic, and musical forms because the morphology and syntax of the two languages had diverged and because the expectations of a lay audience would have been different from those of a religious congregation. Hence a threshold between languages and communities. This meant that even when similar methods of setting text to melody were used in the court context, they would have different effects and make possible a different tempo of performance. An interpretation of songs by the first two troubadours then showed that they exploited the relation to religious song but

also insisted on the difference between theirs and that of the monks, on the changes they had wrought. Readers may profess disappointment in the final sections because the relation to architecture and acoustics was not made explicit in the medieval texts. But that is the nature of troubadour song. While these lyricists found myriad ways to perform their difference from the monks, they never said that their song sounded different. They didn't have to. Everyone could hear it. Nonetheless, Cercamon's allusion to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins brought us back to the threshold of the church, which is also, in the parable, the threshold of the hall where a wedding is to be celebrated. The ultimate mystery of his song is that listeners could not have told whether the reawakened troubadour aspired to enter a Christian sanctuary or a lady's chamber.

This trajectory has allowed us to revisit and enrich the concept of vocality. Zumthor gave a clear definition:

Vocality is the historicity of a voice: its use. It is true that a long philosophical tradition examines and valorizes the voice insofar as it is the bearer of language, insofar as in it and through it meaningful sounds are articulated. Nonetheless, what should preoccupy us instead is the broad function of the voice. Speech constitutes its most obvious manifestation, but not the only one nor the most vital. By that I mean the physiological power of the voice, its capacity to produce sound and organize its substance. This *phoné* is not immediately bound to meaning; it only creates a place for it. What should therefore retain our attention is the corporeal aspect of medieval texts, their mode of existence as objects of sensory perception (1987: 21).

The difficulty arises, not with the concept, but with the proposal to make vocality the object of research. It is possible to demonstrate that texts were experienced aurally without refining our understanding of vocality or showing how the phenomenon actually shaped the creation and reception of individual texts or genres. Verbal representations of voice are rare, especially in lay song traditions, and discursive markers of orality may be nothing more than a fiction of orality within a literary practice. Hence the challenge of reconnecting surviving texts to their medieval vocality. It comes as no surprise, then, that the wistful *topos* of the unrecoverable object of research runs through scholarship on vocality, beginning with Zumthor's own statement that "the distance of time, this very long absence, compels us to pursue that which we know we cannot reach" (1987: 21–22). The comment anticipates the radical skepticism of Daniel Leech-Wilkinson about any chance of recovering the original sound of medieval song because styles of singing change so much from one generation to the next (2002: 126). But is it not, after all, in the nature of all historical research to perform a partial interpretation of unrecoverable phenomena based on the traces that they have left? The present study has taken the building, or what remains of it, as just such a trace. Whatever the style of singing would have been, the building's acoustic can be known, and hence its feedback to performer and audience, the way it contributed to shape the experience of the voice, the way performers would have had to respond. Moreover, a contrast in architecture makes it possible to deduce a contrast in vocality without requiring each instance of vocality to be described down to the

last detail. This makes it possible to highlight difference even when there are significant continuities.

This paradigm of difference within continuity is the second conceptual model that emerges from the study. The troubadours are neither wholly replicating what had come before, nor wholly rejecting it, even if their rhetoric sometimes suggests otherwise. Instead, they exploit their social circle's familiarity with religious song to perform a series of subtle shifts. That this work would inaugurate a whole new lyric tradition cannot have been evident to anyone at the time. Audiences must instead have measured the significance of these songs in relation to the religious song they knew. After a few decades, a small body of Occitan lyrics would have been recognized as forming a divergent corpus. In this regard, my study parallels that of Vincent Debais in the present volume despite the opposition between song and inscription, and we might think of the earliest troubadour lyrics as analogous to the instances of miniscule script that preoccupy the epigraphist. In the field of English literature, Audrey Wasser (2016) has recently proposed that such "work of difference" in which a series of relations to and departures from existing models are inscribed in the text itself is the very scaffolding for the creation of new literature. New texts are produced through what she dubs "heterogenesis". In the corpus of modern novels that she studies, this process is made visible through rhetorical figures of repetition with a difference: epanorthosis (self-correction), hyperbole, and tautology. We might discern similar manifestations in Guilhem's repurposing of words such as *lati* or *sermo*, in Cercamon's derivation on *camjar*, or in the way the word *plan* comes to describe new effects in lay lyric. Above all we should recognize that repetition with a difference is the very principle of rhyme.

Let me conclude, then, by taking up this loose thread, which offers the closest relationship between vocality and surviving text. Among sound effects, rhyme distinguishes itself for being unique to the voice. Melody, rhythm, and reverberation can all be created by other instruments, but rhyme requires a mouth. The introduction of end rhyme to poetry in the south of France in the eleventh century was probably inspired by the *muwashshah*, created in Al-Andalus at least a century earlier. (For its part, this form constituted a hybridization of rhyming practices from classical Arabic poetry with strophic forms from Romance, Latin, or Hebrew songs.)⁷⁵ However, Dwight Reynolds has observed that the troubadours distinguish their lyric from the *muwashshah* by disjoining rhyme from melodic form (2013: 196–97). We can see this in the song of Jaufrè Rudel (ex. 2), where the A melody begins with a verse line that rhymes between the two A sections but ends with a line that does not. Rhyme can be similarly disruptive with regard to syntax and semantics, for it brings into suggestive association words that the sentence holds apart. The phenomenon of rhyme is, therefore, a pattern

⁷⁵ Here I follow the argument of Reynolds (2013). For the history of the *muwashshahs*, see also Rosen (2012).

of sound integrated with but also independent from musical and linguistic structures. The early troubadours cultivate that independence.

My readings of the songs have highlighted rhymes that functioned disjunctively within the rhyme pattern itself, either by reorganizing themselves once (the regression of rhymes in Guilhem's song), or by failing to correspond to any other rhyme within the *cobla* (the *rim estramp* in Cercamon's). In both cases, there is still continuity: regressed rhymes are still the same sounds, and a *rim estramp* will find one echo in each new *cobla*. Nonetheless, the listener is aware of a sound that remains disjoined from the joining that is the *cobla*, or else an unexpected change in the order of joining. Other early troubadours created similar effects. Jaufrè Rudel's "Qan lo rius de la fontana" (ex. 2) involves a reassignment of the rhyme sounds midway through and the introduction of a new rhyme sound with "chantan" in the final *cobla*, prompting one editor to declare that "disintegration, imbalance and/or irregularity" characterize the song (*The Songs of Jaufrè Rudel* [1978] 95). Similarly, Marcabru would experiment with different kinds of regression. More popular in the first half of the twelfth century are *rims estramps*, especially at the end of *coblas*. Not only do they appear in the majority of songs by Cercamon and Jaufrè Rudel, but also in nearly half of the songs of Marcabru and Bernart Marti. Eventually, regressed rhymes and *rims estramps* will come together to undergird the regular formal structures of two of the most enduring poems in medieval Occitan: Arnaut Daniel's sestina (c. 1180–1200) and the *coblas capcaudadas* of Guillem de Tudela's *Canço de la Crosada* (c. 1213). But in the first generations of troubadour song, such developments could not have been imagined. Instead, these rhyme variations created what might be called a vocality of dissonance or difference. At the end of his song of change, Cercamon associated it with the re-performance of the song by a new voice, and hence with the subtle differences that distinguish one singing from another. I would suggest that the vocality of difference that we hear in this kind of rhyming constitutes an echo or parallel manifestation of the vocality of difference that is created acoustically by the passage of a singing voice from the architecture of the large church to that of the small hall or chamber. Both vocal effects work in tandem with the troubadours' play on syntax, semantics, and intertextuality to create a new song, one that marks its difference from religious song. Ultimately, the new song is generated from the myriad differentiations it performs, so that each unfolding appears better than the last.

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Kathryn M. Rudy

3 Targeted Wear in Manuscript Prayerbooks in the Context of Oath-swearing

In “The Man of Law’s Tale”, Geoffrey Chaucer refers to an unusual use of a Gospel manuscript. The tale, which is set in the sixth century, follows the misfortunes of the heroine Constance, the daughter of the Christian Emperor. After marrying a Syrian sultan whose mother has a death wish for Constance, the young bride finds herself cast adrift at sea. Eventually she washes up on the shores of Northumbria. A constable and his wife Hermengild take Constance in and convert to Christianity. Constance also meets an evil knight who wants to seduce her. The knight murders Hermengild, and then accuses Constance of the murder. When her accuser swears his false account on a Gospel book, he is struck dead for perjuring himself (Breeze 1998: 335–338). As this story of deceit lays bare, laypeople might be expected to swear on a Gospel manuscript when giving testimony. With God and the Gospel writers as witnesses, a perjurer would suffer serious and verifiable real-world consequences. Chaucer’s fourteenth-century audience would have been sufficiently familiar with the practice of swearing on a Gospel manuscript not to need much explanation for the legal procedure.¹

However, laypeople in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in England and on the Continent, would have had only mediated access to Latin Gospel manuscripts.² The few such manuscripts in existence largely formed part of liturgical and altar furnishings in cathedrals or were locked within monasteries.³ Gospel manuscripts were precious items, and under the jurisdiction of clerics (Kolmer 1989: 239). Non-clerics

¹ For other oaths that feature in literary sources, see Kolmer (1989: 43–47).

² Vernacular bibles were disseminated from the mid-fourteenth century in different language areas to a largely non-clerical audience. The usership, reading conditions, and perceived gravitas of these manuscripts differed from that of their Latin counterparts. This chapter considers only Latin Gospel manuscripts in their full and abbreviated forms. The question of whether the vernacular versions could serve as oath-swearing items is outside the scope of this work.

³ Neil Ker (1964) and Andrew Watson (1987) drew up a list of manuscripts associated with parish churches and chapels in England, in which they identified only one Gospel manuscript; cited in Poleg (2016: 67). Of the approximately 2550 medieval manuscripts in The Netherlands – a country for which I have a large data set of extant manuscripts – there are only 27 Gospel manuscripts, and of those, only 16 were made after 1400. By comparison, 530 of the surviving manuscripts in this set are books of hours. After 1400, many more laypeople would have had personal access to books of hours than to Gospel manuscripts. For these data, I am relying on the Byvanck database, formerly housed at the KB – The National Library of The Netherlands in The Hague.

Note: Ideas presented in this chapter expand on those I present in my multi-volume study, *Touching Parchment: How Medieval Users Rubbed, Handled, and Kissed Their Manuscripts* (Open Book, 2023–2025).

who wanted to secure promises and swear oaths with a degree of formality would not normally be able to use a Gospel manuscript that belonged to a church or monastery.

This chapter considers the kinds of manuscripts on which laypeople might have sworn oaths in the absence of a full Gospel. Whereas officials would have conducted major formal ceremonies at an altar with a Gospel manuscript, those in less formal circumstances may have forgone the altar and used more accessible items, namely prayerbooks containing extracts from the Gospels, or those containing images of a Crucifixion or Last Judgment.⁴ To make this case, my methodology relies on use-wear analysis, that is, studying the patterns of wear in individual manuscripts to better understand how users handled them.

Use-wear analysis has largely been absent from the manuscript historian's toolbox until recently. This method supplements other approaches for understanding how people interacted with their books. Studying fingerprints in the margins of medieval manuscripts only works on items that have been used sufficiently intensely to leave marks of wear, which are sufficiently perceptible to be interpretable (Rudy 2010). Targeted wear, on the other hand (meaning that a user has deliberately touched an image) can be perceptible after a single incident. Systematic smears in predictable places demand an explanation. The change this chapter therefore considers is that to the surface of the parchment. Studying the darkening of parchment from ground-in dirt and oil, as well as the blurring of images from dislodged and smeared paint particles, can reveal how manuscripts were physically handled. This chapter hypothesizes that certain images in private prayer books were put to use as oath-swearing objects.

To swear or not to swear

What kinds of oaths did medieval people swear? They took offices, joined convents, and professed monastic vows. They married. They bought and sold property. They joined in land tenancy agreements and pledged rents. They retained services or submitted to private indentures. They formalized contracts for which they spelt out commercial or political obligations.⁵ They joined brotherhoods and guilds. They swore to the veracity of their statements at trials and more informal hearings. They offered their versions of events in legal settings. They made private promises. Newcomers swore oaths of allegiance to towns and cities.⁶

⁴ The examples below are all taken from Latin manuscripts; it is possible that laypeople also swore oaths on vernacular translations of the Gospels, but I leave discussion of such possibility to a different study.

⁵ See for example Chattaway (1999: 2).

⁶ In this way, they formed what Italian historian Paolo Prodi (1993) considers a "sworn society", a *società giurata* or a *conjuratio*.

In sum, oath-swearing functioned in three domains for laypeople. It could be assertory, or backward-looking, and involve sworn testimony, as in the example from Chaucer (“I did not murder Hermengild”). Second, it could be promissory, or forward-looking, and involve a vow, or a contract between two people, either commercial (“In exchange for 30 percent of the yield, you can farm on my parcel of land for the next five years”) or social (“I will not betray you”). Third, it could be forward-looking and involve a promise with oneself (“I will take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem”). These three domains involve different kinds of speech acts, as Austin (1962) describes them: forms of language that have a real-world effect by virtue of their utterance. These utterances could establish facts and create bonds, as long as they were made according to an agreed-upon script and followed established rules, including, for example, being performed in the presence of charged or numinous objects (Ganz 2023; Rudy 2023). Swearing while touching a Gospel manuscript would bring God’s presence into the proceedings and ensure that God will eventually punish those who broke their oaths. The manuscript, charged with divine presence, could then validate contracts and punish liars, sanctioned as they were (in the eyes of believers) from on high. Transgressors would suffer God’s wrath at the Last Judgment (but might also be injured immediately via supernatural forces). Because of this, oaths depended on credulity in a judging, vengeful God, or else they would have no teeth.

It is not difficult to see how supernaturally-sanctioned swearing could undergird religious and civic culture by smoothing negotiated contracts and giving people confidence in others’ promises. However, some people avoided – and even condemned – oaths. The Lollards in England believed that swearing oaths had no scriptural basis, and likewise, the Waldensians from continental Europe refused to swear oaths. These two groups, famous for their vernacular translations of the Bible, disclaimed the supernatural numen of the Latin words. Their actions around oath-swearing, or inactions, were sufficiently threatening to cause them to be persecuted as heretics. To root out Waldensians, inquisitors referred to manuals filled with questions and strategies as they confronted suspects. As can be seen from the signs of wear in an inquisitor’s manual that survives in Linz, suspected heretics were compelled by their interrogators to swear an oath on an image of a Crucifix drawn in ink in the manual’s front matter to demonstrate that they were, in fact, willing to swear an oath (Figure 1).⁷

As Spencer Strub (2020) has adeptly shown, swearing oaths, although ubiquitous in medieval Europe, divided opinion among its practitioners. While most skeptics were not willing to die, as the Waldensians were, to demonstrate their contempt for oath-swearing, many believed oaths represented a misuse of Christian symbolism and that swearing contravened the prohibition clearly written in the Book of Matthew. Specifically, Jesus says, “But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the

7 On this manuscript, see the excellent dissertation by Reima Välimäki (2016).

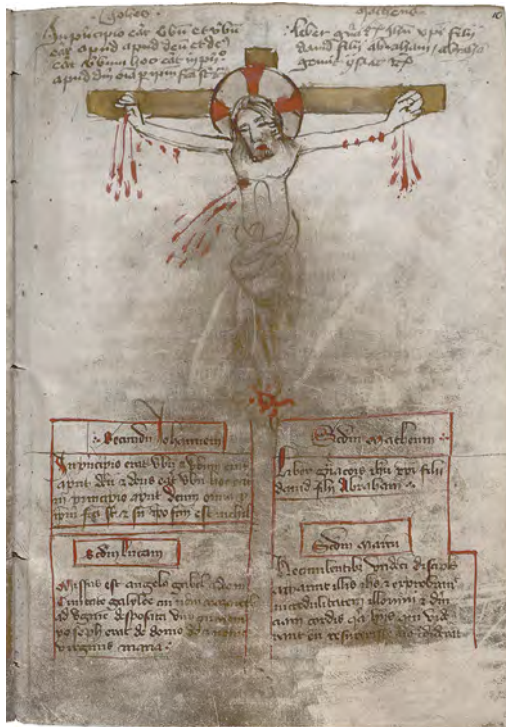


Figure 1: Folio from a compilation of texts about inquisition and heresy, with a drawing of Christ Crucified. Linz, Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek (OÖLB), Cod. 177, fol. 10r. Photo: Oberösterreichische Landesbibliothek Linz.

throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King” (Matt. 5:33).

Alongside this vocal minority of oath-refusers, most people swore oaths without questioning the practice much. Strub, in his discussion of a fifteenth-century text – Peter Idley’s *Instructions to his Son* – characterizes the two camps:

Idley’s teaching on oaths and vows is, on the face of things, [an] uncontroversial treatment of a vexed topic in late medieval religion. The oath is language *in extremis* – it is a speech act that invokes the sacred, binds the speaking self to its utterance, and inscribes its speaker in a relationship of obligation or accountability – and this perceived power made the value and use of oaths the subject of heated debate among theologians and lay believers. But fifteenth-century business, law, and governance all rested on sworn bonds; oathworthiness was one of the determinative qualities of gentle status. Pastoral theology was therefore obliged to navigate between stringent spiritual directives and a pragmatic accommodation of the practices of secular life. Idley resolves these ambivalences, and secular pragmatism – the worldly demands of gentility – wins out. (Strub 2020: 193)

In other words, oath-taking was controversial because it dabbled in the supernatural and suggested that divine powers could be harnessed by men. It worked in Christian

culture because Christians believed that God knew their sins, including promises unkept and lies told under oath, and would punish them when he returned to judge everyone.

Why were Waldensians and other oath-refusers so threatening to the civic order? Because everyday business dealings – such as agreeing to land purchases, maintaining weights and measures, acceding to the terms of a public office or an apprenticeship – borrowed *gravitas* from oaths. They helped to maintain a more predictable future, in which an agreed land sale would still be valid after a hundred years. While the conservative camp pointed to the biblical injunction against swearing oaths, the practical camp saw swearing as a feature of a smoothly-running civic society, in which promises were kept and contracts honoured. If everyone were biblical literalists, like the Lollards and Waldensians, there could be no oaths, legal bonds, or court testimonies, and the social fabric would disintegrate. And what did happen? The literalists burned, the pragmatists prevailed, and oath-taking carried on in Western Europe.

Use-wear evidence in prayerbooks

Swearing oaths “on” objects implies a talismanic understanding of those objects; relics and certain manuscripts were considered numinous and appropriate for swearing. Talismanic use of scripture can be traced to biblical times (Poleg 2016: 60). Although a Gospel text could be read, say, in the course of a priest performing Mass, Gospel texts also took on a symbolic role, which did not require reading the text at all. Instead, the text might be processed, displayed, or touched ceremonially. In those cases, as Poleg (2016: 61–63) has demonstrated, a Gospel manuscript could be understood as a proxy for Jesus. The numinous book made Jesus immediate and tangible. In some cases, especially when the manuscript wore an ornate, reliquary-like binding, the closed book could be handled in the ritual, but pictorial and use-wear evidence suggests that the text pages, and not just the binding, could radiate meaning in these talismanic contexts.

For example, when Charles V of France (r. 1364–1380) was coronated, part of the ceremony involved his touching a manuscript. A rendition of the event appears in a manuscript he commissioned shortly thereafter, in 1365: his Coronation Book. In words and pictures, the book describes the details of the ceremony.⁸ As one miniature shows, Charles V swore on an open manuscript proffered by a bishop (Figure 2). While some Gospel manuscripts could be used for such symbolic and talismanic

⁸ The Coronation Book (fols 35–80) was formerly bound with a twelfth-century pontifical (fols 3–34, 81–197), but now forms a separate volume. A facsimile was made in the late nineteenth century, with a commentary by Dewick (1899). The manuscript has also been the subject of a sustained study in Ferguson O’Meara (2001).



Figure 2: Charles V swearing an oath on an open book being held by a bishop, Paris, 1365. London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Tiberius B VIII/2, fol. 46v. Photo: British Library.

purposes in a closed state (which would also warrant elaborate treasure bindings that would further liken the book to a relic in a jeweled reliquary), this image clearly shows the proffered book in an open state.

Some Gospel manuscripts have marks of wear on their parchment interiors that confirm this type of open use. One example is the Carolingian Gospel Book of St Amand (Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531), which has elaborate Evangelist portraits at each of the four major openings.⁹ At the opening for the Book of John, several sets of accumulated fingerprints lap onto the bottom edges of the parchment, in a pattern that suggests that two people were both touching the manuscript simultaneously (Figure 3a). The openings for Mark and Luke similarly have dark patches in their respective lower margins, corresponding to the accumulated wear of touching during oath-taking. However, the opening for Matthew is relatively clean, most likely because the Gospel of St Matthew actually condemns swearing, as we have seen¹⁰ (Figure 3b).

As described above, oaths could have different formality levels, from the coronation of a king in a formal ceremony, to the oath of a priest to his chapter, to the assertion of truth-telling in a small legal matter, to a promise between friends. Only the

⁹ I thank Jos Biemans for directing me to this manuscript. The manuscript dates from c. 860–880 and measures 26 x 19.2 cm in its binding, which was made in Cologne c. 1160–1170.

¹⁰ Mann (1917) notes that Matthew's Gospel prohibits swearing.



Figure 3a–b: a) Opening at the beginning of the Book of John. *Evangeliarium, St Amand*, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 151v–152r; Photo: Erzbischöfliche Dom- und Diözesanbibliothek Köln b) Opening at the beginning of the Book of Matthew, *Evangeliarium, St Amand*, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 11v–12r. Photo: Erzbischöfliche Dom- und Diözesanbibliothek Köln.

most formal ceremonies would have warranted bejeweled Gospel manuscripts gleaming with splendour and projecting gravitas. Other ceremonies could employ an undecorated copy of the Gospels, or even a different book type altogether. In the second volume of *Touching Parchment*, I show that members of the Chapter of St Servaas in Maastricht took their oath of membership on the Statutes and Regulations of their chapter (The Hague, KB, Ms. 132 G 35), not on a Gospel manuscript.¹¹ However, this book of regulations contains extracts from the four Gospels, thereby endowing it with the numen of a Gospel manuscript, but only occupying one quire of parchment. Other guild books – which were not formulaic but often contained some combination of a group’s history, its list of members, and its statutes and regulations – could also contain extracts from the Gospels and show signs of wear from having been used in swearing-in ceremonies.¹² The incipits of the Gospels stood as a synecdoche for the entire text, took up little space, and obviated the need for a second volume.

That the manuscript being used for oath-swearing need not be a Gospel is clear in another of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*: “The Shipman’s Tale” portrays a scene in which two characters swear an oath on a prayerbook. A young monk is staying as a guest with his friend, a wealthy merchant, and his wife. One morning in the garden, the monk is saying his prayers and encounters the wife, who appears forlorn:

- 124 **This monk bigan upon this wyf to stare,**
This monk began to stare upon this wife,
125 **And seyde, “Allas, my nece, God forbede**
And said, “Alas, my niece, God forbid
126 **That ye, for any sorwe or any drede,**
That you, for any sorrow or any dread,
127 **Fordo youreself; but telleth me youre grief.**
Should destroy yourself; but tell me your grief.
128 **Paraventure I may, in youre meschief,**
Perhaps I can, in your unhappy situation,
129 **Conseille or helpe; and therefore telleth me**
Advise or help; and therefore tell me
130 **Al youre anoy, for it shal been secree.**
All your trouble, for it shall be secret.
131 **For on my portehors I make an ooth**
For on my prayer book I make an oath
132 **That nevere in my lyf, for lief ne looth,**
That never in my life, willing or unwilling,
133 **Ne shal I of no conseil yow biwreye.”**
Shall I betray any of your secrets. ”
134 **“The same agayn to yow,” quod she, “I seye.**
“The same in reply to you,” she said, “I say.

¹¹ For a description and bibliography, see *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa*, “S-GRAVENHAGE, KB: 132 G 35” (URL in bibliography).

¹² See, for example, the Rood Privilegeboek of ’s-Hertogenbosch, discussed in Rudy (2023), chapter 5.

- 135 **By God and by this portehors I swere,**
 By God and by this prayer book I swear,
- 136 **Though men me wolde al into pieces tere,**
 Though men would tear me all to pieces
- 137 **Ne shal I nevere, for to goon to helle,**
 I shall never, even though I go to hell for it,
- 138 **Biwreye a word of thyng that ye me telle,**
 Betray a word of anything that you tell me,
- 139 **Nat for no cosynage ne alliance,**
 Not for any kinship nor alliance,
- 140 **But verrailly for love and affiance.”**
 But truly for love and trust.”
- 141 **Thus been they sworn, and heerupon they kiste,**
 Thus they are sworn, and thereupon they kissed,
- 142 **And ech of hem tolde oother what hem liste.**
 And each of them told the other what they pleased.¹³

From this one can see that the two made promises of secrecy to each other by swearing on the monk's prayerbook, which was readily at hand, since he had been using it to recite his prayers at the moment when he encountered the wife. Their oath is certainly not formal enough to warrant finding a Gospel manuscript. Although Chaucer is describing a fictional encounter, use-wear evidence in extant prayerbooks suggests that the activity described here was commonplace. For example, interpretable marks of wear appear in a prayerbook with grisaille miniatures, made around 1460 for someone in the circle of the Burgundian court (Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 219).¹⁴ The owner of this book has deliberately touched the faces of three of the Gospel writers, who appear as authors alongside their respective accounts of the Passion. On the opening folio, the image of St Matthew, together with his attribute the angel, has been thoroughly abraded (Figure 4a). The pattern of wear suggests that multiple people have touched the image with a dry hand, leaving the surface powdery and the edges feathered. Those touching the image particularly targeted the saint's head, his torso, the scroll emanating from his hands, his attribute, his robe, and the frame and the initial P, for *Passio domini nostri*.

While the image depicting St Mark has not been touched (fol. 21r, Figure 4b), that of St John the Evangelist, in the miniature prefacing his Gospel reading, has been distinctly targeted (fol. 57r; Figure 4d). The pattern, which is diffuse, is consistent with multiple acts of touching. It is possible that the owner touched this image during a ceremony in which he made a promise or oath of some kind. Further marks of wear strengthen the oath-taking hypothesis: someone has likewise touched the figure of St Luke, predominantly on his torso, but the representation of the book on its lofty

¹³ Excerpted from *Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website*, “7.1 The Shipman's Tale” (URL in bibliography).

¹⁴ Greg Clark (2009) has written an article dedicated to this manuscript in a highly illustrated journal, although he has not reproduced the touched images under consideration here.



Figure 4a-d: Four miniatures prefacing their four respective Gospel extracts in a book of hours with extra texts for taking a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 219: a) fol. 1r (St Matthew), b) fol. 21r (St Mark), c) fol. 39r (St Luke), d) fol. 57r (St John). Photo: Bibliothèque de municipale de Tours.

lectern has also been touched, as if re-enacting in miniature the ceremony he was undergoing in real life (fol. 39r; Figure 4c).



Figure 5: Jesus, resurrected, meeting his mother (to represent the site along the pilgrimage route), in a French book of hours, c. 1460. Tours, Bibl. mun., Ms. 219, fol. 87r. Photo: Bibliothèque de municipale de Tours.

What is also telling is that the other images in this book of hours remain pristine, demonstrating that its owner was not systematically touching the images out of iconoclastic impulses, unfettered curiosity, as a devotional act while praying, or out of mere boredom. The other (clean) images include several depicting holy sites to be visited during a pilgrimage around Jerusalem, for example, at the site where Jesus visited his mother after the Resurrection (Figure 5). Neither this nor the other images depicting the pilgrimage locations have been touched. In fact, the manuscript has not been handled or worn much at all. Perhaps the owner used the Evangelist portraits, *inter alia*, to swear to undertake a pilgrimage.¹⁵ Given the clean state of the rest of the

¹⁵ On the topic of *grisaille*, see Moodey (2014).

manuscript, one wonders whether he took the manuscript with him to Jerusalem.¹⁶ If he did, he treated this book very gingerly.

Unlike most books of hours, Tours 219 currently has no calendar. There are no frayed stitches, offsets, or patterns of dirt that would suggest it ever had one. In fact, the manuscript appears to be in its original boards (Figure 6), although the spine has been repaired. If the owner opened the front cover, he would immediately encounter the Passion according to Matthew, being the first text in a section of extracts from the Evangelists. It is possible that the owner used the image of Matthew most intensely for the purpose of swearing oaths because that text came first in the book. If this is the case, then clearly this person lacked concern for the injunction in Matthew against swearing. If he placed his hand on the image, he would in a physical sense have all the Gospel extracts under his hand: by virtue of its position, the top Gospel subsumed the others. Considering that the other miniatures in this manuscript have not been targeted, but three of the Gospel openings have been, one is hard-pressed to find another explanation for this targeted wear.



Figure 6: French book of hours, c. 1460. Tours, Bibl. mun., Ms. 219, binding. Photo: Bibliothèque de municipale de Tours.

¹⁶ For prayerbooks with extra texts designed to be read in Jerusalem, see Rudy (2000, 2001).



Figure 7: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Buchanan e. 9, fol. 13r copy 2. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2024.

That other owners of books of hours similarly touched the Evangelist portraits suggests that this practice was culturally diffuse and not particular to this single example. Another French book of hours, made around 1425–1450, had an owner who touched the image of St John on Patmos, which has been thoroughly wetted (Figure 7). This image has a place of priority in the book: immediately after the calendar. The owner,

possibly the female patron depicted elsewhere in the book, has wet-touched the figure's robes, so that its red paint has liquefied and flowed down onto the rocks of the island, and the impressionistic sky has become even more watery under the patron's enthusiastic modifications. Are we seeing the results of general water damage? No. Overall the book has not incurred water damage. The edges lack signs of seepage, so clearly a user targeted just this figure within the frame. Usually those who swore oaths did so with a dry hand, but perhaps the person who owned this one may have involved a hand moistened with holy water. The owner may have been enacting a particularly serious oath by way of this ritual, which, due to the damage it caused, had the added benefit of serving as a permanent reminder of the oath.

Once one has the lenses to see images of the Evangelists in prayerbooks in this way, more examples pour forth. A French book of hours for the Use of Rome, made in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, has been well-used (Oxford, Bodleian, Rawl. Liturg. G. 7). The manuscript is written on fine parchment, with rubrics in red and blue, and many of the parchment corners darkened with use: at the Hours of the Virgin, prime is much more used than matins; the Penitential Psalms is used throughout; and the beginning of the Hours of the Cross is very dark with wear, but the rest of the text



Figure 8: Opening in a French book of hours with a suffrage to St Anthony. Oxford, Bodleian, Rawl. Liturg. G. 7, fol. 99r. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2024.

less so; while the Office of the Dead is pristine. Clearly, the manuscript's early owner spent considerable time with this volume but had strong preferences for particular texts. Alongside the extensive inadvertent wear in the volume, two of the images have been targeted: the frame around St Anthony (Figure 8), and the image of John, which opens the Gospel readings, (Figure 9). Whereas the user has carefully touched the frame around St Anthony, who was frequently summoned for desperate physical and mental health conditions, the user has touched the image of St John on Patmos in a different way. She or he has targeted the face of the saint, as well as John's scroll: the words of the Gospel he inscribes while taking dictation from on high. Considering that the owner did not touch any other saints' faces in the manuscript, doing so was not a routine way to venerate a saint, but rather must have had a different and specific function. It is possible that the owner touched the image while pronouncing a vow. The beginning of the Gospel of John (rather than John's account of the Passion) may have had special significance to those swearing vows, since the text states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Believers understood the word to be continuous with the divine. A vow made while touching John's words would be tinged with God's power and therefore binding.



Figure 9: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of John. Oxford, Bodleian, Ms. Rawl. Liturg. G. 7, fols. 6v–7r. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2024.



Figure 10a–b: Folio in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of John. Oxford, Bodleian, Ms. Rawl. liturg. f. 19, fol. 17r. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2024.

Other books of hours, primarily French, have a similar pattern of wear. For example, the pattern appears in a book of hours from Paris, made around 1480 (Ms. Rawl. liturg. f. 19, fol. 17r; Figure 10a–b).¹⁷ Accompanying the *In Principio* text is an image of St John writing his Gospel on Patmos. The owner has carefully touched the image of the book containing God’s word. Another French book of hours, made c. 1450 possibly for someone in Soissons, has a full program of large miniatures and historiated initials (The Hague, KB, 76 G 18). Some of the large miniatures were never completed, including three of the Evangelist portraits near the beginning of the manuscript. One of the lacunae appears before the gospel fragment from St Luke (Figure 11). However, the historiated initial at this text has been filled in. The user has touched this initial multiple times. This is the only deliberately touched image in the manuscript. If the owner touched images in order to venerate saints, one would expect to see multiple images touched within the book. In this manuscript, only the Evangelist St Luke has been touched. Perhaps the owner’s name was Luke, and he was touching his name saint. But perhaps he was punctuating a promise with a theatrical book-touching gesture.

¹⁷ *Digital Bodleian*, “Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. liturg. f. 19” (URL in bibliography).



Figure 11: Folio in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of John. The Hague, KB, 76 G 18, fol. 14v. Photo: KB, Nationale bibliotheek van Nederland.

A series of dramatic examples appears in a French book of hours, made in the early fifteenth century in Paris, now in the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279.¹⁸ This manuscript also begins with the Gospel extracts immediately after the calendar, beginning with John (Figure 12a). The damage is severe and has been effected over a series of events. Someone, or quite possibly multiple people, have targeted the saint's head, the book he is penning, and his zoomorph, the eagle. This contact has taken place with a wet finger, as if oath-takers touched their fingers to their lips before handling the page. The severity of this moisture becomes fully apparent when the illumination is considered alongside its facing folio, which bears the offset of the moistened paint. A similar pattern of touching appears at the incipit of the Book of Luke, where the writer's head, book, and attribute have been touched (Figure 12b and Figure 12c). Matthew has also been touched, although not as severely (Figure 12d). This observa-

¹⁸ The miniatures, which are integral, are attributed to someone in the circle of the Boucicaut Master, who was active in Paris. For a basic description and further references, see *Initiale: Catalogue de manuscrits enluminés*, "Paris, Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève, 1279" (URL in bibliography).



Figure 12a: Opening in a French book of hours with the end of the calendar and the incipit of the Gospel of John. Incipit of John. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 12v–13r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.



Figure 12b: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of Luke. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 14v–15r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.



Figure 12c: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of Mark. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 18v–19r.



Figure 12d: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Gospel of Matthew. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 16v–17r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.



Figure 13: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Fifteen Joys of the Virgin, and an image of the Virgin and Child flanked by angels. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 186v–187r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.

tion is difficult to assess. Either it means that the user was unaware of Matthew’s injunction (and therefore took oaths on the images anyway); was aware of Matthew’s injunction (and therefore usually avoided Matthew); or was touching the images for reasons other than oath-taking. If the last, then that reason must account for the user’s exclusive touching of the Evangelists. He or she has not systematically gone through the images elsewhere in the book and smeared them; rather, many of the images have been ignored, such as one depicting the Virgin and Child enthroned (Figure 13). One could conclude that the person who touched some of the images was doing so for deliberate reasons and choosing particular subjects to touch.

What other subjects might have been used for swearing oaths?

Laypeople could have sworn oaths on Crucifixion images, which is the image type that suspected Waldensians were made to swear on to prove that they would take oaths. In the current context I will discuss some examples consistent with a pattern of wear for which individuals have touched the image deliberately. After having examined every



Figure 14: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Hours of the Cross and an image of the Crucifixion. Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 120v–121r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.

book of hours mounted on the website of the Stabi in Berlin, every one on the Bibliothèque virtuelle des manuscrits médiévaux, and from having physically handled every book of hours in the KB – The National Library of The Netherlands in The Hague and more than half of those in the Bodleian Library, I can say with confidence that many full-page images of Crucifixions in books of hours have been abraded from deliberate handling. Most of these preface the Long or Short Hours of the Cross, for which Crucifixion images constitute the standard subject.

In fact, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, mentioned above, has two further images that have been heavily damaged due to touching: the Crucifixion (Figure 14), and the Last Judgment (discussed below). The pattern wear in the Crucifixion miniature is similar to that of St Luke, although the Crucifixion is even more abraded, with losses across the entire expanse of the miniature.

Moreover, the smears lead off the top of the page, as if the manuscript had been proffered to another person, upside-down. Many other Crucifixion images have been treated in a similar way.



Figure 15: Folio in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Hours of the Cross and an image of the Crucifixion. Angers, Bib. Mun. Ms. 133 (125), fol. 66r. Photo: Angers Bibliothèque Municipale.

To take another example: a French book of hours, made c. 1425–1450, has a Crucifixion image before the Hours of the Cross (Angers, Bib. Mun. Ms. 133, Figure 15).¹⁹ Cumulative fingerprints in the lower corners of the folios reveal that the manuscript has been held open for reading on many occasions: this was a utilitarian manuscript. In addition to the inadvertent marks of wear due to reading, there is targeted abrasion in the manuscript's only miniature. Someone has repeatedly touched the entire torso of Christ's hanging body, eroding the paint and exposing the raw parchment. Likewise, the bodies and faces of Mary and John have been worn away. These paint losses are consistent with many instances of handling the image over time.

A similarly vigorous pattern of wear appears at the opening of the Hours of the Cross in an English manuscript, which was made in several campaigns of work, with some elements made in the Southern Netherlands. Books of hours were produced in

¹⁹ Alternative signature: Ms. 125. The manuscript is unstudied. For a rudimentary notice, see *Initiale: Catalogue de manuscrits enluminés*, "Angers, BM, 0133 (0125)" (URL in bibliography).



Figure 16 (a–b): Opening in a Southern Netherlandish book of hours (made for export to England) with the incipit of the Hours of the Cross and an image of the Crucifixion at the Hours of the Cross, with a full-page Crucifixion. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Barlow 33, fols 12v–13r. Photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2024.

large numbers in the Southern Netherlands, with the aim of exporting them to England.²⁰ The entire manuscript has been handled roughly, apparently by sixteenth-century owners who wrote their names repeatedly among its pages. Given the multiple types of damage this manuscript has incurred, it is difficult to say with certainty how and when it was handled. It seems clear, however, that the image of the Crucifixion has been deliberately touched, with the face, torso, and legs of Jesus, and the upper body of Mary particularly targeted (Figure 16). Someone has attempted to re-inscribe the figures' eyes onto their faces. The imagery has not been attacked in a manner consistent with iconoclasts or Henrician reformers (who lightly cancelled texts elsewhere in the manuscript containing references to popes and indulgences), so fear or hatred of images does not stand up as an explanation for this damage. Moreover, although

²⁰ See Rogers (1982), with further references.



Figure 17: Opening in a fragmented book of hours, with David at Prayer, and a Crucifixion. Arles, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 9, fols Av–Br. Photo: Bibliothèque Municipale Arles.

there are wet stains and smears on this opening, the manuscript does not have all-over water damage associated with leaks or seepage. Instead, this opening in particular has been wetted, as if it had been used in ceremonies involving touching the image and sprinkling holy water.

Dramatic abrasion has afflicted the images in a fragmented book of hours, made in France c. 1450–1475, and now preserved in Arles (Figure 17). The fragment now contains offices of the Virgin and of the Passion. The two remaining images, depicting Solomon kneeling in prayer (which probably prefaced the Seven Penitential Psalms), and a Crucifixion (which probably prefaced the Hours of the Cross), have been bound at the front of the manuscript. They are in terrible condition. That the stains on the two images do not match indicates that they were stained before they were mounted into their current positions. Both images have been handled, rubbed, and abraded, with particular losses on the face and torso of Jesus. Was this touched during an oath-swearing ritual?

A severely handled example is now preserved in Caen (Figure 18). Here the book has not been extensively worn overall, but the image of the Crucifixion has been abraded down to the parchment. The damage reveals the direction of the gesture: the top of the image has been touched, with only light wear on the script at the bottom of

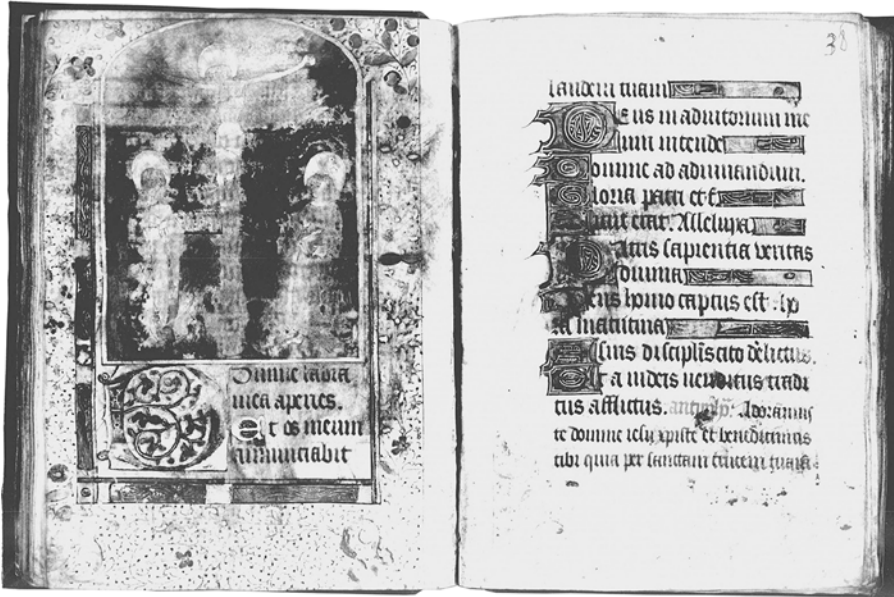


Figure 18: Opening in a French book of hours with the incipit of the Hours of the Cross and an image of the Crucifixion. Caen, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 18 (aka Ms. 358 in quarto 29), fols 37v–38r. Photo: Bibliothèque de Caen.

the folio, suggesting that the user may have proffered the book to an oath-taker whose hands entered the book from the top.

Another possible image on which oath-takers could have sworn in a book of hours was the Last Judgment, the image that often prefaces the Seven Penitential Psalms. This subject has been heavily touched in Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279 (Figure 19). Given the prevalence and relevance of Last Judgment imagery in legal and court settings in the late Middle Ages, oath-swearers may have reached for the analogous imagery to solidify personal bonds. Although oath-swearing may explain why images of the Last Judgment are so often abraded, it is also possible that votaries touched this subject in conjunction with reading the Seven Penitential Psalms, during which they atoned for their sins. They feared Christ’s damnation for their behaviour including, but not limited to, swearing false oaths.²¹ Like the Crucifixion image in the same manuscript, this one has damage that extends into the upper margin, as if the person doing the touching had stood at the head of the book and reached in.

²¹ See Rudy, *Touching Parchment*, Vol. 1, Chapter 5.1, “Last Judgment Imagery for Reinforcing Obligation”.



Figure 19: Opening in a French book of hours at the Seven Penitential Psalms, with the Last Judgment. Paris Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms. 1279, fols 193v–194r. Photo: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.

Conclusion

I have cautiously suggested here that laypeople took oaths on their prayerbooks. The optional Gospel extracts copied into the fronts of books of hours, often accompanying portraits of the Evangelists, turn the manuscript into scaled-down, condensed versions of the very manuscripts associated with swearing oaths – Gospel manuscripts. Just as the Gospel extracts and Evangelists’ portraits in the Statutes and Regulations of the Chapter of St Servatius in Maastricht (The Hague, KB, Ms. 132 G 35) functioned as a touch-object for brothers’ oaths, the analogous texts in books of hours may have likewise been designed for lay book owners, their business partners and employees, to swear oaths on. These texts lent the manuscripts the presence of the four Evangelists and the power of God, so that the manuscripts could then function as witness to solemn oaths.

This leads us to consider the broader cultural and religious implications of these practices. Although it is well established that oath-swearing took place at altars and in exalted circumstances, I have posited that laypeople could have copied the practice with less pomp, by individuals who were not empowered with any particular council or office, who had no access to Gospel manuscripts or tomes binding guilds together,

but who nevertheless needed to demonstrate appropriate gravitas when they made agreements. By observing changes in the surface of parchment folios, we can paint a more detailed image of para-liturgical rituals, which help to explain broader social changes.

Swearing oaths may have been a habit undergirded by official governmental and religious institutions, but one which provided a model for individuals who wanted to secure promises for the future or wanted to swear as witnesses. Further research could interrogate the extent to which these personalized oath rituals reinforced or even subverted ecclesiastical and secular power structures. Owners of prayerbooks may have taken lessons – regarding the pertinence of touching the Evangelists – from more formal ceremonies they had witnessed, and then applied them to their local situations. If prayerbooks were the objects with the most gravitas that laypeople had at hand, they used them to enact versions of the public rituals that they had seen, by touching the Evangelist portraits in their books of hours as makeshift foci while performing speech acts. One might speculate whether this reflected a democratization of holy objects, diluting the Church's control over sacred rituals.

Patterns of wear in certain late medieval manuscripts support a hypothesis that laypeople could swear testimonies, oaths, and contracts by reaching for their own prayerbooks to seal their words. This tactile interaction with the texts reveals a physicality to medieval piety and promise-making, a corporeal approach to faith and fidelity. Users altered the surface of their manuscripts while changing abstract reality (commercially, socially) through speech acts, which are those acts that change the world through their very utterance. Whereas two characters in Chaucer's "The Shipman's Tale" performed such a ritual to mutually swear to secrecy, real-life late medieval people may have used such rituals for promising I-owe-yous or other debts, or maybe they reserved the practice for the most serious kinds of oaths, such as a promise to wed or to go on pilgrimage. Literary scholars may be able to identify texts alluding to analogous oath-taking actions that bound people socially, commercially, or romantically. The practical and perhaps even commercial use of such sacred objects invites us to reconsider the relationships between the spiritual and material economies of the period.

Examples here demonstrate the degree to which medieval users handled depicted figures in a deliberate way. Images depicting the Crucifixion, the Last Judgment, and the Evangelists lent Christ and the Gospel writers tangible presence and imbued the oath-taking milieu with the divine. This presence testifies to the medieval belief in the corporeal as a vessel for the sacred, a belief that both empowered and constrained medieval individuals. Although the extent to which people perceived that they were making promises to God is unknowable, the fact that their promises were witnessed by peers and people in authority, and then sealed through specific words and gestures, reveals that the bonds they were forging were possibly vertical (with God), but most definitely horizontal (with each other).

Further studies could investigate the social dynamics at play, examining how the act of touching a prayerbook could have served as a form of social capital or a means of establishing credibility within a community. At the very least, placing one's hand on an image of the Crucifixion (semi-)publicly demonstrated one's orthodoxy. Moreover, the function of manuscripts in these interactions not only facilitated bonds of trust and duty but may also have represented a form of cultural currency, which – like today's social media “likes” and “shares” – endorsed and amplified social standing and reputation. Further investigations could illuminate variations in the performative aspects of oath-taking, to explore how these practices shaped individual and collective identities.

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4 The Soundtrack and Ecology of Medieval Textual Culture: Multimodal Experience in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*

Hearing is one of the five main senses (in addition to sight, touch, smell, and taste) that allow us humans to learn and develop individually, as well as to navigate our social existence and participate in various cultural communities in a meaningful way (Steen & Turner 2013). This means that human experience is inherently multimodal. However, while medieval sight and touch have been much discussed based on textual, visual, and material culture, smell, taste and hearing, have only recently been approached in scholarship through studies of textual and material clues that can tell us something about such utterly ephemeral phenomena.¹

This chapter will focus primarily on the topic of sound and sound cultures as described and as embedded in textual sources.² The main aim of the chapter is thus to bring medieval sounds and sound cultures to the fore of our attention, as one of the major aspects that formed human individual and social experience in the Middle Ages. More specifically, I will investigate how sound is shown to interact with other sensory inputs that impact human experience and also whether and how sound led to significant changes or development in human existence.

To achieve these aims, I will seek to “unmute the past” by discussing sound on both intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels. I will study (1) what sounds and sound cultures are described in literary sources, (2) how sound interacts with other material, textual, and visual triggers as described in medieval literature, and (3) what role sound plays in the narrative development and structure of medieval literature. In the final part of the chapter, the way medieval literature addresses these topics will be interpreted on the extradiegetic level, thus opening up a discussion not only of the inherent aural nature of medieval literature, but also its essentially multimodal and experiential nature, i.e. its nature as a live artefact.³

The discussion of these topics will here pertain most directly to Old Norse literature and culture. The starting point of the analysis is the Old Norse *Tristrams saga*,

¹ See references below.

² Other sources may be illustrative of medieval sound cultures too. For art-historical approaches to sound, see Pentcheva (2021), Boynton & Reilly (2015). For archaeological approaches to sound, see Scarre & Lawson (2006), Hommedal (2020). For architectural approaches, see chapter 2 in this book by Mary Franklin Brown; for studies with focus on Norwegian churches and buildings, see Snekkerstad (2010), Fett (1968). For approaches from a music perspective, see for example Fassler (2014).

³ This is an allusion to Terrance Cave’s (2022) book of the same title, which is discussed at the end of the chapter.

which is a translation of Thomas' *Tristan*, done by an otherwise unknown monk, Brother Robert, in 1226, under the commission of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson. The examples from this main text will be contextualized within the broader Old Norse text and manuscript culture in order to allow for the more general discussion about the implications of sound-studies for our understanding of Old Norse literature and culture.

A couple of comments on method. First, even though *Tristrams saga* is a translation, I will not juxtapose it to its Old French source-text but will contextualize it within its Old Norse literary and cultural context.⁴ Theoretically, it has been argued that translations are useful to understand the target culture (Tourey 2012), and numerous studies of Old Norse translations have shown that words, concepts, character descriptions, narratology, and style were generally adapted to the target Old Norse culture in order to meet the readers' and listeners' aesthetic, ideological, and cultural expectations.⁵ This allows us to see *Tristrams saga* as a product of Old Norse literary culture, and to contextualize it within it. *Tristrams saga* seems to have been well known and relatively influential in the Old Norse literary context from the thirteenth century onwards,⁶ which legitimizes using it as a starting point for our discussion.

Further, in order to address the main topic of the book, namely models of change, special attention will be paid to how sound triggers *changes in individual/cognitive and social practices*, as these are presented in *Tristrams saga* and other Old Norse texts. Consequently, we will discuss whether sound can be a significant factor not only for changed human experience in literature, but also for how stories are told, i.e. for the narrative structure of medieval stories. Last but not least, the chapter will reveal not only how sound is represented and described in medieval texts, but also how it is embedded in their vocabulary and their materiality. This invites us to move beyond the study of medieval textual culture (including Old Norse) as linguistic signs on parchment, and rather perceive it as literary renderings of multimodal lived experience which were to be perpetuated through new multimodal performances. My aspiration is to discuss not necessarily only models of change in medieval textual culture, but models of change *of* medieval textual culture, and not least *of* the way we perceive it: not only as written texts, but as aural and multimodal lived experiences with their own continuous "soundtracks".

4 For a comparative study of the way literary voices and silence are translated in Old Norse translations, see Eriksen (forthcoming).

5 See for example Sif Rikhardsdóttir (2012).

6 For a discussion on the influence of *Tristrams saga* on Old Norse indigenous literature, see Kalinke (2011), and Driscoll (2011: 169, 178).

State of the art: texts, voices, and sounds

Medieval philology and literary studies have fostered various discussions affiliated with the topic of sound and multimodality, within which this study is contextualized and to which it contributes. The most relevant debates for us here are concerned with orality, literacy, vocality, and aurality in medieval culture.⁷

Attitudes to orality, literacy, and vocality have changed under the consecutive influence of the oral-formulaic paradigm, inspired by the work of Milman Parry (1971) and Albert Bates Lord (1960),⁸ and “The Great Divide” turn, driven on by scholars such as Walter J. Ong (1988), Erik A. Havelock (1986), and Jack Goody (1987).⁹ The most productive paradigm today, proposed by such scholars as the social anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (1988; 1977) among others, suggests that orality and literacy are not binary opposites but co-exist in some form or another in all cultures. Transferred to medieval studies, such discussions may suggest that all medieval texts also fluctuate on a continuum between oral and written, and in order to conduct a more precise discussion, it is necessary to be explicit about which phase of the text’s existence is being discussed – its composition, transmission, or reception. An original oral composition may for example have ended up being transmitted in writing; or an original written composition may have ended up being performed orally. No matter how a text fluctuated on the orality-literacy continuum, many have pointed out, through various research methods, that public aural reading was the default mode of textual reception in the Middle Ages, while silent reading occurred in specific monastic/religious contexts.¹⁰

A related discussion concerns the meaning of “voice” and its relationship to medieval textual culture. In medieval studies, “voice” has been discussed as the narrative voice inherent in a text, or the authorial voice of the past, or as the sound heard during the performance of the text.¹¹ A central premise in recent discussions on voice comes from classical and medieval perceptions of voice, which promote the difference

7 Other related debates will be referred to in the actual discussions, such as performance and liturgy, disability studies, and animal soundscapes. There are other potentially relevant debates that will not be addressed here, which include discussions of the theological significance of silence, see for example Mac Culloch (2013), and Debiais (2019).

8 For studies of Old Norse poetry and prose inspired by the oral-formulaic theory, on eddic poetry see Kellogg (1991), Gurevič (1986); on the formulaic nature of the Icelandic sagas, see Byock (1984–1985), Gísli Sigurðsson (2004, 2005).

9 See also Bäuml (1984).

10 See for example Coleman (1996). On the development of administrative literacy, see Clanchy (2013); see also Green (1994). On silent reading in the Middle Ages, see Saenger (1982). Many recent anthologies within Old Norse studies follow this paradigm, see for example Rancovic, Melve & Mundal (2010), Mundal & Wellendorf (2008), Rancovic et al. (2012), Mulligan & Mundal (2019), Gropper & Rösl (2022).

11 See for example a recent anthology on voice D’Arcens & Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (2022); see also Boynton et al. (2016).

between voice and sound. On one side, voice, or “vox” was regarded as the sound made by someone with a soul (Aristotle’s definition) and was thus strongly connected with language, humanity, spirituality, and thus with textuality (medieval Christian understanding) (D’Arcens & Sif Ríkharrðsdóttir 2022: 2–3; Boynton 2016). This has been pointed out earlier too, as for example in Zumthor’s argument that “the human voice [is] a dimension of the poetic text”, (Zumthor 1984: 67).¹² Sound, on the other hand, belonged to the non-human realm; sound could be produced by animals or trees, or even the landscape: it was non-semantic and inarticulate, by definition (Kay 2016: 1006). The difference between voice and sound is thus the same as between human and non-human, between culture and nature (Boynton 2016: 1001). However, recent scholarship includes studies of medieval texts where non-human agents seem to be attributed a voice too (like birds and other animals) (Leach 2007; Kay 2016: 1002–1015). The way texts appear through their speaking subjects and the embodiment of the human voice is another topic discussed in recent scholarship, which is also relevant for our interest in the multimodal nature of human experience.¹³

Building upon these discussions on the significance of the human voice for the understanding of medieval textual culture, the present analysis will incorporate the study of representations of the human voice and others sounds in texts (intradiegetic sound) and the intended voiced reading of texts (extradiegetic sounds) within a richer and more varied sound culture, including also sounds produced by other materialities and entities, such as things, animals, and nature. Voices and sounds will also be “listened to” within the context in which they are made, i.e. their effects on characters will be correlated to other sensory inputs that the characters may be exposed to, such as sight and touch, smell and taste. In this way, I aim to highlight not only the multimodal nature of human existence as described in literature, but also the very nature of medieval texts as lived experience. Voices and sounds as described and as embedded in literature will thus be seen as elements not only of a medieval multivocal soundscape, but also of a processual and ongoing medieval “soundtrack” that crosses intra- and extradiegetic boundaries, in medieval times as well as today.

Theoretical framework for the analysis

The discussion of the role of sound for human existence in the Middle Ages leans on contemporary cognitive and social studies of the auditory and multimodal nature of our cognition, which describe how the interplay and combination of inputs from all our senses condition cognitive development, communication, and social participation.

¹² Zumthor (1984); see also Zumthor (1988).

¹³ See for example Sif Ríkharrðsdóttir (2022).

Listening and reading within the framework of 4E cognition

The main contention in contemporary auditory neurosciences is that hearing is not a simple passive process, but it depends on many factors including other sensory input, our bodies and bodily movements, our memory, attention, neuropsychology, the physical context and its acoustics, and the temporal/situational/narrative context, among other factors (McAdams & Bigand 1993; Schnupp, Nelken, & King 2012). In other words, the study of sound has incorporated the framework of 4E cognition, which suggests that our cognition is not an independent faculty, separate from and unrelated to our bodies and our material, social, and environmental contexts, but is Embodied, Embedded, Extended and Enacted (Newen, DeBruin, & Gallagher 2018). When applied to the discussion of sound and hearing, this stresses that the production and reception of sound is *deeply embodied*. We both speak and “listen” with our whole bodies, by for example making and observing gestures and “reading” the whole situation, in order to make sense of what we are hearing. In cases of hearing impairment, people can listen through lip-reading. Hearing is dependent on our own attention, ability to focus, and current mental state, which sometimes predispose us for a successful listening experience, while other times may completely obstruct our ability to listen. Listening competence and habits are also essential for how we listen and what we hear and understand. Sound is *highly embedded* as it is always perceived within a physical context, with its own space, geometry, openness or closeness, and acoustics, that impact the transmission and reception of sound. Further, within any space, sounds exist together with other visual, textual, and material elements. What we see (or do not see) may impact what we hear, and vice versa: auditory input may ease the appropriation of visual or textual input, for example during learning.¹⁴ The making (and thus the hearing) of sound is also *extended*, i.e. it is inseparable from the material objects that produce the sounds, the most obvious example of which is the human body (when speaking) or musical instruments. Sound is also *enacted*: it unfolds in time, it always exists in a temporal frame, it happens as a part of a series of other events, and its role depends on this temporal and narrative situation. Sound compresses and incorporates time, because it can trigger memories of the past or thoughts about the future.¹⁵ By deploying the 4E cognition framework, we can read much more into a literary reference to the sound of church bells, for example, than just the sound itself. The sound-reference tells something about people’s personal faith, their bodily engagement in religious practices, possibly ongoing social, judicial, or political processes, and not least their physical existence in an urban or rural landscape, in the proximity of a church.

¹⁴ On different learning styles, see Vincent & Ross (2001).

¹⁵ For a parallel discussion on the listening of music and singing, see Kelkar (2019).

Since we are extrapolating sound from written texts, recent research on reading from a cognitive perspective is also relevant for our approach to the interplay between texts and sound. It has been demonstrated that we read – also when we read to ourselves – with our whole bodies, including our ears. When we read, we hear an inner voice that shapes our interpretation of the story; sometimes we even voice the text in order to better understand what it may mean. We can change the tone, tempo, and flow when reading, which may influence nuances in the meaning of the text. In addition, we take multiple breaks, cast glimpses outside the window, check our email and read our text messages, have sips of coffee, change our sitting positions, and do a lot of other little bodily movements that also impact (positively and negatively) our reading process (Trasmundi et al. 2021, Trasmundi & Cobley 2021, Benne 2021). Reading is thus always a multi-scalar bodily experience and the meaning of what we read is influenced by our whole bodily existence and our material surroundings. Further, reading is not only embodied and extended, it is socially embedded and enacted. Studies of public/social readings have shown that experiencing a book aurally together with others creates a much stronger sense of community compared to listening to the same text individually, as the impressions from hearing are usually strengthened through the other senses, such as sight (eye contact), touch (sitting next to someone), and smell (of other people and their fragrances) (Mar et al. 2021).¹⁶ Even when people listen to audiobooks, podcasts, or music individually, i.e. plugged in to their phones through headphones or sitting alone in a room listening to a recording, even then, sound is social, because the listener is connected to the person reading, talking, or playing music digitally, despite the fact that they are not together physically (Swarbrick 2020). Such observations also increase our awareness of the embodied, extended, enacted, and embedded nature of medieval reading and performance – texts would not only have been listened to, they would also have been experienced during mesmerizing or poor performances, with other people, within a specific context. All these factors would have “coloured” and given multimodal body to the medieval voice and other sounds.

Sounds, texts, and community

Sound thus impacts both individual cognition and social interactions, and various studies of the social function of sound offer some additional important insights into the various roles of sound. It has, for example, been pointed out that cultures with good listening practices allow for more resonance in the community, for more space

¹⁶ On digital social reading, see Wu Li & Zhou (2021). Music research shows that collective listening and playing of music even leads to people’s hearts beating in the same rhythm, see research of Simon Høffding (2020).

and room for individual psychological development, which ultimately inspires stronger social bonds. Significant problems with listening on the community level, on the other hand, may lead to social inequalities and injustices (Motzkau & Lee 2022). Lack of good listening habits and practices not only leads to a weaker sense of belonging to a community, but it may also have judicial and political consequences for a society.

Religious practices are also deeply based on the social nature of sound. The study of religion has been characterized by “disciplinary deafness”, a bit like medieval studies, but with increased focus on rituals and practice; it has been shown how integral sound and listening is not only for participation in religious communities, but also for communication and interaction with God (Hackett 2012). Further, silence, an integral part of sound, has a main role in many religions, as it gives mental room for meditation and rumination, and facilitates a stronger spiritual experience and greater understanding and wisdom.¹⁷

These arguments from various cognitive and social studies of sound will be used as guidelines for this chapter’s methodological approach to sound. The experience of sound is dependent on our embodied minds, on the physical space in which it occurs, on the temporal and narrative frame, and on the social context within which the sound is experienced. All these factors, and not just the reference to the sound itself, will therefore be of interest in the discussion on the types and roles of sound, as it is conceptualized in *Tristrams saga*. Further, inspired by the results in the cognitive and social studies of sound, the analysis will be structured according to the impact of sound on (i) the individual level (cognitive and emotional), on (ii) the social/ community level (belonging or exclusion), on (iii) the legal level (rights and punishments), and on (iiii) the religious level (communication with “other” worlds). These levels are certainly not mutually exclusive but will be discussed consecutively for the sake of structural clarity.

Individual cognitive level: Learning and personal development in *Tristrams saga*

Sound is an important factor for the cognitive development of the characters in the saga. When Tristram grows up with his foster father, he is taught the knowledge of books and is described as quick at learning. He acquires the seven liberal arts and a great many languages. He masters seven different stringed instruments better than anyone else. In addition, he grows to be unmatched in good nature, generosity,

¹⁷ See references to scholarship on silence in medieval Christian culture in footnote 7. On the essentiality of silence, or stillness in Japanese Noah-theatre, see Morioka (2015).

courtly conduct, intelligence, common sense, and valour (p. 51).¹⁸ This description does not single out the aural aspects of his learning but learning languages and instruments would have demanded practicing both listening comprehension as well as speaking, writing, and playing.

The saga does not give us too much information about the learning context, but Tristram grows up in safety at the steward's castle. It is also emphasized how well-intentioned, noble, and devoted the steward was to the boy, to such a degree that his own sons were jealous of the attention and the high-esteem Tristram got (p. 51). This suggests most favourable learning conditions for Tristram, in which he would have been able to dedicate his attention to learning anything from languages and music to common sense and correct courtly conduct.

His knowledge of languages and music proves to be directly significant for several major episodes later in the saga. To stick to the topic of learning: because of his knowledge and abilities, Tristram becomes the teacher of Ísönd. He teaches her to play the harp and other stringed instruments, to write and compose letters (*rita ok bréf at gera*), and also to acquire all kinds of information (*allra vela fróðleik*, p. 86). It is not said whether the acquiring of information is based on reading or listening, but Ísönd's education must have incorporated both textual material as well as oral and aural elements, as later on she is asked to play the harp for the court and her wisdom becomes known across the kingdom through her many debates with the wisest men (*Þá sýndi hún ok vizku sína í margs konar spurningum ok órskurðum, er hún gerði fyrir hinum vitrustum mönnum*) (p. 86). Ísönd thus acquires wisdom aurally and textually and demonstrates it verbally and performatively.

Such descriptions comply well with what we know about the aural nature of learning from other Old Norse sources. *The King's Mirror*, which was written in the same milieu in which *Tristrams saga* was translated, confirms the importance of knowledge of languages, such as French and Latin, which would have demanded both speaking and listening. *The King's Mirror* also presents a consistent learning method which includes aural reception and comprehension as first elements of the learning process (Eriksen 2014). The cognitive process of learning includes the acquisition of new information through the senses – mostly hearing, but also seeing and sometimes tasting. Thereafter one needs to juxtapose the new information against their existent “understanding horizon”. Learning is thus closely related to what one already knows, because if something is completely new, it becomes inconceivable. If one hears something that one has never heard about (for example the explanation of the sun's trajectory), one has to continue asking questions to receive more input, until the new information is relatable to what one already knows. The next phase of a learning process is reflecting upon this new information. Thereafter, one has to remember good and bad examples in order to learn. Lastly, one must be able to apply what one has

¹⁸ References from *Tristrams saga* are from Kalinke (1999).

learned. This holistic cognitive process – from sensory input, through reflection and remembering, to correct application – is most importantly seen as an active process. It can be activated by asking questions and inquiring more deeply. Learning and personal development thus demand both speaking and active listening. The universality of a learning methodology that promotes verbal inquiry and communication, and that demands active listening and the asking of follow-up questions, can be confirmed by other Old Norse pedagogical texts that are written in dialogue form, such as the *Elucidarius*, *Barlaams saga*, and dialogues between body and soul, among others.¹⁹

The significance of the aural aspect of learning may be further emphasized by reflecting upon how people with impaired hearing may have experienced it. In his thorough study of deafness and nonspeaking in the Old Norse world, Yoav Tirosh points out that the social class of hearing-impaired people was significant for their experience of learning in a different way, i.e. through writing (Tirosh 2020). Learning to write the Latin alphabet and the availability of resources to write was certainly a luxury for people of higher social standing, but people could learn to write runes and carving runes on wooden sticks or writing on wax-tablets must have been affordable for many more people.²⁰ Even though mostly intended for monastic communities where silence was an essential virtue, sign language and communication would have offered another way of communicating.²¹ Even though there are few sources to use of sign language in the Old Norse culture, communication by gestures seems to have been practiced both by religious people and hearing-impaired people.²² A relevant example that emphasizes the link between hearing/speaking, learning, and remembering is seen in *Sigurðar saga þögla*, where a man who lacks communicative ability is initially considered as mentally deficient, a kind of non-human. Later on, he starts speaking, after hard work and training, which is possible for him because of his high social standing.²³

The episodes from *Tristrams saga* also describe learning contexts for the higher social classes, where auditory comprehension is an important part of the learning process. However, learning is also extended and embodied as it is aided or combined with the study of books, the practice of writing and playing instruments, i.e. the mastering of various handcrafts. The examples demonstrate and emphasize that the learning process would not have been the same without the auditory element. In this

¹⁹ For a discussion of *Elucidarius*, see chapter 2 in Eriksen (under revision); on learning the quadriga based on *Barlaams saga*, see Eriksen (2019); for the development of the self as conceptualized in two Old Norse dialogues between Body and Soul, see Eriksen (2016).

²⁰ For examples from various Old Norse texts, such as *Lárentiuss saga byskups* and *Sturlunga saga's Sturlu þátr*, see Tirosh (2020: 316).

²¹ See for example Bruce (2007).

²² For examples, see Tirosh (2020: 318–319). For a comprehensive diachronic study of disabilities in Iceland, see Crocker, Tirosh, & Ármann Jakobsson (2021).

²³ For a more detailed discussion and other examples, see Tirosh (2020: 325–326).

case, the multimodal experience, including sound, leads to change in individual cognitive and practical abilities and knowledge, which naturally leads to change in the way an individual can participate in various social occasions.

Social participation

Announcing one's arrival with horns

One literary motif where sound appears as crucial on a social level is the announcement of someone's arrival. In *Tristrams saga*, we find several examples when the arrival of a character is announced by blowing a horn. When Tristram first approaches King Mark's castle, he takes his hunting horn and blows a long melodious note, which is followed by all the other hunters sounding their horns. The king's people come out wondering what this is all about and the group continues trumpeting until they come to the king himself. The trumpeting is accompanied by the carrying of a head of a stag on a pole to be presented to the king – a ritual that was called “komandi veiðifórn” (‘the gift of the chase’), an astonishingly lavish way to honour the king, never seen before (p. 60). This leads to the hunters bragging of Tristram's hunting abilities, which he also gets to demonstrate many times during his stay at King Mark's court. This in itself allows for the further development of the plot, where Tristram becomes close to the king and is later sent to fetch his chosen bride Ísönd.

Another example of the aural announcement of someone's arrival is when Tristram goes to Bretagne, to the area where he later builds his hall of statues. There he is told that he is not supposed to cross a certain river, because on the other side, there is a giant that owns the land. However, Tristram immediately notices how lovely and rich the forest looks on the other side (p. 176). One day, he crosses the river, almost dying in the process, and when he gets to the other side, he blows his horn to announce his arrival to the giant. The giant hurries over and when he hears that Tristram is interested in his forest, they engage in a violent battle, won by Tristram. The giant begs for mercy, promising submission and truce to Tristram, which of course serves Tristram well in the following (p. 181). Later on, when Tristram wants to show Kardin the woman he is in love with, he takes him to the hall of statues, where he uses the horn to call the giant, having him promise that he will not hurt Kardin if they cross the river and enter his forest (p. 191).

The sound from horns is thus an important communicative tool that can be used across distance when connecting both to humans and their communities, and to other creatures. This allows those who perceive the sound to prepare for the approaching meeting; it may also help them understand either precisely who is arriving (if the sound of the horn was distinguishable) or what kind of a person, or a group, is arriving (if the sound incorporated numerous horns). In the first example, the sound is

also extended, as it gets combined with a visual emblem (the stag head on the pole) which is accessible for those who are close enough to see it. The audible and visual elements intensify the effect of the communication, but no doubt the sound of the horns would have been perceived by many more than the visual effect of the stag head on the pole. This foregrounds the greater accessibility of sound than purely visual forms of communication. In the second example, the first time Tristram blows his horn, the giant does not know what to expect, but he quickly learns what visual, material, and social elements follow with the sound of this specific horn. At the same time, even though Tristram has won over the giant one time, he continues to announce his and others' arrival out of respect for the rules in this specific sound context. A last feature of the sound in these examples is their embeddedness and situatedness in respectively an urban-fortification-context, and the wild forests of Bretagne, with all their symbolism and human and non-human inhabitants.²⁴

The sounding of horns and trumpets is a common motif used in many other Old Norse sagas of various genres, with similar functions as in *Tristrams saga*, such as announcing war or prophecies, or introducing the identity and status of the one approaching. A few examples will suffice. In the legendary saga *Hrólfs saga kraka* (allegedly thirteenth century, but manuscripts from the fourteenth century and later), we meet the legendary war-queen Olöf, when she is preparing for a fight with King Helgi. She is preparing her troops at night and the men of King Helgi “heyra nú lúðragang ok herblástr á landit upp” (‘heard from the land the sound of trumpets and the blast of war horns’).²⁵ This makes him understand that he should not attack her then, forcing him to ponder how to avenge himself later. The blowing of horns, in this case, warns the vicinity of enemies.

Various kings' sagas as well as the Icelandic sagas include many examples of the blowing of war horns and trumpets, often with the same military function: either to collect the troops for war or to notify and intimidate the enemy.²⁶ When horns are blown to summon troops, the leader of the troops would often give a motivational speech, where they present the situation and the chosen strategy.²⁷ Sometimes toasts would be drunk, or prayers made to relevant deities – various Æsir in pre-Christian contexts, and God in Christian times. An interesting example may be given from the saga about King Magnus the Good from *Heimskringla*, where before an important battle, the king dreams of his father, St. Óláfr, who tells him that they should not be afraid of fighting the heathens and that they should attack them once they hear his (that is St. Óláfr's) horn. When the king wakes up, he tells his fellows about his dream

²⁴ On the symbolism of the medieval forest as a space for chaos, see Saunders (1993).

²⁵ Chapter 7 of the digital edition of *Hrólfs saga kraka* from Norsesaga.no. For more examples of the use of ‘herblástr’, see ONP.

²⁶ See for example *Heimskringla* 2, 2016, ch. 48, p. 36; ch. 83, p. 79; ch. 102, p. 111).

²⁷ See for example chapter 9 in *Vatnsdæla saga*. In *Hreiðars þáttur heimska* horns are used to announce meetings and ship levies, see *Morkinskinna*, p. 153.

and then they all hear the ringing of the bell *Glöð*, a bell given to the church of St. Clement by King Óláfr himself.²⁸ We will return to the significance of the sound of the church bells below, but here we have a clear example of the war-horn's significance, so meaningful that it appears even in symbolic dreams in some of the sagas.

Probably the most famous horn from Old Norse culture, namely the legendary *Gjallarhorn* (yelling horn), must be mentioned too. It was owned by the god *Heimdallr* and is heard at *Ragnarök* – the final battle. The horn is mentioned several times in *Gylfaginning* in *Snorri Sturluson's Edda*, a textbook in Old Norse mythology and poetic language from c. 1220.²⁹ First we hear that *Heimdallr* uses *Gjallarhorn* to drink from the well of *Mímir* and thus becomes wise himself (ch. 15). Later on, we hear that the horn can be heard in all the worlds (ch. 25) and that at *Ragnarök*, *Heimdallr* will blow *Gjallarhorn* to awake the gods and assemble them at the battle (ch. 51). *Gjallarhorn* is also mentioned in the eddic poem *Völuspá*, st. 46 (*Codex Regius*, c. 1270).³⁰ Rudolf Simek (2007: 110–111) has pointed out that the horn is among the most ancient of Germanic musical instruments, along with lurs. Citing archaeological finds (such as the fifth century Golden Horns of Gallehus from Denmark), he argues that sacral horns appear to have been kept purely for religious purposes among the Germanic people, which may have been the background for *Heimdallr's Gjallarhorn*.

These examples demonstrate the use of horns as a very common motif not only in *Tristrams saga*,³¹ but in other Old Norse sagas too. The sound of horns could either announce the arrival of an honorary guest, or the summoning of men for war, or it could be interpreted as a warning of an impending attack, or even the coming of the end of the world. The sound of the horn was inseparable from the physical objects of the horns themselves,³² but the sound could also be combined with visual tokens or emblems carried by members of the same troop, or speeches given by the troop's leader, that would have elaborated on the message. The sound of horns would have been more wide-ranging than the visual or verbal signs, which confirms its special function in various multimodal medieval contexts.

28 *Magnúss saga ins goða*, chapter 27.

29 *Gylfaginning*, ch. 14, 25, 51.

30 *Völuspá* (*Seeress's Prophecy*), stanza 46.

31 References to horns as both musical instruments and drinking vessels exist also in Old Norse translations of Old French epics, the most famous of all possibly being Roland's horn, *Olifant*.

32 Many horns are highly ornate, which would have increased their multimodal symbolic meaning, see for example Kingsley (2010–2011). Further, the blowing of horns is a common motive in manuscript illuminations. An analysis of the horns' visuality and the visual representations of horns in manuscripts falls however outside the scope of this paper. Comparison between textual and visual representations of similar sound culture is a main aim for a future research project.

Telling the news – public reading of letters

Another literary motif that elucidates the aural nature of medieval culture is the importance of news-telling. This is indeed a very common activity at the court or at any place people gather. It is sometimes described as part of the entertainment at a court. In *Tristrams saga*, one example of news-telling is seen in the episode when the steward Róaldr, Tristram's foster father, arrives at the court of King Arthur. The saga says:

Sem þeir váru mettir ok vel settir hirðligum mat ok dýrum drykk, þa segja þeir tíðindi af öðrum löndum eptir hirðmanna siðum, hvat títt var með höfðingjum, er bjuggu á öðrum löndum næstum, ok hvat gerz hafði á næstum vetrum, er þeim sómndi at vita ok honum at segja (*Tristrams saga* p. 66).

After they [people at King Arthur's court] had eaten their fill and enjoyed their food and drinks, they related the news from other lands, as was the custom at the court, what the chieftains who lived in other, nearby countries were doing, and what had happened in recent years that was fitting for them to know and for Róaldr to tell (*Tristrams saga* p. 67).

Next, Róaldr reports with eloquent speech (með snjöllu erindi), well-crafted words (vel skipuðum orðum), and a keen memory (glöggsýni minni), for the king and everyone close enough to hear (öllum áheyröndum), the story about Tristram's parents and identity (p. 66). Róaldr confirms what he says by showing a ring that he has gotten from Tristram's mother Blensibil right before her death.

Additionally, this aural exchange is highly extended and embedded, as the verbal message is confirmed by the presentation of a material/visual object shown within a specific social and architectural environment. In this case, this is the ring given by Blensibil to her brother, which confirms her death and the identity of her son. Moreover, we notice the explicit emphasis that the message was accessible only to those who were close enough to hear it. Unlike the previous case, where the sound of the horn out in the landscape would have been more accessible than a summoning by visual tokens, in this context, which we can imagine as a crowded, noisy king's hall, the spoken message would have been heard by only those who stood or sat close by. Many more people might have seen the revealing of the ring which confirmed the authenticity of the message. In any case, this multimodal social sharing of news is central for the further development of the saga-plot.

This topos of news-telling is a very common one and exists in almost any genre of Old Norse literature. News is asked for and delivered orally in many Icelandic sagas, usually upon the arrival of a new guest or stranger. Such exchanges are not always accompanied by a material or textual confirmation, which in many situations opens the way for confidential conversations or the exchange of intricate and ambiguous one-liners, so typical of the sagas of Icelanders. Such episodes would have also presented an

occasion to the audience to get immersed in the plot by keeping their attention on who tells, hears, and knows what.³³

In other cases, however, and more often in other genres, especially the kings' sagas, news is often presented aurally, but accompanied by material objects, as in *Tristrams saga*, or by actual letters, which would contain both the written message as well as the seal of the sender. From such sources, we know that the news in the written letter would either be read aloud, or simply transmitted orally, i.e. the letter would not be read silently. In the cases of such aural presentation of news, the materiality of the physical letter, and especially the materiality of the seal(s), would have then had the same function as the ring in *Tristrams saga*, namely to authenticate the orally transmitted news.³⁴ Once again, the trustworthiness of the information or news that was presented had to be verified in a multimodal way, including both aural and visual confirmation.

Music-playing, storytelling and other audible entertainment

The telling of news happened often at festive occasions when other types of entertainments also took place. *Tristrams saga* tells us how at the king's court some people play board games, some listen to songs, others to stories, while the king is listening to a harp (ch. 22, p. 60). Later on, Tristram gets the opportunity to play for the king himself, when he demonstrates his excellent skills. The saga adds that the court had never heard anyone play so beautifully.³⁵ This leads to the king inviting him to his quarters, giving Tristram a chance to continue developing their relationship.

Another example of music playing from *Tristrams saga* confirms that such occasions were never "only" entertainment, but often carried deeper meaning. When Tristram ends up in Bretagne with his friend Kardin, and away from King Markis and, not least, away from his sweetheart Ísönd, he is heartbroken and lonely. But he continues playing music to comfort himself, and his own emotions are enacted and expressed through the sentiments of his music. People think then that the love songs Tristram plays are directed towards Kardin's sister Isodd, which leads to the two getting married (s. 166). This episode confirms the social significance of audible entertainment but also emphasizes that emotions and inner mental states may be transmitted through such audible expressions, though they could also be misunderstood.

³³ For the discussion of other examples of news exchanges, see Eric Shane Bryan, *Discourse in Old Norse Literature*, Available from: VitalSource Bookshelf, Ingram Publisher Services UK- Academic, 2021, pp. 86–87.

³⁴ For a discussion of this phenomenon based on material from medieval England, see Clanchy (2013, ch. 8). For a similar discussion in the Nordic context, see Spurkland (2000).

³⁵ For a discussion on the acoustic qualities of various medieval halls, in connection to troubadours' singing, see Mary Franklin Brown's work in this book, chapter 2.

The potential for misunderstanding of sound or the idea that sound can be used intentionally to trick or to manipulate someone is exemplified in another episode from *Tristram's saga*, when an Irish man manages to win Ísönd after playing the harp for the king. When Tristram hears this, he sets off to save her and manages to win her back by playing a fiddle. Without dwelling on the symbolism of the different instruments mentioned here, the episodes clearly demonstrate how music can be used to manipulate people and to make them lose their rationality and senses.

Similar scenes where we can almost hear the multimodal buzzing at the king's courts are described in many other sagas, both indigenous and translated. Storytelling is such a major topos in Old Norse literature, and such a central part of medieval culture, that it almost needs no exemplification.³⁶ We can nonetheless mention reference to and discussion of oral storytelling, for example, in the prologue of *Þiðreks saga*, where we hear of how the story about Þiðrek has been told in many lands for the entertainment of powerful people.³⁷ But story-telling was a popular form of entertainment for all social classes, especially in the North, where dark and long evenings during much of the year would have offered plenty of time for such activities. The prologue continues, saying that some peoples, like the Danes and the Swedes, turned such stories into songs.³⁸ References to songs and music appear in many other sagas too, and one lavish example comes from *Strengleikar's* prologue, which tells how the *lais* were performed with harps, fiddles, hurdy-gurdies, lyres, dulcimers, psalteries, rotes, and other stinged instruments.³⁹ The Old Norse indigenous literature, such as kings' sagas and the sagas of Icelanders, recount numerous performances of skaldic poetry at the kings' courts and various competitions in composition and performance.⁴⁰ A related audible form of entertainment can be seen in various verbal games and riddles presented and arranged at courts.⁴¹ Such exchanges entailed much

36 For a recent review of storytelling and performance in an Old Norse context, see Mitchell (2022), McMahon (2017). For a debate on the entertainment or educational role of storytelling, see the research of Marianne E. Kalinke and Geraldine Barnes respectively.

37 *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, p. 2. Such information from the prologue has spurred intense discussions among scholars about the process that led to the Old Norse written version of the saga; for a summary see Kramarz-Bein (2012).

38 On other forms of audible entertainment in Old Norse culture, see a recent anthology on performance in Old Norse poetry, McMahon & Ferreira (2022). For an interesting discussion on the difference between performances by men and women, linked to the debate about public and private space, see Borovsky (1999).

39 "Forræðra/Prologue", in *Strengleikar*. For a discussion on references to music in other Old Norse sources and in archaeological evidence, see Tsukamoto (2017), esp. pp. 32–44.

40 See for example Millward (2014), Collinson (2004). Notice also that skaldic poetry may be recited in contexts that are hardly comprehensible for modern readers – for example in the middle of battles, or right before one dies. In such contexts, the recital of poetry may be seen as staged by the author of the saga and may be more indicative of literary tastes and strategies for story telling than of sound cultures.

41 On riddles, see Michtell (2020). On wordplay, see Males (2018).

more than entertainment, however, and could lead to gaining or losing status and thus power, depending on the intellectual accomplishment demonstrated. A well-known example is seen in *Hervarar saga*, where the king ends up in a riddle duel – and loses – with a disguised character, who is actually Óðinn.⁴² The main point for us here is, however, the centrality of audible entertainment in Old Norse culture, its essentially extended and embedded nature, emphasizing its main function – namely to create a community, and to distribute social status within it. Those who were present and could hear the storytelling, the music, or the recitals were part of this community. Access to the sounds may thus be understood as access to the community, which was immersed in and thus potentially influenced by the audible messages and the scene. Those who did not have access to the sound of the community were excluded from it; they had lower social status and were treated differently. One suitable example may be given from *Laxdæla saga*, where Melkora, who is supposedly not able to speak and hear, is bought as a slave. Later, her social position changes when people learn who she is and that she can in fact speak and hear. In other cases, deaf people are compared to those who do not have independent will, such as slaves and madmen.⁴³

Gossip, secrets, lies, and intrigues

The seductive character of sound and the fact that access to sound also means access to a community may be confirmed and nuanced if we consider scenes where gossip, secrets, and lies are exchanged. In *Tristrams saga*, numerous gossip-situations occupy a central narrative role, and they demonstrate gossip's central social function. First, when Tristram returns to the court of King Marcus, after being healed by the Irish queen, people are both happy to see him and surprised that he has survived. They start spreading gossip – some say that he possesses extraordinary knowledge and cunning to be able to get out alive and healed from the Irish court. Some even say that he has the ability to change men's minds (en þat segja sumir, at han kunni um snúa manna lunderni, p. 90) and that he would exact revenge on those who had abandoned him when he was sick (segja þeir hann mundu hefna sín á öllum þeim, er í sótt hans höfnuðu honum, p. 90). People start fearing him because of his excellence, and because of their own guilt and bad consciences and, therefore, in secret they start plotting against him (Gerðu þeir þá í leynd ráðagerð sína á móti Tristram, p. 90). The plot is to get the king to marry so that he can have a legitimate heir, and in this way avoid a situation where Tristram inherits the kingdom and the power. As we know, the plot succeeds.

⁴² See *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, esp. ch. 10, pp. 36–51. For a discussion of the episode, see Burrows (2014).

⁴³ For a discussion of the episode from *Laxdæla saga* and reflections on how gender (race and social class) influence the status of non-speaking people, see Tirosh (2020: 323–330).

Even the dramatic ending of the saga is made possible through the sense of hearing, though the episode stresses the inadequacy of purely oral communication, unconfirmed by other visual material proof, i.e. what you hear and what you say may be false if it cannot be confirmed by a material, visual, or textual medium. The episode recounts Tristram being fatally wounded, when he sends Kardin to bring the only person who can heal him, namely his Ísönd. Tristram asks Kardin to raise a white sail if he comes back with her, a black sail if without. Kardin manages to get Ísönd, but when Tristram's wife Isodd sees the ship with the white sail, she lies to Tristram that its sail is black. As she had overheard the agreement between Tristram and Kardin, she uses the occasion to finally get back at Tristram (ch. 99). As we know, this leads to Tristram's death and later to Ísönd's as well.

The spreading of gossip, secrets, and lies is also a powerful narrative motif in the indigenous Old Norse sagas. Men complot together and women create numerous conflicts and drama by presenting lies or versions of the truth.⁴⁴ Sharing of information orally, information that could be heard by others as well, is thus a main vehicle in all the sagas. The information could concern many topics, but the important factor for us here is that it is the sharing of the information, who you share it with and not, that signifies inclusion in and exclusion from a social community. Without the ability to hear, people would miss out on central social and thus power dynamics.

All these examples indicate that gossip must have had a very powerful social function. People could start gossip in order to manipulate and convince others to do what is maybe not in their own interest. This is indeed a main method for manipulation, namely, to cut the source-tag from the sender and create scenarios where the information is presented as factual, impersonal, and objective (Knox 2011: 247). Of course, sometimes, the information coming from such gossip can be proven unreliable and deceitful if it is doublechecked or compared to other mediums. It is exactly this double nature of gossip – its ambiguity and potential for truth or falseness – that may explain why gossip is such a potent literary motif and a primary tool for driving the narrative forward.

Legal aspects of sound

The degree and the way in which verbal/aural messages were or could be embodied, visually extended, and socially embedded, had significant implications not only for social participation, but also for legal matters. Once the king is suspicious of the two lovers in *Tristrams saga*, he seeks to test their – or mostly Ísönd's – innocence in different ways. For example, Ísönd's verbally proclaimed innocence is to be tried by the

⁴⁴ Of course, there are many examples of open and direct verbal conflicts and quarrels; for a discussion of the meaning of the concepts or genres *senna*, *mannjafnaðr*, and *flyting*, see Bryan (2021, ch. 2).

hot iron test. She manages to arrange a public scene where Tristram, dressed up as a pilgrim, touches her skin, which makes her verbal statement – that she has been touched only by the king and this poor pilgrim (namely Tristram) – true. In her oath, she also addresses God and affirms that she is telling the truth before God and all saints. Consequently, the spoken truth is confirmed, as Ísönd can hold the hot iron without anyone noticing any signs of pain or cowardice (ch. 59, p. 150). For us it is important to emphasize that the trial consists of the verbal audible oath that has to be heard and the trial by hot iron. Ísönd even adds: “Nú ef ek hefí <ekki> yfrit fyrir skilit í þessum eiði, þá leggið til skjótt, sem þér vilið, ok skal ek sverja.” (p. 150)/ ‘And if I have not stated enough in the formulation of this oath, then add on quickly, and I will swear to it’ (p. 151).

Ordeals with hot irons are mentioned in other Old Norse texts as well. In *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* it is said that all supporters of the young king would have gladly been tested by hot iron for him, rather than see him lose his right to the throne (ch. 13). His mother, Inga of Varteig, who was only the concubine of his father the king, had to prove by the same ordeal that the father of Hákon was really the king Hákon III (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ch. 14). She goes to church and fasts before her trial, but then when the time comes, the iron is miraculously gone.⁴⁵ This then does not allow comparison between the trial and whether or not it had to be combined with a vocal audible oath.

In *Grettis saga*, there is a very similar episode, where a woman named Spes is condemned by the bishop to prove her innocence by swearing an oath and by an ordeal by hot iron. Spes and her lover arrange a similar episode as in *Tristrams saga*, where her lover ends up touching her as if by chance, which makes her oath true, namely that nobody except for that man has touched her. The difference from *Tristrams saga* is that here, the ordeal is not conducted, as the oath is deemed sufficient to prove the woman’s innocence.⁴⁶ The similarities and differences between these seemingly identical episodes in sagas of different genres prompts the need to study the significance of sound cultures and multimodality in different generic cultures. This is, however, out of the scope of this initial investigation and will be pursued in consequent studies of sound cultures. For now, it suffices to notice that sometimes sound may have legal significance by itself, and at others it must be combined with a material/bodily ritual.

Tristrams saga includes several other examples that illustrate the legal significance of sound, always in combination with material proof. When the agreement for the marriage between King Markis and Ísönd is made, Tristram lays the foundation for the reconciliation vocally (that Ísönd will receive as a bridal gift all of Cornwall and she will wield authority over all of England as queen). The king then asks Tristram

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the episode, see Øye (1999).

⁴⁶ Kalinke (2011: 149–150). For another discussion of these episodes, see also Hamer (2008: 7–8).

and his companions to swear on the agreement, so that there is no treachery. Tristram swears an oath over holy relics that are brought in (p. 117, end ch. 44). Another example may be seen in the wedding of Tristram and Isodd (p. 169). Mass is sung by the chaplain and the union is consecrated according to customs, the saga says. In the evening, when Tristram realizes that he has to sleep with Isodd as his wedded wife, he reflects on his unsolvable dilemma – he cannot leave Isodd because he had married her in front of many listening witnesses (*ek hefi fest hana mörgum váttum áheyröndum*, p. 170), but he cannot live with her carnally without breaking his promise to Ísönd. Such an unconsummated marriage could also be a reason for divorce. His marriage is thus legally binding because people heard their consent, but his promise to Ísönd is also binding. His solution is to lie to Isodd, that he has an ailment on his right side that causes him discomfort and makes it impossible for him to sleep with her. He of course asks her not to tell anyone of his secret, which emphasizes the significance of marriage consummation for the union's validity, in addition to a vocal audible statement. Once again, we notice that an audible statement has to be confirmed or combined with a material, or in this case bodily, commitment for it to be valid.

These examples accord well with what we know about the legal significance of sound from other Old Norse texts and law.⁴⁷ In many situations, to legally prove that they were telling the truth, people had to swear audibly, while holding their hand on a bible or a relic. The law also demanded vocal public oaths in various ceremonies, such as royal coronations, when the king has to repeat the oath given in the law and swear. Thereafter, chieftains and earls, barons and *hirdstjori*, lawmen and peasants had all to swear an oath of loyalty to the new king, also by saying the oath as given in the law.⁴⁸ With regard to marriage, audible consent becomes important from the end of the 1100s and is addressed in the Christian sections of the Old Norse laws, at the same time as both the Gulathing and the Frostathing law claim that marriage is to be arranged by the parents for social and economic reasons.⁴⁹ Divorce was allowed for very few reasons, one of which was lack of consummation.⁵⁰ The vocal proclamation of oaths was thus an important legal tool, which most often had to be combined either with other people's oaths, or it had to be made authentic through the use of material objects. Even though oath-taking was usually a collective group activity, sometimes the defendant could take an oath individually, but the oath still had to be sworn on sacred texts.⁵¹

47 For a comparable discussion of the importance of sound in English common law, see Seabourne (2019); see also a popular article by Butler (2020).

48 Kristendomsbolken, ch. 9 in *Magnus lagabøters landslov*.

49 See G51; FXI2; FIII22; for discussion, see Jochens (1986: 143). See also Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (1999).

50 G54, G138. For a discussion of other Old Norse sources, see Jochens (1987).

51 In earlier pre-Christian periods, people had to swear on other important objects such as swords and rings. For a study of how individual oath-taking changes and develops in medieval Old Norse law, see Rønning (2020).

The legal importance of being able to pronounce audible statements and also to hear such statements demands the discussion of how that affected people with speaking or hearing impediments, as well as how this was handled in contexts where sound transmitted poorly. The Frostathing law claims that in legal situations, a person who could not speak (because his tongue was cut out, for example), was supposed to point at the person accused of having committed a crime, or write his name in runes, or use sign language. The Grágás also ensured the rights of deaf people and those who are temporarily unable to speak (Tirosh 2020: 319). Another relevant example of how deaf people were included or excluded from legal processes may be given from the end of *Egils saga*, when Egil's sight and hearing worsen because of his old age. When Egil needs help to go the Althingi and is denied help, he finds a way to punish his family members. This example illustrates how deaf people were not entirely excluded from legal processes, but their participation had to be organized in a different way, where the lack of the important sense of hearing somehow had to be compensated for.

Non-hearing may be caused not only by disability, but also by the context and the physical circumstances. Most of the episodes that we have discussed from *Tristrams saga* took place in inner spaces,⁵² but the last example from *Egils saga* reminds us that many legal arenas were out in the landscape. Think of all assembly sites in medieval Norway and Iceland, the prime example of which is Þingvellir, where oral communication and sound was the uniting factor for the community gathered there. Of course, we may only wonder how sound carried at such sites and whether they were chosen for specific acoustic features. One famous scene when a crucially important legal decision is announced at the Alþingi may be given from *Njáls saga*, when Þorgeirr, the chieftain of Ljósvatni is to proclaim what law will be valid in Iceland, the heathen or the Christian. After a whole day of thinking, Þorgeirr goes to the Law Rock and asks for silence, then proposes that Christianity is accepted by everyone and asks people to swear and pledge by this decision.⁵³ This scene not only implies that the voice of the (law)speaker had to be audible, it suggests a dynamic two-way communicative situation, since people's oaths presumably had to be heard: no additional material/visual/bodily aspects to the oath-taking are mentioned.

The audibility of legal decisions has also recently been discussed in urban contexts, which actually takes us back to our discussion of the usage of horns. Miriam Tveit has shown that in the town-laws of Magnus Hákonarson (the Lawmender) from 1276, the sound of the town-horn is not only very important legally but is used as a first essential stage in urban legal procedures. The town-horn is mostly used to call people to town-meetings, to gather people when ships were drawn on land or released at sea, or for other more random town-events. Hearing the sound of the town-horns, or the church

⁵² On architectural approaches to sound, see footnote 2.

⁵³ *Njal's saga*, ch. 105, p. 127.

bells,⁵⁴ was thus legally binding in urban contexts and people were supposed to gather for their public duty straight away at the sound (“þegar horn kueðr”).⁵⁵

To recapitulate: the examples of the legal significance of sound from *Tristrams saga* agree with the general picture we get on the topic from other sources, but there are also variations. The sounds with legal significance could be produced by humans, i.e. the human voice, but also material objects like horns and church-bells. On a few occasions, audible human statements had to be combined with material or bodily proofs to be valid. Legally binding sound could be transmitted in varied contexts, both inside and outside, and a specific context could sometimes make it difficult for people to hear what they were supposed to hear. Speaking- or hearing-impaired people could be excluded from the legal community and needed alternative methods of participating, which were sometimes provided, and at others self-acquired.

Communicating with the otherworldly

So far, we have discussed the significance of sound for individual development and social navigation, but we remember that Tristram also used his horn to communicate with the giant in the forests of Bretagne. In the following we will consider sound as an important medium between humans and “others”, such as animals, natural forces, and God.⁵⁶ We remember that in the Middle Ages, the sounds made by animals were not always considered articulate and meaningful, but an animal could have a voice, if it also had a soul (Boynton (2016), Kay (2016), Cornish 2016: 1020). Sounds from God’s universe were regarded as something very different and highly meaningful, but here, we will see how communication with various kinds of non-human agents, including animals and nature, as well as inanimate objects like church bells, could impact humans on deeply emotional and religious levels.

⁵⁴ The role of the sound of church bells will be treated in the next section.

⁵⁵ For references and a detailed discussion of the function of the town-horn in Norwegian towns, based on laws and other sagas, see Tveit (2023). The article gives a detailed review of who was supposed to go, the fine imposed if you didn’t, and in what cases you could opt out (including if you did not hear the horn or if you did not know what it meant); who could use the horn and ask for such help; who blew the horn; and in what other cases the horn could be used.

⁵⁶ Otherness may certainly be defined in many other ways and we do not aim for an exhaustive discussion here.

The Sounds of Nature

Tristrams saga includes several examples of human sensitivity to the sounds of other creatures and universes. A prominent episode occurs when Tristram is in the service of the Duke of Poland (ch. 61), and he is heart-broken because of his unhappy love story with Ísönd. The duke invites people to bring various types of entertainments to cheer up Tristram. The “entertainment” most interesting for us here is a dog, sent to the duke by an elf-woman from Álflheimar. The dog is so beautiful that nobody can even recount or record details of his form (aldri var sá maðr fæddr, at skrá kynni né telja hagleik hans né vöxt, p. 152). It shines and radiates colour that changes all the time. For some, it looks red and brown, for others white and black, with green, etc. The dog is led on a golden chain and when unleashed, he shakes his fur and his bell rings so beautifully that Tristram forgets about Ísönd and all his sorrows. His mind, his heart, and his mental state change to such a degree that he is not sure whether or not he is the same man. There is no human being on earth who could hear this bell and not get full comfort for all their pain and be filled with a sense of beauty and pleasure, making other entertainment unnecessary (ch. 61, p. 152–53). Tristram listens closely and gazes upon the dog. He is fascinated by the dog’s changing colour and the sound of the bell; he touches his silky soft fur. Tristram feels that he cannot live longer unless he sends this dog to his beloved. As a return for a big favour (the killing of a threatening giant), the duke gives Tristram the dog, who sends the dog to Ísönd. There, the dog proves to be an excellent hunter and he lives in the forest, not in the castle with Ísönd.

The image of this creature is unique and fascinating. In order to “see” the dog, Tristram engages three of his senses, and “seeing” the dog is thus an utterly multi-modal experience that changes his mind. The impact of the sound, combined with the impact of the changing colours and the silkiness of the fur, is profound and deep on Tristram’s mind and mood. It comforts him and triggers his compassion for his sweetheart, making him want to comfort her by sharing this magical creature and its sonic and sensual effects. This example reveals how sound could impact individual emotional states, again together with other sensual impulses.

Old Norse literature contains other examples of animal sounds so special and touching that they make people feel better and forget their sorrows. One well known episode is from the short story *Laustic* in *Strengleikar*, where the beautiful songs of the little nightingale allow the lovers to contemplate their love and whatever else pleased them. In this story, Laustic becomes the symbol of the lovers’ platonic relationship, and is also killed for that reason by the woman’s jealous husband.⁵⁷ In other examples, the sounds from an animal express and symbolize its strong emotional link to its human. A classic example is given in *Njáls saga*, where Sámr, Gunnar’s dog,

⁵⁷ “Laustic”, in *Strengleikar*, 101–05.

plays an important role during the final episode of Gunnar's life. Sámr warns him with his cry right before he (the dog) dies, which Gunnarr laments and interprets as an omen of his own impending death.⁵⁸ However, dogs do not always represent the soulmate of a human, as an example from *Bevens saga* demonstrates. When the Christian King Guion is presented with the idol of the heathen god Terrogant, he hits the object, and a bishop sprinkles it with holy water. A devil in the shape of a dog then comes running out of the idol, crying loudly and saying: "Vesal er sa er áá mik truir. ok sa er huer tapadr er traust hefer áá mer" ('Wretched is he who believes in me and condemned is he who trusts me').⁵⁹

A slightly different example is seen in stories about Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, as it appears in sources such as *Völsunga saga*, eddic poetry, and also *Þiðreks saga*.⁶⁰ With slight variations in the motive, the relevant passage says that when Sigurðr tastes the blood (or the juices) of the dragon's meat that he is cooking, he gets the ability to understand the language of the birds, who tell him of the impending dangers lurking in his near future. This is a complex example of the combined stimulation of various senses, where taste leads to a different comprehension of the sound of birds.⁶¹ The element that is most significant for us here is that the sound of the birds becomes suddenly meaningful in a new way and is crucial for the further development of the story. Another major character from the Old Norse universe is also known for understanding the language of birds – this is namely Óðinn, who has his two ravens Hugin (thought) and Munin (memory) sit on his shoulders and speak into his ears all the news that they see and hear ("segja í eyru honum öll tíðendi, þau er þeir sjá eða heyra").⁶² This is also a very complex and layered listening situation because the listener is not just anyone, it is Óðinn, the god of knowledge, wisdom, and poetry, who sits on his throne from where he has exceptional visual access, who has offered one of his eyes in exchange for knowledge from Mímir's well. The ravens are not simply ravens but symbols for thought and memory, two of the most important human cognitive faculties. In other words, this is a powerful metaphorical image, one that nonetheless exemplifies the great significance of sonic communications between humans and the animal world within Old Norse culture.

Many other examples may be given of animal sounds impacting human consciousness, thoughts, and emotions. A new study by Harriet Evans-Tang argues that the popularity of the literary motif of human-animal communication in the Icelandic

⁵⁸ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 186. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Gunnar and Sámr, see Evans Tang (forthcoming).

⁵⁹ *Bevens saga*, ch. 35, p. 347.

⁶⁰ See Eriksen & Johansson (2012: 24–30).

⁶¹ For a discussion on the link between taste (drinking and eating) and cognitive change, see Eriksen (2018).

⁶² "Gylfaginning", p. 33. The references to the Old Norse text are from *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, <https://heimskringla.no/wiki/Gylfaginning> (accessed 27 January 2023), see ch. 38.

sagas may be interpreted as a pedagogical tool to teach saga-audiences of various times the secrets and nuances of these relationships.⁶³ The Old Norse examples accord with studies of animal sounds in European material. In a recent book, *Animal soundscapes in Anglo-Norman texts*, Liam Lewis investigates “the barks, hoots and howls of animals and birds” that pierce through the human experience in medieval Old French texts (Lewis 2022). Multivocal inter-special communication emerges thus as a significant sonic aspect of medieval culture and its impact on humans and mythological figures is both emotional and intellectual.

Before we move on to sounds from and to God’s universe, I wish to present a last example to illustrate the great potential that lies in deeper understanding of non-human sounds and communication. The example is from *Laxdæla saga*, when Þorkell sails off and dies in the shipwreck (ch.76). Þorsteinn tries to get him to postpone his trip because the weather is unfavourable, but Þorkell leaves, nonetheless. A short while later the roar of a great wind could be heard in the room, and Þorsteinn says: “Þar megu vér nú heyra gnýja bana Þorkels frænda.”⁶⁴ (‘There we can now hear the roaring of my kinsman Þorkell’s killer’). In this case the sound of the storm is really audible and impossible to misinterpret, but many other sagas describe people’s sensitivity to their natural environments, using all their senses and navigating not only in the social, but also the natural world.⁶⁵

The Sound of God

If we return to the dog in *Tristrams saga*, we remember that its audible effect was also due to its bell. In this case, the bell belonged to a dog sent from the elf-world, so it had a momentous emotional effect on its listeners. The ringing of various types of bells is a common motif in many other Old Norse texts and, in most cases, they signal an inherent message from “another” world. A well-known episode when the ringing of church-bells, for example, features prominently is when the Icelanders Kjartan Ólafsson and Bolli Bollason are baptized by Óláfr Tryggvason in Niðaros, an episode preserved in several sagas.⁶⁶ In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, they first state that they are not interested in accepting the Christian religion, but then they hear the church bells and the beautiful singing and sense the sweet smell of incense during the liturgy. Not surprisingly, a bit later the two Icelanders are baptized by the king and

⁶³ See Evans Tang (forthcoming).

⁶⁴ *Laxdæla saga*, p. 222.

⁶⁵ This example is also discussed by Eriksen (forthcoming), with focus on the juxtaposition between the silenced dying character and the roaring sound of nature. For a detailed discussion of other episodes of bad weather in the sagas, see McCreesh (2018).

⁶⁶ The episode exists with slight variations in several sagas including the saga about Óláfr Tryggvason in *Heimskringla, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, as well as in *Laxdæla saga* (ch. 40).

become his men.⁶⁷ The symbolic meaning of the church bells is also explicitly described in the Stave church sermon, in the Old Norse Homily book: the church bells symbolize the priests who sing beautiful songs and prayers for God and the congregation, as well as God’s message that helps us to be good Christians.⁶⁸ This agrees with how the ringing of bells was understood in medieval culture, i.e. as they were often considered to “speak” or to have “voices”, because they functioned with human agency (Arnold & Goodson 2012).

In everyday life, we know that the church bells held central significance for people’s lives. It gave them the main rhythm of their daily lives, as well as marked significant holidays in the liturgical calendar. In other words, bells sacralised everyday existence, as they rang in different ways, in different numbers of chimes, for listeners to interpret and navigate accordingly. This was valid in urban contexts, where there were several churches, but also in rural settings, where the sound of church bells was meant to be heard by the people at the nearby farms.⁶⁹ This example demonstrates the central role of sound in the Middle Ages, because, as argued by Jean Claude-Smith (2016) in his book on rhythm in the Middle Ages, the experience of sound was also the experience of rhythm in medieval lives; it mirrored the rhythm established by God through the Creation in the course of seven days, with the last for resting.

An additional aspect of the sound made by church bells may be revealed by studying church bells themselves. Many of them have inscriptions that thematize the sound itself and its meaning. A Swedish church bell from the 1200s is inscribed with the following Latin text: “Dat Katerina sonum fideli populo bonum. Hic sonus auditor, hic mens turbata blanditur”, meaning ‘Catherine gives good sound to the faithful people. Here the sound is heard, here the troubled mind is calmed’ (Vg 248). This is the same motif we read about in *Tristrams saga*, when the dog’s little bell calmed Tristram’s sorrows. The very expression “sonum bonum” is pleasant to hear and may be understood as reflecting the ringing of the bell itself. This church bell has a sister-bell with a similar inscription in runes. There is also a hypothesis that if a church bell bore an “Ave Maria” inscription, people would know that every time the bell rang, it amounted to a prayer to God (Groot 2023).⁷⁰

Of course, communication with God was a two-way channel, and prayers to God had to be vocalized to reach heaven. At the end of *Tristrams saga*, after Ísönd has arrived too late to find her beloved dead, she turns to God in a prayer that she speaks while facing east (ok sneriz í austr ok bað bænar sinnar með þessum orðum, p. 220).

⁶⁷ *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, p. 370. For a discussion of other examples from Old Norse texts where church bells have an important religious role, Eriksen (2010); see also (Wellendorf 2010).

⁶⁸ *Gammelnorsk Homiliebok*, pp 102–03.

⁶⁹ On the sacralization of urban life in medieval towns, see Syrstad & Aavitsland (forthcoming). For a discussion on the significance of church bells in Tønsberg and Nidaros, see Tveit (2023).

⁷⁰ For a study of the audibility of inscriptions on the walls of medieval churches, see Holmqvist (forthcoming).

She calls upon God, addressing him as the Saviour and referring to Mary and Maria Magdalena and to His crucifixion for people's everlasting joy. She asks that her sins are forgiven and invokes the trinity. Afterwards, the saga tells us that she talks (talaði) to the dead Tristram about their love and their distressing separation, including some words in direct speech. Then she lies down next to him, kisses him and places her hands on his neck, then dies. In this passage we notice the audibility of her prayers, combined with an embodied gesture (her turning east), as well as the audible and embodied communication with the dead Tristram.⁷¹ The importance of the audibility of prayers for their effect may be exemplified in many sources that recount people's prayers. It has even been suggested that short prayers or personal names written on church walls could have been combined with an audible prayer for the writing "to work" (Holmqvist 2018). A similar argument can be made for prayers or invocations written on amulets.⁷² These discussions further emphasize the connection between voiced prayers and written text, and thus stress the importance of multimodality in communication with God.

A last relevant aspect pertaining to the link between God's presence and appearance and humans' ability to hear is that deafness could be a state that allowed for the manifestation of God. From a Christian perspective, disability is related to sin and being cured is a demonstration of divine justice. Deafness is for example cured by the reading of miracles at the Althingi (Tirosh 2020: 320). Speaking and hearing were thus important for communicating and participating in society and the legal systems, but their lack could be an occasion for divine intervention through the working of miracles.

These very different examples reveal how sound could play a religious role both on individual and collective levels: it could inspire personal change of religion, and it could regulate the community's collective existence according to the Christian prescribed rhythm. On a few occasions, the effect of the sound is combined with the effect from other senses: the church bells have their effect together with the smells and scents from the liturgy, which also encompassed the reading of texts, the movement of bodies, and the visual appropriation of church architecture and art. The inscriptions on church bells explain the sound of the church bells, as well as emphasize the essential nature of multimodality in medieval culture. Prayers to God are more efficient when embodied by a ritualized positioning of the body, or by being written down in combination with being said out loud. Last but not least, God could intervene by curing impairment in hearing or speaking, thus manifesting His existence in an utterly multimodal and transcendent fashion.⁷³

71 Communicating with the dead, i.e. speaking to and hearing the dead, is a separate motif that can be richly exemplified, but it falls outside the scope of this chapter. See Kanerva (2023).

72 For a recent review and discussion of amulets' inscriptions, see Imer (2021).

73 For a more detailed discussion of the topic of voice, silence, and miracles in hagiographical literature, with particular focus on children, see Diesen (forthcoming).

The hall of statues: the ultimate compression of multimodal medieval culture

So far, we have studied various sound cultures and their impact on individuals and communities as represented in *Tristrams saga*. These have been structured according to the different roles of sound for the sake of structural organization, but different sounds co-existed and affected people on individual and social levels simultaneously, depending on the sound context, as suggested by contemporary studies in acoustic cognition. The last example that I would like to give from *Tristrams saga* describes a communicative context which may be seen as the ultimate compression of multimodal medieval culture. The site for this communicative scene is the hall of statues, which epitomizes the lovers' experiences and their shared material, physical, ecological, mental, and aural universe. As always, we are most interested in the sounds, and in their complementarity with other textual, material, and visual triggers for human 4E cognition and experience. This episode is also an excellent example highlighting the inherent link between intra- and extradiegetic sounds.

When heartbroken, Tristram builds the hall of statues in the forests of Bretagne, where he sculpts statues of Ísönd, Bringvet, and other creatures that have contributed to their common fate. The statue of Ísönd is described as exceptionally beautiful, perfumed with the sweetest scent, which is installed with golden tubes in her body. She is very animated and beautifully attired, with a crown and flowers adorning the rod she is holding. On her staff, there is a bird with open wings, as if it is about to fly. On her right hand, she wears a golden ring and on the ring are written the last words that she said (*kvað hún*) when she parted from Tristram:

Tristram tak þetta fingrull <í> minning ástar okkarrar ok gleym ekki hörmum okkrum, válk ok vesöldum, er þú hefir þolat fyrir mínar sakir ok <ek> fyrir þínar.

Tristram, take this ring in memory of our love. Never forget our trials and tribulations, which you endured for my sake and I for yours (p. 187).

Her words, as presented in writing, explicitly trigger Tristram's memory of their love affair and hardships. Her representation would have triggered all his senses, as she can be perceived visually, auditorily through her last words, and aesthetically through her scent. She is carved out of nature, but also surrounded by nature, plants, and birds. Even her dog is there, and he shakes his head and rings his bell, thus contributing to the aural and visual scene. The sound and the sense of movement in the sculptures of these natural elements contribute to the sense of Ísönd's living spirit.

On the other side of the hall is the statue of Bringvet, holding a cup, on which are written her words: "Ísönd dróttning, tak drykk þenna, er ger var á Írlandi Markis kóngi" ("Queen Ísönd, take of this drink, which was prepared in Ireland for King Markis") (p. 187). It is interesting to remember that Bringvet never said those exact words in the

saga but gave the drink to Ísönd by mistake. Nonetheless, for us it is significant that the written text aims to elucidate spoken words.

The saga also tells us that every time Tristram comes to the statue of Ísönd, he treats her as a living human being, kissing her and holding her in his lap with his hands around her neck, as if she is alive. This is reminiscent of her final gesture, putting her hand on his neck, before she dies herself. He speaks to her and to Bringvet and remembers all that he used to say to them (mintiz á öll orð, þau er hann var vanr at mæla við þær, p. 189). Tristram is not the only one to speak with these statues. When Tristram shows Kardin the statue of Bringvet, he goes over to her statue and whispers in her ears; he tells her he misses her and thinks of her night and day. Other times, the saga says, he talks to her when he is happy (p. 192).

This relatively short episode is packed with information about multimodality and the link between the senses, cognition, and the material and natural world – sound exists and serves to connect people; it signifies lived lives, past conversations, individual emotions, and shared experiences; it soothes and comforts, and it holds the community together. Ultimately, sound may be recorded, commemorated, and thus embedded in written text. The episode reminds us that writing is mainly intended to represent voiced utterances.

The sculptures in the hall may be seen as visualizations of Tristram's mind, emotions, and memory.⁷⁴ They show the way he saw his lover and her companion in his inner eye and confirm the 4E qualities of the human mind – Tristram's mind operates through and creates images in space and time, which come with sounds and smells, and of course the sense of touch. This episode strengthens our understanding of how our human 4E cognition impacts not only how we experience the present, but also how we remember the past and how we imagine the future.

Another example illustrating that written text, even when inscribed on objects, is intended to represent speech appears in the short story *Geitarlauf*, from *Strengleikar*, where Tristram makes a four-sided stick from a hazel branch, on which he writes a message, then secretly gives it to his queen who is passing by. When the message is retold in the saga, it is presented as something Tristram says (p. 199) about how the two of them are as the honeysuckle and the hazel and how he cannot live without her, nor she without him. How such a long “speech” is carved on a little stick is of course unexplainable, but again, the important point for us here is that the written message aims to represent Tristram's words.

This last point – about the intended vocality and aurality of medieval text and inscriptions – is very important when we try to understand and interpret medieval texts as *audible entities*.⁷⁵ As mentioned, medieval texts were primarily read aloud.

74 For a study of the statues as a physical manifestation of Tristram's delusions, imagination, and desire, see Støa (2015).

75 For a discussion of the intended reading mode of runic inscriptions, see Spurkland (1994).

Even though the voiced, aural aspect of the texts is forever gone from us, it is important to keep in mind that it was always there and that it was essential for the meaning of the text. *Tristrams saga* does not have any extended prologues or epilogues commenting on its intended vocal performance, but many other sagas include such passages. An appropriate example comes from *Elíss saga*, which was translated in the same context and possibly by the same translator as *Tristrams saga*. *Elíss saga* opens with an invitation to listen: “Nu lyðit goðgæfliga . . . sœmð er suagu at segja ef hœyrende til lyða” (‘Now listen carefully, it is an honour to tell stories if the listeners pay attention’) (ch.1). Later on, the narrator emphasizes the aural aspect of the text: “nu er at segja yðr” (‘now you will be told’); “nv seger fra elisi” (‘now it is told about Elis’); “nv uil ec segja” (‘now I want to tell you’). Chapter 14 adds a meta-comment on listening:

[N]u lyðit goðgæfliga. betra er fogr frøðe en kui | ðar fylli. þo scal við saugu súpa. en æi ofmikit drec | ka. sœmð. er saugu at segia ef hæyrendr. til lyða. | en tapat starfi at hafna at hæyra.

Now listen carefully, it is better to be knowledgeable than full in the stomach. One may drink when stories are told, but not too much. It is an honour to tell stories if the listeners pay attention, but it is a wasted effort if nobody listens.

An interesting variation on this topos is seen in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*:⁷⁶

Er þat ok bezt ok fróðligast at hlýða, meðan frá er sagt, ok gera sér heldr gleði at en angr, því at jafnan er þat at menn hugsa eigi aðra syndsamliga hluti, á meðan hann gleðist skemmtaninni.⁷⁷

It is best and wisest to listen while stories are told and enjoy oneself instead of being unhappy, since it is always like that that people do not remember/think of other sins, while they are enjoying their entertainment.

Note the narrator’s explicit comment on where and why the listeners should direct their attention: listening to stories may indeed ease their troubled minds and provide entertainment. This suggests the link between sound, individual cognition, and social participation that we have touched upon many times. The narrator continues:

Nú þótt mönnum þiki slíkir hlutir ótrúligir, þá verðr þat þó hverr at segja, er hann hefir séð eða heyrtr. Þar er ok vant móti at mæla, er hinir fyrri fræðimenn hafa samsett.⁷⁸

Now even if such things seem unbelievable to some people, everyone still has to report what they have seen or heard. It is also difficult in such cases to contradict what the learned folk of old have put together.

⁷⁶ The prologue is also discussed by Phepstead (2009). For other discussions on the truth value of narrators’ comments in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* and other sagas, see O’Connor (2005: 101–102).

⁷⁷ *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, p. 164.

⁷⁸ *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*, p. 164.

This last comment suggests that even though sound is important for cognition and may be enjoyable, it is still untrustworthy on its own, that it should be compared to other information that has been heard or read, and most importantly, it must be interpreted within a social and temporal context. Such narrators' comments are literary thematization on sound highlighting the fact that texts in themselves were sounds and meant to be experienced aurally.

Summary and concluding remarks 1: Medieval sonic maps (collating the sounds)

The main aim of this study was to explore sound cultures as represented in Old Norse literature, using *Tristrams saga* as a key to the material. This was done by paying attention to (1) what sounds and sound cultures were described; (2) the way sound interacted with and was complemented by other material, textual, and visual triggers as described in Old Norse literary culture, in order to get a better insight into (3) the various functions of sound in medieval literature and culture on both individual and social levels. In the following, I wish to discuss three main observations or conclusive remarks based on the investigation. But first a summary of the main findings: (1) The sounds described in the text include human speech, but also sounds from various objects like horns and bells, as well as birds, dogs, and other animals, and winds and storms, some of which aimed to symbolize the sound of God. These sounds were transmitted in very different contexts: outside (in the forest, in the landscape, at the thing, or in towns) and inside, at public occasions or during private and intimate meetings; the sounds were exchanged between creatures on earth, but also in the greater cosmos, be it the Christian universe or the elfish world; (2) In many of these cases, the meaning and message of the sound was supported by textual, visual, or material confirmation. In cases where the aural and visual could not be compared or confirmed, the validity of the sound could be debated; (3) The analysis suggests that sound is central on the individual cognitive level for learning, but also for emotional processing and development. Sound was significant on the social level in many different ways: it could announce the arrival of important people or troops, with both positive and negative connotations for the party thus signalled audibly. Sound was the main medium for announcing both the legitimate authorized news, by supporting it with material or textual proofs, and for spreading gossip and lies which would not usually be confirmed by other mediums. Sound was also important for strengthening the sense of community, for including and excluding people from this community, or for establishing social order and hierarchy with this community, through the telling and reading of stories and engaging in various verbal and creative contests. Sound also held legal significance, in many cases featuring in the first stage of a legal procedure. Last but not least, sounds were exchanged with otherworldly universes, which included animals and other non-human creatures, as

well as God and His world. All these examples show that sound could lead to major changes and was thus a major structuring factor in the narrated, and possibly the real, world. Attaining the knowledge to decode the signal of sounds would have had transformative potential for the listener.

Collating the evidence on sound has important implications. First, what we have demonstrated by studying *Tristrams saga* is how these different sound-cultures co-existed and interplayed, and collectively created a multilayered sonic map that humans had to navigate during their personal and social endeavours. This exploration helps us better understand the audio-competence that was necessary to navigate medieval culture: for example, people needed to be able to recognize which church-bell was ringing, to be able to interpret the meaning of the sound; or people knew what they had to do before or after they expected to hear or after they heard a given sound, to ensure their legal safety. Some sounds were reserved for private spaces, others had to be public to have any value; some were relevant mediums in female domains, others in male.

Such observations correspond well with the argument of David Garrioch, who claims that in European towns of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, sound served as a crucial source of information that “formed a semiotic system, conveying news, helping people to locate themselves in time and space, and making them part of an ‘auditory community’” (Garrioch 2003: 6–7). He argues that the sounds people heard in such contexts were very different from today. Medieval sounds were certainly different from sounds we hear today, but they functioned in a very similar way, i.e. as sonic semiotic systems, which people needed to learn in order to navigate their existence.

As this was an initial study that did not seek to be exhaustive, we may conclude that further studies of sound cultures are necessary for a more nuanced understanding of the topic and for further development of medieval sonic maps across literary genres, linguistic cultures, and cultural contexts.

Concluding remarks 2: Sound studies and narratology: from soundscapes to soundtracks?

A second implication from this investigation is that the transformative potential of sounds that was observed above can also inspire new approaches to interpreting literary motives and narrative structure. Because sound is temporal and because different sounds seem to always lead to individual or social development that is significant for the plot, literary motifs retelling of sound and of communication appear important on a narratological level. For example, because Tristram learns languages and music, he can later teach Ísönd the same, and thus connect to her; because Tristram’s foster father

tells his story to King Markis at his court, Tristram can remain there; because Tristram has made a verbal promise to Ísönd and verbalizes consent when he marries Isodd, both of which are ethically and legally binding, he needs to lie to Isodd, which ultimately leads to his death; and because Isodd overhears the conversation between Tristram and Kardin about the ship's sails, she can lie to him and cause his death, etc. Episodes recounting audible exchange and/or communication thus seem to be of great narrative significance in *Tristram's saga*; studying their distribution in a narrative could be a possible new approach to narratology. A similar approach has previously been suggested based on the study of the modes of the human voice in a narrative (direct, indirect, free indirect),⁷⁹ but this study proves that episodes recounting any audible communication can be regarded as key narrative motifs through which the literary characters unfold.

Further, the narrative significance of sound-episodes for individual and social development may be seen as an explanation for the popularity of such literary motifs. The sound scenes that I presented from *Tristrams saga*, be it aural education scenes, the blowing of horns announcing various events, the telling of news, stories, and other entertainment, and the communication with non-human energies, all of these are very common in Old Norse literature, and certainly not unique to it. We may thus agree that even though these motifs appear in fictional texts, they are truthful representations of human cognition and social navigation, which also explains their popularity. The importance of sound culture for individual and social development in the real-world, as presented in the theoretical framework in the beginning, seems to be reflected through the popularity and narratological importance of motifs that tell us about sound, in *Tristrams saga* as well as in many other texts. The temporal nature and narrative significance of sound is reflected in our interest not only in soundscapes, but also soundtracks, which proceed in time and have their own narratology.

Concluding remarks 3: The soundtrack and ecology of medieval textual culture

The third concluding remark concerns the link between sound, medieval textual culture, and medieval ecology. *Tristrams saga* contained many episodes when texts were read aloud (in learning, legal, and religious contexts, and/or as entertainment), and we have emphasized that aural reception was the default mode to experience medieval texts. They were listened to and appreciated through the embodiment and the voice of the reader/teller. Scholarship on embodied reading today emphasizes that even in the cases of private reading we read with our whole bodies, including our

⁷⁹ See Fulton (2022).

hearing.⁸⁰ In medieval cultures, because public vocal reading was the default practice, the embodiment of reading was even more essential, as we today may experience a play on stage with all the senses. Reading was embodied not only because it entailed both seeing and listening, but also touching (turning the page and other bodily gestures; see Kathryn Rudy's chapter in this volume (Chapter 3); being physically close to other people while listening; sometimes tasting (kissing the book maybe, or eating and drinking while listening); and also smell (for example, during the liturgy, but also during secular readings). Because of its default audible nature, medieval texts were much more than the text itself, experienced in manifold and variable ways. Even when we remember that variance and *mouvance* are the main characteristics of medieval manuscript culture, the variation that pertains to the written texts was only one aspect of that through which they were experienced. Every public reading, every performance was different. It depended on the reader, but it was also uncontrollable and unpredictable and depended on the listeners' engagement. It was never possible to go back and listen to the same performance again. The rhythm and energy of a reading was unpredictable and could get destabilized; it could accelerate or slow down depending on external factors. As such pauses and gaps would have been perceived automatically by the listening audience, they would have changed the experience of a text. They would have influenced not only what and how people heard the text, but also what they were left with to interpret, what they remembered, and how the text resonated with their own 4E cognition.

All these aspects could become integrated in our experience and study of medieval textual culture today to a much greater extent. This is hard to achieve through our bodies since we seldom have direct access to the medieval texts, and never in contexts that are even mildly reminiscent of an "authentic" medieval aural context. But it could be an interesting nuance to keep in mind when interpreting medieval texts. Even if it is impossible to unmute the silence in our minds, it could be fruitful to imagine freely and creatively how people's senses may have been triggered when voicing and listening to written texts, if we want to get a better sense of the true nature of medieval textual culture.

This major point pertinent to our understanding of textual culture and voice has been contextualized here within a more general emphasis on the multimodal nature of medieval culture. In other words, medieval culture was not just oral or literary/textual, it was multimodal (as is human experience in general). It was not only books that were experienced with sound, but many other objects also produced sounds (musical instruments, horns, church bells) and had specific functions, such as authenticating the sounds that were to accompany them (seals), or illustrating

⁸⁰ See references to Trasmundi's and Benne's research in footnote 22.

and visualizing the voiced words (art, illuminations, sculptures).⁸¹ The human body in itself has to be understood as part of this material world, as we have seen how its movements often corresponded to or signified the function of the sound it produced – the approaching troop of hunters corresponded to their horns blowing; being ready to attack corresponded to the blowing of war horns; managing to hold a hot iron confirmed the authenticity of people’s words; or turning east strengthened the validity of people’s prayer. In some cases, we witnessed the effects of sound when it operated on its own, as in cases of spreading gossip, or lying. In such cases sound proves to be more untrustworthy and could be used for manipulation and damage. All these examples also demonstrate that sound is an item that needs to be interpreted. The meaning of sound depended on bodies, visualizations, smell and touch, inner mental states, and physical contexts around both those who produce the sound and those who listen. The more of these variables one had access to, the easier it was to interpret “in full”. Activating our 4E cognition could be a possible way for modern readers and interpreters to immerse in and “listen” to medieval culture, despite the distance between the two contexts. Maybe we could be a bit more like Tristram in his physical or imagined hall of statues, i.e. we have the cognitive potential to mentally animate the material, visual, and textual remnants, and imagine them being made and used by bodies, surrounded by ephemeral but constant sounds and smells, in order to come closer to the core nature of medieval culture, including medieval texts.

This conclusion lines up with a couple of fascinating suggestions in the recent book *Live Artefacts* by cognitive literary scholar Terrance Cave. First, Cave entertains the idea of virtual museums of human culture which would include, among other items, “the display of languages, their sounds, their writing systems, . . . , verbal artefacts (profusely oral, more sparingly written), some given special function and status, but on a spectrum that goes from everyday chatter (someone telling a tiny but memorable story) to sacred or magic objects and performances” (Cave 2022: 17). To use Cave’s term: in this chapter we have discussed the sounds and verbal artefacts required of a virtual museum of medieval culture.

Second, Cave (2022: 197) proposes that literature (in any form, including oral, written, performed, digital, etc.) should be considered a live artefact, a life-form, an autopoiesis. He also argues that autopoiesis can be seen as autopoetics, or in simpler terms that life can be seen as literature:

Human cultures (including thought-systems) certainly do a lot of constructing, but, since culture is an expression of nature, it is not ontologically distinct from the kinds of autopoietic construction that characterizes life itself (Cave 2022: 55).

⁸¹ An interdisciplinary study of sound based on textual, archaeological, and visual culture featured at the core of three sessions at the International Medieval Congress held in Leeds, UK, July 2023.

Following this line of thought, the literary representations of sound in medieval literature discussed in this chapter can be seen as literary representations of medieval life and its entire ecology. The perpetual existence and the essentiality of sound – in real life, in writing and rewritings, through new aural performances, and in the memories of new generations – lead to the organic perpetuation and regeneration of medieval sound, life, and ecology in the minds of new audiences to this day. This suggestion – to perceive medieval textual culture as representing and transmitting medieval sound, life, and ecology, with its own soundtrack – may possibly offer a new perspective on medieval textual culture, and on its relationship to other cultural and natural elements of this ecology.

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Benjamin Pohl

5 Re-Modelling Geoffrey: The Manipulation of Authorship and Generic Identity in Durham, Ushaw College, MS 6

Studies of genre in medieval textual culture(s) often tend to focus on the authors of specific texts or textual corpora and their prospective audiences, many of whom are known to us, if not necessarily with full biographies, then at least by their names or pseudonyms. By contrast, the makers of the manuscripts that preserve these texts, most of whom remain anonymous, are too often excluded from these discussions, especially when dealing with non-autographic (or allographic) manuscript traditions. Changes in how a work was codified, communicated, and consumed by its users in material form could have a profound – and transformative – impact on its generic identity, arguably more so than the author’s intention at the point of composition and publication.¹ (Re-)Inserting manuscript makers into the conversation by shifting the focus from authorial design to the agency of scribes and copyists can help redress the balance, and this chapter will do just that by focusing on the manipulation of authorship and generic identity in a relatively little-studied manuscript copy of a text composed during the second quarter of the twelfth century (c.1139) which, by medieval standards, constituted a true “best-seller”: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britannie* – or, adopting the title now preferred by scholars, *De gestis Britonum* [hereafter *DGB*], a (pseudo-)history of the (legendary) kings of Britain in eleven books.²

The meteoric rise of Geoffrey’s *DGB* has been the subject of extensive commentary. Investigating the early reactions to the work, Simon Meecham-Jones thus notes that “[a]lthough the 12th century was blessed with a profusion of elegant and idiosyncratic works of erudition, its literary horizon offers no more spectacular or unforeseen comet than the pan-European fascination with Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *De gestis*

¹ I am using the term “publication” with reference to the various processes involved in the preparation, promulgation, and dissemination of texts in a manuscript culture like that of the medieval Latin West; for further reference and discussion, cf. the activities and publications of the ERC-funded (2017–2022) research project *Medieval Publishing from c.1000–1500* at the University of Helsinki, Finland, <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/medieval-publishing> (accessed 23 July 2024). My use of “genre” and “generic”, by contrast, is rather more straightforward in that it denotes the (actual or perceived) shared characteristics of and differences between certain kinds of (in this case narrative) texts or text groups frequently read and transmitted alongside each other in medieval manuscripts. For similar notions of genre and generic resemblance/difference, see Busby (2002: I, 465) and Busby (2008), as well as Leah Tether’s Chapter 6, *infra*.

² *Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain = DGB*. On the manuscript tradition, see Crick (1989), Tahkokallio (2020).

Britonum” (2020: 181).³ As shown by Jaakko Tahkokallio, this expressed itself in a rich manuscript tradition, the count of which “runs to 225 [. . .], and almost 80 of them can be dated to before c.1210” (2020: 155);⁴ that is, within just seventy or so years of the *DGB*’s composition and initial publication in or before 1139. The operational dynamics of this manuscript tradition differed between Britain and the European Mainland, and the dividing lines between the two were, in Tahkokallio’s words, “surprisingly sharp” (2020: 161). I return to this below, so suffice to note here that in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century England the *DGB*’s dissemination mainly relied on regional branches of transmission which, whilst rather closely circumscribed, converged in a few key areas such as Gloucestershire in the Southwest and Lincolnshire and Yorkshire in the North, the last of which seems to have been something of a hotbed in the region (Tahkokallio 2020: 162–163 and Crick 1989: passim).

This regionality has been credited to two factors: on the one hand, the personal influence of powerful literary patrons and agents like Alexander, bishop of Lincoln (1123–48), and Walter Espec (†1153), a second-generation Norman soldier-turned-monk who, having fought in the Battle of the Standard (1138), founded several Augustinian and Cistercian houses in Yorkshire and Bedfordshire; and on the other, the institutional production, collection, and distribution of manuscripts by religious communities that included, in the North, Lincoln Cathedral, Sempringham Priory (founded by Bishop Alexander), Bridlington Priory, Nun Appleton Priory, and possibly Kirkstall Abbey outside Leeds; and, in the South, William the Conqueror’s foundation of Battle Abbey, Matthew Paris’s home of St Albans, and Margam Abbey in South Wales. That said, institutional readership of the *DGB* initially was much more limited in Britain than it was on the Continent, with fewer than ten percent of the forty-five Insular copies dating from before c.1250 linked to specific religious houses in comparison with – and notable contrast to – thirty-three percent of the forty-nine Continental copies known to have been circulating across the Channel at that time (Tahkokallio 2020: 172).

The manuscript and its manipulation

It is Durham, Ushaw College, MS 6 [hereafter Ushaw MS 6], a later twelfth-century (Northern) English copy of the *DGB* linked (tentatively) to Kirkstall Abbey, that shall concern us in this study. Part of the collections of Ushaw College, a former Catholic seminary founded on the outskirts of Durham in 1808 and closed in 2011, the book since 2019 has been housed in Durham University Library.⁵ The first to propose Kirkstall

³ On the later medieval reception, see Crick (1991).

⁴ Also cf. Tahkokallio (2015a).

⁵ Cf. the Ushaw College Library Special Collections Catalogue, available online (URL in Bibliography). On the medieval manuscripts at Ushaw, see principally Pohl & Tether (2021).

as the possible place of origin of Ushaw MS 6 was Wilhelm Levison (1943), who further noticed that the contents of this – in the words of his close contemporary and collaborator, Jacob Hammer – “peculiar manuscript” (1942: 241) are not quite what they seem at first.⁶ About halfway into the text (fol. 124v), the *DGB* transitions silently – and seamlessly – into another well-known twelfth-century work that enjoyed widespread dissemination in England and abroad (primarily in France), even if not quite to the same extent as Geoffrey’s: the *Historia Anglorum* [hereafter *HA*] written by Henry of Huntingdon, archdeacon of Lincoln, at the order of his prelate, the aforementioned Bishop Alexander (Figure 1).⁷ Building on the work of Levison, Dumville, and the *HA*’s most recent editor, Diana Greenway, the process by which these two contemporary yet generically distinct (see below) texts were combined and blended between the wooden boards of our composite codex’s late-twelfth-century binding (Figure 2) can be reconstructed with some precision,⁸ and the probable sequence of events can be summarised as follows.

The oldest section of Ushaw MS 6 is that which now comprises fols. 61r–121v and fols. 227r–242r. In an important modification of Levison’s arguments, Dumville notes that these seventy-five pages (plus another five that have been removed but remain identifiable through their stubs) originally formed an independent and self-contained codicological unit: a slim volume consisting of eight quires numbered sequentially – with the original quire numbers still visible today – that contained the *DGB*’s Books VII–XI, the first of which (Book VII, here missing the first lines of its preface) was sometimes circulated independently as a work treading the fine line between history

6 Levison’s arguments in support of Kirkstall as the likely place of origin are based on a handful of later twelfth-/early thirteenth-century glosses to the text and some late medieval/early modern notes on the book’s flyleaves (1942: 49–50). Also cf. the discussion in Pohl & Tether (2021: 20–23). Having fled his native Germany during WWII and been appointed a Fellow at Durham in 1939, Levison was tasked by the Polish-born Hammer to assist with the collation of all twelfth-century manuscripts of the *DGB*, the outputs of which included a preliminary handlist produced by Hammer in 1942 and, published by Levison the following year, the most detailed description to date of Ushaw MS 6. Some fourteen years later, David Dumville (1974–1976) added to Hammer’s and Levison’s findings with an article that revisited the manuscript’s palaeography and codicology and shed light on the process of its material composition and scribal execution. Next to comment on the book were Ian Doyle in 1976 in an unpublished seminar paper based on Ushaw Library’s own card catalogue and the second edition of *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* – in turn informing the late Michael Sharratt’s unpublished 1986 handlist of manuscripts at Ushaw – and Alan Piper in the fourth volume of *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* begun by Ker and published posthumously in 1992 (Ker & Piper 1992: 512–513). Sharratt’s handlist is kept in a green ring binder in Palace Green Library, whilst Doyle’s is found in the transcript of his seminar paper in Palace Green Library Archives AID B122 (Pohl & Tether 2021: 28–35 and 57). Dumville apart, they do not add substantially to the knowledge of Ushaw MS 6 generated by Hammer and Levison, however, and even Crick’s 1989 manuscript catalogue still references these three scholars as the primary – in fact, the sole – authorities on the subject (Crick 1989: 318 (= no. 210)).

7 Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People* = *HA* (cxvii–cxliv, p. cxlii = MS U). Greenway (1987: 108).

8 This binding has been identified as the product of an English workshop by Pollard (1962: 2); also cf. Pohl & Tether (2021: 21, n. 18).

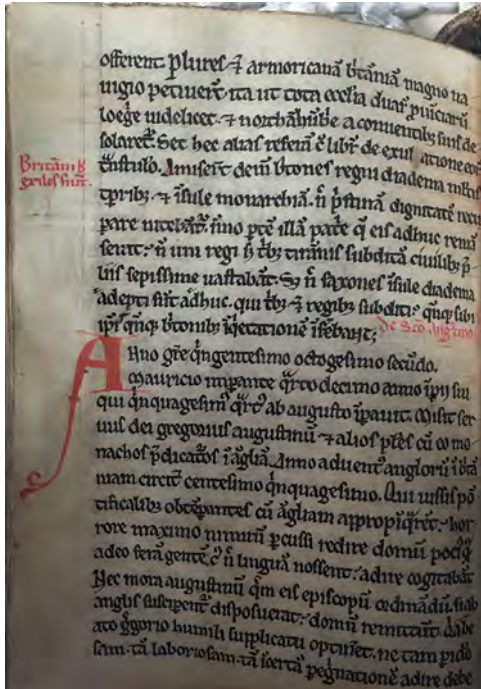


Figure 1: The silent transition from the *DGB* into the *HA* in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 124v – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.



Figure 2: The binding of Ushaw MS 6 – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

and fiction and known as the *Prophecies of Merlin*.⁹ Dumville proposes that these quires might once have constituted the “second volume of a two-volume copy of Geoffrey’s *Historia*” (1974–1976: 317), the first volume of which – if indeed there was one – has not survived. As he observes further, this section of Ushaw MS 6 is the work of a single hand/scribe, and my own palaeographical assessment confirms this.¹⁰ This scribe [hereafter Scribe A] writes a regular, well-trained hand with a confident ductus and features that point to the second half of the twelfth century, likely the third quarter, probably closer to 1150 than to 1175.¹¹ Stylistically, there can be little doubt that we are dealing with an insular/British, if not necessarily an English, scribe.

At some point in the later twelfth century, most likely the final quarter, a set of seven regular gatherings (with four folded sheets each = quaternion) penned by a different hand/scribe [hereafter Scribe B] was prefixed to the existing codicological unit, thus adding the missing beginning of the *DGB* in the shape of Books I–VI (fols. 3r–60v).¹² As with Scribe A, Scribe B’s penmanship suggests ample training and calligraphic practice, even if the aspect of his work is “busier” due to greater levels of horizontal (more words/letters per line with less generous spacing) and vertical compression (less free space between lines and lower ascenders) that give it a lesser sense of equilibrium than is exhibited by Scribe A’s work. The features of his hand, whilst not altogether dissimilar to those of Scribe A, point more consistently to the end of the twelfth century (c.1175–1200), and certain idiosyncrasies like the use of the letter **þ** (“thorn”) – such as in “þangrastræ” (fol. 54v) – strongly point to an English(-speaking) individual.¹³ Unlike Scribe A’s liberal use of space for the preparation of the *DGB*’s Books VII–XI in the original section of Ushaw MS 6, Scribe B’s subsequent addition and “retro-fitting” of Books I–VI appears to have been governed less by aesthetic considerations and/or conventions of decorum than by a pragmatic need to make maximum use of the available writing space on each page and the finite number of pages in each quire. The fact that he succeeded in fitting the full text of Books I–VI neatly into exactly seven quaternions – no doubt the result of careful planning and calcula-

9 The text contained is that edited/translated in *DGB* (142–281). On the *Prophecies of Merlin*, see Crick (1992) and Ashe (2013). On the *Prophecies*’ twelfth-century reception, see Blacker (1996).

10 This *in-situ* analysis and study of Ushaw MS 6 formed part of my Lendrum Priory Residential Research Library Fellowship at Durham University’s Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies in February 2019, selected findings of which were published in Pohl & Tether (2021), and in Pohl (2019).

11 These include the consistent use of feet on minims (including letters consisting of multiple minims such as minuscule **m**, **n**, and **u**), the regular use of long **s/f** in initial, medial, and final position, the parallel and interchangeable use of round and straight **d** in all positions, the forked/clubbed ascenders on minuscule **l** and **b**, the sharp diagonal hairline strokes (c.45° angle) on minuscule **e** (finishing stroke), 8-shaped **g** (lower compartment), and short **s** (upper and lower compartment), and the advanced level of angularity that can be observed in, for example, the upright nature of minuscule **a** and **c**.

12 *DGB* (4–141).

13 Crick (1989: 318) calls it an “English Protogothic minuscule”. On the use of **þ**, cf. Parkes (2008: 128).

tion – confirms that we are dealing with an experienced copyist. We do not know why this addition was undertaken – the loss of a separate sister volume as envisaged by Dumville is certainly a possibility – though we do know that Scribe B additionally inserted, as part of the same writing campaign, Henry of Huntingdon’s *HA* on fols. 124v–225v. To achieve this, he separated the *DGB*’s existing text at the nearest codicological – not textual – juncture, that is, the end of the seventh quire (fol. 121v). Splitting the book here meant losing about five and a half pages of text from Book XI contained on what were fols. 122r–124v (now fols. 227r–229v), which Scribe B then re-copied on the opening sheets of the first added quire. As noted by Levison (1943: 43) and Dumville (1974–1976: 317), the text of Books VII–XI originally copied in Ushaw MS 6 by Scribe A belongs to a different version/branch of transmission than do Books I–VI and the replacement of Book XI copied by Scribe B, but it has proven impossible to identify the exemplar of either section amongst the *DGB*’s extant twelfth-century copies.

Once he had replaced the *DGB*’s text that had been excised by splitting Quires VII and VIII, Scribe B began copying the *HA*. Again, we do not know which specific exemplar was used for this — none of the *HA*’s extant twelfth-century copies listed in Greenway’s edition is an exact match – but we do know that the text preserved in Ushaw MS 6 belongs to a version consisting of ten books that was completed and released for dissemination in early 1138 (Greenway’s “Version 3”).¹⁴ Having reached the end of Book X’s narrative according to this version – Abbot Theobald of Le Bec’s appointment as archbishop of Canterbury in December 1138¹⁵ – Scribe B put down his pen on fol. 225v, thus leaving the lower half of the page blank (Figure 3). The next (half-)page (fol. 226) is a stub with doodles and pen practice, and the job could well have been finished here as the *DGB* had been completed by 1139 and therefore did not add to the chronology of the *HA* by which it was replaced. Rather than disposing of the obsolete quire (Quire VIII) with the “old” end of Book XI copied by Scribe A, however, Scribe B – or whoever re-assembled and bound Ushaw MS 6 after these textual and codicological adjustments – made the intriguing executive decision to preserve this quire and append it to the end of the *HA* as fols. 227r–242r, the result being that Ushaw MS 6 in its present form effectively duplicates substantial parts of Book XI in two different versions (Figures 4 and 5). Whatever the motivation for this, it is unlikely to have been a general concern for textual or physical integrity. If anything, the complete lack of an attempted transition between fols. 225v and 227r creates a sharp contrast – and an aesthetic contradiction – with Scribe B’s carefully crafted and skilfully concealed blending of the *DGB* and the *HA* earlier in the same manuscript.

Before attempting a new explanation as to why these two works were combined by the makers of Ushaw MS 6 in the way set out above, some mention must be made

¹⁴ *HA* (cxlvii–cl); Greenway (1987:125) (= Appendix 2).

¹⁵ *HA* (718–19).

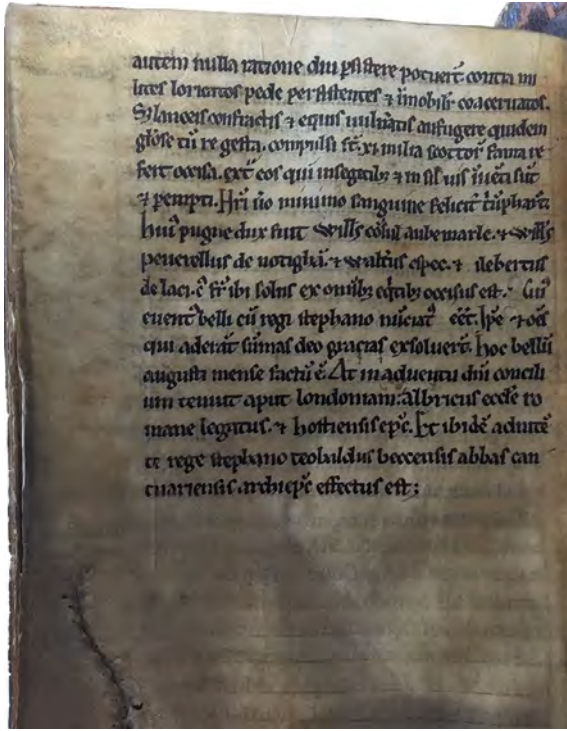


Figure 3: The end of the *HA* in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 225v – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

of Scribe B's working method, the details of which have so far eluded scholarly remark, but which are instrumental to understanding the possible motivations for the creation of this fascinating composite codex. To begin with, it should be noted that Scribe B rarely copied extended sections of the *DGB* in one go, but instead – judging from the palaeographical evidence – was writing in relatively short and intermittent stints. This *modus operandi* is especially noticeable in what are now the manuscript's first seven quires – that which contain the *DGB*'s Books I–VI, and which, as explained above, were prefixed retrospectively to a pre-existing (and previously distinct) codicological unit originally comprising only Books VII–XI copied from a different exemplar with conspicuous textual variants. Throughout these added quires, there are multiple instances where Scribe B appears to have copied little more than a paragraph at a time – and sometimes even less – before pausing his work and then returning to it at a later point. What is more, few (if any) of these pauses seem to have been due to routine mechanical adjustments like turning over the exemplar's pages, replacing the ink, or re-cutting a blunt/split and worn-out nib, all of which would have allowed the scribe to resume work instantaneously, and most of them indicate significantly longer interruptions, even if quantifying their duration with precision is impossible. In

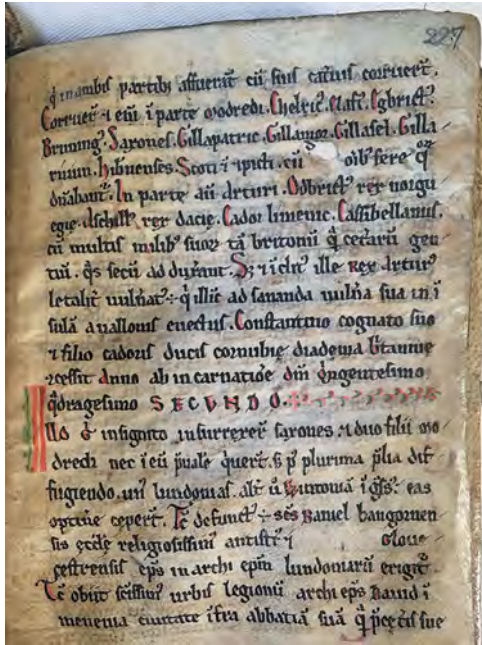


Figure 4: Scribe A's copy of the DGB's Book IX in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 227r – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

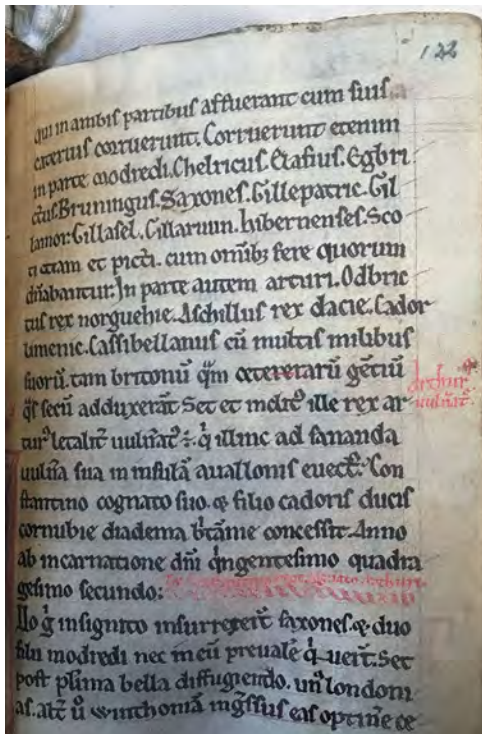


Figure 5: Scribe B's copy of the DGB's Book IX in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 122r – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

several cases, it evidently took the scribe multiple attempts to complete even a single page, as can be seen on, for example, fols. 24r, 25r, and 26r (Figure 6).

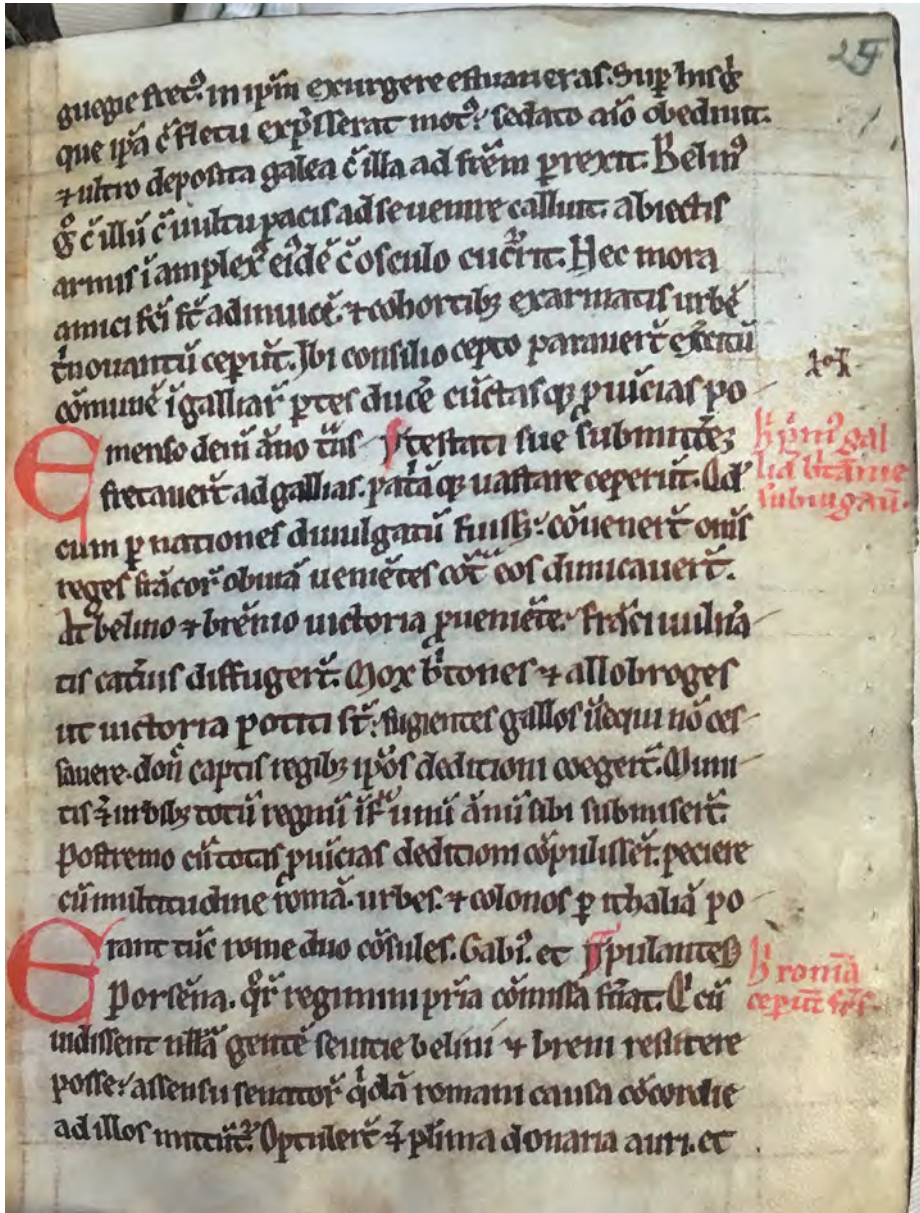


Figure 6: Multiple scribal stints in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 25r – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

The explanation for this may very well be that producing the book – or at least these sections – was not viewed as a priority, and that Scribe B had been allocated limited time and resources for the task by his institutional superior(s), requiring him to adopt a pragmatic approach in which copying the *DGB*'s missing Books I–VI was deemed secondary to, and therefore had to be arranged flexibly around, his primary duties within the monastic community's daily life and routine.¹⁶ Conversely, his frequent if intermittent return to the writing desk whenever he could or was permitted to might suggest a certain sense of urgency on the part of the commissioning authority.¹⁷ The fact that Scribe B seems to have been working by himself, though, rather than as part of a scribal “taskforce” or production line of multiple individuals working in parallel to expedite the process, speaks more in favour of a low-priority enterprise. Intriguingly, Scribe B's other and more substantive contribution to Ushaw MS 6 – the *HA* on fols. 124v–225v – is characterised by a strikingly different method that saw him working in extended writing stints with few interruptions beyond the occasional change of ink and/or writing implement. Compared to his work in the manuscript's first few quires, one cannot help but notice that here the scribe seems to be operating with a greater sense of priority, urgency, and indeed care. Unlike the supplementation of the *DGB*'s Books I–VI, which may have been driven by little more than the desire to have a complete copy of the work in one volume, the incorporation of the *HA* in the second half of the book marks an altogether different approach, one that sets us on the right path towards a plausible explanation for the unique fusion of these two popular and widely disseminated twelfth-century texts in Ushaw MS 6.

A case apart?

Despite their conceptual and generic differences, Geoffrey's *DGB* and Henry's *HA* both belong to a corpus of texts known as the “Anglo-Norman historical canon” that also includes the works of other twelfth-century writers located on either side of the Channel such as William of Malmesbury, Eadmer of Canterbury, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni (see below).¹⁸ As noted at the beginning of this study, the *DGB*'s early manuscript tradition in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Britain differed from that on the Continent, and one of its distinguishing features was a notable preference for stand-alone transmission in which Geoffrey's work circulated in manuscripts that contained no other texts alongside it – a phenomenon also known as the production

¹⁶ As argued elsewhere, the use and allocation of human and material resources for monastic book production required the permission and licence of the head of house; see Pohl (2023a).

¹⁷ For a contemporary (c.1200) case study of this, see Pohl (2023b).

¹⁸ Tahkokallio (2019). On Anglo-Norman historical writing, see generally Gransden (1974), Staunton (2017), van Houts (2002), and, recently, Pohl & van Houts (2022).

of “independents” as opposed to “compilations” (Pohl 2015: 18, n. 67 and 50–52). By Tahkokallio’s (2020: 170–174) count, more than half of the *DGB*’s Continental copies made before c.1250 are compilations (51 percent), compared to less than a third (29 percent) of contemporary Insular copies – a distribution pattern that only began to shift gradually in favour of Insular compilations during the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This alone makes Ushaw MS 6 part of a minority phenomenon, if not a total outlier. And yet, it is not the only manuscript to feature copies of both the *DGB* and the *HA*. There are five more manuscripts that preserve both works (or parts thereof): Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, MS 8495–8505; Cambridge, St John’s College, MS G.16 (*olim* 184); Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd. I.17; Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3514; and Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale et patrimoniale Villon, MS U.74 (*olim* 1177).¹⁹ Of these, only the two codices now in Brussels and Rouen were produced in the mid-to-late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, respectively, making them roughly contemporary with Ushaw MS 6, whereas the others all date from the later thirteenth to early fifteenth centuries. And unlike Ushaw MS 6 – which, as we will recall, preserves the *HA* according to Version 3 completed in early 1138 – they give the text according to Versions 4, 5, and 6, produced in 1146, 1149, and 1154, respectively.²⁰ Crucially, moreover, they all present the *HA* and *DGB* as two strictly separate works so as to preserve their respective textual integrity, generic identity, and authorial attribution – except for MS CUL Dd. I.17, in which Geoffrey’s *DGB* is copied and presented as a textual entity in its own right whilst Henry’s *HA* only features in excerpts as part of a multi-textual historical compilation. The makers of Ushaw MS 6, by contrast, blurred these textual, generic, and authorial boundaries to the point of complete obfuscation. Here, one text leads straight into the next on fol. 124v without so much as an *excipit/incipit* or a visual marker such as the decorated initials used elsewhere in the same manuscript – for example, at the beginnings of the *DGB*’s preface (fol. 3r) and Book I (fol. 3v), both of which are also the work of Scribe B (Figures 7 and 8). As a result, Henry’s authorship is concealed – and deliberately so – from the book’s readers, and those unfamiliar with his work have no reason to suspect that the text occupying the lower half of fol. 124v through to about the middle of fol. 225v is the work of anyone other than Geoffrey, whose name does, after all, feature prominently in the manuscript’s opening rubric.

The fact that there is no obvious parallel for this silent re-attribution of authorship in any other surviving manuscript of the *DGB* or *HA* – nor indeed, to my knowledge, in the manuscript traditions of other works within the wider Anglo-Norman historical canon (see above) – has prompted scholars to search for explanations, some more compelling than others. By far the most persistent and widely subscribed opinion is that put

¹⁹ See *HA* (cxxvii, cxxx–cxxxii, cxxxiv, cxxxviii, and 839 (= Appendix IV)), Greenway (1987: 122–124), Crick (1989: 28–29, 51–55, 67–71, 114–17, and 305–306 (= nos. 18, 32, 40, 70, and 200)).

²⁰ *HA* (cl–clviii).

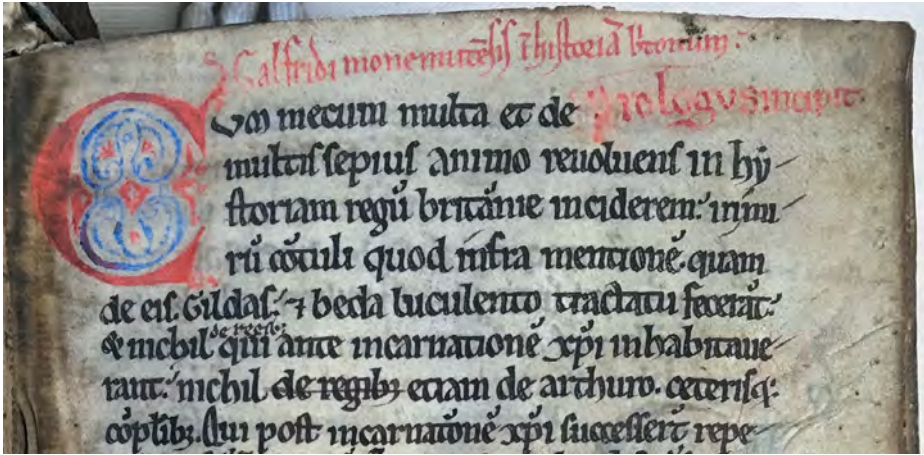


Figure 7: The opening rubric naming Geoffrey in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 3r – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

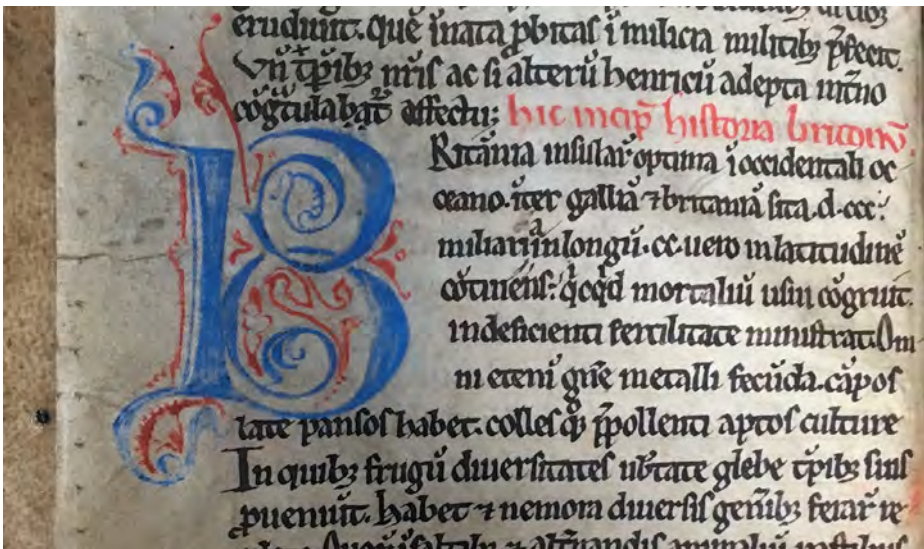


Figure 8: The decorated initial marking the *DGB*'s beginning in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 3v – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

forward by Levison in 1943, who saw the unparalleled fusion of two texts in Ushaw MS 6 as an attempt at “combining the History of the Britons with an English History” (1943: 43). Arguing in a similar vein but without reference to Ushaw MS 6, Rebecca Thomas sees a distinguishing factor between the *DGB* and the *HA* in their authors’ respective loyalties to the British *vis-à-vis* English cause: “[w]here Henry tracks the development

of the English kingdoms”, she explains, “Geoffrey relates a period of British supremacy”, and thus “[w]hat is a period of formation and consolidation of English kingdoms in [. . .] Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum* becomes a period of British domination in the *DGB*” (Thomas 2020: 106 and 116–117).²¹ Their persistence and popularity in scholarship (particularly in the anglophone academy) notwithstanding, these and similar kinds of interpretations are rarely informed by considerations of the manuscripts and the contexts of their production.²² Unlike the authors and patrons of twelfth-century historical writing, some of whom may well have been motivated by national identity and sentiment, the anonymous scribes/copyists, artists, binders, and other agents responsible for preparing the manuscripts that provided the primary vehicles for the codification, publication, and dissemination of texts like the *DGB* and *HA* are much less likely to have been driven by such concerns. To them, considerations of “Englishness” or “Britishness” in the works they copied probably mattered less than, say, conventions of genre. In the remainder of this study, I will therefore explore an alternative model for interpreting the attempted – and, judging from the book’s intact survival and the lack of critical intervention and correction prior to the first half of the twentieth century, successful – fusion of the *DGB* and *HA* in Ushaw MS 6, one that focuses less on shifting national affiliations than on the no less contested subject of genre and generic identities.

A question of labelling?

Much ink has been spilled by critics both modern and medieval on the (perceived) generic identities of Henry’s and, in particular, Geoffrey’s works.²³ From as early as the twelfth century, the *HA* was seen and cited as an example of historical writing *stricto sensu*, whereas Geoffrey’s writings – particularly his *DGB* – have traditionally been refused this trademark, but from early on were labelled (and dismissed as) fiction, fabrication, and “pseudo-history”.²⁴ Geoffrey’s earliest accusers famously include William

21 Thomas further concludes that “[t]he establishment of the English kingdoms painstakingly related in Henry’s *History of the English* has no place in Geoffrey’s work” (2020: 106), which “does not grant much space to the English” (2020: 105).

22 See, for example, Gillingham (1991) and Gillingham (1995), both reprinted in Gillingham (2000: 19–39 and 123–144). For an alternative perspective, see Weiler (2020), emphasising that “[i]n high medieval Europe, the writing of history was a truly international undertaking” (2020: 43).

23 The literature is too vast to be referenced in full here. Recent contributions include Rollo (2015), Mehtonen (2012), and Putter (2009). Also cf. the general discussions by Ashe (2007) and Otter (1996).

24 Aurell (2016) and Tahkokallio (2015b). More generally Fulton (2009). Modern scholarship has gone some way towards rehabilitating Geoffrey from this stigma bestowed upon him (and other writers like him) by his twelfth- and thirteenth-century (near-)contemporaries, with Laura Ashe emphasising that the *DGB* is “not fiction” (2015: 3).

of Newburgh, a twelfth-century Yorkshireman and Augustinian canon who in his *Historia rerum Anglicarum* embarks on “a lengthy demolition” of the *DGB* (Garnett 2020: 79), in which he discredits Geoffrey as something of a parvenu and charlatan who rose to fame (or rather infamy) by peddling the most absurd fictions (“ridicula figmenta”).²⁵ Writing around the same time, Gerald of Wales in his *Itinerarium Cambriae* likewise cast doubts on Geoffrey’s credentials as a historian by complaining that he had filled the *DGB* with tedious episodes about evil spirits and various other superstitions,²⁶ thereby delivering “a passing kick on the shins of a man who had so comprehensively laid claim to a body of literary material which he (and Walter Map) might otherwise have expected to claim as their own” (Meecham-Jones 2020: 192–193). Others were less vocal in their criticism, and some readily made use of the *DGB* despite (or without) reservations. They included Geoffrey’s contemporaries and acclaimed writers of history, Orderic Vitalis, Robert of Torigni, and – indeed – Henry of Huntingdon, all three of whom approached Geoffrey and his work with much respect, as well as Alfred of Beverley, author of the *Annales sive Historia de gestis regum Britanniae*, who treated the *DGB* and its author with “something approaching reverence”.²⁷

As is now well established, Robert of Torigni showed a copy of Geoffrey’s *DGB* to Henry in 1139 when Henry stopped over at the abbey of Le Bec in Normandy – Robert’s then home – on his way to Rome in the entourage of Theobald, Le Bec’s sometime abbot and the recently invested archbishop of Canterbury (Pohl 2015, Tahkokallio 2019: 37–38, Henley 2020: 292–293). As we will recall, it is Theobald’s archiepiscopal investiture that signals the end of the *HA*’s Book X in Version 3 and thus marks the end of the chronological narrative in Ushaw MS 6. Henry’s *HA* features a personal letter addressed to one Warin “the Breton”, in which Henry expresses great joy about being given access to the *DGB* because it helped him “fill in the blanks” in the historical records that were available back in England.²⁸ He was so thankful indeed that he sent Robert and the monks of Le Bec a copy of his *HA* in or around 1147, very soon after he had completed what was – in Greenway’s taxonomy – Version 4 (Pohl 2015: 165, *HA* pp. cl–clii). Henry’s encounter with Robert and their consultation of Le Bec’s copy of the *DGB* – preserved in Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS BPL 20 – is illustrated with a fine miniature in the authorial working copy of Robert’s *Chronica* (Avranches, Bibliothèque patrimoniale,

25 “The ‘Historia rerum Anglicarum’ of William of Newburgh”, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, I (11): “At contra quidam nostris temporibus, pro expiandis his Britonum maculis, scriptor emersit, ridicula de eisdem figmenta contexens, eosque longe supra virtutem Macedonum et Romanorum impudenti vanitate attollens”. English translation in *William of Newburgh: The History of English Affairs*, I (29): “But in our own day a writer of the opposite tendency has emerged. To atone for these faults of the Britons[,] he [Geoffrey] weaves a laughable web of fiction about them, with shameless vainglory extolling them far above the virtue of the Macedonians and the Romans”.

26 “Itinerarium Kambriæ”, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, VI (58). English translation in *The Itinerary Through Wales and the Description of Wales by Giraldus Cambrensis* (53).

27 Garnett (2020: 79) with the relevant reference to Alfred of Beverley’s work.

28 Quoted and translated, with discussion, in Pohl (2015: 145–147).

MS 159, fol. 174v) produced by the monastic scribes and artists of Mont-Saint-Michel, where Robert had become abbot in 1154, under the author's close personal supervision.²⁹ The miniature depicts the two like-minded historians operating (and seated) on eye-level whilst engaging in what today we would call “source criticism”, the subject of their deliberation being the *historia* – which is, after all, how Robert and Henry viewed it – recently published by Geoffrey, whom they seem to have considered, for all intents and purposes, as their colleague and peer. As Laura Ashe reminds us, Geoffrey likewise “considered himself to be a historian, and advertised himself as such” (2015: 3).³⁰ Perhaps, then, the miniature's confident depiction of the *DGB* as the subject of serious conversation between two *bona-fide* historians from the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman historical canon combined with Henry's self-confessed appreciation for Geoffrey's work in his letter to Robert might serve to relativise somewhat the perceived chasm between the respective generic identities of the *DGB* and Henry's *HA*?

As the examples of William of Newburgh and Gerald of Wales show, however, not everyone in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries adopted such a liberal and collegial stance towards Geoffrey's work. At the time that Scribe B merged the *DGB* with the *HA* in Ushaw MS 6, Geoffrey's reputation as a fabulator and pseudo-historian still loomed large both in Britain and abroad. Might that be why our scribe chose to “historicise” – and thereby lend a greater air of *auctoritas* to – Geoffrey's work by injecting it with a healthy dose of what even die-hard sceptics like William and Gerald would have accepted, without question or hesitation, as “proper” history? Was the intention of silently inserting substantial passages of the *HA* into the *DGB* without noticeable caesura or acknowledgement of Henry's authorship perhaps not to make Geoffrey's (pro-)British history more English as proposed by Levison and others, but rather to make it more *historical* – or at least more palatable as a work of history by twelfth-century conventions – by quietly effecting a manipulation of generic identity?³¹ What would have made this subtle yet potentially impactful manipulation of the *DGB*'s generic identity all the more effective is the complete and systematic suppression of Henry's authorial persona, which in Ushaw MS 6 is subsumed entirely by Geoffrey's. As Siân Echard observes, “Geoffrey is very insistent as to his own authorship” (2020: 222), and Georgia Henley draws attention to the fact that “[t]he entire *DGB* is written in his [Geoffrey's] voice, with no departure or digression from the main narrative [. . .] and little discussion of sources”, a *modus operandi* that, as Henley notes, “has not won Geoffrey any favors in the reception of his work, contemporary or modern”, and which is amongst the reasons why “the *DGB* is widely regarded as a work of imagination[,] rather than history” (2020: 303). “It is through the elision of

²⁹ Reproduced and analysed in Pohl (2015: 150–52). See also Pohl (2022: 117–119).

³⁰ Also cf. Brook (1976).

³¹ Henley (2020: 292–306) and Aurell (2006). On conventions of history and historical writing in the twelfth century, cf. recently Burek (2023) and Tahkokallio (2022). Also cf. Damian-Grint (1999), and, generally, Ganz (2017).

sources and the establishment of authority”, she argues further, “that Geoffrey departs the most from the commonplace tools of history writing exemplified by his [. . .] contemporaries” (2020: 303), one of whom was – of course – the author of the *HA*, Henry of Huntingdon.

Henry fashioned himself a different kind of historian than did Geoffrey, and in his *HA* he regularly – and explicitly – indebts himself to the *auctoritas* of previous historians, chief amongst them the “Father of English History”, Bede.³² As Henry admits openly, and not without a sense of pride, in the *HA*’s preface addressed to his patron, Bishop Alexander, he closely followed, on the latter’s advice, Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* wherever possible, and only when it did not supply the required information did he turn, rather reluctantly, to alternative sources.³³ The latter included the *DGB* made available to Henry by Robert, which compensated for Bede’s relative silence on the early British past. As Emily Ward notes, “Henry viewed Bede as an unquestioned authority [. . .] and relied on the *Historia Ecclesiastica* unequivocally, occasionally even at the expense of what he had written himself”, so much so that he “referred [. . .] to Bede as a saint” throughout the *HA* (2017: 180).³⁴ If conscientious adherence and explicit lip service to Bede was what gave “canonical” twelfth-century writers of history such as Henry, Orderic, William of Malmesbury, and William of Newburgh their credentials – and their *auctoritas* – as reputable historians, then it was, *mutatis mutandis*, the very absence thereof that posed a reputational challenge for Geoffrey, who, as observed by Thomas, “has no problem in turning Bede’s narrative on its head to suit his own purposes” (2020: 128).³⁵ Indeed, Meecham-Jones argues plausibly that “William [of Newburgh] presents Geoffrey as dishonest partly because his account is not supported by the recognized authoritative source of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*”.³⁶ Or, as Peter Damian-Grint puts it succinctly, to William and his fellow critics “Geoffrey is a liar because he contradicts or at least disagrees with Bede” (1999: 45).

32 Plassmann (2017), Greenway (1991). Also cf. Ward (2017).

33 *HA*, ed./tr. Greenway, pp. 6–7: “Tuo quidem consilio Bede venerabilis ecclesiasticam qua potui secutus historiam, nonnulla etiam ex aliis excerpens auctoribus, inde cronica in antiquis reservata librariis compilans, usque nostrum ad auditum et visum preterita representavi”.

34 Also cf. Greenway (1991: 46–49).

35 On Bede’s reputation and legacy amongst medieval writers of history, see Davis (1989) and Gransden (1981, reproduced in Gransden 1992: 1–29).

36 Meecham-Jones (2020: 203), quoting a passage from “The ‘Historia rerum Anglicarum’ of William of Newburgh”, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, I (14). Walsh & Kennedy (1998: 32–33): “Since these events accord with the historical truth as expounded by the Venerable Bede, it is clear that Geoffrey’s entire narration about Arthur, his successors, and his predecessors after Vortigern, was invented partly by himself and partly by others”.

Authorship and authority

Returning to Ushaw MS 6, it is unlikely to be coincidence that Scribe B chose the crucial and skilfully concealed moment of transition from the *DGB* to *HA* to be the conversion of the English by St Augustine reported in Book III of Henry's work (*HA*, 138, n. 138 et seqq.). As Greenway remarks in her edition, from the exact point that facilitates the silent transition in Ushaw MS 6, "almost the entire book consists of direct quotation and reworking of passages from Bede's *H[istoria] E[cclesiastica]*" (*HA*, 139, n. 1). Throughout Book III, Henry repeatedly identifies Bede as the true author – and the sole authority – of his account, and these declarations are copied in their entirety, and verbatim, by our manuscript's Scribe B. In a sense, therefore, Geoffrey in Ushaw MS 6 appropriates not only Henry's authorship, but also – and more importantly – his methodology as a credible historian exemplified and epitomised by detailed knowledge and faithful use of Bede. If credible and canonical history was indeed what the late-twelfth-century scribe had in mind when modifying the existing codex, then this would help explain perfectly why he excised not only the *HA*'s Books I and II – the very books in which Henry explicitly discloses and asserts his authorship – (*HA*, 2–137), but also Books VIII and IX, which in Ushaw MS 6 are removed completely from the narrative so that Book X follows silently and seamlessly from the end of Book VII (Figure 9). Why exactly were these two books dropped, then? Book VIII comprises what in many manuscripts is labelled "exalted matters", beginning with an "epilogue" in which Henry reflects upon the future reception of his work by explicitly situating himself in the year 1135 before addressing prospective readers living in the third millennium (that is, the year 2135), followed by a letter to King Henry I, the letter to Warin discussed above, and a third letter known as *De contemptu mundi* in which Henry expresses his contempt for the world based on personal experience (*HA*, 594–619).³⁷ What they have in common is that they are written in Henry's personal voice and therefore leave no doubt as to his authorship, which may well be why they – just like Books I and II – were deemed undesirable by the makers of Ushaw MS 6 and became "collateral damage" in the process of quietly re-assigning the *HA* to Geoffrey.

Book IX, meanwhile, seems to have been disqualified for different – if related – reasons. Devoted entirely to the miracles of the English, its conceptual design and narrative focus were hagiographical (for want of a better term), rather than strictly speaking historiographical, and its inclusion in Ushaw MS 6 would thus have run contrary to, and risked compromising, the new generic identity that the manuscript's compilers were pursuing with their carefully crafted "hybrid-history".³⁸ Writing from the secure position

³⁷ See also Roling (1999).

³⁸ This is not to suggest, of course, that historiography and hagiography were considered categorically distinct, let alone opposites, by twelfth-century writers and their audiences. Cf. Bailey (2019), Herrick (2019), and Lifshitz (1994).

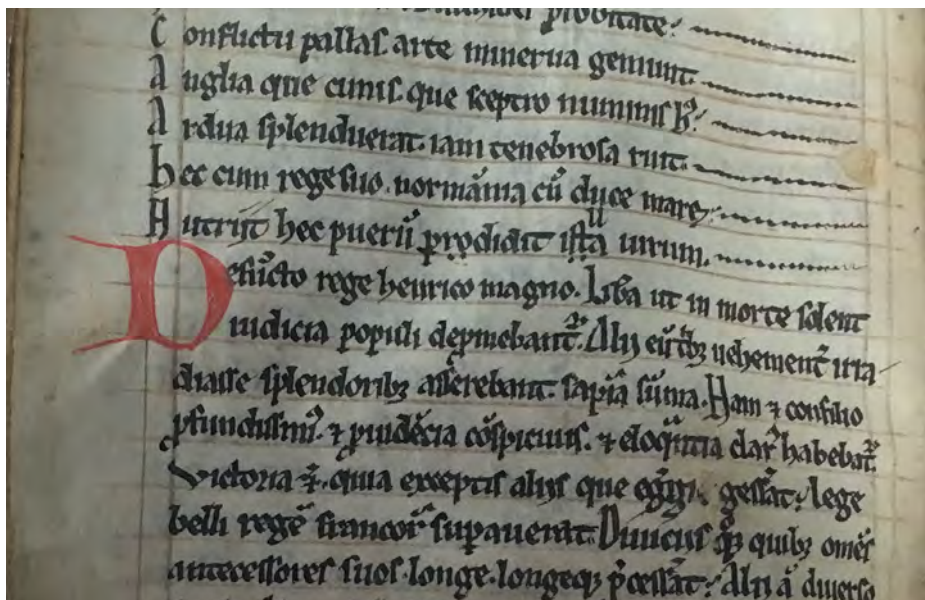


Figure 9: The silent transition from the *HA*'s Book VII to X in Ushaw MS 6, fol. 220v – reproduced by permission of Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens.

of a *bona-fide* historian whose credentials were above suspicion and recognised by his peers and contemporary audiences, Henry could afford to include some miraculous – even legendary – material in his *HA*; after all, had his venerated role model not done so himself on multiple occasions?³⁹ Styling himself as Bede's disciple and successor, Henry confidently reassures his readers that "I have added none, or nearly none, to the miracles which that man of the Lord, the venerable Bede, whose authority (*auctoritas*) is completely secure, has written in his [*Ecclesiastical*] *History*".⁴⁰ Geoffrey's, by contrast, was a much more fragile and vulnerable authorial persona, one whose qualifications as a writer of credible (or canonical) history had been called into question soon after the *DGB*'s publication and remained contested at the time Ushaw MS 6 received its present form around the turn of the thirteenth century (or slightly earlier). The book's makers, and specifically Scribe B, appear to have been acutely aware of this difference, and they took advantage of it when the opportunity presented itself during the addition of the *DGB*'s Books I–VII: having sourced a suitable exemplar – albeit one from a different textual version than Books VII–XI already present in the original codex – they

³⁹ Rosenthal (1975), Ward (1976), Rubenstein (2011), and Ahern (2018).

⁴⁰ *HA*, (622–23): "In hoc siquidem libello, exceptis miraculis que vir Domini Beda venerabilis, cuius auctoritas firmissima est, in historia sua conscripsit, nulla vel fere nulla apposuimus". On the use of Bede's miracles in historiographical and/or liturgical contexts, see Pohl (2017) and Webber (2015).

added not only what was missing from the *DGB*, but also, and very likely from yet another exemplar, a customised and “anonymised” copy of the *HA*’s Version 3 that strategically omitted – in an attempt to a) remove any trace of Henry’s authorship, and b) avoid generic ambiguity that could cast doubts on the text’s classification as a work of history – the *HA*’s Books I, II, VIII, and IX. The result – and perhaps the very intention – was not just a manipulation of generic identity, but also the silent transformation of the authorial persona to re-model “Geoffrey the Fabulator” as “Geoffrey the Historian”.

Conclusion

Just how unique was this authorial persona, then, and is there any parallel for this transformation in the other extant manuscripts? As discussed above, the blending of the *DGB* and the *HA* in Ushaw MS 6 is unprecedented and unparalleled in the known manuscript corpus. But is this true for Scribe B’s redaction of the *HA*, too? Besides Ushaw MS 6, there are eight more manuscripts of the *HA* that omit Book IX, two of which – Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter U 6.6 (= MS G) and London, British Library, MS Royal 13 A xviii (= MS Rd), both from the early fourteenth century – also lack Book VIII, and two more – Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 6043 (= MS Bc), from the later sixteenth century, and Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 732 (= MS Vb), from the seventeenth century – that preserve only the *capitula* of Book IX.⁴¹ None of them, however, is related to Ushaw MS 6, and they all preserve the *HA* according to Version 4 or 5. Most importantly, though, they contain no traces whatsoever of Geoffrey’s *DGB*. From this perspective, too, Ushaw MS 6 thus remains, to recall Hammer’s expression, a rather peculiar – and unique – manuscript, one that furnishes us with an instructive model of how perceptions of authorship and genre could be manipulated and (re-)negotiated by medieval scribes and copyists.

These transformative manipulations acquire additional significance if Ushaw MS 6 were indeed produced at Kirkstall (as per Levison) or another Northern Cistercian community. As argued elsewhere, the manuscript’s material and artistic execution, specifically its decoration with pen-flourished initials using a reduced colour palette and artistic vocabulary characteristic of Cistercian workshops, certainly allow for this possibility, even if they do not provide definitive proof (Pohl & Tether 2021: 20–23).⁴²

⁴¹ The manuscripts that omit Book IX but include Book VIII are Cambridge, University Library, MS Add. 3392 (saec. xiii^{ex}/xivⁱⁿ); London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 179 (saec. xiiiⁱⁿ); Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Laud Misc. 564 (saec. xii^{ex}/xiiiⁱⁿ); Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale et patrimoniale Villon, MS 1178 (saec. xiv); Cambridge, Sydney Sussex College, MS 70 (saec. xiv^{ex}/xvⁱⁿ); and London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A XVIII (saec. xiii^{med-ex}); see *HA*, cxxiv–cxliii (= MSS Ca, Lb, Ld, Re, Ss, and V).

⁴² Also cf. Lawrence (1995, 2012).

The Cistercian expansion in Northern England, particularly in Yorkshire, during the mid- and later twelfth century created a historiographical milieu that, whilst not quite as prolific as that built by the Benedictines, was instrumental to the *DGB*'s early transmission and dissemination.⁴³ Ushaw MS 6 apart, no fewer than five Insular copies of the *DGB* made in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries come from Cistercian houses, two of them in Yorkshire (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS Bodley 514, from Jervaulx, and Yale, University Library, MS 590, from Roche).⁴⁴ It is, of course, a case of delicious irony that the milieu producing the composite codex that fashions Geoffrey as a *bona fide* historian following in Bede's footsteps by quietly appropriating Henry of Huntingdon's work and authorial persona might have been the very one that was home to the *DGB*'s harshest twelfth-century critic and native Yorkshireman, William of Newburgh.

Could it be that the transformative intervention of Scribe B in Ushaw MS 6 was a response – direct or indirect – to a wider culture of scepticism towards Geoffrey and his work within the region, one that was epitomised by, but not limited to, William's dismissive approach to the *DGB* and its author's credentials? And, if so, was the scribe's cloak-and-dagger operation to re-model Geoffrey for the manuscript's target readership an attempt to influence not just local or institutional reading habits, but changing perceptions of genre – and indeed changeable generic identities – within the wider historiographical milieu of the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries? Asking questions like these requires (re-)consideration of authorial and – perhaps more importantly – scribal agency, and even if we cannot answer them conclusively here, the evidence presented in this study urges us to look more closely at the influence of scribes and their (hidden) work when thinking about models of change in medieval textual and manuscript culture(s). Indeed, we could go further still by asking whether the intention of the maker(s) of Ushaw MS 6 might have been to challenge twelfth-century discourse about generic resemblance/difference through establishing an alternative, more inclusive notion of the “model historian” that accommodated *both* Geoffrey and Henry. And if this was so, then we may – and should – view manipulations of authorship and generic identity such as those studied in this chapter as an act of creation.

⁴³ See Tahkokallio (2022: 170–74) and Tahkokallio (2019: 12). On the Cistercian historiographical milieu in (Northern) England, see principally Freeman (2002) and Cheney (1973).

⁴⁴ The remaining Cistercian copies come from Sussex (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 13210, from Robertsbridge) and Wales (Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3514, possibly from Whitland Abbey, and London, British Library, MS Royal 13 D II, from Margam Abbey); see Crick (1989: 6–7, 114–118, 183–184, 210–211, and 221–223).

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Leah Tether

6 Running Titles in the Books of Jacques d'Armagnac: A Model for Enacting Generic Change

Particularly prominent amongst the many textual interests of the noted fifteenth-century bibliophile, Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours (c. 1433–4 August 1477), is a fascination for Arthurian literature. From what is extant of Jacques' vast collection, which today comprises in the region of one hundred and forty-five manuscript volumes (some of which make up multi-volume sets)¹ now scattered across modern libraries and repositories globally,² we can be sure that Jacques owned at least twelve Arthurian manuscripts (made up of twenty-four volumes).³ Originally housed across

1 Since many of Jacques' manuscripts are today made up of multi-volume sets, some of which were bound as one in Jacques' lifetime whilst others were always extant in multi-volume form, I will adopt the terminology of "volume" to indicate a single codex, and "manuscript" to indicate either a set of volumes or a self-contained single volume that is today considered to constitute one structural unit. For example, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 113–116 is one manuscript, but it is made up of four volumes.

2 Léopold Delisle seems to have been the first scholar to attempt to reconstruct Jacques' library (1868–1881: I, 89–91), a list to which he made additions/corrections in a later tome of the same work (1868–1881: III, 342) and two subsequent articles (1903: 265–275; 1905). Antoine Thomas (1906) made further additions to Delisle's list. Susan Blackman (1993: II, 252–569) provides the most recent and comprehensive cataloguing of manuscripts known to have belonged to Jacques, counting one hundred and twenty-three individual volumes (including two noted as addenda that Blackman discovered on the eve of her thesis defence). Several of these make up multi-volume sets that are designated by a single shelfmark. Blackman also notes the existence of eleven manuscripts (now extant across thirteen volumes) that have been plausibly linked to Jacques (II, 275–277). In a later article, Blackman (1995: 30–31) lists twenty-eight items as new attributions to Jacques' ownership, which arise from the work in her thesis. All of these except the final four were already listed in her thesis as likely to have belonged to Jacques, including the two aforementioned addenda. This update, in other words, adds four volumes to Blackman's total list (two of which were, however, mentioned in Blackman's list of "Unlikely Attributions" in her thesis (II, 278–279)), making a grand total of one hundred and forty volumes. Appendix A lists these in full, and also adds five additional volumes which, according to the *Jonas* database of the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (URL in bibliography), have more recently been attributed to Jacques' ownership. The *Jonas* database also lists New York, Morgan Library and Museum, MS 805–807 as connected to Jacques, but I have not found documentary evidence as to why this attribution exists, so I have left these three volumes out of my corpus for consideration here.

3 Today, these have the following shelfmarks: Chantilly, Bibliothèque du château, MS 648 (404) and Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 527 (*Tristan*); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS fr. 99 (*Tristan*), fr. 106–109 (*Perceforest*), fr. 112 (Arthurian compilation with core of *Lancelot-Graal*), fr. 113–116 (*Lancelot-Graal*), fr. 117–120 (*Lancelot-Graal*), fr. 2154 (*Conte de papogaulx*); n.a.fr. 6579 (*Tristan*); Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 3325 (*Guiron le Courtois*); New York, Public Library, MS Spencer 34 (*Livre du petit Artu*); Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, MS 1622 (L.I.7–8–9) (*Tristan*);

three physical library spaces,⁴ some of Jacques' manuscripts, his Arthurian books included, were "fresh" commissions – that is, books he ordered from scratch, and which were tailored and customised according to his personal specifications and preferences –, whilst others were heirlooms inherited from his bibliophile forebears, in particular his great-grandfather Jean de Berry (30 November 1340–15 June 1416) and his maternal grandfather Jacques II de Bourbon (c.1370–24 September 1438) (Blackman 1993: I,41–42). Some of Jacques' books even duplicate – apparently on purpose – the same narratives (Arthurian examples include the *Tristan en prose* and the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle). These duplicate Arthurian volumes have attracted considerable attention, particularly – in the case of the *Lancelot-Graal* – for their complementary programmes of illumination. Such enquiries have led to three particular sets of multi-volume manuscripts formerly owned by Jacques becoming especially recognised and studied in scholarship.⁵ These are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MSS fr. 112, fr. 113–116 and fr. 117–120.⁶ The Arthurian text, or rather group of texts, found duplicated in these books is the *Lancelot-Graal*, though MS fr. 112 also interweaves a selection of other Arthurian narratives in between its covers.⁷

All three manuscripts are large format, two-column, lavishly illuminated books; they are, in other words, luxury copies. Whilst antiquarians like Jacques often bought duplicate copies of texts second-hand (Monfrin 1964: 11), Jacques' book acquisition practice seems to have been more unusual because many of his books, including some of his Arthurian volumes, were new commissions. For example, whilst BnF, MS fr. 117–120 is an heirloom inherited from his great-grandfather, Jean de Berry, Jacques personally commissioned BnF, MSS fr. 112 and fr. 113–116 (Blackman 1993: I,183). Even in the case of BnF, MS fr. 117–120, though, Jacques took the opportunity to introduce new features to the manuscript: he customised it by having several of the miniatures repainted

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2542 (*Tristan*). Ten of these twelve manuscripts can be firmly attested through codicological evidence as having belonged to Jacques, while there is strong, but not entirely conclusive evidence for the remaining two manuscripts (Chantilly, MS 648/Dijon, MS 527 and BnF, MS fr. 2154). Note: after the first mention of each full manuscript shelfmark, I will adopt the short-form format indicated here, that is: city or, where there is more than one library in a given city, library (abbreviated where appropriate)/MS/number; e.g. Chantilly, MS 758, but BnF, MS fr. 112 (as there is more than one relevant library in Paris).

4 These are known by the names of Carlat, Castres, and La Marche (Blackman 1993: I,13–19).

5 Amongst the many studies dedicated to these manuscripts, particularly notable are Fabry-Tehranchi (2009), Bogdanow (2005), Blackman (1993: I,182–243; 1996), and Pickford (1960; 1965). See also Middleton (2006: 66–69).

6 All three of these, despite the inconsistent nature of their shelfmarks, are "multi-volume books". As a reminder, I am referring to all such "multi-volume" items as single manuscripts, especially since it is in fact possible that at least some of them were originally bound as one item (see below).

7 The manuscript contains portions of the Vulgate *Lancelot* and the *Queste del Saint Graal*, the whole of the Vulgate *Mort Artu*, as well as interpolated sections of *Guiron le Courtois*, the prose *Tristan*, and material derived from the Post-Vulgate *Suite de Merlin* and *Queste del Saint Graal* (see Bogdanow 2005: 21–22).

(Blackman 1996; Blondeau 2001; Hermant 2012), an act which means that the three manuscripts, despite their different original dates of creation, became connected by a varied combination of the same artisans. Specifically, the scribe Micheau Gonnot wrote and rubricated BnF, MS fr. 112 (his signature appears on fol. 223r of current tome III, albeit latterly overwritten),⁸ probably at least partially on the basis of BnF, MS fr. 113–116 (Fabry-Tehranchi 2009: 2; Pickford 1965: 249). Gonnot also arranged for some of the decoration in these two manuscripts to be completed by at least one common illuminator, one indeed who seems also to have worked on others of Jacques' books (Pickford 1960: 16 and 275–276). Meanwhile, the illuminator Evrard d'Espingues, who certainly worked on BnF, MS fr. 113–116 (Blackman 1993: II, 503–540), might have been amongst the hands that retouched the miniatures of the inherited BnF, MS fr. 117–120 (Seidel 2014: 161). Blackman (1996: 5) further contends that Gonnot's intimate knowledge of the *Lancelot-Graal* text, evidenced by his meticulous compilatory work on BnF, MS fr. 112, means he is likely also to have overseen the repainting of BnF, MS fr. 117–120's miniatures and the entire production of BnF, MS fr. 113–116. Indeed, she believes him to have orchestrated the work on these three Arthurian manuscripts deliberately so that they would form a set, one whose programmes of illumination would complement each other, and actively avoid duplication (Blackman 1996; 1993: I, 182–243; see also Fabry-Tehranchi 2009).

As alluded to above, there is a further connecting factor in the decoration of these three manuscripts, one that has not been previously investigated, as far as I am aware, and it is upon this subject that this study will turn. All three manuscripts present very similar vermillion and azure running titles with matching foliation in their top margins, which appear to have been executed roughly contemporaneously across the three manuscripts. Given the anteriority of BnF, MS fr. 117–120 to the other two, questions arise about when and why these running titles were included. I will argue here that Jacques' personal, idiosyncratic choice to include these running titles in his Arthurian (and other) volumes offers us a model for enacting generic change in manuscripts. The phraseology I use here is important: by “model for” (as opposed to “model of”) I am referring to the common distinction drawn, following Clifford Geertz (1973: 93), between a model that is *prescriptive*, setting an example for possible future practice, and one that is *descriptive*, setting out a picture of how things are. Here I am arguing for the former, a model that prescribes the use of paratexts, in this case running titles, to encourage a mode of reading thought to have been far more common for referential texts than for works of “literature”.⁹ To make this case, I will commence by studying, palaeographically and codicologically, the running titles them-

⁸ For the discovery of this act of over-writing, see Paris (1836–1848: I, 151) and Pickford (1960: 21–22; 1965: 248–249); for a recent discussion of the implications, see Tether (2017: 56–57).

⁹ The topic of genre distinction in medieval textual culture is famously problematic, as I discuss in more detail below. Unless otherwise stated, by “literature”, I mean specifically literary fictions, rather than works that purport to be, in the strictest sense, historiographical, or even pseudo-historiographical.

selves, to show that there is deliberate intent on Jacques' part in including them, rather than that their appearance is the whim of an illuminator/scribe/rubricator. I will then offer a statistical breakdown of the appearance of running titles in all of Jacques' extant manuscripts in an effort to categorise the works contained in his books into content-based groups, before turning to the crucial question of what it is that Jacques was attempting to achieve with his running titles. Here I will ask whether enacting change in respect of both the perception of genre (broadly defined; see below) and associated modes of reading indeed played a part in his enterprise.

Running titles: intention or accident?

The fact that the titles in Jacques' three copies of the *Lancelot-Graal* are all contemporary in spite of the anteriority of BnF, MS fr. 117–120 is supported by the following evidence: codicological features firmly date BnF, MS fr. 113–116 to around 1475 (Blackman 1993:II, 503–540), whilst the titles in BnF, MS fr. 112 are by the same hand as the main text, which we know belongs to Micheau Gonnot who, in his closing signature, helpfully provides a date of completion for the manuscript of 4 July 1470 (tome III, fol. 233r). The titles in BnF, MS fr. 113–116 are in *littera cursiva formata*, while those of BnF, MS fr. 117–120 are in *littera textualis formata*.¹⁰ Nonetheless, several of the letter forms bear close similarities to each other in both their composition and configuration, most notably in respect of, for example, their curvature/angularity, the level of fusion (or the absence thereof), the length of ascenders/descenders and their finishing strokes, the construction and orientation of compartments (e.g., on minuscule **p**), the use of transitional strokes (e.g. on minuscule **i**), and the execution of ligatures (see Figures 1 and 2). More generally speaking, too, the aspect and basic ductus that characterise the titles in both manuscripts are similar enough to suggest that they were executed within a roughly contemporaneous timeframe, and certainly not as early as c.1400 when BnF, MS fr. 117–120 was first made. One curiosity, however, is that there are rulings in MS fr. 117–120 into which the running titles have been written, and these appear to be contemporary with the manuscript's original manufacture, suggesting that the maker constructed the *mise-en-page* so as to give the option for titles and/or foliation to be added at a later date. BnF, MS fr. 113–116 does not contain such rulings. Nonetheless, the overall implication is that the running titles in BnF, MS fr. 117–120 were not included when the manuscript was first made, but rather are a later addition that likely occurred during Jacques' lifetime.¹¹ It is pure speculation, but we might reasonably wonder if sight of the unused rulings at least partially inspired Jacques into the act.

¹⁰ For an explanation of these palaeographic terms and these scripts' evolution, see Tesnière (2020).

¹¹ Fabry-Tehranchi (2009: 6) makes a brief mention of her belief that the titles were added "*a posteriori*" but does not speculate further as to the reason(s) for their inclusion.

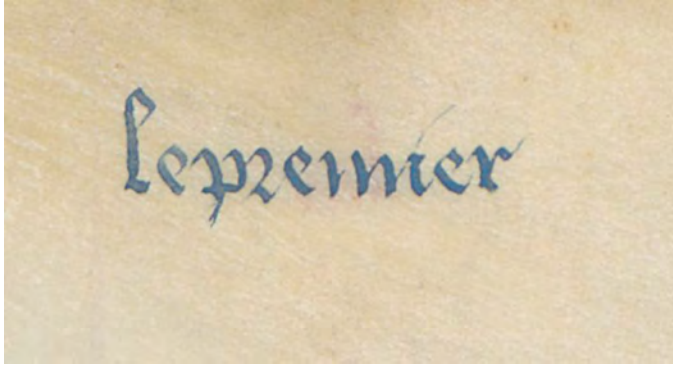


Figure 1: Letter strokes in running titles in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 113–116 (detail from MS fr. 113, fol. 2v). Photo: BnF.

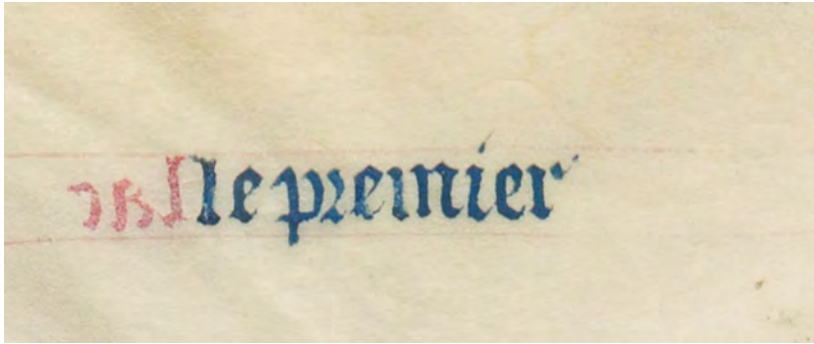


Figure 2: Letter strokes in running titles in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 117–120 (detail from MS fr. 117, fol. 63v). Photo: BnF.

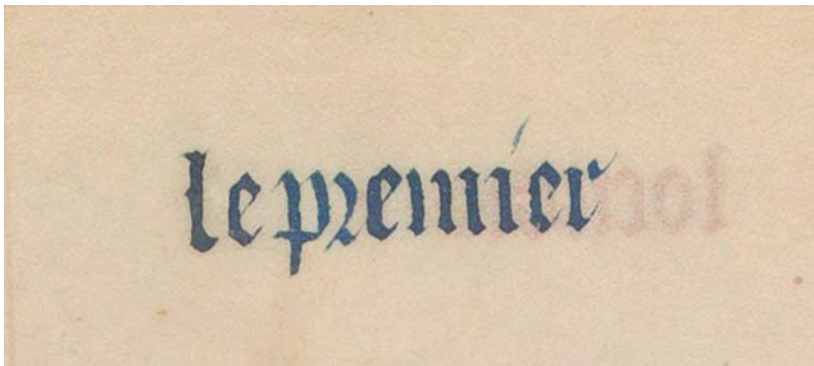


Figure 3: Letter strokes in running titles in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 99 (detail from fol. 11v). Photo: BnF.

Further confirmation of the hypothesis that the titles were included at Jacques' behest is provided by a series of other pieces of evidence, and it is necessary to discuss each of these in turn and in detail, to eliminate the possibility that someone other than Jacques was responsible for the inclusion of these navigational aids. The first example is provided by another of Jacques' commissioned manuscripts that is kept in Paris at the BnF, one of his copies of the *Tristan en prose*, dated 8 October 1463, and now housed under the shelfmark of MS fr. 99. This manuscript also contains the work of Gonnot as copyist and Evrard d'Espinques as illuminator (Blackman 1993: II,433–458). Here, as for MS fr. 113–116, no rulings are provided for titles, but titles are included in *littera textura formata*, just as in BnF, MS fr. 117–120. Moreover, they are palaeographically so close to those in BnF, MS fr. 117–120 that there can be little doubt that they are the work of, if not the same scribe, then very likely a common workshop (see Figure 3). There is also a “twin” of BnF, MS fr. 117–120, believed to have been produced in the same workshop (Pickford 1960:280), but made for a different commissioner/patron,¹² now Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 3479–3480. Arsenal, MS 3479–3480 is practically identical to BnF, MS fr. 117–120 in all respects of its layout, albeit with a different programme of illumination and currently bound into two rather than four volumes.¹³ However, Arsenal, MS 3479–3480 lacks both running titles and contemporary foliation, which supports the hypothesis that the titles and foliation in BnF, MS fr. 117–120 were not included by the original workshop, but rather are later additions.

Another piece of evidence in support of this notion is provided by BnF, MS fr. 113–116. In the third tome, MS fr. 115, two folios (fols 546 and 547) have been cut out and replaced at a later date for reasons that are now impossible to determine, but which may have had to do with damage caused, or textual errors discovered, after the manuscript's completion. BnF, MS fr. 113–116, we will remember, has running titles and accompanying foliation throughout. The two replacement folios, however, lack them, suggesting that their inclusion in the manuscript happened after all of the decoration in the manuscript, including the titles and foliation, was completed, and possibly by a party connected with the original workshop. Indeed, the hand of the

¹² This has been postulated to be Jean sans Peur, the nephew of Jean de Berry (Pickford 1960: 280), but the attribution has been questioned on more than one occasion (Hagopian van Buren 1988: 703; Doutrepoint 1906: no. 68). The book's second and last folio references identify the book as certainly having been in the Burgundian library according to its inventories of 1420 (Doutrepoint 1906: no. 68) and 1467 (Barrois 1830: no. 1235). Middleton (2006: 48 and 85 n. 4) explains the detail of a receipt from Jacques Raponde, dated 1405 (1406 by modern reckoning) but entered into the accounts in 1407 (transcribed variously by different critics, but perhaps most reliably in Cockshaw 1969:138), for the sale to Jean sans Peur of a book that seems to be the present Arsenal, MS 3479–3480. Middleton notes that not all of the aspects of the receipt provide a match for the book in the 1420 inventory, leading to an element of doubt as to whether Jean sans Peur's book is indeed the same as Arsenal, MS 3479–3480. Annie Combes (2009, 14) has more recently attempted a rehabilitation of the identification.

¹³ These manuscripts have complex binding histories. What is known about them is set out in Appendix B.

two replacement folios is extremely close to, if not the same as, that of the rest of the manuscript, while page layout and other decoration (initial letters and line space fillers) are identical, as is the format and hand of the catchword at the bottom of fol. 547v. There is also brown ink foliation on the top right of the recto of each of these two leaves, probably to indicate where they should be inserted and, though slightly cropped, these folio numbers tally with the leaves' placement as fols 546 and 547. Whilst there are only a very few letter forms to compare, the hand that inscribed this brown-ink foliation is unlikely to be later than 1475.¹⁴ Therefore, this repair probably happened not long after the manuscript's original manufacture, which has been dated to c.1475, and likely in the original workshop – in other words, during Jacques' lifetime. Once again, this lends weight to the notion that the running titles in the rest of the manuscript (and thus also in MS fr. 117–120) were added specifically at Jacques' commission, and not by the workshop that manufactured the manuscript.

Yet further support for this hypothesis is supplied by the known details of the three manuscripts' ownership after Jacques' trial and execution for treason in 1477,¹⁵ which led to the dispersal of his books (Blackman 1993: I, 19–27). BnF, MSS fr. 112, fr. 113–116 and fr. 117–120 ended up dispersed between at least two different owners,¹⁶ so it is unlikely a single subsequent owner added the titles – indeed, the fact that other books in Jacques' collection contain these running titles and later passed into various different hands, as we will see, serves to corroborate this further. Meanwhile, a final piece of evidence for the titles having been included at Jacques' behest is offered by the binding history of BnF, MS fr. 112, which now consists of three volumes, where once it is presumed there were four.¹⁷ The original “Book I” is now missing, and

¹⁴ Thanks to Godfried Croenen for confirming my tentative dating of this hand.

¹⁵ A detailed account of the life, trial, and execution of Jacques d'Armagnac is provided by de Mandrot (1890). The trial itself is fully described in Samaran & Favier (1966).

¹⁶ BnF, MS fr. 112, from the inclusion of the arms in the now third tome (fol. 1), appears to have passed to the Montejean family (Blackman 1993: II, 460; see also *BnF online catalogue* “François 112”, URL in bibliography), whilst BnF, MS fr. 113–116 seems to have been acquired by Pierre de Beaujeu, Duke of Bourbon, whose arms overpaint what may be those of Jacques on several occasions, and whose love knot and banderole appear in the margins (Blackman 1993: II, 504). Similar overpainting of what may have been a version of the Armagnac arms (likely Bourbon quartering Armagnac) in MS fr. 117–120 (tome I, fol. 1) suggests that it passed into the same hands as BnF, MS fr. 113–116 (*BnF online catalogue* “François 117–120”, URL in bibliography). Thanks to Roger Middleton for offering clarifications about the nature of the overpainted arms, which noted that whilst the originals are likely to have belonged to the Armagnacs based on other ownership evidence, there is not enough of them left visible to make as firm an identification as Blackman suggests.

¹⁷ Whilst this is the prevailing narrative, there is actually no documentary evidence that there was ever a first book, since the running titles at the beginning of the now first tome merely announce the title of the text (the second book of *Lancelot*). There does not necessarily *have* to have been a first book of *Lancelot*, rather, subsequent readers have simply assumed there should have been one. However, since there is some evidence that a roughly contemporary, but subsequent owner felt the need to obscure the absence of the first book (see below), I will proceed here on the basis that this widely

Bogdanow (2005:21) suggests that the most likely moment at which it went astray was during the manuscript's rebinding in the seventeenth century. However, the *BnF online catalogue* refers to the fact that Book I was in fact already missing ("manquait déjà") in the sixteenth century – not long after Jacques' death.¹⁸ It is known that BnF, MS fr. 112 was, at one time, bound as one large book though it is not known precisely when this was originally done: the *BnF online catalogue* explains that the manuscript was split from one into the current three volumes in the 1980s, and the inclusion of a very large spine (large enough to have covered the three extant volumes) pasted onto a flyleaf in the back of current tome I provides testimony of the manuscript's earlier format.¹⁹ The manuscript certainly seems to have been bound as one as early as 1622 in that it was given a single shelfmark in the 1622, 1645, and 1682 BnF catalogues, with each of these numbers still visible on the first folio.²⁰ However, this seems unlikely to have been how the manuscript was kept under Jacques' ownership: the fact that the three tomes are each independently foliated by the hand of the main scribe (unlike BnF, MSS fr. 117–120 and fr. 113–116, which are through-foliated) lends support to this notion. Additionally, the fact that Jacques' *ex libris* appears at the end of current tome I, while the arms and motto of the Montejehan family (who owned the book after Jacques but before the royal library) are painted in at the beginning of the present third tome, might also indicate that the volumes were separate prior to 1622.²¹ Indeed, if the manuscript was first bound as separate books, it becomes easier to imagine how Book I (assuming it existed) could have become separated from the rest prior to the manuscript's entry into the royal collection. Certainly, given that Jacques' books

held presumption is most likely correct even if it is not provable beyond doubt. Thank you to Roger Middleton for raising this point.

18 See also the summary of various historical catalogue descriptions in the study of BnF, MS fr. 112 by Pickford (1960: 17).

19 To confuse matters further, the 1980s binder opted to label the new spines of the volumes as tomes II–IV (reflecting their original designations), while the labels placed inside the covers refer to them as tomes I–III (reflecting their extant state).

20 Respectively, these are 105 (Omont, 1908–1921: II, 267), 18 (Omont 1908–1921: III, 4), and 6783 (Omont 1908–1921: IV.i.5).

21 These pieces of evidence, along with the inclusion of some sixteenth-century poems on the death of King Charles VIII in 1498 at the end of current tome I, the different treatment of decoration in current tome II, the fact that Jacques' *ex libris* at the end of current tome I is not subject to the same act of *dammatio memoriae* as that at the end of tome III, and the various anomalies in the order in which work was done in the volumes (as evidenced by the incorrect counting of foliation and miniatures in the extant tally in current tomes I and III), all seem to suggest that the manuscript was bound in separate volumes before it entered the royal library, and that these may have had separate histories. This also raises the perplexing question as to whether the books were in fact designed from the outset not as a set, but rather as three (or four?) separate books, and if so, whether the Montejehans actually came into possession of just one of the books (that in which their arms are found – current tome III) rather than all of them, meaning they were dispersed immediately after Jacques' death, or perhaps even earlier, before coming back together in the royal collection.

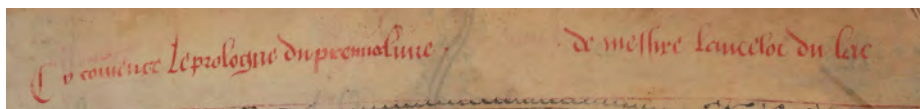


Figure 4: Visible amendment to running titles at the opening of the second, now first, tome of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 112, fol. 1r. Photo: BnF.

are known to have been dispersed somewhat chaotically after his execution (de Mandrot 1890: 274–316; Edlich-Muth 2014: 165),²² this would seem to provide a plausible moment for Book I's loss.

On the balance of probabilities, then, BnF, MS fr. 112 – unlike BnF, MSS fr. 117–120 and fr. 113–116 – was likely bound during Jacques' lifetime in separate books, and it was only when the volumes entered the royal collection (apparently under King François I, r. 1515–1547)²³ that they were bound as one.²⁴ Grasping the moment at which Book I was lost is important for our purposes because a subsequent owner of BnF, MS fr. 112 amended the running titles at the beginning of what is now Book I (formerly Book II) to try to cover up the first tome's apparent loss, but did so in a rather ham-fisted manner by squeezing in extra words (see Figure 4; Chase 2005: 529–531; Edlich-

²² Antoine Thomas (1881) notes that the execution of Jacques d'Armagnac also spelled the beginning of the apparent dispersal of the historical archives of the Counts of La Marche.

²³ Both the *BnF online catalogue* and Pickford (1960:17) state that the book arrived during the reign of François I, but neither gives a reference for this information. I suspect that they either infer this based on simple assumption (the manuscripts of the dukes of Bourbon were confiscated by François I in 1523 after the then duke, Charles, defected to the Emperor, and many if not most entered the royal library) or have extracted this from the BnF's historical catalogues, especially that reproduced in Omont (1908–1921: I, 20, 215, 381).

²⁴ This runs counter to Pickford's (1960:17) assessment that when BnF, MS fr. 112 entered the Bibliothèque des rois de France, "[i]l comportait les trois volumes actuels, reliés ensemble" [it was comprised of three individual volumes, bound together], though this is without a reference. Curiously, Pickford follows this with later descriptions of the manuscript from the library's second catalogue onwards based on Omont's (1908–1921) edition of the royal library catalogues, but none of Pickford's citations mentions the manuscript's bound status, and no reference is made at all to Omont's first tome, which contains the catalogue covering the time of King François I, when BnF, MS fr. 112 apparently entered the collection. Having checked the first tome of Omont (1908–1921, I: 20, 215, 381), there are several items mentioned that could be identified with BnF, MS fr. 112, some of which are bound in multi-volume sets, and some in single volumes, but none is immediately identifiable with BnF, MS fr. 112 because the descriptions are so vague that they could just as easily be identified with BnF, MS fr. 113–116 or MS fr. 117–120 (e.g. "Premier volume de Lancelot du Lac"). Strangely, Pickford (1960:18), just one page later in his study, appears to contradict himself by saying "qu'à cette époque le manuscrit se composait de trois tomes indépendants. C'est peut-être lors de son entrée dans la Bibliothèque Royale qu'ils furent reliés ensemble" [that at this time [after Jacques' death, but before the manuscript's entry into the royal collection] the manuscript was composed of three independent tomes. It is perhaps when they entered the royal library that they were bound together], which would appear to support the hypothesis that the manuscript was bound as one only after entering the royal library.

Muth 2014: 164–165). Given the appearance of the hand, it is likely that the amender came into possession of the book shortly after Jacques' death, supporting both hypotheses: that Book I was lost around that time and that the running titles were added in Jacques' lifetime.

It seems safe to assume, therefore, that the inclusion of titles constituted a personal preference of Jacques himself, and one of especial importance to him since he saw fit to have titles included in not only some of his fresh commissions, but also retrospectively into some of his inherited manuscripts. However, whilst an idiosyncratic practice, Jacques' penchant for doing this, even in second-hand books, should perhaps not surprise us. Visually marking his ownership of books in consistent ways was clearly important to him. For instance, he employed a regular tally formula across his manuscript collection, which indicated the number of folios and illuminations in the book (Blackman 1993: I,30–33). He also had a consistent *ex libris*, in which he would state that the book belonged to him and in which of his three libraries the book would be housed, often signing off with his own monogram (Blackman 1993: I,29–30).²⁵ He also often personalised the decoration of his books by having his arms, anagrams of his motto, and sometimes portraits of himself painted into them (Blackman 1993: I,34–47). Considerable work has been done on such ownership markers (see, for example, Delisle 1868–1881: I, 87–88 and III, 89ff; Blackman 1993: I, 29–47; Middleton 2006: 66–69), but as stated earlier, to my knowledge no one has yet explored Jacques' use of running titles specifically, other than merely noting their appearance in formal descriptions of Jacques' manuscripts (such as in the catalogue of Jacques' manuscripts compiled by Blackman 1993: II, 281–569). The question raised, then, is whether the inclusion of running titles, not only in Jacques' Arthurian manuscripts but also across his broader collection, was a practice employed for more than just aesthetic reasons.

Facts and figures

Around one hundred and forty-five of Jacques' manuscript volumes have survived (see Appendix A), and there may still be others as yet unidentified. The majority are now in the BnF and the Bibliothèque du château (formerly Musée Condé) in Chantilly, both of which provide excellent digital access to a large number of their holdings via the BnF's *Gallica* repository and the IRHT's *Bibliothèque virtuelle des manuscrits* respectively, but many are also to be found elsewhere.²⁶ Thanks to the regular tally and

²⁵ Jacques frequently inscribed the *ex libris* himself, and occasionally the tally, too, though sometimes he would employ a secretary to undertake the work, particularly in respect of the tally. His monogram seems always to have been inscribed personally (Blackman 1993: I, 29–34).

²⁶ *Gallica*, BnF and Arca, IRHT (URLs in bibliography).

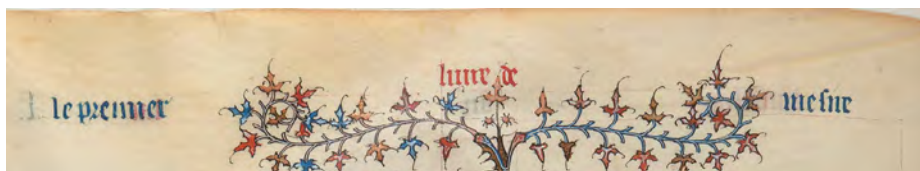


Figure 5: Example of irregular placement of titles to fit around already executed border decoration in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 117, fol. 50v. Photo: BnF.

ex libris noted above, Jacques' books are usually easy to identify, even though quite often such markers have either been erased or written over by later owners, typically in acts of *damnatio memoriae* following Jacques' execution (Middleton 2006: 66; Tether 2017: 162). Additionally, Jacques appears to have had a core set of artisans involved in the production of many of his manuscripts, some of whom seem to have worked exclusively for him (Blackman 1993: I,48–83). Thus, if one of these artisans can be identified in a manuscript's manufacture, it can sometimes indicate that a manuscript belonged to Jacques.

Of the one hundred and forty-five known manuscript volumes, thirty-five have running titles (see Appendix A).²⁷ Of these, nineteen are formerly owned books. In the case of fourteen of these formerly-owned volumes, the style of the titles seems to be contemporary with their original composition, thus we can disregard them as having been included at Jacques' behest, leaving five formerly-owned volumes into which Jacques had titles painted later (BnF, MS fr. 117–120 and Chantilly, Bibliothèque du château, MS 758 (311)), probably at the same time as having some of their miniatures repainted. Additionally, given the varying provenance of the fourteen containing pre-existing running titles, the titles cannot be the work of a single former owner, even though at least nine of the fourteen with pre-existing titles do seem to have been inherited by Jacques from members of his family (six from Jean de Berry and three from Jacques II de Bourbon)²⁸ – and this matter of family connection may be significant, a point to which I return later. Thus, Jacques' original commissions that contain running titles number sixteen.

Most of these sixteen volumes show that running titles were some of the last touches, often the very last, to be added to Jacques' manuscripts. Amongst the evidence for this is the slightly irregular placement of titles to fit around already-completed border decoration (see Figure 5). Two additional pieces of evidence in support of this are

²⁷ Appendix A contains a full listing of the manuscripts, with an enumeration of all the raw data set out here.

²⁸ Jacques II de Bourbon previously owned Chantilly, MS 4–5 and BnF, MS fr. 268, whilst Jean de Berry owned Geneva, MS 190, BnF, MSS fr. 2608, fr. 2810, fr. 20090, fr. 316 and Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 140.

provided by BnF, MS fr. 112. The first concerns the now second tome, formerly third, only some of whose illumination is complete (whereas decoration is fully executed in the current first and third tomes). The second tome has neither running titles nor border decoration, but there is some illumination executed, thus it seems clear that the titles were only to be added after the illuminator had completely finished his/her work. The second piece of evidence is seen in the now first and third tomes where the border decoration over-paints the titles. The hand of the titles, we will recall, is the same as that of the main text, and to the naked eye the red ink in which they are written seems to be the same as that of the manuscript's rubrics (also in the same hand), for both of which we know Micheau Gonnot to have been responsible. Most likely, therefore, he composed the rubrics and running titles post-illumination but prior to border decoration.

In sum, just over twenty-four percent of Jacques' extant manuscripts, both formerly owned and new commissions, contain running titles; the proportion of the collection that can be shown to have had running titles included whilst the volumes were owned by Jacques is a little smaller at just over fourteen percent. This is still not insignificant but cannot really be said to point to an extensive or pervasive practice on Jacques' part; still, though, it is high enough to suggest that the inclusion of running titles represents a deliberate choice, especially given the retrospective addition of titles to formerly owned books. The question that concerns us here is *why* Jacques took this deliberate action.

Why running titles?

Assuming the choice to include running titles is not simply arbitrary, we must consider the possibility that one or more of the particular artists or scribes who worked on Jacques' books, especially those exclusively in his employ, had something to do with it. Someone like the illuminator Evrard d'Espinques, for example, could be a plausible candidate, since he is known to have worked on BnF, MSS fr. 93, fr. 99, fr. 113–116 and fr. 6448, all of which contain running titles added under Jacques' ownership. In fact, Evrard is known from extant invoices to have written rubrics which, like running titles, are often inscribed after the rest of the manuscript is completed (Guibert 1895: 14–18; Blackman 1993: I,63–64).²⁹ However, Evrard is by no means the connecting factor between all manuscripts with running titles. Similarly, Micheau Gonnot worked on several of the manuscripts containing running titles added during Jacques'

²⁹ For other information and extant documentation related to Evrard d'Espinques, as well as a discussion as to the identity of his employer after the execution of Jacques d'Armagnac, see Thomas (1895).

lifetime (BnF, MSS fr. 93, fr. 99, fr. 112) – but, again, not on all of them. Indeed, both Evrard d'Espingues and Micheau Gonnot worked on others of Jacques' manuscripts that contain no running titles whatsoever, and I can find no other single artisan to connect the manuscripts with running titles added in Jacques' lifetime, thus we can safely exclude this option.

Another possibility is that the practice had to do with the library in which Jacques intended each volume to be kept. Upon inspection, however, once again the evidence does not stack up, for running titles are found in manuscripts intended for all three of Jacques' known libraries at Castres, Carlat, and La Marche (see Appendix A). A further possible explanation, and it is to this that I alluded in my introduction, may be to do with a kind of broad “generic resemblance”³⁰ (at least from Jacques' perspective) between particular kinds of texts, and his associated use of the volumes containing them (though we must always keep in mind that modern genre distinctions do not always map neatly on to medieval reading habits). As Table 1 shows, for example, the twenty-one manuscript volumes with running titles inserted in Jacques' lifetime fit broadly into four “categories”, or content-based groups: history/historiography, hagiography, Arthuriana, and philosophy (specifically Aristotelian philosophy). Table 1 also shows that, of the fourteen volumes with running titles included by former owners, most of them also fit into these same four broad categories, or “running title categories”, as I shall refer to them henceforth. The five exceptions amongst the formerly owned books are three Bibles, one law treatise, and one medical treatise.

Even if we disregard the five exceptions and assume that the four running title categories bear some meaning, the issue remains that the categories in question are not obviously linked to each other, particularly Arthurian narratives and philosophical treatises (specifically ones by Aristotle). This raises the question, though, as to whether the manuscripts *without* running titles can be linked via a similar exercise of categorising them according to their type of content, and whether this might help to determine a causal link between content-based groups and running titles in Jacques d'Armagnac's books. Figure 6 depicts the breakdown of text types contained in Jacques d'Armagnac's volumes that do not have running titles; the raw data is supplied in Appendix A. Three of the four running title categories also find representation here, with forty-four volumes *without* running titles belonging to them. Can the lack of running titles in as many as forty-four volumes that belong to our designated running title categories be plausibly explained?

³⁰ I borrow this helpful term from Busby (2002: I, 465) to describe the notion that, whilst medieval texts cannot be made to fit modern genre distinctions, from analyses of compilatory practice it does appear that medieval audiences saw “likenesses” or understood there to be “shared categories” amongst certain kinds of texts, thus leading to their placement alongside each other in codices and increasingly fitting them out with navigational devices to facilitate the kind of reading that most suited their perceived use of that kind of text; see also Busby (2008).

Table 1: Content-based groups in the manuscripts of Jacques d'Armagnac with running titles.

	Manuscripts with running titles inserted whilst owned by Jacques d'Armagnac	Manuscripts with running titles inserted prior to the ownership of Jacques d'Armagnac
History/historiography	Chantilly, MS 758 (Livy, <i>Trois decades</i>) Chantilly, MS 860 (Boccaccio, <i>Cas des nobles hommes et femmes</i>) The Hague, MS 10.A.17 (Jean de Courcy, <i>La Bouquechardière</i>) BnF, MS fr. 41 (Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>) BnF, MS fr. 50–51 (Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>) BnF, MS fr. 93 (<i>Livre de Marques de Rome</i>) Geneva, MS 190 (Boccaccio, <i>Cas des nobles hommes et femmes</i>)	BnF, MS fr. 268 (Livy, <i>Histoire romaine</i>) BnF, MS fr. 2810 (<i>Livres des merveilles</i>) BnF, MS fr. 2608 (<i>Grandes chroniques de France</i>) Vienna, MS 2544 (Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>) BnF, MS fr. 316 and Baltimore, MS W. 140 (Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>)
Hagiography	BnF, MS fr. 29 (Francisco Eximeñes, <i>Vita Christi</i>)	BnF, MS fr. 412 (<i>Légende dorée</i>) BnF, MS fr. 6448 (<i>Légende dorée</i>)
Arthuriana	BnF, MS fr. 99 (<i>Tristan en prose</i>) BnF, MS fr. 112, t. I and III (<i>Arthurian compilation</i>) BnF, MS fr. 113–116 (<i>Lancelot du lac</i>) BnF, MS fr. 117–120 (<i>Lancelot du lac</i>)	
Philosophy	BnF, MS fr. 207 (Aristotle, <i>Ethiques</i>)	Chantilly, MS 278 (Aristotle, <i>Ethiques</i>)
Bible		Chantilly, MS 4–5 (French Bible) BnF, MS fr. 20090 (Guiart de Moulins, <i>Bible historiale</i>)
Law		Giessen, MS 945 (Justinian, <i>Code</i>)
Medicine		Glasgow, MS Hunter 32 (Medical Writings)

In respect of the group of forty-four manuscripts without running titles, I leave to the side for a moment the twelve Arthurian volumes and concentrate first on the remaining thirty-two volumes. As set out above, running titles are among the last touches added to Jacques' manuscripts, typically being inserted only after the completion of the entire programme of illumination. Of the thirty-two volumes, twelve had incomplete or minimal decoration during Jacques' lifetime (most still do),³¹ which provides

³¹ These are BnF, MSS fr. 36–37, fr. 55–58, fr. 71–72, fr. 125, fr. 253, fr. 4619, fr. 16962. Miniatures for MS fr. 55–58, whilst now completed, only became so after Jacques' arrest and under the ownership of Pierre de Beaujeu (Blackman 1993: II, 343).

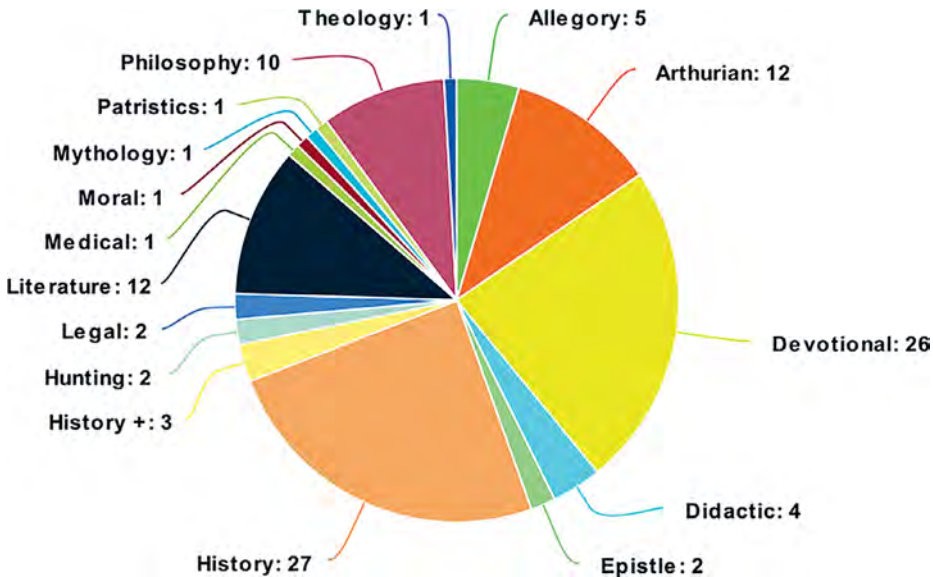


Figure 6: Breakdown of content-based groups in Jacques d'Armagnac's volumes without running titles.

a plausible explanation as to why they contain no running titles despite their belonging to the four running title categories. Related to this notion of incomplete/minimal decoration are BnF, MS n.a.fr. 20962, which has just one miniature, and Chantilly, MS 722, containing the third part of Vincent de Beauvais' *Miroir historiale*. Despite this latter volume containing all of its planned miniatures, I have categorised it as having incomplete decoration since its two companion volumes (contained in BnF, MS fr. 50–51) do have running titles, suggesting that the lack of running titles in the third volume is likely a product of that volume not being fully executed. Additionally, given that all of Jacques' manuscripts with running titles have a two-column layout, the fact that New York Public Library (NYPL), MS Spencer 18, Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS 79, and the now privately-owned *Chronique Martienne* all have single-column layouts may give a possible reason for their not including running titles. NYPL, MS Spencer 33, meanwhile, has elaborate border decoration, thus leaving no space for running titles, and BnF, MS fr. 9186, containing the *Compendium historial*, might in fact be miscategorised as belonging to "history", since it is a text with pervasive devotional qualities thanks to its being an abridgement of Augustine's *Cité de Dieu*.

Of the remaining thirteen volumes, a further six were formerly owned. Two of them (which together make up one manuscript) have particularly ornate foliation, leaving little to no room for running titles in the top margin (BnF, MSS fr. 247 and fr. 21013). Similar to this is MS 27 of the Schoyen Collection in Spikkestad, which has cen-

tred foliation, again leaving no room for running titles. The duke's tally in a further one of these six (BnF, MS fr. 2825) describes the text as "rommans", suggesting it may have been read or conceived of as literature (in the strictest sense), rather than as history. The final two of these six (BnF, MS fr. 246 and Chantilly, MS 768) reveal no reason for lacking running titles other than the fact that they are quite considerably older than the rest and, in terms of their visual *mise-en-page*, look rather different to most of the duke's other manuscripts, meaning that a programme of running titles might not have been deemed aesthetically appropriate.

This leaves seven volumes whose texts belong to the running title categories, but which do not have them. Two of these make up MS fr. 2660–2661, containing the third and fourth volumes of Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*. The whereabouts of the first two volumes are unknown, so it is possible that an answer to the lack of running titles might have lain in these, especially given the testimony provided by the second tome of MS fr. 112, which demonstrated that the decoration of multi-volume manuscripts was not necessarily executed in sequence. The Cracow codex of René d'Anjou's *Livre des tournois* (Muzeum Narodowe Biblioteka Czartoryskich, MS 3090), meanwhile, is believed to be one of five workshop replicas of BnF, MS fr. 2695, and so might have followed the model set by its exemplar (which contains no running titles) (Płonka-Balus 2005: 12, 18). Chantilly, MS 730, additionally, contains a sophisticated alternative finding aid in the shape of a table of contents linked to the foliation, perhaps negating the need for running titles. This leaves just the three volumes of BnF, MS fr. 283–285 with no obvious explanation as to why they, despite containing a text classifiable as a history, contain no running titles.

I return now to the twelve Arthurian manuscript volumes without running titles, where it transpires that the lack of running titles can be explained for these books by similar means. For example, one (Vienna, MS 2542) is formerly owned and has just one miniature. Three of them (Turin, MS 1622, Arsenal, MS 3325, BnF, MS n.a.fr. 6579) are much older than the others and their *mise-en-page* gives them a rather different aesthetic to Jacques' books with running titles. A further six (BnF, MSS fr. 106–109, containing the *Perceforest*, and Chantilly, MS 648/Dijon, MS 547, containing *Tristan*) have incomplete decoration. One volume is the second tome of BnF, MS fr. 112, in which the decoration has not been finalised; its two sister volumes, of course, do contain running titles and so we can surmise that had decoration been fully executed, this volume would also have received running titles. The final manuscript, NYPL, MS Spencer 34, contains *Le Livre du petit Artus* (usually now referred to as *Artus de Bretagne*). Whilst this text has an Arthurian pre-history, it is not set in the Arthurian world per se and does not conform to the usual tropes of Arthurian literature, having in fact been originally composed at least a generation or two after the early-thirteenth century's main wave of Arthuriana (Busby 2018: 428; Ferlampin-Acher 2017: I, xxxiii). Arguably, then, it might more accurately be categorised under "literature" rather than "Arthuriana" specifically.

In sum, therefore, that leaves just three volumes (of the forty-four total) for which no plausible explanation presents itself as to why, despite belonging to the defined running title categories, they do not in fact contain any running titles. I am mindful, of course, that this range of explanations may seem to stretch what is reasonable to suggest as support for the idea that the relatively large number of volumes without running titles, but which do belong to our categories, are mere exceptions to the rule. Can we even call them exceptions considering that there are in fact more of these outliers (forty-four) than there are conformers (thirty-five)? Similarly, there are five volumes *with* running titles that do not belong to the running title categories, though their status as formerly owned items arguably provides one of the more persuasive reasons for classifying them as exceptions. These caveats notwithstanding, I propose that the four running title categories should stand and, by way of conclusion, consider whether Jacques himself did indeed perceive a generic resemblance, to return to Busby's term, between the kinds of texts contained within certain manuscripts that led him to commission the inclusion of running titles in them. The question, therefore, is in what way(s) might Jacques have viewed these categories as related? Such a connection seems fairly straightforward between works of history, hagiography, and philosophy insofar as they are all reference works into which one might wish to dip *in medias res* and locate a specific textual moment with ease and precision, so why should non-Aristotelian philosophical works not be subjected to the same practice? It could, I suggest, have to do with the renewed interest in Aristotelian philosophy during Jacques' lifetime, whereby Aristotle's works became *the* foundation of philosophical study in universities; indeed, few periods in history can claim to have produced as many commentaries on Aristotle as the Renaissance (Lines 2012: 173–175). One could well imagine, therefore, that Jacques, whilst wishing for a convenient way to find important references at a glance in works of history and hagiography, might have included the works of Aristotle to facilitate these increased levels of usage – or perhaps he simply preferred the Aristotelian mode of philosophy.

What can be argued with relative ease for works of history, historiography, and even philosophy might seem rather less compelling, at least from our modern perspective, with regard to Arthurian literary texts, which *prima facie* appear more difficult to link generically with reference-type works. That said, there are in fact several examples of books from across the Middle Ages and Renaissance whose compilatory context suggests that Arthurian literature was indeed read as, or at least alongside, history. The works of Chrétien de Troyes, for instance, can be found compiled in between works of history in BnF, MSS fr. 1450 and fr. 794 (both thirteenth century), as well as in London, College of Arms, MS Arundel XIV (fourteenth century), leading scholars to suggest that the readers and/or planners of these manuscripts might have read Chrétien's Arthurian works in ways akin to how they read historical narratives (Tether 2017: 121; Trachsler 2003: 23–25; Pohl & Tether 2025; see also Weaver 2019: Ch. 1). In the world of print, too, Benoît Rigaud's *Lancelot* of 1591 contains a curious index and several other paratextual navigation aids suggesting that Rigaud expected his readers to dip in and out of the

book, and to locate certain sections and references periodically, just as they might do with reference works (Taylor and Tether 2023). Another case in point is provided by Durham, Ushaw College, MS 6, which sees the interpolation of Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* into Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-historical and Arthurian-inspired *De gestis Britonum* as a means of adding historical heft to the text (see Benjamin Pohl's contribution in Chapter 5; Pohl & Tether 2025). If multiple readers both prior to and after Jacques' lifetime demonstrably read Arthurian literature in this way, then why should we assume that Jacques himself would not have done the same?

I posit, therefore, that the use of running titles in Jacques' books does indeed represent a *prescriptive* model for enacting change, one that has the effect of manipulating the readers' perception of genre by encouraging them to adopt a different mode of reading. If our four running title categories do in fact relate to kinds of texts that were used, in some way or other, as reference works, then the inclusion of running titles as a means of navigation in manuscripts containing these kinds of texts makes perfect sense. This is less of a circular argument than it sounds, given that in a manuscript culture – and, to a degree, also in early print – the inclusion of every textual and/or paratextual feature represents a conscious and deliberate decision on the part of the book's planner. This is true even when copying from an exemplar that already includes running titles, where a choice must be made whether or not to carry them over. With regard to Jacques' books specifically, we must remember that we are considering the practice of a single individual, so if the inclusion of running titles indicates something of significance, then this significance needs to be understood, first and foremost, within the context of Jacques' *personal* reading practice. The books that Jacques chose to furnish with running titles, therefore, were very likely ones that he preferred to consult using a referential mode of reading and, moreover, ones to which he returned with particular frequency. Such an internal sense of hierarchy based on frequency of usage would also help explain why some, but not all, of Jacques' referential works received running titles. Again, their inclusion was always, and in every instance, a matter of choice. And even if we are talking primarily about a personal choice, one that resembles personal practice more than it does general custom, this should not prevent us from exploring the possibility that Jacques' use of running titles served as a model for enacting generic change upon texts contained in his manuscript books, and that their re-presentation through this paratextual apparatus had the effect of adjusting their readers' generic perception of the text(s).

One final caveat remains, though. There are various navigational aids that Jacques could have employed for the purposes of quick reference, ones that arguably would have offered more precise and user-friendly tools than running titles – rubrics, for instance, or tables of contents. Running titles, by contrast, even when accompanied by foliation as in many of Jacques' books, tend simply to repeat the title of textual sections, running over tens, sometimes hundreds, of folios. Indeed, both rubrics and tables of contents, as well as other paratextual devices, appear across Jacques' collection, but with nowhere near the same consistency as running titles, and not

inserted retrospectively into inherited volumes. Even if we were to conclude that the running titles' purpose had little more than a superficial navigational benefit, and think instead of the titles as mere decoration, as something aesthetically pleasing to Jacques, we still cannot deny that the books selected to receive them post-production were singled out for special treatment. Whether they constituted decoration or navigational aids, or a combination of both, we still must try to understand why running titles were Jacques' tool of choice over and above any of the other, arguably more suitable options. Perhaps the answer lies precisely in Jacques' inherited manuscripts, or rather in the models for reading practice set by their former owners – a factor to which I alluded earlier. Jacques might well have learnt and adopted this practice from those whom he admired: his bibliophile forebears, Jean de Berry and Jacques II de Bourbon. There is, after all, compelling evidence that Jacques respected deeply, and sought to emulate, their respective book collecting practices. For instance, he followed their *ex libris* format and wording very closely, and where he inherited a manuscript, he did not overwrite their original ownership markers, but rather added his own onto the end, as we saw in BnF, MS fr. 246 and elsewhere.³² As we will recall, nine of Jacques' volumes with running titles inserted prior to his ownership belonged to these two particular ancestors, and they all are either histories or Bibles. And though there are, unfortunately, no extant Bibles commissioned by Jacques himself with which to compare the inclusion (or not) of running titles, Jacques evidently, and quite deliberately, continued a family model for reading practice by giving running titles to books that contained texts used frequently for personal reference.

Crucially, Jean de Berry had not, though, added running titles to his *Lancelot du Lac* (BnF, MS fr. 117–120). The fact that Jacques added them at a later point, and ensured they appeared in his other Arthurian books directly inspired by this manuscript (BnF, MSS fr. 112 and 113–116, and his *Tristan* in BnF, MS fr. 99), suggests that his own way of reading Arthurian material marked the crossroads at which he departed from the practices of his venerated forebears and exercised his idiosyncrasy to a noticeable extent. Jacques seems to have read Arthuriana using a mode of reading more typically associated with history than with literature, and such a mode benefited from the inclusion of navigational aids such as running titles. Indeed, the very specific directives Jacques seems to have given in respect of the distinct but complementary illumination cycles in BnF, MSS fr. 112, fr. 113–116, 117–120 reveal them as precisely these kinds of “personal favourites”. Being able to navigate his way through his most treasured Arthurian books swiftly and accurately was a benefit evidently worth the additional effort and cost of including running titles, all the more so as they also added to these volumes' pleasing aesthetic appearance. As such, Jacques' “repackaging” of his favour-

³² The *ex libris* states: “Ce livre est au duc de Berry, Jehan. Et de present, par sa succession, au duc de Nemours, son fils, conte de la Marche. Jaques”. “This book belongs to Jean, Duke of Berry. And now, by his succession, to the Duke of Nemours, his son, count of La Marche. Jacques”. (BnF, MS fr. 246, fol. 306r).

ite books offers an important and instructive reminder that enacting generic change does not always have to be the result of some grand master plan or elaborate programmatic strategy, but can just as well, and perhaps more commonly, be an upshot of personal preference that on the one hand takes its cue from existing reading practices, or models for reading, but which, on the other, through accumulation and adaptation, becomes a new model for reading in its own right.

Appendix A – Table of Manuscripts

The table that follows lists all the known extant manuscripts of Jacques d'Armagnac. For all of the information related to dates of composition, provenance, libraries, scribes, and artists, I am indebted to the catalogue constructed by Blackman (1993: II,250–569; 1995). For manuscripts not listed by Blackman, I have used the holding libraries' own online catalogues and/or the IHRT's Jonas database. Manuscripts are listed alphabetically by shelfmark, except where they form part of a multi-volume set split across two modern repositories, in which case the volumes concerned are presented adjacent to each other. Old/New/Modified refers to whether the volume in question was made prior to Jacques d'Armagnac's ownership (Old), at his behest (New), or prior to Jacques' ownership but modified on his instruction (Modified). Shaded adjacent cells in the "Set" column indicate that volumes demarcated in this way form a multi-volume manuscript set.

Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 141	1350–1375	Guillaume de Deguilleville, <i>Pèlerinage de la vie humaine</i>	Devotional ?	?	?	?	Old	1	0	0	0	0
Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, MS 10467	c.1450	Justinian, <i>Institutes</i>	Law	?	?	Carlat	Old	1	0	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 142 (534)	1427	Francisco Eximeñes, <i>Lo libre dels doñes</i>	Theology ?	?	?	Castres	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 253 (685)	17 Jun 1430	<i>Statuta ducatus Sabaudiae</i>	Law	?	Not illuminated	Carlat	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 278 (575)	early 15th c.	Aristotle, <i>Ethiques</i>	Philosophy ?	?	?	La Marche	Old	1	0	1	1	1

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 292 (403)	1460–1475	Philippe de Mézières, <i>Songe du vieil pèlerin</i>	Allegory	?	Master of Ango Hours	Carlat	New	1	1	1	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 333 (591)	14th c.	Bernard de Gordon, <i>Lilium medicinae</i>	Medicine	?	Not illuminated	Carlat	Old	1	1	1	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 4 (1045)	early 14th c.	<i>Bible</i>	Bible	?	?	?	Old	1	1	1	1	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 5 (1045bis)	early 14th c.	<i>Bible</i>	Bible	?	?	?	Old	1	1	1	1	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 601 (905)	1460–1475	Boccaccio, <i>Théséide</i>	Literature	?	?	?	New	1	0	0	0	0

Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 648 (404)	c.1460	<i>Tristan en prose</i>	Arthuriana ?	?	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 527	c.1460	<i>Tristan en prose</i>	Arthuriana ?	?	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 651 (1486)	c.1470–1475	<i>Roman d'Alexandre</i>	Literature ?	Followers of Evrard d'Espinques	Carliat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 730 (455)	c.1460	Jean Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i>	History ?	?	?	New	1	0	0	0	1
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 758 (311)	1400–1450	Livy, <i>Trois décades</i>	History ?	Followers of Geneva Latini	La Marche	Mod- ified	1	1	1	1	1
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 768 (701)	14th c.	Suetonius, Sallust and Lucan, <i>Faits des Romains</i>	History ?	?	?	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 860 (401)	5 Feb 1465	Boccaccio, <i>Cas des nobles hommes et femmes</i>	History	Jacob Ten Eyken	Maitre François and associate Marche	New	1	1	1	1	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Cracow, Muzeum Narodowe Biblioteka Czartoryskich, MS 3090	c.1465–1470	René d'Anjou, <i>Livre des tournois du roi René</i>	History	?	School of Batholemy Van Eyck	?	New	0	1	0	0	0
Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, MS Oc. 54	1460–1475	Petrarch, <i>Remèdes de l'un et l'autre fortune</i>	Philosophy	?	Follower of Maître François	La Marche	New	1	1	0	0	0
Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS 79	c.1475	<i>Compendium historial</i>	History/ Devotional	?	Chief associate of Maître François	?	New	1	1	0	0	0
Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS 190	c.1411	Boccaccio, <i>Cas des nobles hommes et femmes</i>	History	?	?	?	Old	0	0	1	1	1

Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 945	13th c.	Justinian, Code	Law	?	The Bari Master	Carlat	Old	1	0	0	1	0
Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 32	1250–1300	Medical writings	Medicine	?	?	?	Old	0	0	0	1	0
The Hague, Rijksmuseum- Meermanno- Westreenianum, MS 10.A.11	c.1475	Augustine, <i>Cité de Dieu</i>	Devotional	?	Maître François	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Nantes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 181 (fr. 8)	c.1475	Augustine, <i>Cité de Dieu</i>	Devotional	?	Maître François	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
The Hague, Rijksmuseum- Meermanno- Westreenianum, MS 10.A.17	c.1470–1475	Jean de Courcy, <i>La Bouquechardière</i>	History	?	Artist of Arsenal	MS 4121?	New	1	0	0	1	1
New York, Public Library, MS Spencer 18	1468	<i>Chronique Martiniene</i>	History	Barthélemi Cusinnet?	Maître François	?	New	1	1	1	0	1
New York, Public Library, MS Spencer 33	c.1465–1475	Boccaccio, <i>Des cleres et nobles femmes</i>	History	?	Artist of Dresden, MS 54	?	New	0	0	0	0	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
New York, Public Library, MS Spencer 34	early 1460s	<i>Livre du petit Artus</i>	Arthuriana ?	?	Followers of the <i>Jouvenel des Ursins</i> Master	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 2315	1460	Heinrich Suso, <i>L'Horloge de sapience</i>	Devotional ?	?	?	?	New	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3325	13th c.	<i>Roman du roi Meliadus</i> and <i>Roman de Guiron le Courtois</i>	Arthuriana ?	?	?	Carlat	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5121	1470–1474	<i>Oeuvres diverses spirituelles</i>	Devotional	Micheau Gonnot	Followers of Maître François	Carlat	New	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 6329	1311	Brother Laurent, <i>La Somme le roi</i>	Morality ?	?	?	Carlat	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3717	c.1465	Gaston Phébus, <i>Livre de la chasse</i>	Hunting ?	?	?	?	New	0	1	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Imp. rés. J. 1224	1471	Cardinal Bessarion, <i>Epistolae</i>	Epistle	?	?	New	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 22	c.1470	Augustine, <i>Cité de Dieu</i>	Devotional	Gilles Gracien	Evraud d'Espingues	New	0	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 25	early 15 th c.	Augustine, <i>Cité de Dieu</i>	Devotional	?	?	Old	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 29	1475	Francisco Eximeñes, <i>Le Livre de Vita Christi</i>	Devotional	?	?	New	0	0	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 36	1460–1475	Leonardo Bruni, <i>Guerre Punique</i> and Livy, <i>Troisième Décade</i>	History	Same as BnF, MS fr. 16962 and fr. 125	Unexecuted	New	1	1	0	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 37	1460–1475	Livy, <i>Quatrième Décade</i>	History	Same as BnF, MS fr. 16962 and fr. 125	Unexecuted	New	1	1	0	1

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 41	c.1465–1475	Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>	History	?	Master of Jacques de Luxembourg and associate	?	New	1	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 50	1459–1 Sep 1463	Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>	History	Gilles Gracien	Mître François and associate	Carlat	New	1	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 51	1459–1 Sep 1463	Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>	History	Gilles Gracien	Mître François and associate	Carlat	New	1	1	1	1	1
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 722 (1196)	1459–1 Sep 1463	Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>	History	Gilles Gracien	Mître François and associate	Carlat	New	1	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 55	1467–1475	Jean Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i>	History	?	School of Tours	Carlat	New	1	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 56	1467–1475	Jean Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i>	History	?	School of Tours	Carlat	New	1	1	1	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 57	1467–1475	Jean Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i>	History	?	School of Tours	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 58	1467–1475	Jean Mansel, <i>Fleur des histoires</i>	History	?	School of Tours	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 71	1471–1476	Jean de Wavrin, <i>Chroniques anciennes d'Angleterre</i>	History	?	Unexecuted	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 72	1471–1476	Jean de Wavrin, <i>Chroniques anciennes d'Angleterre</i>	History	?	Unexecuted	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 93	1466	<i>Livre de Marques de Rome</i>	History	Micheau Gonnot	Evraud d'Espingues	?	New	0	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 99	8 Oct 1463	<i>Tristan en prose</i>	Arthuriana	Micheau Gonnot	Evraud d'Espingues	?	New	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 106	1471–1475	<i>Perceforest</i>	Arthuriana	I. du Ny	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 107	1471–1475	<i>Perceforest</i>	Arthuriana	I. du Ny	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 108	1471–1475	<i>Perceforest</i>	Arthuriana	I. du Ny	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 109	1471–1475	<i>Perceforest</i>	Arthuriana	I. du Ny	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 112(i)	4 Jul 1470	<i>Lancelot du Lac</i> (Arthurian Compilation)	Arthuriana	Micheau Gonnot	?	Castres	New	1	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 112(ii)	4 Jul 1470	<i>Lancelot du Lac</i> (Arthurian Compilation)	Arthuriana	Micheau Gonnot	?	Castres	New	1	1	0	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 112(iii)	4 Jul 1470	<i>Lancelot du Lac</i> (Arthurian Compilation)	Arthuriana	Micheau Gonnot	?	Castres	New	0	0	1	1	1

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 113	c.1475	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?	Follower of Master of Livy/ Evrard d'Espinques/Master of BnF, MS fr. 114	New	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 114	c.1475	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?	Follower of Master of Livy/ Evrard d'Espinques/Master of BnF, MS fr. 114	New	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 115	c.1475	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?	Follower of Master of Livy/ Evrard d'Espinques/Master of BnF MS fr. 114	New	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 116	c.1475	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?	Follower of Master of Livy/ Evrard d'Espinques/Master of BnF, MS fr. 114	New	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 117	c.1404	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?	Master of 1404 (repainted c.1465 by Master of Jacques d'Armagnac and follower of the <i>Jouvenel des Ursins</i> Master	Modified	1	0	1	1

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 118	c.1404	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?		Master of 1404 (repainted c.1465 by Master of Jacques d'Armagnac and follower of the <i>Jouvenel des Ursins</i> Master	Carlat	Mod-ified	1	0	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 119	c.1404	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?		Master of 1404 (repainted c.1465 by Master of Jacques d'Armagnac and follower of the <i>Jouvenel des Ursins</i> Master	Carlat	Mod-ified	1	0	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 120	c.1404	<i>Lancelot-Graal</i>	Arthuriana ?		Master of 1404 (repainted c.1465 by Master of Jacques d'Armagnac and follower of the <i>Jouvenel des Ursins</i> Master	Carlat	Mod-ified	1	0	1	1	1

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 125	1460–1475	Aristotle, <i>Politiques et économiques</i>	Philosophy ?	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 16962	1460–1475	Aristotle, <i>Ethiques</i>	Philosophy ?	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 175	1460–1475	Jean Cassien, <i>Institutions monastiques and Collations des pères</i>	Patristics ?	Unexecuted	Carlat	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 193	1462	<i>Jardin des nobles</i>	Devotional ?	?	New	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 207	1460–1475	Aristotle, <i>Ethiques</i>	Philosophy ?	Unexecuted	?	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 246	1364	<i>Livre de Suetoine</i>	History ?	?	Old	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 247	c.1410–1420	Flavius Josephus, <i>Les antiquités Judaïques</i>	History ?	Josephus and Harvard Hannibal Masters (repainted c.1462–1465 by Jean Fouquet)	Carlat	1	0	0	1

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS n.a.fr. 21013	c.1410–1420	Flavius Josephus, <i>Les antiquités Judaïques</i>	History	?	Josephus and Hannibal Masters (repainted 1480? by followers of Jean Fouquet)	Harvard Carlat	Mod- ified	1	0	0	0	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 253	1471–1475	Raoul le Fèvre, <i>Recueil des histoires de Troyes</i>	History	?	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 268	end of 14th c.	Livy, <i>Histoire Romaine</i>	History	?	?	?	Old	1	0	0	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 283	14 Jan 1469	Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>	History	Jacob Ten Eyken	?	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 284	14 Jan 1469	Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>	History	Jacob Ten Eyken	?	?	New	0	0	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 285	14 Jan 1469	Valerius Maximus, <i>Memorabilia</i>	History	Jacob Ten Eyken	?	New	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 316	24 Nov 1333	Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>	History	?	Maitre du Roman de Fauvel	Old	0	0	1	0
Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 140	24 Nov 1333	Vincent de Beauvais, <i>Miroir historial</i>	History	?	Maitre du Roman de Fauvel	Old	0	0	1	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 372	13th–14th c.	Jacquemart Gelée de Lille, <i>Roman de Renard</i>	Literature	?	?	Old	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 412	1285	<i>Légende Dorée</i>	Hagiography	?	Henri Carlat	Old	1	0	1	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 425	beginning 15th c.	<i>Ci nous dit Moustardier</i>	Devotional	Jean le Moustardier	?	Old	1	0	0	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 458	1460–1475	Heinrich Suso, <i>L'Horloge de sapience</i>	Devotional	?	?	?	New	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS n.a.fr. 23728	1460–1475	Heinrich Suso, <i>L'Horloge de sapience</i>	Devotional	?	?	?	New	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 579	mid-15th c.	<i>Régime des princes</i>	Didactics	?	Artist of BnF MS fr. 541 (repainted 1460–1475 by follower of Jacques de Luxembourg)	?	Mod- ified	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 600	c.1475	Martin le Franc, <i>Estrif de fortune et de vertu</i>	Philosophy	?	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 602	1400–1425	Guillaume de Deguilleville, <i>Pélerinage de l'Aime</i>	Devotional	?	?	Carlat	Old	1	1	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 766	c.1400	<i>Roman de Maugis d'Aligremont and Renaut de Montauban</i>	Literature ?	?	Castres	Old	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 783	c.1275–1300	Benoit de Sainte-More, <i>Roman de Troie</i>	Literature ?	?	?	Old	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 784	c.1275–1300	<i>Roman de Thèbes and Roman d'Enée</i>	Literature ?	?	?	Old	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 790	c.1300–1325	Lambert le Court, <i>Roman d'Alexandre and Vengeance d'Alexandre</i>	Literature ?	?	Castres	Old	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 796	c.1465	<i>Geste de Guillaume d'Orange</i>	Literature	Micheau Gonnot	?	Not illuminated	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 818	c.1250	Gautier de Coinci, <i>Miracles de Notre-Dame</i>	Devotional ?	?	?	Old	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 857	c.1325–1350	Matfré Ermengau, <i>Breviari d'Amor</i>	Devotional ?	?	Carlat	Old	1	0	0	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 870	1400–1450	<i>Ovide moralisé</i>	Allegory	?	Drawings added 1460–1475 by an artist of Jacques d'Armagnac	?	Mod- ified	0	1	0	0	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 916	20 Apr 1474	Saint Bernard, <i>Lamentations</i>	Devotional	Micheau Gonnot	Master of Morgan, MS 366	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 921	1463–1476	Saint Bonaventura, <i>Méditations de la vie notre Seigneur</i>	Devotional	?	Maître de Vivonne	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 922	1463–1476	Saint Bonaventura, <i>Méditations de la vie notre Seigneur</i>	Devotional	?	Maître de Vivonne	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 996	c.1470–1475	<i>Miroir de l'Ame</i>	Devotional	?	?	?	New	0	1	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1003	1460–1475	Jean Gerson, <i>Miroir de l'Âme</i>	Philosophy	Micheau Gonnot?	Follower of Fouquet-Bourdichon?	?	New	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1034	c.1470–1475	Robert Blondel, <i>Les douzes perils d'enfer</i>	Allegory	?	School of Tours	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1137	c.1470–1475	Guillaume de Deguilleville, <i>Pèlerinage de la vie humaine</i>	Allegory	?	Unexecuted	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1291	c.1465	Gaston Phébus, <i>Livre de la chasse</i>	Hunting	?	Follower of Jean Fouquet?	?	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1468	c.1460–1475	Albertanus, <i>Livre de Melibée et de Prudence and Lucidaire</i>	Devotional	?	Unexecuted	Castres	New	1	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1488	c.1470–1475	<i>Florimont</i>	Literature	?	Artist of BnF, MS fr. 113–116?	?	New	0	1	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1497	c.1465	<i>Geste de Guillaume d'Orange</i>	Literature	?	Unexecuted	Carlat	New	1	1	0	1

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1531	c.1390	Jean de Venette, <i>Histoire de trois Maries, filles de Sainte Anne</i>	Devotional	?	?	Castres	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1532	c.1390	Jean de Venette, <i>Histoire de trois Maries, filles de Sainte Anne</i>	Devotional	?	?	Castres	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1559	end of 13th c.	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, <i>Roman de la Rose</i>	Literature	?	?	Carlat	Old	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1988	c.1470–1475	Aeneus Silvius Piccolomini, <i>Disputacion touchant la misere des curiaux</i>	Epistle	?	Unexecuted	?	New	1	1	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2154	c.1460–1475	<i>Conte de papagaulx</i>	Literature	Micheau Gonnot?	?	?	Carlat?	New	0	0	0	0	0								
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2608	early 15th c.	<i>Grandes chroniques de France</i>	History	?	?	?	?	Old	1	0	1	1	1								
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2660	c.1470	Jean Froissart, <i>Chroniques de France, d'Angleterre et de pais voisins</i>	History	?	?	?	Castres	New	1	1	1	0	0								
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2661	c.1470	Jean Froissart, <i>Chroniques de France, d'Angleterre et de pais voisins</i>	History	?	?	?	Castres	New	1	1	1	0	0								
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2810	c.1400–1425	<i>ivre des merveilles</i>	History	?	?	?	Carlat	Modified	1	1	1	1	0								
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 2825	c.1275–1300	Guillaume de Tyr, <i>L'Histoire de Eracles Empereur and La conquest de la terre d'outremer</i>	History/ Literature	?	?	?	?	Old	1	1	1	0	0								

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 4619	c.1475	<i>Chronique de Normandie</i>	History	Gilles Gracien	Unexecuted	?	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 5936	1467	Clément Prinsault, <i>Traité du Blazon d'Armes</i>	Didactics	Clément Prinsault	Clément Prinsault	?	New	0	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 6448	c.1475	Jacobus de Voragine, <i>Legende Dorée</i>	Hagio- graphy	?	Evrard d'Espingues	?	New	1	1	1	1	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 9186	c.1475	<i>Compendium historial</i>	History/ Devotional	?	Maître François	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12444	early 15th c.	<i>Le livre du roi Botrus</i>	Philosophy	?	Not illuminated	Carlat	Old	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 19810	1466–1470	Ramon Lull, <i>Ordre de chevalerie</i> and <i>Miroir de l'Église</i>	Didactics	?	Evrard d'Espingues	?	New	1	1	0	0	0

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 20090	c.1380–1390	Guiart des Moulins, <i>Bible historiale</i>	Bible	?	?	?	Old	0	0	0	1	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 24380	c.1475	Jean du Bueil, <i>Le Jouvencel</i>	Didactics	?	Evrard d'Espingues	?	New	0	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 1352	end of 14th c.	Book of Hours	Devotional	?		?	Old	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 15070	1450–1475	Leonardo Bruni, <i>De bello a Gothis in Italia gesto</i>	Philosophy	?		?	New	0	0	0	0	1
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS n.a.fr. 6579	13th c.	<i>Tristan en prose</i>	Arthuriana	?		?	Old	1	0	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS n.a.fr. 6591	early 15th c.	Brunetto Latini, <i>Livre du trésor</i>	Philosophy	?	Follower of <i>Jouvencel</i>	?	Modified	1	0	0	0	0
					Master, opening miniature added in early 1460s							

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS n.a.fr. 20962	1463–1475	<i>Chronique d'Écosse</i>	History	?	Follower of Harley Froissart	Castres	New	1	1	0	0	0
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Rothschild 2755	1460s	Pseudo-Aristotle, <i>Livre du gouvernement des rois et des princes</i>	Philosophy	?	?	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0	0
Spikkestad, Schoyen Collection, MS 27	c.1375	<i>Histoire ancienne</i>	History	Raulet d'Orléans	School of Jean Bondol, repainted elements 15th c.	?	Modified	0	0	0	0	1
Turin, Biblioteca nazionale universitari, MS 1622 (L.I.7–8–9)	15th c.	<i>Alixandre l'orphelin, Guiron le Courtois, Roman de Meliadus, Ségurant le Brun</i>	Arthurian	?	Evrard d'Espingues	?	New	0	0	0	0	1
Unidentified private owner	1458	<i>Chronique Martinienne</i>	History	?	?	?	New	1	1	0	0	0

Unidentified private owner	15th c.	Book of Hours	Devotional ?	Follower of Maître François	?	Old	0	0	0	0
Unidentified private owner	c.1475	Book of Hours	Devotional ?	Follower of Maître François	?	New	0	0	0	0
Unidentified private owner	c.1466	Book of Hours	Devotional ?	Evraud d'Espinques	?	New	0	0	0	0
Unidentified private owner	c.1475	Book of Hours	Devotional ?	Master of MS 117–120 and Evraud d'Espinques	?	New	0	0	0	0
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2542	c.1300	<i>Tristan en prose</i>	Arthuriana ?	Miniature added 1460s by follower of <i>Jouvenel</i> Master	Carlat	Modified	1	0	0	0
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2544	c.1470	Valerius <i>Maximus</i> , <i>Memorabilia</i>	History ?	Artist of <i>Le Bouquechardiere</i> /Master of Jacques d'Armagnac	Carlat	New	1	1	1	1
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2551	c.1470	Phillippe de Mézières, <i>Songe du vieil pèlerin</i>	Allegory ?	Maître François	?	New	0	0	0	0
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2559	early 1470s	Petrarch, <i>Remèdes de l'un et l'autre fortune</i>	Philosophy ?	Maître François	Carlat	New	1	1	0	0

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Shelfmark	Date	Content	Text type	Scribe	Artist	Library	Old/ New/ Mod- ified	Ex libris	Tally	Running titles	Foliation	Set
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbiblio- thek, MS 2586	1472-1475	Raoul le Fèvre, <i>Livre du fort Hercules</i>	Mythology	Johannes Leode- gary	Master of Jacques d'Armagnac	?	New	1	1	0	0	0

Appendix B – Binding Histories of Arsenal, MS 3479–3480 and BnF, MSS fr. 113–116 and fr. 117–120

According to the inventories of 1420 (Doutrepoint 1906: no. 68) and 1467 (Barrois 1830: no. 1235), Arsenal, MS 3479–3480 was likely originally bound as one item (it is described as “ung gros livre” and “ung autre grant livre” respectively). It does not appear in the 1487 inventory of the Burgundian library, since it appears to have been given, with several other books, to Philippe le Croy (d. 1482), as evidenced by the arms of Croy painted on the opening folio of the now first tome and an *ex libris* (now erased) on the last folio of the now second tome (Middleton 2006: 64–65). The content of the *ex libris* was recorded in 1746 by J. B. Achille Godefroy as stating “Ce fenist l’histoire Lancelot du Lac. Ce sont les trois volumes de messire Lancelot du Lac comprises en un ou il y a 121 [altered to or from 124] histoires le quel est a Monsieur Charles de Croy Conte de Chimay” ‘Here ends the story of Lancelot du Lac. These are the three books of Sir Lancelot du Lac contained in one, in which there are 121 [altered to or from 124] illustrations, and which belongs to M. Charles de Croy, Count of Chimay’ (Lille, Médiathèque municipale Jean Lévy (formerly Bibliothèque municipale), Fonds Godefroy, MS 93, fol. 96). When entering the Croy library, then, the book was still in one volume, and this is also supported by the fact that there is no note at the end of the now first tome, and no arms of Croy at the beginning of the now second tome. In his 1746 notes, though, Godefroy describes the book in front of him as in two volumes, meaning that the book was split at some point between 1486 (the collation of the Croy library) and 1746 when Godefroy saw it. The most likely moment is between 1511 when the Croy manuscripts were bought by Margaret of Austria and 1523 when an inventory of the library at Malines describes the only *Lancelot* as being in two volumes.

Documentary evidence suggests a similar story for the binding of BnF, MS fr. 117–120, which is well described in the *BnF online catalogue* and summarised in Middleton (2006: 45). The inventory of books in Jean de Berry’s will and testament (Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 841) describes the book as “un grant livre” (fol. 236v), whilst the 1622 inventory compiled by Nicolas Rigault gives the book just one shelfmark – 64 (Omont 1908–1921: II, 264), as does that of 1645 by Pierre and Jacques Dupuy – 55 (Omont 1908–1921: III, 6), and the traces of both of these are visible on the first folio of the now first tome. None of the other tomes have such numbers, thus the manuscript was likely bound as one until at least 1645. Nicolas Clement’s 1682 catalogue, however, gives the manuscript four shelfmarks (6788–6791) and describes it as “en 4 volumes” (Omont 1908–1921: IV.i,5), and these numbers appear on the first folio of each of the present four volumes, suggesting it had by this time been split into four. Other assorted evidence from the stamps used on the current bindings allow the date of this division to be narrowed to 1670–1675 (for the detail, see *BnF online catalogue*). The Berry inventory and the 1622 and 1645 shelfmarks do not entirely rule out the

notion of a multi-volume set, of course, but when taken together with the through-foliation that accompanies the running titles apparently added retrospectively by Jacques, they might be seen as indicators that the work was indeed contained in a single volume, at least in Jacques' lifetime. Its likeness to Arsenal, MS 3479–3480, though, suggests it was probably bound as one even beforehand, from the moment of its creation.

Whilst the *BnF online catalogue* does not give similar information about BnF, MS fr. 113–116, the same historic catalogues show that it follows the pattern of BnF, MS fr. 117–120, in that it has single shelfmarks in 1622 (63; Omont 1908–1921: II,264) and 1645 (54; Omont 1908–1921: III,6), present only on the first folio of the first tome and, in that of 1682, alongside a description reading “en 4 volumes”, it has the four shelfmarks of 6784–6787 (Omont 1908–1921: IV.i,5), which are present on the first folio of each of the present four tomes. The similarity of the current binding to that of BnF, MS fr. 117–120 means we can probably assume a similar date for the split of BnF, MS fr. 113–116 from one into four tomes, and that it probably existed as one single volume under Jacques' ownership, even if the note on fol. 735v of the final tome documenting the book being gifted from Jean de Chabannes to Jacques de Coligny on 3 June 1496 indicates it did not arrive in the royal library by the same means (the confiscation of the Bourbon library in 1523). I am indebted to Roger Middleton for this information.

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Jonatan Pettersson

7 The Vernacularisation of Documentary Writing in the Medieval Swedish Realm

The choice of language for a text or utterance serves practical, communicative purposes, but it is not merely a functional consideration. Language choice is intertwined with identities and power structures, manifesting aspects such as inclusion and exclusion, high and low status, and authority and challenges to the established authority – a potential expressed in the notion of language as a “non-neutral medium” (Duranti 2013). Individuals proficient in several languages may have the opportunity to choose, but access to languages typically varies within a population. A society with multiple languages serving distinct functions is commonly characterised by the concept of *diglossia* (Ferguson 1959), with one variety or language reserved for official and high-prestige domains, typically involving writing, and another variety or language used for private communication that is primarily spoken and holds lower prestige.¹ The order of languages is generally considered stable over time, but attitudes may undergo change leading to a language shift (Fishman 1964). Typically, research on language shifts concerns spoken languages, but the case which will be discussed here is a shift in the language of writing.²

Within the scope of medieval Latinate Europe, some of the most notable instances of language choice renegotiation occur during the Renaissance movement and the Reformation, during which vernacular languages were advocated for literary and religious discourse. The heightened significance of these historical movements can be attributed, in part, to their association with exceptional writers such as Dante Alighieri and Martin Luther, as well as their involvement in literate domains of high prestige. The vernacularisation of practical documentary writing – the composition of legal and

1 Sociolinguistic research relating to Ferguson’s (1959) concept of diglossia has mainly been concerned with spoken language from a modern, synchronic perspective rather than historical diachronic shifts of language in writing. The concept is, however, not utilised analytically here, but employed for general descriptive purposes on the macro-level.

2 Change in the choice of language is usually described with the concepts of *shift* and *switch*. Language shift usually refers to large-scale processes whereby a population starts to use one spoken language instead of another, whereas switch typically is connected with temporary and/or instantaneous alteration between different languages in the same conversation (code-switching). The investigation of the language shift in Flandres in Kadens (2001), which recurs as comparandum in the present investigation, uses the term switch for the change in the choice of language, but, here, the concept of shift is utilised. It is sometimes suggested that code-switching might pave the way for a language shift (Myers-Scotton 1993: 220–224), but the relevance of such claims for the shift from Latin to Old Swedish will not be explored here, but hopefully in a future publication.

economic documents – has received less widespread attention.³ Nevertheless, the shift in document language from Latin to the vernaculars that occurred in medieval Europe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries had profound effects on societies and textual culture, potentially even surpassing the impact of vernacularisation in other domains of written culture.⁴

In the medieval Swedish realm, this transition occurred in the middle of the fourteenth century. Domestic juridical and economic documents dating back to the late twelfth century, like those in other parts of Europe, were written in Latin.⁵ The first preserved document in the Swedish language does not appear until 1330, and until around 1350, there are only sporadic instances of charters in Swedish (Bäärnhielm 1984). However, in the two decades following the mid-century, Swedish rapidly became more prevalent than Latin, although Latin continued to be used for different segments of society (Bäärnhielm 1984: 24–25). The Swedish history of the vernacularisation of documentary writing thus unfolded in a later phase compared to other parts of Europe, yet earlier than some other regions.⁶ Among the Scandinavian-speaking cultures, vernacular documents in the West Nordic area (modern Iceland and Norway) date back to the early thirteenth century. In the Danish realm, the first preserved documents stem from the last decades of the fourteenth century, leaving the Swedish realm in the middle.⁷ However, there had been vernacular writing in

3 In accordance with widely used terminology in international research, I use the term “document” and “documentary writing” for the material under study rather than the more specific category of “charter” or its historical and vernacular counterpart “letter”. Kadens (2001) offers a useful definition of “document” as “an umbrella term to describe the non-literary, non-educational, non-religious texts, usually of no great length, which served to record matters of legal, judicial, fiscal, demographic, commercial, and administrative concern” (2001: 27), without requesting the specific formal and legal status of a charter. However, the vast majority of the preserved material under study would be defined as charters.

4 See an overview in Kadens (2001: 4, footnote 3), who also points out this difference between literary and documentary vernacularisation (2001: 25–26).

5 The beginnings of such documentary writing in the Swedish realm are unknown to us, but the oldest preserved written communication addressed to Swedish kings from the papal administration stems from around 1080 (SDHK nos. 169, 170). In the *Vita Anskarii*, written by the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen Rimbart (d. 888) about the predecessor to his chair, Ansgar, and his missionary travels among the Swedes 829 to 831, it is mentioned that he returned to Louis the Pious with a letter that the king of the Swedes should have written himself. Nothing else is known of this alleged communication (Larsson 2009: 1–2). A Scandinavian overview and analysis of the first traces and development of literacy is provided in Nedkvitne (2004).

6 For a comparative overview of the vernacularisation process in different parts of medieval Europe, see Brunner (2009), especially p. 37.

7 The vernacularisation of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark is compared in Nedkvitne (2004: 178–179) and the Danish example is further discussed in Knudsen (2018: 121–124) and is the topic of Vrieland (forthcoming).

Sweden before 1330 in other genres, especially provincial laws, since the thirteenth century, and in epigraphic runic writing for about a thousand years.⁸

The shift to the use of Swedish in documentary writing after 1350 is commonly attributed to the new regulations outlined in the first Swedish National law (MELL = *Magnus Erikssons Landslag*, ‘Magnus Eriksson’s National Law’), associated with King Magnus Eriksson (1316–1374), which was finalized around the mid-fourteenth century. The new law mandated that deeds be issued for transactions involving real estate property and legal judgments, specifying that these documents were to be written in Swedish. In the Provincial laws that preceded the National law, no such regulations existed.

While previous research has provided an overall description of the language shift, the main objective here is to investigate this process in detail.⁹ The goal is to gain a closer understanding of the historical process of change, its different components and phases, and how the shift became possible. Specifically, this research seeks to answer questions such as: How did the change actually unfold? What would a model of a language shift of this kind look like?

Overview of documentary writing in the Swedish realm 1300–1370

The investigation takes its starting-point in a quantitative overview of documents from the period 1300–1370 in the national edition of *Diplomatarium Suecanum*. Previous investigations have considered the surviving material as a whole, but here a motivated sample will be used to reach a more precise view of the development. Needless to say, caution is necessary in the interpretation of quantitative data in this kind of material, since the preserved documents only make up a tiny fraction of the documents once written, and preservation conditions varied considerably among owners of documents.¹⁰ Still, as we will see further on, there are changes and tendencies in the statistics that can hardly be explained by a change in preservation circumstances

⁸ For an overview of ancient runic sources, see Birkmann (2002), and for medieval Swedish texts, see Jörgensen (2002). An overview of Scandinavian Viking Age runes is provided in Düwel (2008).

⁹ The history of the use of Swedish is specifically addressed in Bäärnhielm (1984) and Larsson (2003, 2009, 2014), while overviews of documentary writing, including in Latin in medieval Sweden, is also presented and analyzed from different perspectives in Myrdal (2003) and Franzén (2009).

¹⁰ One often-cited estimation by Clanchy (2013: 60 (=1993: 58)) suggests that the preserved material from the English royal chancery of Henry I in the 1130s might be as little as one percent of the documents once written. Larsson (2009: 200–210) is cautious with the estimates and mainly discusses the number of documents that might have been issued in connection with one single transaction, which usually is only known from one preserved letter. Her conclusion is that each sale should have generated a series of documents including copies, perhaps four to six, and in the case of wills even more.

but instead seem to reflect known historical circumstances, the most obvious example being the variation related to the Black Death (more on this below). It is necessary, however, to always be aware of the source critical problems arising from the fragility of the material.

Selection of material and main analytical categories

In view of previous research, it has seemed relevant to concentrate the period of investigation from 1300 to 1370. The first preserved Swedish charter was issued in 1330, and to give some context to and perspective on the development around this year, 1300 was chosen arbitrarily as a starting point for the analysis. As to the ending year, Bäärnhielm's (1984) analysis of the complete material of charters in *Diplomatarium Suecanum* shows that Swedish documents begin to outnumber Latin documents in 1362, and as the focus of the present investigation lies on the process that leads to the shift in languages, it was decided not to include the 1370s in the analysis but rather to use 1370 as the endpoint. In the case of royal documents, which are analysed separately, 1360 was chosen as the ending year, because of the complicated political situation in the realm during the 1360s, with civil war and a new king of German descent, Albrecht of Mecklenburg, ascending to the throne in 1364.

The geographical area of investigation must also be defined, as some regions had different rulers during the period of investigation. The modern southern Swedish provinces of Skåne, Blekinge, and Halland belonged to the Danish realm until King Magnus Eriksson bought them in 1332, although they were later recaptured by the Danish king in 1360. The Baltic Sea island of Gotland also became Danish in 1361, but it had always had a somewhat independent status, even if it was brought under the Swedish crown in the late thirteenth century. Parts of modern Finland were part of the Swedish realm during the entire period of investigation. King Magnus Eriksson furthermore inherited the Norwegian crown and was elected king of the Swedish realm. However, in the present investigation, only documents issued in the Scandinavian part of the Swedish realm before the purchase of the southern provinces are analysed, also including documents from Finland and the island of Gotland.¹¹

A challenge with the material lies in its great heterogeneity, as it includes documents of completely different kinds. Furthermore, they were issued by representatives of different social groups with shifting literacy practices. While a bishop might have used writing on a daily basis, a lay person perhaps only once in his lifetime appeared as the issuer of a document, for instance, in his or her testament. How can

¹¹ As the analysis aims to capture local literacy behaviour regarding the use of the vernacular, issuers who are visiting the realm from abroad are excluded to the extent that it has been possible to identify them. Individuals with typical Low German names are not excluded only because of their name.

we study such disparate material as *one* corpus? To approach a solution to this problem, the analyses focus on certain social groups and, to some extent, certain kinds of documents, to gain a comparable set of data over time. The main sample is made up of documents issued by persons that *appear to* pursue worldly occupations, that is, peasants, townspeople, gentry, nobility, etc., more or less equivalent to the *laboratores* and *bellatores* classes of the well-known triad. However, as representatives of these groups are not always presented and identified with a title in the documents, but only with a name, the actual designation of anyone in the investigated group is negative, namely a person who is not described as belonging to the religious social groups of monastic orders or the clergy by an official title. The negative category will therefore inevitably include documents issued by persons that in fact belonged to the religious social group but whose titles are not mentioned. It is, however, not likely that such religious titles were left out in many cases, and it is assumed here that the quantitative results will still be useful to discuss and describe the literacy habits of the population with worldly occupations.¹²

There is no self-evident term for the social category that includes everyone but the religious, but the term *lay person* and *laity* is used in this sense, including lay elite groups with or without formal education.¹³ The king is held separate, being an exceptional character in the worldly groups through his role and office, and therefore, documents issued by the ruling king or his representative are analysed separately.

Among the many different kinds of documents there is in some analyses a special focus on deeds of transactions and royal judgement deeds, but the different kinds of documents in the whole corpus will also be analysed and described below.

Another challenge lies in the status of the documents, as some are preserved in the original and others as copies of different kinds. Two categories of material are included in the investigation: the first category is documents preserved in the origi-

¹² The challenge of social categorisation will be discussed in Pettersson (manuscript in preparation b) of which this study will be one part. Here, it is only possible to comment upon this briefly. The categories are formed out of what can be conceived as *occupations*, which target what one actively engages in daily and in what context. It is thus not a categorisation based on power, social hierarchy, or lineage. The main distinctions are between 1) a religious social group, 2) a worldly social group, and 3) the ruling king, but there are also subcategories within the two large social groups, which are taken into use for different analyses. Among the religious group there is in some analyses a distinction made between the secular clergy and the monastic orders, and, further on, between male and female abbeys. Among the worldly group there might be a distinction between the urban and rural groups and between male and female individuals within them. The urban group is indicated by explicit urban titles or urban residency, while the rest – with or without titles – is understood as a general lay group of mainly rural residents.

¹³ *Lay people* and *laity* (of Greek *λαός* ‘men, people’) was in the time of the Constantine Emperor part of a distinction between the serving clergy and the baptised people, but their internal relations and roles came to be understood in various ways during the Middle Ages (Vauchez 1993: 39–44). Here, the term is used in the sense of the population (except for the king) that did not have an office or serving role within religious institutions.

nal, which make up the largest part of the corpus. The second category concerns copies of lost originals which were made in the Early Modern Era with the seals of the document depicted together with the copied text. Copies in general are problematic for the investigation of a language choice analysis, since the copied text might be a copy of a translation or a translation itself. However, if the Early Modern copyists have depicted the seals, they probably had the original in front of them, and it can thus be assumed less likely that they also translated the original. This category of documents is also a minor category, however, not insignificant (see Table 1).

Table 1: Number of documents in the corpus in different categories with a comparison of the total number of posts in SDHK.

	Total number of Latin documents in the corpus	Total number of Swedish documents in the corpus	Number of Early Modern copies in Latin in the corpus	Number of Early Modern copies in Swedish in the corpus
Lay issuer 1300–1370	1671	522	194	79
Royal issuer 1300–1360	450	34	39	7
SDHK 1300–1370	6286	944	–	–

As one can see in Table 1, documents in the database issued by a lay person are almost four times as numerous as royal documents. Together they make up almost a third of all Latin posts in SDHK (the online database of *Diplomatarium Suecanum*) during the period of investigation, and as many as half of all the documents in Swedish. The remaining material consists of 1) documents that are not qualified to be part of the sample, for instance, copies and translations; 2) documents issued by persons in the religious groups; and 3) documents issued by persons from outside the Swedish realm. The Early Modern copies included in the investigation make up a little more than a tenth of all documents.

To sum up, the material under study comprises documents issued by persons who do not appear with a clerical or monastic title and are here assumed to belong to a worldly social group described as lay persons. Documents issued by the ruling king or his representative are analysed separately. Only documents preserved in the original or as Early Modern copies with seal depictions are included in the analysis, and they should have been issued in the area of the medieval Swedish realm before the purchase of the modern southern Swedish provinces, including Finland and the island of Gotland.

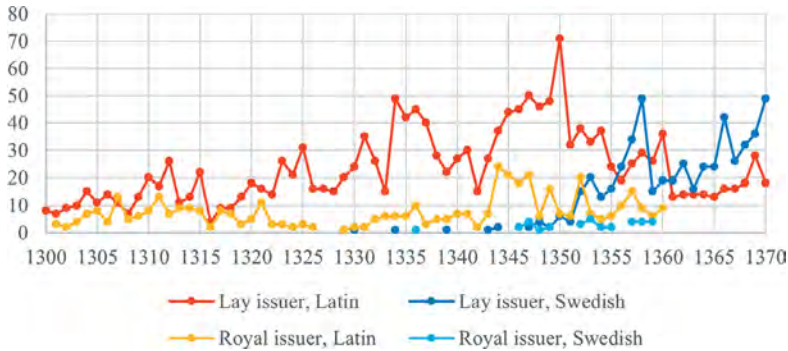


Figure 1: The number of documents per year issued by lay persons (1300–1370) and the ruling king (1300–1360) in Latin and Swedish, respectively.

Analysis of the material

A starting point for the analysis is a chronological overview of all documents issued by lay persons and the king between 1300 and 1370, presented in Figure 1. It shows the number of documents per year issued by lay persons and the king in Latin and Swedish, respectively.

Several observations and interpretations can be made from the diagram in Figure 1, and the analysis will start out from the observations labelled a–h with some additional analysis in relation to each observation.

a. A limited use of documentary writing among the lay persons' group at the beginning of the period

At the beginning of the period until 1320, the number of preserved documents issued by the lay group is only slightly bigger than the documents issued by the king alone. This might be an indication of only limited groups of people making use of written documents, but it could also be the case that writing was used for fewer purposes than it was later. To approach an answer to this, an overview of the Latin documents analysed in different document types is presented in Table 2.¹⁴

¹⁴ As there are very few documents in the vernacular material during the period 1330 to 1349, these have not been included in the analysis here.

Table 2: The number of documents issued by lay persons for each type of document in Latin for each decade from 1300 to 1349 and the relative share of each type of document for each decade.

	Transactions of real estate property					Economic relations					Private and official legal acts					Total
	Sale	Exchange	Gift	Other	Mortgage	Debt	Completion of payment	Announcement	Attorneyship	Testament	Official decision	Judgement	Confirmation	Title confirmation	Communication	
1300–1309	7	13	22	4	7	3	2	5	1	24	0	1	15	0	0	105
1310–1319	15	20	16	3	3	0	8	14	4	23	0	7	27	1	2	144
1320–1329	22	20	28	22	8	2	21	11	8	27	1	1	18	3	0	193
1330–1339	50	45	41	44	31	9	21	23	11	17	3	3	25	0	0	326
1340–1349	80	42	44	54	18	8	33	18	14	20	0	3	29	0	4	369
1300–1309	6%	12%	21%	4%	7%	3%	2%	5%	1%	23%	0%	1%	14%	0%	1%	100%
1310–1319	10%	14%	11%	2%	2%	0%	5%	10%	3%	16%	0%	5%	19%	1%	2%	100%
1320–1329	11%	10%	14%	11%	4%	1%	11%	6%	4%	14%	1%	1%	9%	2%	1%	100%
1330–1339	15%	14%	13%	13%	10%	3%	6%	7%	3%	5%	1%	1%	8%	0%	1%	100%
1340–1349	22%	11%	12%	14%	5%	2%	9%	5%	4%	5%	0%	1%	8%	0%	2%	100%

As mentioned above, the document categories used for the analysis of the material are relatively heterogeneous due to the nature of the source material.¹⁵ Some categories are quite distinct, such as the documents concerning the sale and exchange of real estate property, whereas it is sometimes difficult to keep, for example, donations (gifts) to religious institutions apart from testaments (for definitions see footnote 15). Some categories are wide, such as Official decision while others are specific, such as Judgement, and it is also possible to see several of them as subcategories of the wide general categories of Announcement or Confirmation.¹⁶

From Table 2, one might see that almost all categories are already represented in the first decade of the fourteenth century, and that several of the categories have approximately the same share of all issued documents. The low number of documents at the beginning of the century is thus not explained by a narrower function of written documents, as far as one can tell from the statistics above. It is probably better explained by a more limited spread of the use of documents in the population.

Some of the categories become more important during the period while others decrease in relative importance. There is, for instance, almost the same absolute number of testaments each decade during the period; it does not grow as the total number of documents grows. Categories that expand are, in particular, deeds of sale and the “other” category among transactions of property. It has often been noted that the selling of real estate property for money becomes more common during the Middle Ages, and the present investigation supports this picture.¹⁷ The quantitative growth of documentary writing is to a large extent connected to transactions of real estate property and selling land for money specifically.

15 A thorough discussion and description of the categories will appear in Pettersson (manuscript in preparation b); here, brief descriptions will suffice. Sale documents include transactions of real estate property which are sold and bought for money. If land is given in exchange for land, it is seen as an Exchange. Gifts involve no material compensation but might include religious/symbolic compensation in the form of a final resting place or the reading of masses. Mortgage is a debt obligation with land as a security, whereas Debt documents mention no security for the loan. Completion of payment includes receipts and other documents that acknowledge fulfillment of a payment, and Announcement includes different kinds of public announcements of, for instance, an intent, an approval, some form of recognition of facts and present conditions, or a decision that is not related to specific official authority. In Attorneyship documents, someone is appointed as a representative for someone else, while Testaments concern the distribution of one’s property after death. Official decisions are those taken by representatives in their office; Judgement refers to various legal acts by judges and courts, which is also a form of official decision but is kept apart as they play a specific role in the history discussed here. Confirmation is a ratification or renewal of already existing rights, conditions, and completed transactions. Title confirmation is a subcategory that is kept apart from Confirmation in general for the same reason that Judgement is kept apart from the Official decision, namely that the “Title Deeds” were specifically regulated in the MELL and therefore is of special interest.

16 A small group of documents classified as “Other” in my database have been excluded due to their insignificance in number (4) and heterogeneity in terms of content.

17 For a discussion and investigation of Swedish material, see Bjarne (2010: 24, 281).

b. Variation over the decades in the number of royal documents

The drop in royal documents in the 1320s is probably explained by the fact that King Magnus Eriksson was underaged at this time, as he inherited the crown of Norway and was elected King of Sweden in 1319 when he was only three years old. Some few documents are issued in his name in these early years, but after Magnus comes of age at the beginning of the 1330s, there is an increase in documents in the following decades.¹⁸

c. A growth in preserved documents issued by the lay group in the first half of the century

Documents issued by lay persons grow steadily in number in the first half of the century, with ups and downs that might be the result of fortuity regarding the preservation of material but that also could be reflections of shifting economical situations, for instance, due to favourable or unfavourable weather or plagues. Such a reaction to historically known circumstances can be seen in the years 1350 and 1351; the Black Death reaches Sweden in late 1350 and there is a clear drop in document issuing in 1351. This data will be further commented on below. Overall, the expansion during the period of the first half of the century could be due to either the spread of the use of writing in wider social groups, the expanded use of writing, or a combination of both.

d. Documents in the Swedish language appear sporadically from 1330 and continuously from the late 1340s

The first preserved document in the Swedish language was issued in 1330, and in the period up to the mid-1340s, there are isolated occurrences of documents in Swedish issued by either lay persons or the king. Among these early examples is the royal testament that King Magnus and his queen Blanche issue in 1346 (SDHK no. 5307), which perhaps is the most important document in the Swedish language from this period. However, from the second half of the 1340s, a new trend emerges with a low but unbroken series of documents in Swedish.

e. Short-term effects of the Black Death on lay documentary writing

The Black Death arrived in the Swedish realm in late 1350. It is not very well documented in historical sources, but it seems to have struck almost simultaneously over a large part of the Swedish realm (Myrdal 2003: 153). One can easily expect that the kind of economic and juridical activities that end up in the issuing of documents

¹⁸ There is a similar drop in Swedish royal documents in the 1290s when the old King Magnus Birgersson died and his son Birger was underaged. The data will be presented in Pettersson (manuscript in preparation b).

would cease significantly in the context of the plague. However, the peak of documents in 1350 can also be ascribed to the Black Death. There is an extremely large number of gifts and testaments to religious institutions this year, most of them appearing in the second half of the year.¹⁹ What we see is probably a reaction by people to the threatening situation, with many making penance to save themselves and their loved ones. King Magnus, probably in September 1349, sent a letter to his subjects pleading with them to pray and offer gifts to poor people to prevent the great plague he had received news about (SDHK no. 5702; Myrdal 2003: 86–87). It seems likely that it contributed to the sudden outburst of gifts in combination with the terror that the plague brought with it in other ways.

f. Indications of a relatively fast recovery after the Black Death

In Figure 1 above, it is remarkable how fast the number of documents return to a level similar to that before the Black Death, at least if one includes the new rapidly increasing number of documents issued in Swedish by lay persons together with documents in Latin.²⁰ In Figure 2 the two categories are collapsed.

Figure 2 indicates that the number of documents returns to a pre-epidemic level as early as 1352, and one cannot trace any lasting declined activity of issuing documents in the 1350s. However, it is necessary to consider the kinds of documents and the different reasons people issued them before drawing any conclusions. We will return to this later on.

g. A fast increase in lay documents in Swedish in the 1350s leads to a replacement of Latin as the most common language

If we return to the diagram in Figure 1, lay people start to issue documents in Swedish to an increasing extent at the beginning of the 1350s. However, and as noted above (d), the development seems to start in the final years of the 1340s, while the steep rise occurs in 1352 and onward, resulting in more documents being issued by lay persons in Swedish than Latin in 1356.²¹

¹⁹ Testaments and other donations in relation to the Black Death and subsequent plagues are analysed in Myrdal (2003: 124–143).

²⁰ A similar observation is made by Myrdal (2003: 112), in which he investigates the complete corpus, not only lay documents, but without any further discussion.

²¹ The rapid increase in Swedish documents in the 1350s is already noted by, for instance, Bäärnhielm (1984) and Myrdal (2003: 111), but this investigation adds the more specific sample of laity to the picture, and the chronology of this specific corpus. In Bäärnhielm's (1984: 25) analysis of the complete material of charters, the tipping point appears later, not until 1362.

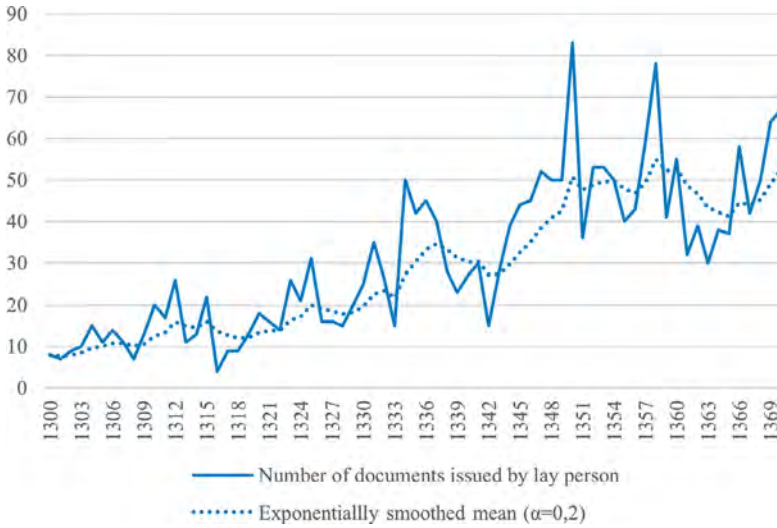


Figure 2: Number of Latin and Swedish documents issued by lay persons with an exponentially smoothed mean.

h. A lasting regression in the use of Latin after the second wave of the plague

Despite the change in dominance from Latin to Swedish in the 1350s, lay documents in Latin are still numerous during this decade. However, something seems to happen after the second wave of the plague, which in Sweden took place from 1359 to 1360. Just like in 1351, there is a sharp drop in 1359 – but only Swedish documents. The Latin documents instead drop first in 1361, but thereafter stay consistently at a lower level than before. Thus, the regression of Latin seems to proceed in two steps: first there is the challenge of the vernacular after the epidemic when there is a dynamic change with a rapidly growing use of Swedish, and then there seems to be an establishment of a new order in the 1360s. Both steps seem to have some connection with the plagues, which will be further discussed below.

Summary of overview analysis

The picture of the language shift process that emerges from the present investigation is not on the whole different from earlier descriptions, but it has been able to more clearly distinguish a series of phases and provide more specifics about them, which is fundamental for a full comprehension of the process. The period 1300 to 1350 is a time of increasing use of documentary writing among lay people, from what seems to be a quite socially limited use to a somewhat more widespread practice. There is evidence of sporadic use of Swedish in lay documents from 1330 and onward, and a continuous, however low, number of vernacular documents from the second half of the 1340s,

before the great expansion takes place in the 1350s and 1360s. Something seems to have happened in the late 1340s which alters the attitude towards use of the vernacular. The Black Death in Sweden during the period of 1350–1351 causes some kind of temporary interruption of the development, but in 1352, the number of documents is back at a pre-epidemic level and with a surprisingly fast-growing share of Swedish documents. Already in 1356, Swedish is more common than Latin in the lay documents, and after the second wave of the plague in 1359–1360, there is a clearly restricted use of Latin in documents issued by lay people. In the following, the process of the spread of the vernacular will be further explored in detail in four parts.

The process of vernacularisation in documentary writing in the Swedish fourteenth century realm

Vernacularisation is here studied as a process in which a *written* vernacular assumes functions and roles previously reserved for a cosmopolitan language in a textual culture.²² It can also be described as a change in the linguistic order – or just a modification of it – but it does not necessarily entail a complete replacement of one language with another, nor a general shift across all kinds of genres.

The cosmopolitan language in question is evidently Latin.²³ It is less self-evident what the vernacular should be called.²⁴ The term “Swedish” as the name of the vernacular in the Swedish realm is actually first attested in Latin in a 1346 inventory of the royal castle Bohus in the western part of Sweden, where there is said to have existed ‘a large Bible book in Swedish’ (“unum grossum librum bibliæ in swenico”, SDHK no. 5311). Thereafter, the name of the language appears in Swedish in the National law of Magnus Eriksson (MELL *EgnB* XXII), probably worked out during the last years of the 1340s and with a manuscript from around 1350, to which we will return below. The vernacular is also described with equivalents of the “Swedish tongue” in the

22 “Vernacular” has different meanings in various scientific traditions, and in many cases vernacular primarily refers to a spoken language or variety. The process of vernacularisation concerning writing might include the invention and creation of a written code, akin to the historical process of “Verschriiftung” in the model of Oesterreicher (1993) or “literization” in Pollock (2006). Other linguistic levels are also relevant, such as lexical and terminological development, as explored by, for instance, Larsson (2009) for Swedish and Kadens (2001) for Dutch. In the present investigation, neither the written code nor the lexical level of a developing vernacular is in focus, but rather a historical and pragmatic perspective on the use of the vernacular (which is also an important perspective in the above-mentioned studies).

23 The concept of a “cosmopolitan” language is borrowed from Pollock (2006), who uses it for a trans-regional language of a certain status and kind that stands in relation to local vernaculars.

24 An overview and analysis of the names for all the vernaculars in Scandinavia is presented in Berg (2016).

first half of the fourteenth century alongside isolated occurrences of “gothic” and regional variants.²⁵ In other cases, the expression “our language” seems to have been used customarily. For simplicity, the vernacular of the Swedish realm corresponding to modern Swedish is here referred to as Swedish.²⁶

The analysis of the vernacularisation process has been divided into four different parts. The first shed light on the time before the process starts and the few instances of vernacular documentary writing. The second addresses the work on the new National Law and the linguistic behaviour of the king in the issuing of documents. The third part investigates to what extent the change of language spread across the different types of documents, and the fourth examines how the vernacular was accepted across the different social groups. In the conclusion, a model is discussed which might integrate these different parts.

Part 1: 1300–1340s. A time of sporadic vernacular use and the first traces of a change

Up until the mid-1340s, it was evidently natural for lay issuers to have their documents written in Latin; the number of vernacular documents issued by the lay group during the time period from 1330 to 1345 is no more than six, whereas there are 507 Latin documents from the same period in the corpus. These isolated examples of vernacular writing are thus spread out over the sixteen years, and their provenance forms no coherent geographical pattern: they originate from different regions in the central parts of the Swedish realm.²⁷ It seems likely that there was no single explanation for the choice of using Swedish, but that it was a decision depending on individu-

25 The courtly verse novel *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* (‘Count Fredrik of Normandy’), which probably dates from the first decade of the fourteenth century, is said to have been translated ‘into the Swedish tongue’ (‘j swænskæ thungo’, *Hertig Fredrik*, p. 169; for a summary of the discussion of the dating, see Andersson 2014: 48–51). The expression ‘Swedish tongue’ (‘swenska tungo’) is also used once in a Pentateuch translation, which is believed to have been written in the first half of the fourteenth century, generally identified with the Bible book in the Bohus inventory. However, it also includes sporadic uses of Swedish provincial names for the language along with the standard phrase ‘our tongue’ (Hesselman 1927: 14–17, Pettersson (manuscript in preparation a)). The isolated occurrence of ‘gothic’ appears in an Old Swedish translation of *Legenda Aurea*.

26 There were also other vernaculars spoken and written in the Swedish realm, not least Low German, but the total number of documents in SDHK in German during the period is 229, and 3/4 of them are from 1360 to 1370. A large share of them are either issued abroad or sent as letters to towns abroad.

27 One document is issued in Uppland (SDHK no. 4078) and one in the town of Lödöse in Västergötland (SDHK no. 5026). Four have no place of issuing noted, but through their content they are linked to places in Småland (SDHK no. 3679, 4465), Västergötland (SDHK no. 4879), and Södermanland (SDHK no. 5044). There is a tendency for the early vernacular documents to have links to southern and western provinces, which will be discussed in a future publication by the author.

als in varying situations. Some chose Swedish for some practical reason, some were perhaps inspired by the Norwegian tradition of use of the vernacular, and for some it might have been a kind of statement.

There are no indications of royal or state initiatives regarding the use of the written vernacular during the period. During King Birger Magnusson's reign in the first two decades of the fourteenth century there was a more or less continuous civil war going on between Birger and his two brothers and the realm was divided between them. After the two brothers were killed, Birger escaped the realm in 1318, and his three-year old nephew Magnus Eriksson was elected king, but he did not come of age until the beginning of the 1330s. The Swedish kingdom of these times is often described as a federation of provinces, and during these years, legislation was reformed province by province in independent provincial laws up until the 1340s. Such a political and societal structure was probably not fertile soil for linguistic consolidation and common language reform, and one might question if there was even a sense of being speakers of *one* language. The language of the legislation was, however, not Latin but Swedish, or, more accurately, the regional varieties of what was to become called Swedish. King Magnus Eriksson, who took a special interest in legislation, issued a number of statutes from 1335 onward, which are written in Swedish, but only preserved in copies (Larsson 2009: 47). There are also a number of other royal documents up to 1345, but all of them are in Latin.²⁸ There is thus very little that indicates any royal initiatives regarding the use of the Swedish language in documents up to 1345.

One notable pattern regarding these early vernacular documents concerns the sex of the issuer, which merits a separate investigation. In Table 3, the complete material up to 1349 is presented in two chronological sets with regard to language and the sex of the issuer(s). The first set, 1330–1345, comprises the time from the first known document in Swedish (1330) until the mid-1340s. The second set, 1346–1349, is driven by two historical circumstances. Firstly, it encompasses the last years of the 1340s but excludes the year of the Black Death's arrival (1350), which has previously been demonstrated as exceptional (Figure 1). Additionally, it pertains to a period during which a language planning reform advocating for the use of Swedish in documents appears to have originated, a topic that will be further explored in part 2 below.

First, some observations regarding the overall distribution of documents between the two groups in the two chronological sets will be examined. As can be seen in Table 3, the two sets have approximately the same distribution of documents between the three groups. In both chronological sets, approximately 80 percent are issued by men, around ten percent by women, and around ten percent by men and women together, although the values for the last group differ to a somewhat greater extent between the two sets (seven percent against twelve percent). Documents in Swedish

²⁸ The first preserved document in Swedish issued by King Magnus Eriksson is not a statute, but a 1336 letter to the inhabitants of the province of Södermanland, SDHK no. 4304.

Table 3: Number of preserved documents issued in different languages by male and female issuers in two different chronological sets.

	Male issuer(s)		Female issuer(s)		Male and female issuer(s) together		Total
1330–1345							
Latin	408	(82 %)	56	(11 %)	36	(7 %)	500 (100 %)
Old Swedish	3	(50 %)	3	(50 %)	–	–	6 (100 %)
Total	411	(81 %)	59	(12 %)	36	(7 %)	507 (100 %)
Latin	99 %		95 %		100 %		
Old Swedish	1 %		5 %		–		
	100 %		100 %		100 %		
1346–1349							
Latin	142	(78 %)	20	(11 %)	19	(11 %)	181 (100 %)
Old Swedish	5	(63 %)	–		3	(37 %)	8 (100 %)
Total	147	(78 %)	20	(11 %)	22	(12 %)	189 (100 %)
Latin	97 %		100 %		86 %		
Old Swedish	3 %		–		14 %		
	100 %		100 %		100 %		

are only a marginal phenomenon in both sets, and strong reservations must be made about the conclusions that can be drawn from the few instances that have come down to us. However, in the first set up to 1345, there are often years between the single occurrences of documents in Swedish.²⁹ In the second set, the number of vernacular documents is also very low, but there are still more than one preserved document issued in Swedish each year between the years 1347–1349.³⁰ This change in frequency is followed by a rapid increase in the next decade (Figure 1), making it possible to understand the pattern of the 1347–1349 period as the slow beginning of a change to come rather than just a coincidence or a change in preservation circumstances. This will be followed up in part 3 below.

As to the sex of the issuer, there is a tiny yet notable difference in the case of language choice between the two groups. In the first set (1330–1345), the documents issued by women have a slightly higher share of vernacular documents (five percent) in comparison with the documents issued by men (one percent, or more accurately

²⁹ The oldest lay document in Swedish is from 1330 (SDHK no. 3679), followed by one from 1334 (SDHK no. 4078), one from 1339 (SDHK no. 4465), one from 1343 (SDHK no. 4879), and two from 1344 (SDHK nos. 5542, 5552). The numbers suggest a possible increasing trend, but the documents are too few to allow for any real conclusions. One might see it as a reflection of the generally increasing number of documents rather than as a specific increase in the use of Swedish.

³⁰ There are two lay documents in Swedish from 1347 (SDHK nos. 5375, 5462), four from 1348 (SDHK nos. 5542, 5552, 5587, 5683), and two from 1349 (SDHK nos. 5717, 5863).

0.7 percent). Despite the low absolute numbers, the difference is statistically significant on a $p < 0.05$ level.³¹ Chance should not be the explanation for the higher share of vernacular documents in the female group.

In the second set (1346–1349), Swedish is used by male persons in three percent of the cases, which, notwithstanding the very low numbers, is also a significantly higher share than in the male group in the preceding period.³² The increase should thus not be explained by chance.

In the female group there is no significant difference between the two chronological sets. Whatever the catalyst for more men issuing documents in the vernacular in the second period, there is no trace of it affecting documents issued by women.³³

The female–vernacular connection in this early period is further supported when the receivers of documents are also considered. Of the three documents in Swedish issued by males in the first set, two have female receivers. Thus, women are either issuers or receivers in five of six cases, which is undoubtedly more than would be expected.

The reason for the tiny but significant overrepresentation of the written vernacular in documents concerning women is not easy to explain. One must remember that an overwhelming majority of documents was in Latin regardless of the sex of the issuer or receiver. Still, it is sometimes assumed that a reading ability among lay people might have been less uncommon among women than men, and it is reasonable to speculate that such a pattern could be an explanation for women being early in the use of the vernacular in documentary writing.³⁴ The question merits a deeper investigation, but it cannot be pursued here.

However, to approach the question of women's roles in the vernacularisation process as a whole, a glimpse into the next period, the 1350s, is also called for, as one might wonder if women as a group stand out as a driving force in the great expansion of the vernacular in documentary writing in this decade.

As indicated in Table 4, the answer is negative: women issuers show no signs of playing any prominent role in the expansion of vernacular documentary writing in

31 Fisher's exact test, which is used for small sample sizes, returns a p-value of 0.029, which is clearly below the often used limit for significance $p < 0.05$

32 Fisher's exact test returns a p-value of 0.033.

33 Fisher's exact test yields a p-value of 0.567, indicating that one cannot reject the null hypothesis of both sets having the same proportion of vernacular documents and the difference just depending on chance.

34 Women's roles in the development of documentary literacy and the vernacularisation of documentary writing has not been satisfactorily investigated (see, for instance, Clanchy 2013: 253–254, Brunner 2009: 70). Kadens (2001: 264–265, 319–220) argues that the sex of the issuer is not the decisive factor in the development of the material from Flandres, but women as readers of particularly religious literature and patrons of literature has been discussed by several, for instance, Green (2007), Clanchy (2013: 190–196), and Kadens (2001: 213). Examples of women as issuers of documents in medieval Sweden is provided in Larsson (2009: 86–89).

Table 4: Male and female issuers of preserved documents in Latin and Swedish by year between 1340 and 1360.

	Male issuer		Female issuer	
	Latin	Swedish	Latin	Swedish
1340	18	–	5	–
1341	18	–	6	–
1342	8	–	–	–
1343	16	1	3	–
1344	25	–	3	1
1345	32	–	4	–
1346	25	–	5	–
1347	37	1	6	–
1348	27	3	6	–
1349	36	1	3	–
1350	44	5	13	–
1351	14	2	3	–
1352	25	10	3	2
1353	24	17	1	–
1354	31	5	–	–
1355	17	14	1	–
1356	15	20	–	1
1357	16	31	2	2
1358	17	43	3	3
1359	17	13	3	–
1360	26	14	2	2

the 1350s. Instead, the admittedly tiny but observable increase in the use of the vernacular in the late 1340s (the second set in Table 3) is represented by male issuers, and the same can be said about the great expansion of vernacular documents in the following decade. In documents with female issuers, it is difficult to trace any similar development, as documents in Swedish with female issuers continue to be more or less as rare as documents in Latin in the 1350s. In fact, there is a general decrease in documents issued by females annually after 1350, which aligns with previous investigations of female document issuance.³⁵

The investigations so far could be summarised in four observations: (1) Something seems to have happened in the last years of the 1340s, where there was a continual, however weak, flow of vernacular documents in contrast to the preceding period when there were only a few scattered examples; (2) The norm-breaking choice to use the vernacular in documentary writing up to the mid-1340s was a less rare phenomenon in

³⁵ Franzén (2009: 52–54) suggests that plagues and civil war caused lower rates of female document issuing, although their share of all issued documents increased in the long run during the Middle Ages.

documents that concerned women. However, (3) the expansion of vernacular writing after 1350 seems not to be connected to this pattern and does not affect it. Instead, (4) the vernacularisation process of the 1350s seems primarily to be a question of change in document writing with male issuers.³⁶ The next section explores circumstances in the last years of the 1340s, especially the year 1347, which is a candidate for the beginning of the vernacularisation process of the 1350s.

Part 2. The late 1340s: A possible language planning programme

In the context of the dramatic expansion of vernacular documents in the 1350s, vernacular documentary writing in the late 1340s could be understood as the first, slowly progressing phase of an s-curve.³⁷ The impression of a beginning of change is also strengthened by what seems to be a shift in the linguistic habits by the reigning king, Magnus Eriksson, which could be part of a language planning programme. A perhaps symbolic prologue to this new course is the common testament of the king and his queen, Blanche of Naumur, for the Swedish realm, issued in 1346 and written in the Swedish language. In it, among other things, they promise generous donations for what was to become the mother convent of the Brigittine Order at Vadstena.³⁸ Using the Swedish language in the will was a remarkable choice. It was very atypical of the genre as will be shown in part 4 below, since Latin continued to be used for testaments even when Swedish had replaced Latin in other kinds of documents.

A change in linguistic habits of the king is visible in his judgement letters, of which a relatively large number have been preserved. The oldest preserved judgement deed issued by Magnus Eriksson is from 1334, and up to 1346 there are seven-teen in the corpus, all written in Latin.³⁹ However, in 1347, something happens.

As evident in Table 5, there are as many as eight judgement deeds in 1347 up to mid-April, all of them in Latin. However, by the end of the month, April 29, a first judgement letter in Swedish is issued.⁴⁰ Later the same year, two other judgement letters in Swedish follow, with one further the next year. At the same time, Latin letters

³⁶ It is not relevant to simply juxtapose male and female document issuing, because of the different juridical status of the two groups; male issuing was the unmarked alternative, whereas female issuing represented the exception. The expansion of vernacular in the corpus of documents issued by men should be seen as a change in the general attitude in society as it is formed by the privileged group.

³⁷ The widely used s-curve is often suggested as a way to comprehend language change, or more precisely the diffusion of linguistic innovations (Bisang 2016: 375).

³⁸ SDHK no. 5307. Notably, the royal couple issued a testament for the Norwegian realm (SDHK no. 5459) in Latin, despite the long tradition of using the vernacular for documents of the kind; see, for instance, Larsson (2009: 50).

³⁹ SDHK nos. 4061, 4667, 4767, 5032, 5073, 5080, 5086, 5108, 5110, 5112, 5119, 5139, 5141, 5330, 5337, 5345, 5349.

⁴⁰ The occurrence of the first judgement letter in Swedish is noted and discussed in Larsson (2009: 51).

Table 5: Judgement letters preserved in the corpus of royal documents issued by Magnus Eriksson 1347–1348.

Date (YYYYMMDD)	Place of issuing	Language	Doc. status	Receiver	SDHK no.
13470123	Linköping	Latin	orig.	Religious institution	5382
13470219	Västerås	Latin	orig.	Lay individuals, males	5395
13470312	Söderköping	Latin	orig.	Lay individuals, males	5403
13470312	Söderköping	Latin	orig.	Lay individual, female	5404
13470322	Västerås	Latin	copy	Lay individual, male	5411
13470408	Örebro	Latin	orig.	Lay individual, male	5419
13470417	Örebro	Latin	orig.	Religious institution	5421
13470420	Örebro	Latin	orig.	Religious institution	5425
13470429	Tingvalla	Swedish	orig.	Lay collective	5430
13470502	Millesvik	Latin	orig.	Lay individual, female	5432
13470528	Växjö	Swedish	copy	Lay individuals	5442
13470528	Ryd	Swedish	copy	Lay individual, male	5441
13471201	Bohus	Latin	orig.	Lay individual, male	5531
13480528	Stockholm	Latin	orig.	Religious institution	5619
13481018	Våla	Swedish	copy	Lay individual, male	5678

appear in between the vernacular examples. Obviously, it is not a complete turn-about; Latin documents continue to appear alongside Swedish ones. There seems, however, to be a change this year in the sense that a hitherto unbroken norm is challenged.

During the next three years, 1349 to 1351, there are only six judgement letters and all of them in Latin, no more than one each from the disastrous plague years of 1350 and 1351.⁴¹ In the recovery after the plague we see the vernacularisation process accelerate. From 1352, there are six judgement letters, of which two are in Swedish and the rest in Latin, but in 1353 the distribution is reversed: of the six judgement deeds, five are in Swedish and only one in Latin.⁴² During the rest of the decade Swedish dominates in this category of deeds.⁴³ Thus, the quantitative vernacular “take-over” happens in the recovery after the Black Death in 1352 onwards, but it seems as if the first steps in the process are taken in the last years of the 1340s, with the first preserved instance in 1347. What happened during this year?

The explanation for the growth of the vernacular in documents has in previous research generally been attributed to regulations in the so-called National Law of Magnus Eriksson (MELL). In the Section on Land (“Eghnobalken” *EgnB*), the new law

⁴¹ SDHK nos. 5723, 5818, 5824, 5826, 5940, 6296.

⁴² 1352 Latin documents: SDHK nos. 6334, 6449, 6481, 6488. 1352 Swedish documents: SDHK nos. 6339, 6349. 1353 Latin document: SDHK nos. 6554. 1353 Swedish documents: SDHK nos. 6582, 6607, 6608, 6618, 6665.

⁴³ Latin documents: SDHK nos. 6685 (1354); 7702 (1360). Swedish documents: SDHK nos. 6817, 6819 (1355); 7143 (1357); 7371 (1358).

prescribed that documents concerning real estate property transactions and judgement letters were to be written, and that Swedish should be used for them (MELL, *EgnB* XX–XXII). It is thus a prescription concerning both the very issuing of documents and the language choice. Both judgement letters and transactional documents in Latin have been known in the Swedish material for a long time, but the regulations seem to be part of a reform of the local administration (Larsson 2009: 71–77). The prescription of language choice is, it seems, a secondary question: the regulations are not primarily a prescription for officials to use Swedish, but a means for issuing certain documents requiring Swedish for that purpose.

The National Law of Magnus Eriksson was, as far as we know, never officially proclaimed in the same way as, for instance, the Norwegian National Law of 1274; neither does it seem to have been implemented by force. Instead, the sources indicate a stepwise acceptance of the new law in the different provinces during the second half of the fourteenth century, where some seem to have started to use it early in the 1350s while other provinces waited until the 1380s and some not until even the fifteenth century (Holmbäck & Wessén 1962: XXXIX–XLI). Between the production of the new law, presumably in the 1340s, and the first mentions of the new law in the 1350s, are the fatal years of the Black Death in 1350–1351. The plague might somehow have interrupted the launching of the law – not the least because people involved in its production might have died from the disease – but we know almost nothing about the process through which it was initially propagated.

The making of the National Law is also shrouded in obscurity. Its text has been characterised as well-structured and well-written, but the process that brought it forth is hardly known at all. King Magnus Eriksson had taken a great interest in legislation through issuing a number of separate statutes during the 1330s and 1340s that were included in the new law (Holmbäck & Wessén 1962: XVI–XXVI, Larsson 2009: 47). However, the actual work with it is only known from one document issued on March 8, 1347, which contains a written protest from representatives of the Church directed to a commission of lawmen (SDHK no. 5399, of which more below). The next we hear of the new law is when it is referred to in documents in the early 1350s (Holmbäck & Wessén 1962: LVI–LXII, Wiktorsson 1988). The oldest remaining manuscript of the law, AM 51 4to, dates from around the mid-fourteenth century, close to the time of the conception of the law, but the remaining 23 fourteenth-century manuscripts are dated by their editor to the second half or end of the fourteenth century (Schlyter 1862: IV–XXIII).

The 1347 protest against the new law was delivered in the town of Örebro by a group of cathedral canons from the different dioceses (SDHK no. 5399). It was directed to a committee of three lawmen, which, according to the document, was assembled in this town to work on the law, and the delegation rejected any ambition by the committee to reform a number of topics related to ecclesiastical legislation. In the provincial laws, each law had its own Section on the Church, and as each of the legislative regions more or less coincided with the diocese organisation, the bishops probably had reason to watch the steps taken by the committee of lay lawmen. Whatever hap-

pened, MELL never came to have a single, reformed Section on the Church. Instead, the local church laws of each provincial law were kept in use in each respective legislative region, and they were often inserted into the manuscripts of the MELL.⁴⁴

The protest letter from March 8, 1347, further reports that the canons had presented their protest orally a month earlier (February 21) at the same place, but that they now offered the committee a written statement. King Magnus Eriksson was not present in the town during this period. As far as we can tell from documents he issued during the winter of 1346/1347 (Table 5 above), he travelled from south and east to Örebro and arrived in the town later in March, presumably on the 28th when he issues a letter from there.⁴⁵ He seems to have stayed in the town for about a month, but by April 28 he had apparently moved on west to Hammarön, an island in the northern part of Lake Vänern immediately south of today's city Karlstad (founded 1584). The king must have had plenty of time in Örebro in March and April to discuss the committee's work, but there are no direct sources to inform us about it.

Interestingly, the first use of the vernacular for the king's judgement letters seems to follow directly after the meeting in Örebro, as shown in Table 5 above. The judgement letters issued in Örebro between April 10 and April 20 were all in Latin, but the first royal letter issued after the Örebro stay is the judgement letter of April 29 at Tingvalla, which is written in Swedish and seems to usher in a new habit. It seems reasonable to infer that a decision was made during the days in Örebro in 1347, and some support for this conjecture might be gathered from the structure of the Section on Land of the National Law where these regulations appear.

The Section on Land begins with basic definitions and regulations concerning the different kinds of transactions of real estate property, e.g. selling, exchanging, and giving real estate property. In one of these early paragraphs, a protocol for the legal procedure is described in detail (*EgnB* XII), that is, what the participants and the bailiff should say, how witnesses to the transaction should be summoned, and their obligations in case the legality of the transaction were questioned. In these regulations, no written documents are mentioned, and the procedures rely on rituals, memory, and oaths, completely in accordance with existing provincial laws.⁴⁶ Not until later, after a number of special cases concerning the right to sell real estate property are treated, does there follow, somewhat unexpectedly, the part which prescribes the issuing of

⁴⁴ Later, the Section on the Church of the Provincial Law of Uppland, the province of the archdiocese, became common for the realm (Holmbäck & Wessén 1962: xxix).

⁴⁵ King Magnus issues a document in the town of Västerås on March 22 (SDHK no. 5411) and in Örebro on the same date (SDHK no. 5410). The distance is long (c. 100 km) for a day's travel, but perhaps not completely impossible to sail in favourable circumstances. The Västerås letter could have been issued on the evening before March 22 (as the day began with the night), but the distance still casts some doubt over the whereabouts of the king at that time.

⁴⁶ There is one exception in *EgnB* XVII, which demands that an ombudsman needs to have a letter from his master to be allowed to sell his master's property. This is already stated in the Provincial Law of Uppland, which was inaugurated in 1296 (*Upplandslagen*, Jordabalken, 4: 4).

documents as transactions. First, it states that all transactions should be documented in a letter by the bailiff (*EgnB XX*); thereafter, it describes what to do when letters are lost and also how a transaction might be confirmed by the king (*EgnB XXI*). The obligation to issue documents is then expanded to include all kinds of judgments made by the bailiff, the lawman, and even the king. Finally, the following is added, which has been described as the first language act of Sweden.⁴⁷

All letters of the King, the lawman, and the bailiff in these kinds of cases and others, shall be written in Swedish. (*EgnB XXII*)

After these parts concerning the writing of documents, further regulations follow about specific cases of ownership and transactions of property, which connect relatively closely to the introductory parts of the section.

It is easy to get the impression that the sections on the writing of documents stick out where they stand. The regulations concerning judgement letters are not even situated in a relevant context, and in the revised version of MELL from the fifteenth century (KRL), the sentence about judgement letters has been moved to the Section on Lawsuits, where it logically belongs. It is as if the whole section concerning the issuing of documents in MELL is added or inserted in the course of the text, which deviates from the generally accepted characterisation that the law text is very well structured.

What is suggested here is thus that the prescription about documenting transactions and other judgements could have been added to an already worked-out Section on Land after the king had arrived and met the law commission. If one takes the 1346 royal testament (written in Swedish) as an indication of the king's interest in promoting the use of the vernacular, the language act of the National Law might well have been on his initiative. However, both the king and his lawmen probably had good reasons for this reform, as they had to deal with legal disputes concerning real estate property transactions, and gathering everything in writing in an orderly fashion must have been an important achievement for their offices. The language was perhaps of subordinate importance, but it might have suited the king's plans for the realm.

The document regulation is presented as an obligation of the new local office bailiff. Documenting the transactions was thus not a legal responsibility for the subjects, but for the local administration. For the subjects, nothing had changed; the oral rituals were intact, and the documents were not needed for the transaction to be completed or valid. For one thing, the recipients of the transaction had to pay for the document (*EgnB XX*), but they had the most to gain from having a document since it served as protection in case relatives of the disposing party wanted to declare the transaction invalid. Thus, the document and language prescription are embedded as

⁴⁷ According to Peersman (2012: 651, endnote 21) language policies in Europe generally began in the fifteenth century, which would make the MELL regulation an early example.

administrative reform, not a requirement forced on the subjects, but part of the instruction for the local rural administration.

We will never know if the meeting in Örebro was the occasion at which the document and language act was conceived, but as far as we have seen, a new language habit of issuing documents becomes visible this year directly after the meeting. There is no sudden outburst of documentary writing in Swedish in 1347, but the increased frequency in the last years of the 1340s might be seen as the slow start of the change to come, both in the case of the king's judgement letters and the documents issued by lay persons. An interpretation would be that important decisions were made during the meeting in Örebro in 1347, which might have sent a signal to the subjects of the realm that the vernacular was an option and for the local public administration at times an obligation. How this signal was received is the topic of the following two sections.

Part 3. The usage of the vernacular in different kinds of documents from the late 1340s to 1370

The increased use of Swedish in documents in the 1350s appears to have been initiated by new legislation, as suggested in previous research, particularly concerning transactional documents. The legislation explicitly targeted transactional documents and judgement letters, but it also stipulates that “all letters” by officials should be written in Swedish (MELL *EgnB* XXII). In the following, it will be investigated to what extent the use of Swedish as the preferred language in documents grew outside the two specifically mentioned types. Figure 3 presents the percentage of Latin documents among all documents in each category⁴⁸ in chronological periods, and Tables 6 and 7 give the absolute numbers of documents in each category in the investigated corpus.⁴⁹

The impact of the new legislation is notably evident in Figure 3, where the percentage of Latin documents related to real estate transactions rapidly declines after 1350, particularly in the Sale, Exchange, Other transactions, and Title Confirmation categories. The Gift category transitions more slowly to the vernacular, possibly due to the fact that religious institutions, commonly the recipients of gifts, may have pre-

⁴⁸ For a brief description of each category, see footnote 15.

⁴⁹ The first period between 1330–1345 represents a background. For the rest of the chronology, I have chosen five-year periods that transcend the decade by the end of it, as in 1351–1355 and 1356–1360, instead of “pure” decade series like 1350–1354 and 1355–1359. The reason is that the chosen categories better encapsulate the very special year of 1350, when the Black Death hit the Swedish realm in the second part of that year. I hence argue that 1350 rather belongs to the vital late 1340s than the epidemic and post-epidemic recovery phase of the early 1350s, as the plague reached the Swedish realm quite late in 1350. It is also more relevant to keep the two years of the second wave of the plague in 1359–1360 in one period (namely in 1356–1360) than to split them between two (which would have been the case if the categories were 1355–1359 and 1360–1364).

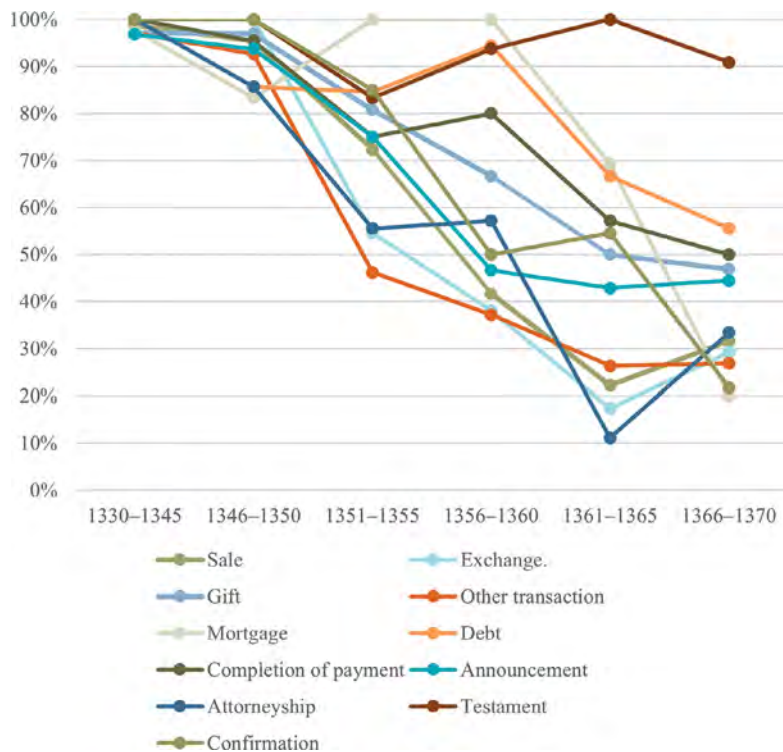


Figure 3: The share of documents in Latin in different categories of documents of all those issued by the lay group between 1330 and 1370.

ferred Latin – an aspect that will be further explored in the next section. Testaments, closely related to Gifts and often involving religious institutions, only marginally undergo vernacularisation during the investigative period. Nevertheless, the overall analysis in Figure 3 suggests that vernacularisation affected nearly all document types, with development initiating in the late 1340s and, with few exceptions, progressing throughout the first half of the 1350s. Swedish was adopted in documentary writing across various document types and was not limited to those explicitly mentioned in the law.

As evident in Tables 6 and 7, many document categories have insufficient instances to provide a clear developmental picture. For example, there are only seven Latin judgment letters and 32 in Swedish. Despite the low absolute numbers, there is a consistent increase, with Swedish judgement letters rising from a single instance in the

Table 6: Documents of different kinds issued by lay persons written in Swedish from 1330 to 1370.

	Transactions of real estate property					Economic relations					Private and official legal acts						
	Sale	Exchange	Gift	Other	Mortgage	Debt	Completion of payment	Announcement	Attorneyship	Testament	Official decision	Judgement	Confirmation	Title confirmation	Communication	Total	
1330–1345	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	
1345–1350	3	-	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	14	
1351–1355	13	10	5	7	-	2	3	3	4	1	-	5	3	12	-	68	
1356–1360	28	13	9	22	-	1	3	8	3	1	-	6	7	40	-	141	
1361–1365	21	19	9	14	4	4	3	4	8	-	4	9	5	6	2	114	
1366–1370	26	17	17	30	12	4	9	5	8	1	4	11	18	24	1	188	
Total	92	59	43	77	19	12	19	22	24	3	8	32	33	82	3	529	

Table 7: Documents of different kinds issued by lay persons written in Latin from 1330 to 1370.

	Transactions of real estate property				Economic relations				Private and official legal acts							
	Sale	Exchange	Gift	Other	Mortgage	Debt	Completion of payment	Announcement	Attorneyship	Testament	Official decision	Judgement	Confirmation	Title confirmation	Communication	Total
1330–1345	81	66	67	68	42	11	37	31	23	33	3	3	37	-	4	506
1345–1350	63	25	32	38	10	6	21	15	6	11	-	3	21	-	10	261
1351–1355	34	12	21	6	12	11	9	9	5	5	-	0	17	-	23	164
1356–1360	20	8	18	13	4	17	12	7	4	15	-	0	7	-	11	136
1361–1365	6	4	9	5	9	8	4	3	1	2	-	1	6	-	10	68
1366–1370	12	7	15	11	3	5	9	4	4	10	-	0	5	-	11	96
Total	216	122	162	141	80	58	92	69	43	76	3	7	93	-	69	1231

late 1340s to eleven documents in the latter half of the 1360s.⁵⁰ A similar pattern is observed for documents related to Debt, Completion of payment, Announcement, and Attorneyship, which had single occurrences in the late 1340s but a slightly higher and gradually increasing number during the rest of the investigative period. Additionally, insights into the low number of Swedish documents in this period may be complemented by examining Latin documents in Table 7, revealing a decline in Completion of payment (from 21 to 9) and Announcement (from 15 to 9), with minor decreases in Attorneyship (from 6 to 5) and Confirmation (from 19 to 17), and increases in other categories.

The Title Confirmation category, as anticipated, exhibits a notable rise in the number of Swedish documents during the 1350s, often attributed to being directly requested by the new legislation. Although there were title confirmations in Latin before, they have typically been categorised as the broader Confirmation category.

Despite the relatively limited statistical data, it can be argued that there was an increase in the use of Swedish across almost the entire spectrum of document types within documentary writing. Notable exceptions are Gifts and Testaments, both typically involving religious institutions as recipients. The next section will analyse the acceptance of the vernacular in different social groups.

Part 4. The acceptance of the vernacular among different social groups from the late 1340s to 1370

From the analysis in previous chapters, the spread of using the vernacular for documentary writing might be described as originating at a centre, namely the king and his officials, and disseminating into a periphery, which would be the population of the realm. The question at hand is what forces propelled the language shift once the innovation was initiated. Was it driven by a force from the centre and outwards, that is, through active prescription or normation, or was the innovation appropriated by the periphery for its own interest?

The centre of the medieval Swedish realm was, as mentioned above, likely too weak to impose the language reform upon its subjects. However, from the perspective of the new law, it was not a question for the subjects to decide; using the vernacular was part of the instruction for the local office of the bailiff, at least in the matters for which they had responsibility. While subjects could have been content with oral rit-

⁵⁰ The drop in the category of Title Confirmation in the 1360s can partly be explained by effects of the return of the plague in 1359–1360 and the unruly times when there was a rebellion against King Magnus Eriksson, and the German Prince Albrecht of Mecklenburg (the king's nephew) forced the king out of the country leading to the election of Albrecht as king in 1364. There might be other explanations for the decrease of Title Deeds, but the general decrease in documents in both Swedish and Latin during 1361–1365 make it plausible to seek the explanation in general historical circumstances.

uals and witnesses at property transactions, bailiffs were nevertheless obliged to issue documents. From this perspective, one might argue that there was a disseminating force from the centre outwards by means of administrative directives for the local officials.

It is, however, important to consider the possibility that the innovation may have spread, driven by the receiving periphery, that is, the population itself. Might they have preferred the vernacular to Latin, and what advantages would the vernacular have offered to mainly non-literates? The vernacularisation process has often been assumed to be a reflection of an increasing popular literacy, but critical objections to such a connection have been raised (Esteban-Segura 2012: 141–142). Jones (2000, 2004) stresses the shifting practices among the literatus, and Kadens (2001: 212–217) argues that vernacularisation did not necessarily imply a growing accessibility to texts; literacy was not widespread, and the literate were Latinate. Instead, documents were read out to listeners, and should they be in Latin, they were probably extemporaneously translated. It is also relevant to mention that these types of documents were probably not consulted too often. The value of the documents and their text lay in their legal function to provide long-term security in case someone questioned what had been agreed upon. One could argue that both reading-aloud practices and the distinctive nature of the texts made the matter of language choice less important.

However, as often pointed out in discussions on early literacy, more people could read than write texts. Writing is challenging, but elementary writing, in the sense of forming single signs into names or even short messages, might have been a not too uncommon proficiency. This kind of writing can be found in Scandinavian runic epigraphy, and to a remarkable extent in some Scandinavian medieval towns.⁵¹ It is nevertheless a completely different challenge to create coherent texts in specific genres, which required practice and formal education, not to mention the craftsmanship that surrounded the material side of manuscript culture. Reading is a far less demanding task than writing, and it would be a skill possible to reach without any institutionalised schooling; literacy with runes must have rested on such informal teaching. However, a definitive prerequisite of reaching such a basic reading ability is, of course, that the text is written in a language known by the reader. From this perspective, the choice of the vernacular over Latin might have made documents somewhat more accessible, or more precisely, a little less inaccessible. To consult a vernacular document, one was not dependent on a person who had been to school, learned, and perpetuated the proficiency in Latin, but it sufficed with someone with a less advanced reading ability. In the countryside of the Swedish realm during this time, this might

⁵¹ For a recent overview, see Imer (2023) and a recent discussion of runic literacy and its relation to administrative literacy can be found in Mostert (2024: 238–240).

have made a difference in making the choice of the vernacular preferred, which in turn could have contributed to the spread of the new linguistic practice.⁵²

The potential advantage of having documents in the vernacular would be greatest among people with no expected Latin proficiency and little contact with non-speakers of the vernacular. It is natural to seek them in the lay group, especially among those who did not reside in towns. Conversely, many might have chosen Latin for various reasons, for instance, when the documents directly concerned receivers with no proficiency in Swedish. Such concerns could be expected to be more common, for instance, in religious institutions with their greater international networks.

To investigate the language preference in different groups, there will be a mapping of language choices among different receivers in the lay document corpus. A document typically involves two main parts (an issuer and a receiver), and one might argue that the receiver had the greater interest of the two in the document setup. Figure 4 presents the share of Latin documents of all lay documents in different social groups of receivers in five-year periods. The religious group is divided between representatives of the secular church, and male and female abbeys. The lay group is divided in two, of which the urban lay group consists of persons who appear with a title connected to the urban milieu or are said to live in a town, whereas the other lay group is negatively defined as unspecified lay persons, probably of rural residency. As discussed in the beginning, the unspecified lay group might also contain individuals that would belong to the urban group and even the religious group, but they are assumed to be a minor share of the group.

The diagram of Figure 4 shows that the unspecified group, which is assumed to be dominated by rural lay people, seems to take the lead as receivers of vernacular documents. Female abbeys apparently follow at approximately the same pace, except for an initial “hesitation” in the first five-year period (1346–1350) when there are no documents in Swedish; after that, the share of Latin drops quickly.⁵³

The other groups seem to have been more reluctant to adopt use of vernacular documents. Male abbeys received few documents in the vernacular during the 1350s but ended up at the same level as the lay group at the end of the 1360s. The initially lower share of Swedish documents could possibly be explained by a stronger Latin

52 The actual reading capability among the population is very difficult to estimate, but the shortage of sources in the form of written documents from the early period should probably be understood as indication of its rarity. There is evidence of runic literacy in lay environments both in rural and urban areas in different times and geographical areas, but Nedkvitne (2004: 199) suggests that literacy with Roman letters among peasants can only be assumed towards the end of the Middle Ages in Sweden and Denmark. However, it is important to distinguish between widespread literacy and possible reading proficiency among single individuals.

53 The “unruly” character of the development can be explained by the relatively low number of documents. Whereas there are only 113 documents with a female abbey as a receiver, there are over a thousand with an unspecified (rural) lay receiver. Chance might play a part in the sudden drops and rises.

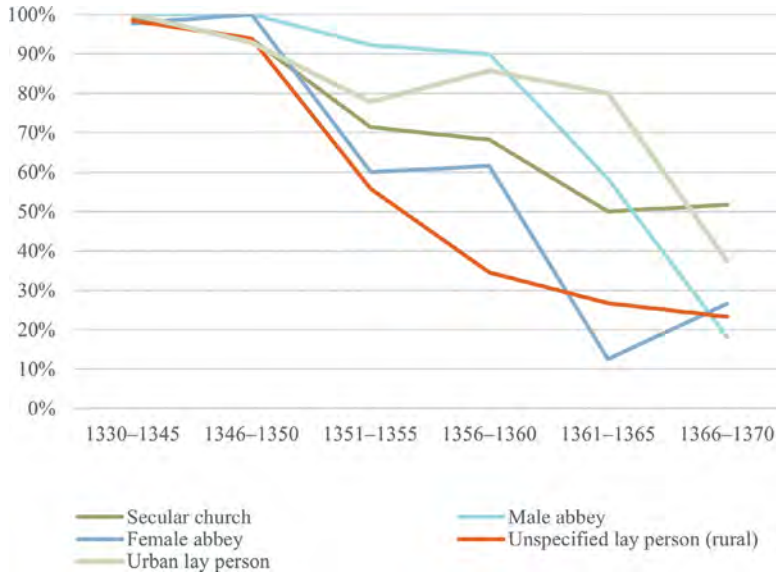


Figure 4: The share of Latin documents among all documents issued by the lay group distributed between receivers of different social groups.

competence than perhaps was present in the female abbeys. The male abbeys were also engaged in international networks of abbeys between which brothers might move, and in such an international organisation, it could have been natural to stay with Latin.

Urban lay receivers were also slow to accept Swedish during the 1350s, which might have several different explanations. For one thing, the National Law, with its prescriptions about documents and language choice, did not have the same status in the towns as in the countryside; the towns used two law books, one on local provincial law and one on relatively brief town law, which included regulations specific for the towns (Larsson 2009: 74–76). A new town law was under preparation during the 1350s, but it is not known at what pace the new National Law was accepted in towns. The towns also had another administrative structure. Furthermore, the multilingual population of towns and the international network they were a part of probably made Swedish less useful for economical and juridical affairs. Finally, it is also reasonable to believe that Latin competence was generally more easily accessible in towns than in the countryside.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ A rich discussion on the relation between the use of writing in the towns and in rural areas can be found in the recently published Mostert (2024), which, however, is more concerned with the question of literacy in general than the choice of language.

The secular church accepted the vernacular documents slowly, and at the end of the period, Latin is still used in fifty percent of all documents with the church as the receiver. It is hardly surprising that it is within this social group that the use of and interest in Swedish as a documentary language is the least, as the expected competence in Latin was high, and they also based part of their influence and power on the proficiency in the language and on the texts in the language.⁵⁵

Thus, the results seem to indicate that the social groups played different parts in the vernacularisation process, and that it was the large unspecified (rural) lay group that was the engine of the change, the one that by accepting and/or choosing the innovation of vernacular made it common and natural in documentary writing in contrast to before. This is not an unexpected conclusion, not least because this group was most directly affected by the new National Law and its prescriptions, but it might also indicate that the choice of language was not irrelevant to them despite the expected low level of literacy in this group. Kadens (2001) questions the argument in previous research that vernacularisation was driven by an assumed improved accessibility. I concur with her general conclusion that accessibility was not the single or even most important factor, but, in my view, one should not neglect that a possible rudimentary vernacular reading proficiency among some individuals in this group might have contributed to making the choice of the vernacular over Latin appealing, when it was no longer given that Latin was the default choice.

To conclude, the dramatic spread of vernacular documentary writing was most likely driven by the combination of the administrative reform introduced by the National Law and the large rural lay population's acceptance of the new language policy. The language act was, however, never a binding prescription as it remained possible to have documents in Latin. Perhaps the most important contribution of language planning was to suggest among the population the idea of a default language for this kind of writing. The process we see during the 1350s illustrates how this idea gains ground and becomes established in the 1360s within a new language order.

⁵⁵ The shifting attitudes also seem to be part of the reason for some of the divergent results in the analysis of language choices in different types of documents above (Figure 3). Gift deeds are written in Latin to a much greater extent in the last period than other transactional documents, and the receivers of this document type are typically religious institutions. The related document type of Testaments, which are almost completely in Latin throughout the period, have in most cases religious institutions as beneficiaries, but there might as well be many different receivers in one testament.

A model for the vernacularisation of documentary writing

The vernacularisation of documentary writing in the medieval Swedish realm evolved as a dramatic process of change. In just over a decade, from the late 1340s to the late 1350s, the Swedish language developed from a marginal phenomenon to the most frequently used language in lay documents. By the 1360s, a new "diglossic order" had seemingly settled, with the Swedish language as the preferred choice in lay documents and Latin as a not insignificant but less common alternative. Latin was employed when required or requested, but it was evidently set aside when unnecessary. The entire process represents a noteworthy shift in linguistic practices within a textual culture.

How can we comprehend this substantial shift in attitudes and practices? In her thorough analysis of the language "switch" (the shift from Latin to the vernacular, see footnote 2) in medieval Flanders, Kadens (2001: 316–317) proposes three stages:

- 1) A preparatory phase characterised by the emergence of specific social prerequisites, most notably a population acquiring "comfort with and confidence in written records" (Kadens 2001: 319).
- 2) The moment of innovation, traditionally conceptualised in previous research as the work of a single innovator, while Kadens (2001: 321) argues in favour of multiple innovators independently arriving at the same idea.
- 3) A period of acceptance and integration. General acceptance of documents and trust in their authority were pivotal for economic and juridical texts of this nature. The innovation could only be embraced when it was deemed safe for all parties involved, given that these documents often dealt with significant economic values for individuals (Kadens 2001: 231 and chapter 4).

Kadens' model does not perfectly align with the development in the Swedish realm in every aspect, but parallels can still be observed. Initially, there is a growth in the use of documents in the Swedish realm, akin to what is anticipated in the "preparatory period". However, unlike in Flanders, it is difficult to decide whether the lead in the Swedish process was taken by the urban population and not the landowning, rural class. Secondly, there is a moment that appears to correspond to the stage of an assumed innovator, but in the Swedish context, it would be the king, in collaboration with some of his officials, launching the language reform, rather than scribes taking the innovation into use spontaneously. Lastly, there is a period of acceptance with partially shifting attitudes among different societal groups, but the vernacular practice was probably also disseminated through administrative reform and regulation of the National Law.

While it is not expected that a model fit every historical example in all its aspects, in an attempt to further elaborate on Kadens' model and perhaps enhance its applica-

bility, the following stages for the process of changing the language order in documentary writing could be suggested:

- 1) Diglossia and the increasing use of documents. The initial phase involves a situation characterised by a stable language order, an “equilibrium”, during which the cosmopolitan language completely dominates documentary writing while the population becomes progressively accustomed to the functions and values of written documents.
- 2) Vernacular legitimisation. At a certain juncture, the vernacular is recognised as a valid alternative to the cosmopolitan language by influential social groups, actors, or institutions that either wield the power and resources to establish prescriptive norms or are emulated for other reasons by the population.
- 3) Language order negotiation. A phase of negotiation and habit change within the population and its different groups regarding the choice of language for documentary writing takes place.
- 4) Emergence of reformed diglossia. A new equilibrium arises concerning the order of languages in writing, wherein the vernacular and the cosmopolitan language assume new complementary functions.

The first stage exemplifies a classic case of diglossia in Ferguson’s (1959) sense, but the last stage, characterised by “reformed diglossia” is less commonly discussed, wherein there is an elevated status for the vernacular while the former high-status language remains significant with, however, limited use. To emphasise the stability of situations before and after the change, as well as the rapid change itself, the model also employs the concept of an *equilibrium*. This term is utilised by Kadens (2001: 315) but, here, it also finds support from the historical linguist Dixon (1997, ch. 6), who argues that languages typically remain in equilibrium for extended periods, with a “punctuation” causing relatively fast changes into new equilibriums. While not delving too deeply into the broader theoretical ideas behind Dixon’s concept, originally derived from biology, it aptly describes this particular case and tentatively applies to other instances of vernacularisation.⁵⁶

The second stage, involving the legitimisation of the vernacular, is suggested here to be the “punctuation” that destabilises the initial equilibrium. The mere innovation of writing documents in the vernacular might have been less critical, considering the existence of Swedish vernacular documents before the actual vernacularisation process commences, and Swedish’s existence as a written language long before its appearance in documents. In the Swedish case, the key seems to lie in the actions of the king and the group around the new legislation, providing a clear signal regarding the vernacular. In general terms, an explanation is required for how a sufficiently

⁵⁶ The concept is also discussed theoretically in relation to “change” in Burke (1979), which is further discussed in Chapters 1 and 9 in this volume.

large group of people gained trust in the vernacular to facilitate its widespread adoption.

The third stage, involving a phase of negotiation and habit change, underscores the potential existence of varying opinions among different individuals and groups regarding the languages, with no guarantee of a complete shift. Bilingual societies might allocate different functions to different languages, and the observed process likely involves deliberation on the potential functions of the vernacular, as well as a struggle between different interests. It is also a period of breaking old habits and getting accustomed to new ones – a social-psychological aspect that should not be underestimated.

Finally, a new equilibrium may be reached, but one should anticipate that the new language order utilises both languages for different functions, rather than one language completely replacing the other. It represents a reshaped differentiation between the languages in the bi- or multilingual culture. Much later, Latin ceased to be a language in function, because other global languages assumed its role for interregional communication and technical and scientific language, not because the vernacular made it dispensable.

The speed with which the change takes place in the Swedish example may have been expedited by the bubonic plague. According to the language change theory of punctuated equilibrium in Dixon (1997), catastrophes are assumed to have played an important role in language changes, and other sociolinguists have argued along the same lines (Trudgill 2020: 8–11). There are also objections to the role of catastrophes, but in this case, one could argue by a simple analogy that organisations that have suffered the loss of many of their members and replaced them with new ones may be less resistant to new routines and habits than an undisturbed and intact group would be. Similarly, a society struck by the plague with the loss of both high and low officials, as well as of the literacy workers themselves, the scribes, could be expected to more easily adopt the innovation of a new language of writing. However, it all depended on the presence and value of the new alternative. Without the language planning programme already underway and a political will backing it, nothing would probably have happened at this stage in history, just as the vernacular breakthrough in documentary writing in Denmark did not take place until half a century later.

Vernacularisation might be thought of as a single, unitary process in the history of a language and its texts, but one should probably treat different domains of writing separately, before a general history of vernacularisation can be written. Whether literary texts, religious texts, epigraphy of different kinds, practical everyday messages, or professional documentary writing, each domain or different kind of writing is embedded in different contexts and probably develops according to its own logic. They might, however, play a role for each other. In his magisterial study of the vernacularisation of literature in medieval South Asia and Western Europe, Pollock (2006) views vernacular documentary writing as a stage from which vernacular imaginative and political literature might suddenly unfold. Kadens (2001), on the contrary,

suggests that a vernacular literature might have contributed to the choice to use the vernacular for documentary writing.⁵⁷ Perhaps these two standpoints are less incompatible than they first sound – Pollock’s documentary writing is a wider category than Kadens’ – but they point to the importance of viewing the processes of vernacularisation within each domain separately as well as in interaction.

The present case of the medieval Swedish realm seemingly supports Kadens’ opinion. Literary works in Swedish were produced at the beginning of the fourteenth century, half a century before the vernacularisation of Swedish documentary writing began. They might have contributed to the acceptance of the vernacular as a language suited for writing, as they were texts of high cultural significance –including for instance three courtly verse-tales, a regnal chronicle, and a Pentateuch translation. The personal union with the Norwegian kingdom, where the vernacular had been used for documents since at least the beginning of the thirteenth century, likely played a role in this process by providing an example.

The breakthrough of vernacular documentary writing in the Swedish realm is closely tied to an effort to consolidate the realm through the National Law. Additionally, it coincides with the first attested use of a proper noun for the vernacular, “Swedish”. It is as if the political concept of a language, its speakers, and the subjects of the realm is born, later becoming intricately connected to a powerful political formula of nationalism. At the same time, there are also less ominous consequences of this identity between vernacular and official administration in the growing accessibility of the public sphere, notwithstanding that true democratisation lies far in the future.

The role of languages in the formation of political units is seldom discussed in these early state-building processes, despite the evident capacity of languages to provide deeply felt identities and delineate the categories of “we” and “they”. As stated at the outset, language choice is far from a neutral question, especially in official contexts. The Swedish vernacularisation process after 1350 seems to offer a model of an attempt to harness this power of a vernacular in the organisation of a state, with documentary writing appearing to have played a central role in implementing this endeavour.

⁵⁷ Other examples on the relation between literary language and documentary writing are discussed in Peersman (2012: 644).

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Vincent Debiais

8 Qualities, Features, and Fashion – Theoretical Notes on the Epigraphic Minuscule

The “Qualities of Inscriptions”

Would it be an exaggeration to say that the analysis of script in Latin medieval inscriptions rests on the tacit pillar of judgement in terms of the “quality” of the epigraphic object? It would certainly be taking a historiographic shortcut by covering in one assertion half a century of publications, studies, and reports.¹ It would also place under a single hat scholarly traditions that are so different that they prevent comparisons, and at times, discussions between the Spanish, French, Italian, and German “schools”. Finally, it would flatten the complexity of certain highly specific palaeographic analyses that are attentive to the description and observation of epigraphic writing without dwelling on the formal and aesthetic value of the produced object. It would thus be an exaggeration, but for all that would it be false?

Clarification should be made in attempting to respond to this question in a nuanced manner, regarding the general notion of *quality*, which covers two essential aspects.² The first, neutral and in theory absolute, is the definition of the *form* in which writing is presented on a given object, a form that can be identified, characterised, and possibly distinguished – a form that can thus be “qualified”. The second aspect, which is relative, or even subjective, is the appreciation of the level of a given writing’s formal perfection, which makes it possible to situate it on the epigraphic standards scale – this understanding of “quality” assumes a “connection” between one script and another. And yet, this “quality” relative to the writing of inscriptions is established tacitly (and most likely unconsciously) based on numerous and disparate criteria.³ Quality is thus established based on the degree of technical preparation of

1 For partial historiographic assessments of the epigraphic discipline, see Favreau (1989a, 1995), Lambert (2004), and Treffort (2007a). See also Koch (2004).

2 On the notion of “quality” and its application in the social sciences, see Musselin et al (2002).

3 It is sufficient to analyse the content of the inscriptions from the great European collections and examine the qualitative adjectives used to convey to the reader a visual sensation born from the formal, aesthetic, and technical properties of inscriptions. The editor often gets caught up in playing with the assigned description to make the inscription more readable and allow themselves to be guided by

Note: I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to Estelle Ingrand-Varenne for her generous and pertinent review of this work. Our points of discussion show how much the palaeographic research of inscriptions still needs to clarify its methods and historical investigations. I also want to thank the translator for the wonderful work done on the original in French.

the medium (ruling and margins) and the disposition of the text within the epigraphic area – a good-quality epigraphic object is an inscription arranged in a consistent, harmonious manner, helped by the use of punctuation or a frame. Quality is also established based on the degree of “formalism” in the engraving of the script – the letters of a “good” inscription convey a mastered technical skill of hand, a specific expertise, confident tracing that avoids the cursivity of the *ductus*; a clear-cut, sculpted, outlined script; a script with no sign of hand-writing.⁴ Quality is still based on the evident aesthetic research from which writing has benefited, which is generally expressed by graphic overindulgence, either by adding complementary features to the simple architecture of the character (bead moulding, reduplication, vegetal elements, etc.), or the combination of characters and plays on letters (conjunctions, interlocked letters, superscriptions, etc.).⁵ Finally, quality is evaluated according to the expected correspondence between the script on an object and its model, the graphic archetype that is assumed to have been in use at the time when the inscription was made⁶ – this theoretical script whose existence has been established through the accumulation of examples, and by the presupposition according to which the letter forms evolve over time, and which allows us to say whether the script is “archaic” when it appears to be from a time earlier than the date of the inscription, “consistent” when it corresponds to its time, or “strange” when there is nothing coherent or satisfying from a chronological point of view.⁷

If we retain the dual meaning of the notion of quality (characterisation and appreciation) on one hand, and if we make an inventory of the criteria involved in establishing the relative quality of the inscription on the other, it is not likely wrong to consider that it is indeed this notion that underlies most of the analyses of writing in medieval epigraphy. Several historiographic reasons can probably explain this fact, but it seems that epigraphy has spent most of its early years under the influence of palaeography, and to a lesser extent, of diplomatics; this led the study of inscriptions

what they feel or envisage about the inscription rather than by what they are capable of actually “describing”. In any other instance, this is the narrative trap denounced by Marin (1978).

4 On this matter, see the already old but essential remarks by Durliat (1980).

5 The consideration of these different criteria, which cannot be brought together as part of an intrinsic and measurable quality of the inscription, is, however, at the origin of the establishment of a hierarchy of values and locations of epigraphic production, particularly in the Spanish epigraphic school. See, among others, Martín López (2007), and García Morilla (2014).

6 Much work has been done that seeks to put manuscript and epigraphic forms in relation to one another; see, in particular, the important methodological proposition of Caramello (2012) which discusses certain technical and analytical pitfalls to avoid.

7 In fact, the questions of archaism, innovation, and modernity are very difficult to deal with in the Humanities and social sciences. On this subject, see Hartog (2003), and Sablayrolles (2007). See also Zumthor (1967).

to import certain taxonomic principles from the analysis of manuscripts.⁸ These principles, insofar as they are not found as such in epigraphic objects – the making of an inscription is a graphic process that differs from handwriting from most points of view – borrow theoretical models of writing that epigraphy uses to compare and evaluate the graphic forms of inscriptions. If any correspondence does exist between the model and the object, the quality of the inscription is high; if there is any divergence, the quality of the inscription is low. What was considered taxonomy in palaeography became the scale of values in epigraphy; the perverseness of this shift resides in the fact that it had imposed writing from the manuscript world as the “model” or “standard” for epigraphic writing.⁹ The second historiographic reason explaining the systematic reliance on the notion of quality is linked to the obligation imposed on epigraphy, mainly by art history and archaeology, to assign a date to inscriptions.¹⁰ Although a large number of epigraphic documents do not bear any chronological indication, analysing the script becomes the main criterion for establishing the date of the object, either in an absolute way by comparing it with what we know about manuscript forms, or in a relative way by classifying the inscriptions based on the degree to which their graphic forms have evolved. What was once a qualification (in the neutral meaning of “evaluation”) is now used for an evolutionary vision of script that must follow, in inscriptions, the progress made in the realm of manuscripts.

Most of the work produced in the field of medieval epigraphy emphasises its own “youth” and inexperience, and it has been doing so for nearly forty years now, which is not without irony.¹¹ This youth, this adolescence required the guidance of more mature fields such as palaeography, diplomatics, codicology, and philology in order to establish a work method and publishing criteria. The fact remains that this peculiar history of scholarship has made epigraphy subordinate to other scientific sub-branches of medieval studies, which is not problematic. However, this has also made the object of epigraphy, the inscription, subordinate to other graphic phenomena of the Middle Ages, which is much more troublesome. The assessment of quality is thus carried out “based on” palaeographic expectations, while almost no one discusses the epigraphic relevance.¹² In this epistemological situation, inscriptions do not seem to exist autonomously, and the epigraphic hypothesis and its forms are only collateral or incidental to manuscript writing. This has nothing to do with lambasting comparative studies between inscriptions

8 For links between palaeography and epigraphy for the Middle Ages, see the group survey “Epigrafia e Paleografia, inchiesta sui rapporti fra due discipline”, *Scrittura e Civiltà* 5 (1981) in which Robert Favreau points out that “epigraphic material can contribute to the study of the function and diffusion of writing”. For the full range of methodological contributions, see also the doctoral thesis of Caramello (2015).

9 This can be best measured by the Spanish school’s systematic application of diplomatic categories to inscriptions; see for example García Lobo & Martín López (2011).

10 On this subject see Debiais (2019).

11 See Pereira (2017).

12 See for example García Morilla (2018) or Rodríguez Suárez (2010a).

and manuscripts; to the contrary, it is the only way to approach medieval written culture in the diversity of its forms, functions, intentions, and effects. However, we must be careful not to invert the heuristic process; we must evaluate in order to compare, not compare in order to evaluate. On this point, medieval epigraphy still has theoretical work to do to finally rid itself of this weighty family tutelage, and it must do so quickly so that it can thus pass from its subordinate role to a dialogue between peers.

The re-establishment of an evaluative neutrality, free recourse to comparisons, and the recognition of a documentary autonomy are conditions to reinstate, especially when envisioning the numerous changes that affect the practice of Middle Age inscriptions in western Europe. This is not the place to make an inventory of scripts, languages, prosodic forms, dispositions, support, locations, content, and functions of medieval inscriptions, and to do so, it is sufficient to view the great European collections, which are now accessible online in France and Germany in particular.¹³ This diversity at all levels gives the impression that very disparate practices existed for creating inscriptions, whose forms seem to have been adapted to each unique communicative circumstance and whose variety and absence of *format* were the principle characteristics. Within this very unstable formal panorama of epigraphic objects, it is also easy to identify sets of inscriptions based on similarities, common features, shared qualities, while recognising profound changes or radical discontinuities in the epigraphic practice is complicated. We can make a few exceptions for some of the more prominent changes, knowing that it would be necessary to discuss each one precisely and consider the geography and chronology of the transformations. The first of these changes is the exponential increase in the number of epigraphic objects produced during the Middle Ages, with a peak in the first half of the fifteenth century when exposed writing takes the control of public spaces, primarily in urban centres.¹⁴ The use of vernacular languages side by side with Latin starts at the end of the twelfth century, and even more so in the thirteenth century.¹⁵ We also witness an extreme diversification of textual content from the 1200s onwards with a relative loss of pre-eminence on the part of funerary inscriptions.¹⁶ Finally, we can identify main

13 For France, the online platform *Persée* (URL in bibliography) offers the vast majority of the volumes from the *Corpus de la France médiévale*, to be completed by consulting the *Titulus* publishing platform (URL in bibliography). As the volumes from the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale* contain entries for inscriptions dated before 1300, this survey dealt mainly with the preliminary inventory for this publication, which contains entries for the inscriptions preserved or known of for the entire medieval period up until approximately 1500. For Germany and Austria, see the excellent website *Deutsche Inschriften Online* (URL in bibliography).

14 For the major epigraphic movements of late antiquity and the decrease in the number of texts available, see Bolle et al. (2017).

15 For the linguistic upheavals in epigraphy, mainly in France, see the definitive overview by Ingrand-Varenne (2017).

16 Regarding this subject, see the collection of papers in the volume by Martín López & García Lobo (2010); see also Favreau (2006).

articulations in the graphic types employed: the revival of the epigraphic capital inherited from Roman antiquity and reinterpreted in the Carolingian Empire; the more sustained use of the so-called “uncial” or “Gothic” scripts that abandon the square capital model from the 1100s onwards; and above all, the appearance of minuscule script in medieval inscriptions.

This last phenomenon is sufficiently important, even radical enough, that it can be considered, at least, as a hypothesis, a “change” in the epigraphic practices of the Medieval West and perhaps beyond. This is by no means a discovery, and some studies have already considered the issue of minuscule script in medieval inscriptions;¹⁷ however, most work seems to have focused on the qualitative perspective mentioned above, considering it subordinate to manuscript writing, and in comparison to other graphic forms, without “qualifying” this epigraphic minuscule script and what it represents in the practice of public writing. The following pages propose some theoretical paths of reflection on this subject rather than an attempt to explain the epigraphic change that constituted the adoption of minuscule script in medieval inscriptions at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This study is by no means definitive and raises more methodological or anthropological questions than answers regarding history or palaeography.¹⁸ For this attempt, the script of inscriptions in the Latin West will be described first, mainly in the area of today’s France, Spain, and Germany (for which the most significant documentation is available), through a partial study that focuses on a corpus of approximately 3,000 inscriptions, which unfortunately does not suffice for establishing anything more than a sometimes impressionistic panorama of the palaeographic situation applied to inscriptions. Secondly, we will see how epigraphic research has addressed this question with a historiographical study of the notions of evolution and quality. Finally, some proposals are put forward shedding light on the graphic context that permitted the (almost) sudden use of minuscule script in inscriptions by invoking the “fashion” phenomenon before returning in conclusion to the heuristic tool of quality and its application to medieval written practices outside the realm of manuscript writing.

¹⁷ The use of minuscule script is seen as representing a break in the epigraphic chronology established by Koch (1969)

¹⁸ This chapter in essence resumes the presentation given in Stockholm in August 2022; research had then been established for the examination of the geographic areas covered by the published volumes of the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale*, with the volumes available online from the *Deutsche Inschriften* collection, and the published volumes from the Spanish and Italian collections.

Epigraphic Writing: “Models” and “Evolution”

The variety of medieval epigraphy is evident everywhere and at all times; it is much more likely to find inscriptions that do not resemble each other than to discover strong similarities between multiple epigraphic objects. These similarities relate to three main aspects: 1) the text’s disposition and support. We can take the example of texts on gothic stained-glass windows,¹⁹ or funerary inscriptions engraved on the surface of effigial slabs beginning in the 1220s across the entire Atlantic seaboard of Europe, which form genuine groups;²⁰ 2) the formulary content of the text which, in Latin or the vernacular, utilises a recurrent vocabulary, structure, or prosodic form²¹. This is the case with epitaphs introduced by the expression *hic jacet*, or texts mentioning the consecration of a church;²² 3) the type of script used to write the text, which is identified as the graphic “quality” of the inscription. The use of Roman capitals in Carolingian inscriptions (Figure 1) or the use of very ornate letters in thirteenth-century epitaphs in the city of Vienne in the Rhône valley (Figure 2) make these inscriptions “look the same”.²³



Figure 1: Tours, Saint-Martin, funerary inscription for *Adalberga* (830 or 840). Photo: © CESC/CIFM J.-P. Brouard.



Figure 2: Vienne, Saint-André-le-Bas, funerary inscription for *Petronilla* (1216). Photo: © CESC/CIFM J. Michaud.

Taken separately, these similarities are so widespread in epigraphic documentation that they likely represent the very structure of the practice. By this we mean that the choice and repetition of a given disposition, formulary, and graphic type define medieval epigraphic writing which, to satisfy the variable communicative requirements,

¹⁹ The great sets of stained-glass windows at Chartres and Bourges constitute a very interesting cluster for analysing painted script because their use in the cathedral spans the entire period during which epigraphic minuscule script appeared and then became rare. Unfortunately, we still lack studies providing a general overview of these inscriptions. See, however, *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale, Tome 26: Département du Cher*, Paris, 2016, entries 14 to 63 for an initial approach.

²⁰ On this subject, see Paul Cockerham’s wonderful recent book (2022).

²¹ The question of epigraphic formularies has been addressed on numerous occasions by Robert Favreau using concrete cases; see in particular Favreau (1989b, 1991a, 1991b).

²² Ingrand-Varenne (2010). For another epigraphic formula, see Mineo (2015).

²³ For a very innovative interpretation of these palaeographic periods, see Deschamps (1929).

constantly manipulates and transforms these three aspects of inscriptions (disposition, content, script). The differences between one inscription and another are due to the arrangement of these three elements and the perpetual reshaping of their relationship. The documentation would thus be less affected by structural change than it would always show fluctuating assemblies of these three elementary particles of epigraphic construction.

On occasion, significant similarities can be observed between one text and another or a group of inscriptions and another, the number of similar objects sometimes leading to the identification of true clusters generally defined by their superficial resemblance and their accumulation in the same place rather than by any detailed analysis of formal convergence points. The gigantic stone obituary preserved in the cloister of Roda de Isábena in Aragon represents the paradigm of such epigraphic groups.²⁴ Great similarities can be found in the disposition, content, and written form of the inscriptions gathered within the same architectural space (Figure 3); however, a thorough study of written forms and techniques reveals profound variations that can be linked to the very epigraphic program, the religious and temporal intentions of Roda's canon community, the site's institutional upheavals, the liturgical commemoration of the



Figure 3: Roda de Isábena, Cathedral Saint Vincent, cloister, funerary inscriptions for canons (13thc.).
Photo: © Vincent Debiais.

²⁴ For the cloister of Roda and its inscriptions, see Gudiol (1967), and more recently Grégor & Uberti (2022).

dead, etc. In this group, which is not dated by any indication in the texts themselves, the palaeographic variations were not considered until very recently, and only for establishing a chronology of inscriptions and for stating, from the evolution of forms (very difficult to detect, moreover), the passage of time, the succession of artisans, and a hierarchy between a so-called “master” and his successors (Martín López 2020).

This evolutionary reading of inscriptions, which prefers the safety provided by the concepts of maturation, apogee, and decline to the complex vagaries of history,²⁵ is based on the observation of the main chronological modifications during the Middle Ages of the third elementary particle, the script, which are summarised here in an excessively schematic manner for the Latin West.²⁶ Before the beginning of the ninth century, epigraphic practices were in line with the late-antique use of public writing, with a limited number of texts produced especially for important funerary displays, urban sites, and objects of distinction (Velázquez Soriano 2014). The written forms employed in these inscriptions were defined by an immense variety of techniques and dispositions, sometimes within the same graphic object, but particularly between one place and another. Most of the time, writing used the capital script or at least a bilinear graphic type (i.e., of a single height divided between two lines) (Stirnemann & Smith 2007), which evokes the use of antique and late-antique epigraphy except for specific epigraphic uses, such as accounts written on slate in the Iberian Peninsula, for which cursive script was adopted. By examining Edmont Le Blanc’s collection (1892) and some volumes from *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*²⁷, and based on publications for which a reproduction of the inscription by means of photography, rubbing, or drawing is available – in total approximately 350 epigraphic objects – we notice that for texts prior to the eighth century, a third of the inscriptions use an epigraphic capital inspired by the antique period and provide a completely classical aspect. Another third use a “rustic” capital outside of any formal nomenclature, as described by Jean Mallon (1952), with modifications in the module and organisation of the strokes. Finally, the last third used a written form mixing capital and other, very diverse forms. At the beginning of the ninth century and with the Carolingian reform of writing, the number of preserved inscriptions rises sharply throughout Europe, mainly in imperial territories and around the great centres of secular and ecclesiastical power. Within this environment, epigraphic writing gradually adopted the “epigraphic” capital script, thus re-establishing the principle of a solemn written

²⁵ On the false sense of security provided by these notions, see the classic work by Chaunu (1981).

²⁶ For an overview of this secular transformation of writing, see Favreau (1995: 57–89). For a more in-depth view of this period up to the twelfth century, see Koch (2007).

²⁷ *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures à la Renaissance carolingienne*, Paris, 197, 3 vols.

form for inscriptions and “monumental” sections of books²⁸. The Carolingian renaissance thus provided epigraphy with a distinctive script situated high in the hierarchy of the contemporary graphic system. This use would, however, not become systematic; in the volume published by Cécile Treffort (2020) regarding Carolingian inscriptions in western France, it is estimated that 70 percent of the inscriptions dated after 900 use such capital script even if it underwent multiple formal variations, both geographically and chronologically. However, even after being put aside for several centuries up until the contemporary period, the capital remains, to this day, the most widely used graphic form for public writing. Around the year 1000, the inscriptions mainly written in capital letters show a gradual shift towards the use of original forms that renounced the square module in favour of a narrower module in which straight lines are combined with more numerous curves. This is designated in French typology as “uncial”, in the Spanish nomenclature as “Caroline”.²⁹ Eleventh- and twelfth-century writing is thus characterised in inscriptions by this coexistence of different capital types, with written forms, sometimes ornate, and curved letters and module variations that permit the addition or transformation of written strokes (Figure 4).

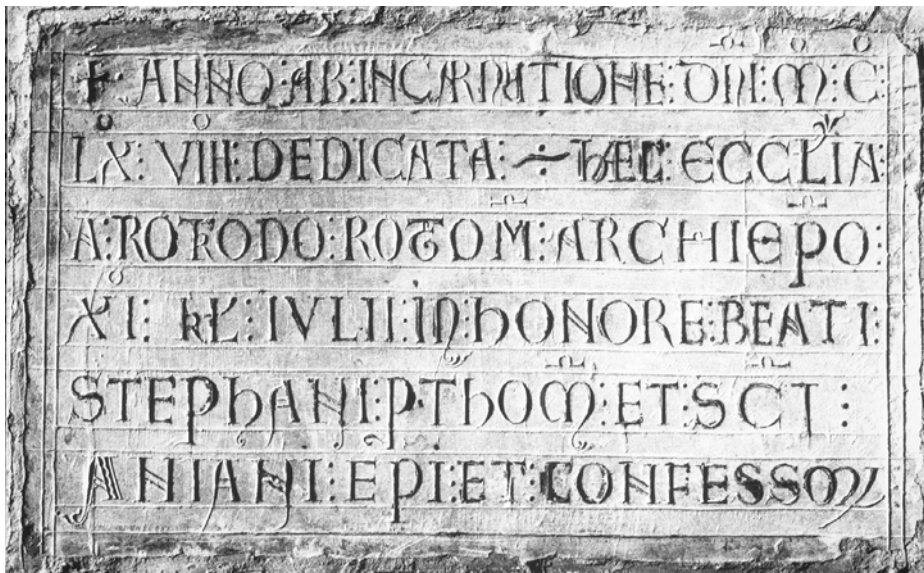


Figure 4: Bures-en-Bray, parish church, inscription of consecration (1168). Photo: © CESC/M/CIFM J.-P. Brouard.

²⁸ On the question of Carolingian writing in inscriptions, see Treffort (2007b); for more specific questions, also see Treffort (2004).

²⁹ For “Caroline” written forms, see in particular García Lobo (2002); see also García Morilla (2018).

From the 1150s onward, the epigraphic square capital favouring straight lines and curves only appeared very occasionally, and the uncial, which was still used in a bilinear system, largely dominated epigraphic production. By around 1450, 80 percent of monumental inscriptions use this type of script, with written forms belonging to pre-humanistic and humanistic scripts. It is within this ocean of bilinear written types, in which a single-height letter is used in very different styles, that we see minuscule script develop; the date is very difficult to establish although this most likely occurred around 1320 (at least in France and Spain). In inscriptions written with capitals, uncials, or Gothic majuscules, we sporadically find some minuscule forms that were, by context, “enlarged”, “stretched out”, or “capitalised” to take their place in the text without needing to break with the principle of a single-height script imposed by the exclusive use of majuscule.³⁰ Furthermore, it is often quite difficult to evaluate whether epigraphic forms may or indeed do belong to the Gothic majuscule system while simultaneously reproducing an enlarged minuscule form. As a letter, minuscule does not constitute in this sense a major change in the practice of epigraphic writing; however, minuscule script as a graphic system – i.e., a script used by multiple authors that allows for the diacritical use of the majuscule (beginning of a sentence, proper nouns, numerals, emphasis, etc.) – drastically changes epigraphic documentation at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Regardless, it seems difficult to identify true “changes” from one state to another in the written forms of medieval inscriptions insofar as types of scripts are most often porous and open to forms found elsewhere and at other times. The systems are not exclusive; they allow (and even encourage) the use of all graphic types, which contests the undoubtedly absurd or foreign idea of standardisation. On the other hand, it should be remembered that independently of any possible identification of coherent epigraphic groups or the attribution of multiple inscriptions to the same hand, each writing action is a *unicum*, and the identical reproduction of letters in stone, metal, or wood (with the exception of texts produced using a mould) did not exist – this is not, by the way, an epigraphic feature specific to the Middle Ages. The use of a given graphic style is thus always mediated by the gesture behind its creation. This intervention by the human body, as a repository of knowledge and subject to whims and fancies, makes each letter a “singularity” (in the mathematical or more general technological sense of the term): each letter is the chronological and spatial product of the written properties defining the whole to which it belongs. Our palaeographic survey here which might consider minuscule script as an upheaval is thus for the most part groundless, antihistorical, or overwhelmingly broad. Writing is always different from one inscription to the next, and we should probably respect this completely disappointing evidence.

³⁰ See, among others, Banti (2000).

One thing is certain: minuscule script in medieval inscriptions does not seem to be a product of any change or evolution. There can be no *change* because at no time in epigraphic history does minuscule script replace capital or majuscule script, and the Latin West does not shift from a graphic system with a single letter height to writing using multiple letter heights, regardless of the chronological scale considered. The use of the majuscule never stopped at the end of the Middle Ages; on the contrary, it continued to be the most used style for the inscriptions that have been preserved. As an example, we can see that for the inscriptions dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries available in the online *Deutsche Inschriften* corpus, 65 percent are written using a bilinear system that excludes the use of minuscule script. The percentage becomes even greater from 1430 onwards. Of the 55 inscriptions dating from the fifteenth century preserved in the town of Passau, only nine texts are inscribed in minuscule; the others use a variable-module Gothic majuscule (Steiniger 2006). Therefore, minuscule script does not force out bilinear types either in the epigraphic material in general or in any group of inscriptions in particular. We thus find epitaphs in capitals, majuscules, and minuscules at the same time and in the same place; stained-glass windows present texts in majuscule and minuscule, etc. Even after the introduction of pre-humanistic and humanistic scripts in inscriptions, majuscule script would continue to be used.

It is also a feature of medieval epigraphy that this unpredictability of graphic choices is never driven by anything other than a circumstantial response to communicative needs. Contrary to what is sometimes found in diplomatic usage, in which certain parts of the text must be copied in a particular written form, where a connection is presupposed between the content of the document and its written form, or between the disposition and the written form, this was never required in the epigraphic practices of the Middle Ages. Such a lack of normativity or constraint in the writing of inscriptions granted these actors immense technical, formal, and aesthetic freedom – we will return to this later. Although it can be difficult to speak of change because there is no substitution, it is even less possible to place the phenomenon of the epigraphic minuscule script into any evolution of the written forms of medieval inscriptions. Indeed, the use of minuscule script does not fit into the evolutionary principle that presumes the emergence of a need or a solution, an adaptation to circumstances through successive mutations, and an end to this process due to success (adoption of the new form and rejection of previous forms) or failure (rejection of the new form, return to the previous form, or emergence of a new solution). The porosity of graphic usage in epigraphy challenges this evolutionary schema that prevents inserting a particular type of letter into a historical context justifying conservatism and invention independently of model and progress. This is exactly what happened with minuscule script, whose use starting in the 1320s owes nothing or next to nothing to the evolution of medieval script, but rather to its relation to the internal circumstances of the objects thus produced.

Minuscule script: between emergence, evolution, and invention

Before analysing these circumstances, let's examine how medieval epigraphy has traditionally viewed the emergence of minuscule script. This will be quite brief insofar as its appearance is considered in historiography as a non-phenomenon. The appearance of minuscule script can certainly be observed since it is part of an inexorable and predetermined "evolution" of graphic forms, coded in their DNA, and not worthy of any particular attention. In this narrative, minuscules were used around 1320 in the same way Gothic majuscule had been used two centuries earlier – and this is hardly an exaggeration.

It should be pointed out beforehand that the use of minuscule script before this date was mostly reserved for epigraphic manifestations of spontaneous writing that are placed under the generic term of "graffiti", even though recent research points to diversity in the intentions and forms of these inscriptions.³¹ In the majority of these cases, they are incised or painted using minuscule, and the graphic style reflects the "cursivity" of a rapid writing gesture mixing the ordinary nature of documentary³² writing with the permanent nature of epigraphic writing. Since graffiti was not systematically included in medieval epigraphy, which never knew quite what to do with these short texts, most of which are difficult to read or date, a great deal of research thus remains to be carried out on this subject. However, it is essential to do so since it allows us to discuss the pertinence of the terms "cursivity" and "spontaneity" to epigraphy, and there is no doubt that this also questions the divergence between graffiti and minuscule script. Were they really written in the same manner in both cases? The issue of materials and technique arises from discussing the very existence of the "ductus", and thus cursivity and "drawn" writing phenomena in graffiti, as we see in inscriptions. Experts will answer these questions that go beyond the issue of "change" in medieval epigraphy; however, they should be mentioned insofar as they reinject a little dose of anthropology into the discussion as a potential path for understanding the minuscule phenomenon in inscriptions from the Middle Ages. Today, we owe both the French and Spanish research teams for addressing this subject, albeit in a very different way. Thanks to the extensive chronological periods covered by the *Deutsche Inschriften*, German epigraphers have been able to concentrate their palaeographic analyses on later, pre-humanistic and humanistic scripts, even if their general reflections on writing, and notably on epigraphic aspects, are essential for the entire medieval period.

³¹ The bibliography on graffiti has been growing exponentially these past few months; here we simply refer to the Graff-IT project (<https://graffitiproject.eu/team/>, accessed 12 July 2024) directed by Carlo Tedeschi that contains the most complete methodological reflections on these matters.

³² I borrow the expression here from Bertrand (2015), who invites one to abandon the use of the adjective "cursive" for medieval writing.

On the Italian side, the opposite phenomenon occurred due also to editorial and documentary reasons, with palaeographic attention turned mainly towards the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a time when minuscule script had not yet intervened as a graphic type in European inscriptions.³³

That Robert Favreau did not devote many pages of his very substantial epigraphic bibliography to the issue of minuscule script is not surprising considering that palaeographic aspects of inscriptions were never really the centre of attention in his research and reflections for the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale*. In the article written by the Poitiers research team, and awkwardly entitled “*L'évolution de l'écriture épigraphique*”, the question of epigraphic minuscule script is viewed as a connection between the inscriptions at the end of the Middle Ages and the realm of manuscript writing (Debiais et al. 2007). By adopting forms designed to increase the legibility of texts and their frequent consultation, and by following the extensive diffusion of books in medieval society, inscriptions came to use the graphic forms used in manuscripts. The appearance of minuscule script would thus be the epigraphic consequence (or at least the reflection) of the inflationist tendencies of the late-medieval written culture; this understanding reduces, however, the choices and intentions of epigraphic actors who would strictly adopt, in a more or less conscious manner, one of the features of writing at the end of the Middle Ages. To strengthen its hypothesis, the same article points out that this spread also applies to diacritical signs, abbreviations, and punctuation. As for books, minuscule script supposes a more intimate relationship between the text and its reader; it is necessary to get close to the object in order to “read” its content, which explains why the use of the majuscule did not disappear and why it was systematically employed in the great monumental texts exposed in public reading spaces.

The appearance of the minuscule script could thus be linked to the “overflow” on epigraphic material of a particular form that has imposed itself on the production of writing, which was increasing considerably in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Minuscule script, used for its speed, legibility, and robustness in the realm of manuscript writing, would become a kind of *littera franca* to the point of contaminating the epigraphic realm as well.³⁴ The conditions for making inscriptions, particularly on hard materials the surface of which must be altered to shape the letter, defy these three apparent qualities of the minuscule script;³⁵ the eventual revival of this graphic system cannot therefore be linked to any technical “superiority” of minuscules. Use of the Gothic minuscules can even be viewed as a surprising, if not counterintuitive, technical choice. The contagion occurred despite the qualities of the minuscule script,

³³ See, for example, the work of Daniele Ferraiuolo (2022).

³⁴ Because of the pandemic, the notions of contagion and contamination have made a remarkable entry into the fields of Humanities and social sciences, and have been used with great productivity. For this subject, see the collective work *De la contagion*, Paris, 2020; see also Sperber (1996).

³⁵ This is made evident in Thierry Grégor's work (2023).

which likely explains why it never became the *littera franca epigraphica* in the Middle Ages. This is also the reason why a trickle-down explanation is not sufficient.

Robert Favreau proposes two paths to be explored in order to understand this phenomenon. First, he considers that the diffusion of minuscule script through the increasingly numerous texts circulating within all social milieux, in order to carry out the majority of everyday activities, made this graphic type the most widespread script, independent of the readers' level of education and literacy. Therefore, minuscule script would simultaneously become the script par excellence *as well as* the script *par défaut*, and inscriptions would have appropriated this script to ensure effective communication. The explanation is tempting and undoubtedly partially true. However, it converts the use of minuscule script into an indication of the generalised ability to read written types that are "less easy to read than the majuscule", whereas it would be necessary to distinguish the ability to read a text from the familiarity of recognising the letters it uses (Favreau 2006: 12). This familiarity makes it possible to create a link between inscriptions and manuscripts, and to understand epigraphic and manuscript objects within the same written culture; however, the familiarity paradoxically shatters the formal exceptionality and distinctive feature of the inscription, which is likely one of the reasons for its use in the Middle Ages, and which justifies the production of inscriptions regardless of the cost, technical difficulties, legibility conditions, conflicts regarding positioning, etc. The fact that minuscule script could thus dissolve the epigraphic specificities in the mass of written culture is thus another possible explanation for the partial diffusion of this graphic type. The second path to explore according to Robert Favreau is linked to the graphic properties of the minuscule script that make it possible to produce longer epigraphic texts at a time in which inscriptions were becoming longer, particularly in the funerary realm. The material evidence seems to prove him right since minuscule script was being used for long inscriptions listing the dead's administrative or ecclesiastical positions, or making inventories of testamentary provisions, especially in the fifteenth century³⁶. Two difficulties remain, however: first, very long inscriptions in majuscule script and very short inscriptions in minuscules can be found at the same time and in the same place; second, it is impossible to determine whether minuscule script allows longer texts or if the literary trend of embellishing funerary inscriptions provoked, accelerated, or imposed the use of a graphic style that was little used in the epigraphic field.

As usual, Robert Favreau's contributions and insights are of considerable importance, and although they do not entirely explain the minuscule phenomenon, they are greatly merited with exploring this graphic type within the context of a general cultural history of the Middle Ages, and linking it to a particular moment in the production of epigraphic material. Here one recognises the cultural (and not strictly palaeographic) orientation of the research team behind the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale*.

³⁶ For more on this matter, see Favreau (2017).

The same could also be said of Cécile Treffort's analysis of the epigraphic capital script at the time of the Carolingian renaissance and the writing reform of the eighth and ninth centuries.³⁷ This cultural orientation, which is not found in similar studies in Germany and Italy, and even less in Spain, has two consequences: one positive and the other negative. It makes it possible to analyse inscriptions for themselves and not for what they might say about a possible palaeographic evolution; however, they reduce to anecdotal evidence and incongruity the original inscriptions which cannot find the means of their explanation within the cultural context. One of the inscriptions in minuscules listed in the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale*, and which can be considered graffiti, is found in the cloister of Monastir-del-Camp, in the commune of Passa in Roussillon province.³⁸ This funerary inscription is made of three elegiac couplets traced in minuscule script inside a ruled compartment. It is dated to 1196, which could correspond to the form of the letters since they are quite distant from the *littera franca*, for which we would have to wait another century and a half. The inscription for Bertrand of Villelongue thus constitutes an anomaly and is succinctly described with the following sentence: "The epitaph is engraved in minuscules, which is done very infrequently in medieval epigraphy"³⁹. It would be fruitful to know more about this anomaly, especially when there is another inscription in Monastir-del-Camp dated 1269 written in Gothic majuscule (Figure 5).

The use of minuscule script would thus be of interest for epigraphy when it breaks away from anecdotal evidence and graffiti, and when it is regarded as a Gothic minuscule that can be approached, compared, and eventually made dependent on manuscript writing. Without exaggerating, one could affirm that this is in line with the research conducted by the Spanish school of medieval epigraphy led by Professor Vicente García Lobo. This school is founded on a strong epistemology and particular understanding of medieval written culture profoundly marked by diplomatics, with numerous contributions notably in the domain of classifying inscriptions. The attention given to palaeography is essential, and the script type is one of the (absolute) criteria for chronologically organising the inscriptions in the *Corpus inscriptionum Hispaniae mediaevalium*.⁴⁰ In addition, changes in the script of inscriptions are always viewed as an evolution of graphic types, an obsolete form being replaced by one more suitable, a modern letter substituting an archaic one.⁴¹ Conversely, the historiographic influence of the realm of books and documents on Spanish epigraphy led to strengthening the dependence between the two graphic systems, the latter being systematically inherited from the former, with manuscript writing anticipating and providing its models to epigraphic writing. In France, where epigraphic research saw inscriptions

³⁷ See, for example, Treffort (2007c).

³⁸ *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale, t. 11: Pyrénées-Orientales*, Paris, 1986, n° 79, p. 999.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 98.

⁴⁰ For this palaeographic classification, see García Lobo & Martín López (1995).

⁴¹ For example: García Lobo (2008).



Figure 5: Passa, Monastir-del-Camp, cloister, funerary inscription for *Bertrandus* (1196). Photo: CC-BY licence © Palauenc05.

as subject to cultural influence from the realm of manuscript writing, epigraphic research in Spain sought to identify an incontestable formal influence that led to continuing with a graphic type from one medium to the next, sometimes without any adaptation or technical or material constraints.⁴² We owe María Encarnación Martín López for providing the primary summarisation of this subject, which establishes several important facts. The appearance of minuscule script in Spain in the fourteenth century is being linked to “the influence of the book upon inscriptions”, which borrows the script of the most solemn parts of *codices* to form increasingly longer texts that multiply common diplomatic formulas (Martín López 2017). Although the author does indeed point out that this use, apparently for most inscriptions on the Iberian Peninsula, constitutes an “unprecedented phenomenon in epigraphy”, she offers no real explanation apart from the natural and inexorable contagion of manuscript writing upon the epigraphic realm. If we examine the author’s argument in detail, we note, however, that minuscule script would come from the use of inscriptions from the late Middle Ages of diplomatic, legal, and prescriptive content from documents effectively written in minuscules. However, the particular type of minuscules, *textualis* or *formata*,

⁴² This circulation is particularly noticeable in García Lobo (1999).

would arise as a consequence of the diffusion of books in late medieval society. This distinction seems more difficult to track since it completely evades the technical dimension, which leads, as was recently shown, to favouring straight, not linked lines of minuscules for lapidary materials, and to choosing different types of script according to uses and needs.

The work of María Encarnación Martín López must therefore be supplemented by the research of Natalia Rodríguez Suárez, who confirmed the anteriority of the Gothic minuscules in manuscript writing and thus the influence of books on inscriptions.⁴³ However, she also specifies the chronology by confirming that minuscule script passed first from books to inscriptions that imitated books, then to inscriptions as such. In the initial phase, it was not a question of using a given written form, but rather of imitating the “form” of an object through drawing. In the second phase, it is genuinely a matter of contagion even though it cannot be determined whether this occurred from the book-object, as María Encarnación Martín López suggests, or the book-image, as Francisco Gimeno Blay (1990) puts forth. In any case, it seems that painting, mainly on wood panels (altarpieces and devotional images), constitutes a milestone in the epigraphic use of minuscules. In his recent dissertation, Julio Macián Ferrandis (2023), clearly separating himself from previous contributions made by the Spanish school, provided a detailed analysis of the corpus from the Valencia region and its major painting production from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries. This cluster shows that the minuscule script indeed appeared first in painted books, scrolls, and labels, but the graphic type was not meant to imitate minuscules from manuscript, then printed books. With the development of minuscule script, we witness the diversification of graphic types that correspond less with the intent to imitate than to express a particular style – Italian painters thus used a minuscule common in Italy for both books and inscriptions. Finally, Julio Macián Ferrandis affirms that Valencian paintings contain exclusively epigraphic forms of minuscule script that do not resemble any manuscript form on one hand, and seek to accentuate the artificiality of the ductus on the other, as does the pre-humanistic script found at the same time in inscriptions from the Iberian Peninsula.

The original work on Valencian painting allows us to consider the cultural context as well as the general evolution of palaeography. It also opens the way to research on writing that takes into account the general aesthetics of artistic forms, an aspect that is too often neglected and that invites us to contemplate the relationship between straight lines and curves, letters and design, the emerging role of perspective in the implementation of writing, the function of images and text, etc.⁴⁴ This cultural, visual, and artistic context, both practical and theoretical, of the last two centuries of the Middle Ages, also experienced transformations and changes that perhaps shed

⁴³ See in particular Rodríguez Suárez (2010b).

⁴⁴ On these matters, see Debais (2010).

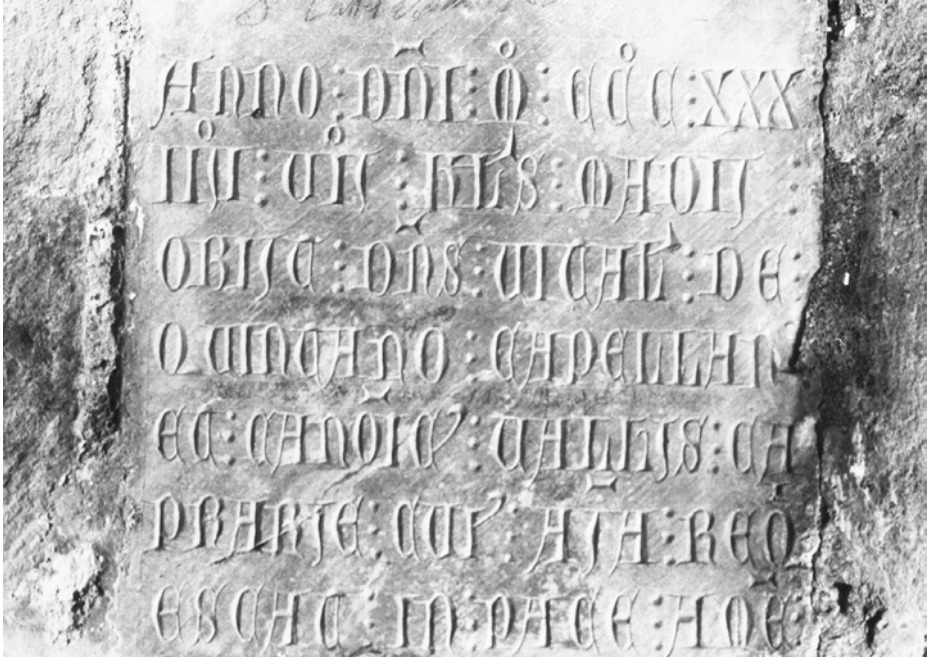


Figure 6: Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, Cathedral, cloister, funerary inscription for *Vitalis* (1334). Photo: © CESC/CIFM J. Michaud.

light on the minuscule phenomenon, this phenomenon would in any case be situated within the panorama of the changes in the written culture rather than in the confinement of a palaeographic evolution permanently challenged by the conditions for creating inscriptions and by communicative intentions.

Script, sign, emblem, and image

When questioning the documentary significance of the minuscule script in medieval inscriptions, it becomes less obvious that this graphic turn of events is meaningful for the Middle Ages. Does it truly represent a change in the history of epigraphic writing? It is difficult to reconcile the discrepancy between the anecdote, the anti-phenomenon that is the alteration of graphic habits doomed to perish due to the hegemony of the majuscule, and the revolution of exposed writing that would constitute the adoption of minuscule script, a graphic type that epigraphic practices had so far pushed aside. The reasonable solution for avoiding this insurmountable discrepancy likely consists of excluding minuscule script from any palaeographic evolutionary scheme and to

see whether the use of this graphic type is linked to more *ad hoc* circumstances, thus avoiding any epigraphic generalisation separating the “feature” from the “system”.

One could first consider that the use of minuscule script is a visual means of producing either similarity or distinction; displaying a text in minuscules within a graphic landscape essentially composed of inscriptions in majuscules is to create a rupture, a “figure of transgression”, to use Hubert Damisch’s (1971) words for the medieval image, which excludes the object from the discourse and makes it the focus of attention, dissonant and divergent. However, if minuscule script is indeed employed within a set of texts using the same written form, it is to visually forge a community of writing and associate graphic objects within the same group. This process of distinction and belonging has been documented for the use of the Carolingian capital and for the use of “strange” letter forms at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era. In any event, this does not refer to using a given letter type inherited from manuscript writing, but rather creating relationships between inscriptions regardless of whether this relationship is one of similarity or disparity. Such use can be seen in several important epigraphic clusters, such as in the Girona Cathedral complex in Spain, where the use of minuscule script is reserved for creating important “families” of texts concerning deceased persons in particular that belong to the same social group (secular or ecclesiastical dynasties, urban factions).⁴⁵ In these groups, minuscule script is reserved for certain families, whereas first the Gothic majuscule and then the pre-humanistic is used in most of the funerary documentation in Girona. With the stone obituary of the former cathedral of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, one sees a different situation (Figure 6): the set of funerary inscriptions, regardless of the date of death or the moment of their creation, uses a very narrow Gothic majuscule, even in the last third of the fourteenth century, a time during which a ductus so narrow was adopted that it becomes practically illegible, as if the lapidaries were avoiding minuscules at all costs⁴⁶. Such conservatism is not linked to the technical or aesthetic inability to inscribe minuscule letters since it is found in other objects within the cathedral; rather, it is due to the desire to graphically strengthen the coherence and consistency of the community, to put up a united front through letters. In some groups of inscriptions now preserved in Germany, in Passau, for example, the opposite phenomenon can be observed; where we would have expected minuscules, particularly widespread in the city in the middle of the fourteenth century, a completely unusual majuscule script was used to extol a particular deceased, minuscule script being reserved for restoring and copying older texts.⁴⁷ In Girona as in Passau, use of minuscule script was intimately linked to the temporal dimension, but in no way to a linear evolution of the graphic types. Uses of minus-

45 For the inscriptions in the Girona Cathedral, see Marquès (2009).

46 *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale. Tome 8: Ariège, Haute-Garonne, Hautes-Pyrénées, Tarn-et-Garonne*, Paris, 1982, n° 134.

47 *DI 67*, Stadt Passau, n° 67 (URL in bibliography).

cule script are the means by which to introduce rhythm into epigraphic documentation, to envisage anachronisms or anticipations.

This play on temporal distortions is only conceivable if minuscule script is indeed endowed – for inscriptions at least – with a chronological singularity and if creators of inscriptions were aware that it was an emerging, breakthrough script. In stone inscriptions, at least between 1350 and the fifteenth century, minuscule script generated an element of graphic surprise and would produce, I would argue, a form of enchantment on those viewing these objects. We must follow here the definition that anthropologist Alfred Gell (1994) gives for *enchantment*, which is the power technical processes have of casting a spell over us, so that we see the real world in enchanted form. In inscriptions, the minuscule's lack of generalisation is not an indication of some failure in the disposition of the script to take its place within an evolutionary scheme of writing – a genetic error which would not have survived its trial period – rather, it is because its non-systematism is the guarantee that the enchantment would last over the long term. It is a script that stands apart and can generate surprise or at least distinguish itself within the panorama of inscriptions in the second half of the Middle Ages.

The surprise effect is undoubtedly not the same for epigraphic objects for which minuscule script is expected to be used; or to express it in a more nuanced way, for which the use of capital script has been and remains less systematic. And it is for these objects that we must attempt to explain why this graphic type was chosen. According to the data collected for this preliminary study, it appears that minuscule script is found mainly in two types of inscriptions. The first type deals with small objects made primarily of metal on which information was incised rather than engraved, and which were possible to be read but not systematically so; it was necessary to purposely take the object in one's hands and look closely in order to locate and decipher the text so as to unlock the inscription's content. This is the case, for example, with the burial crosses placed inside tombs in the High Middle Ages on which texts of absolution indicating the names of the deceased along with prayers intended for the salvation of their souls were written in minuscule and cursive script.⁴⁸ These objects belong to the generic category of endotaphs, but they are distinguished by their content and graphic execution from funerary inscriptions traditionally designated by the word endotaph, which contain briefer texts written in majuscule that mainly identify the deceased (Figure 7).⁴⁹ In a recent article, Morgane Uberti (2018) brilliantly illustrates the temporal implications of these epigraphic objects, alternately exposed and then withdrawn from view, and we can extend these reflections to the absolution crosses which were to be used, at least in a symbolic manner, as part of the liturgy for preparing the body of the deceased and to record the words the priest pronounced on this occasion. The use of minuscule script

⁴⁸ See, for example, the crosses kept at the Musée des Antiquités in Rouen: *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale. Tome 22: Normandie*, Paris, 2002, n° 246 *et sq.*

⁴⁹ Concerning endotaphs, see Treffort (2016).

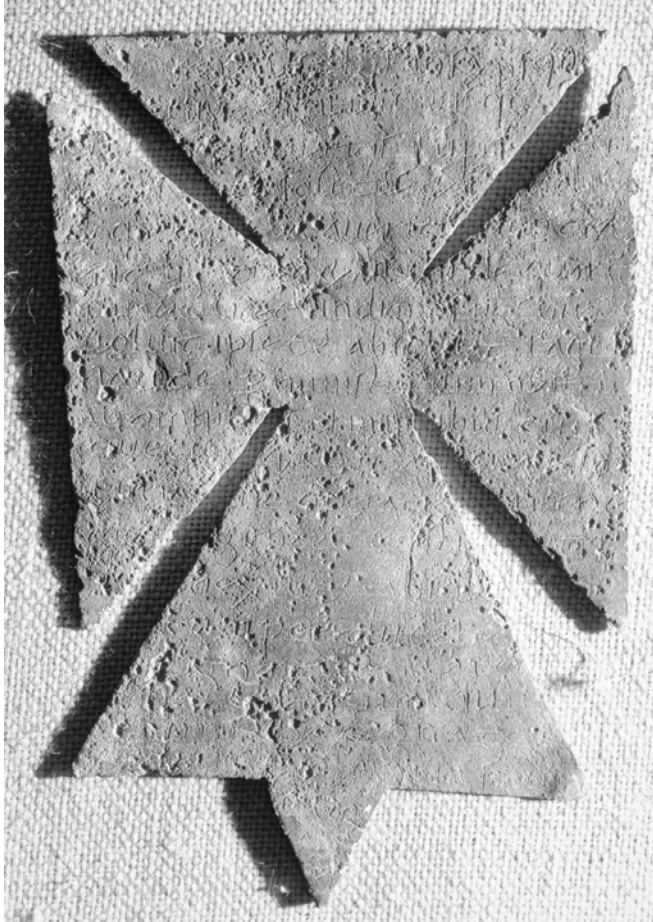


Figure 7: Rouen, Musée des Antiquités, funerary cross for Rainaud (12th c.). Photo: © CESC/CIFM J.-P. Brouard.

for these objects would have many practical explanations: the need to compress the inscription onto a small cross; the urgency of quickly creating the inscription in the time frame of the ritual or of a person's last moments; or the domestic context in which the object was created, establishing minuscule script as the only one "available" for writers. Even if we know very little about the actual conditions under which these crosses were made and used, these practical reasons must not be rejected. This should not prevent us, however, from considering that these inscriptions are practically the only graphic objects from the Middle Ages that incorporate the content of the voice into the material, and, in this way, its sacramental effectiveness outside of books. The absolution cross is certainly a performative object serving to ensure the enduring effectiveness of the words, but it may be, perhaps above all, the most material liturgical score

produced in the Middle Ages on epigraphic media. When a series of absolution crosses are analysed, we note that the general cursivity that emerges from the writing is the product of quick incisions, and one can feel, in the letter forms, the movement of a hand transcribing the content of words spoken or dictated at the same time, which would be completely impossible or artificial with a majuscule script. As a prudent hypothesis, therefore, we could consider the minuscule a *notational script* the use of which in epigraphic documentation is to make a given written circumstance visible in the material.

The second type of epigraphic object for which the minuscule is used is also of small size and made of metal; in any event, the script is employed in a reduced module. These are reliquaries, particularly inscriptions that identify, sometimes in the shape of a list, the holy remains kept inside the chest or shrine. There are few examples before the middle of the fourteenth century, but a general survey shows that the minuscule appears early and spreads rapidly, to such a degree that these metal objects are epigraphic texts for which majuscule script would not be used when it came back for the writing inscriptions at the end of the Middle Ages. Numerous examples produced in Germany around this date confirm this trend for all the engraving techniques and content types (the inscription regarding the donation, donor's identity, goldsmith's signature, and list of relics). The reliquary of Saint Cordula in the Diocesan Museum in Osnabrück, dated around 1440, shows a long inscription in highly ornate Gothic minuscules at the base of the shrine (Figure 8)⁵⁰. We can still read on the reliquary of St Antoine, which was made at the beginning of the fourteenth century and currently preserved in the Cathedral's treasury in Essen, the name of the saint incised in a smallish minuscule⁵¹. The frequency with which this script is used is even more remarkable since, at the same period, lists of relics painted on wood or engraved in stone, which were produced in monumental form in churches, used Gothic majuscule script, and the humanistic majuscules. As with the absolution crosses, it cannot be excluded that reliquaries were inscribed in this way for practical reasons or to follow the graphic conventions of their time. However, this should not prevent us from formulating a prudent hypothesis postulating that the use of the minuscule on the exterior of reliquaries corresponds to the graphic type used on the inside of the same objects for the *authentiques* (authenticity labels) affixed to the relics to identify them when the shrine is opened.⁵² The use of the same written form was meant to display the coherence of the object and its authenticity, and to enforce materially what was recorded on paper or parchment. If we also consider that the *authentique* was often left legible or at least visible thanks to an openwork device protected by glass or stone, being able to contemplate similar written forms on two com-

50 *DI* 26, Ville d'Osnabrück, n° 39 (URL in bibliography).

51 *DI* 81, Stadt Essen, n° 69 (URL in bibliography).

52 For this particular type of written object, see Bertrand (2006).



Figure 8: Osnabrück, Diocesan Museum, Saint Cordula reliquary (1440). Photo: © Deutsche Inschriften.

plementary materials adds to the consistency of the object, which represents a single vessel for the saint's virtue.

In the case of both absolution crosses and reliquaries, the minuscule is not used – or not solely used – in inscriptions either because it represents a contemporary script or because the palaeographic evolution left writers no other choice than to use the written forms imposed on them by the evolution of script types. On the contrary, its use is the result of a graphic decision which enables epigraphic actors to play with the time of inscriptions and frees them from the precise moment of their creation and from the duration of their display. The use of minuscule script is a way to introduce another sense of time in an inscription, to group texts together, to distinguish them from others, to incorporate the temporality of the voice into the object, or to uphold its authenticity. In any event, inscriptions take advantage of minuscule script and transform a graphic type into a sign as if it were a visual construct able to transmit meaning and refer to something located outside the inscription – not to a model that is found at the same time in manuscripts, but to an efficient and shared set of social values that enable the shape of letters to express something beyond what is written in the text.

Now that this point has been established, we can return to wood painting, which serves, according to the important work done by Francisco Gimeno Blay, as a cluster for analysing the use of minuscule script in the epigraphic realm. It is found, in fact, at a very early date in depictions of books and banners held by figures (Christ, apostles, prophets), at a time when frescoes or other depictions in wood paintings still mostly used the Gothic majuscule. These first minuscule scripts adopted extremely diverse forms that are for the most part impossible to “qualify”, often preferring a graceless imitation of verticality and separation of lines found in manuscripts. This thus deals with introducing a feature of minuscule script into the image to produce what one could call a “*writing effect*”. Painters chose to use minuscule script not because they wanted to imitate “real” books possessing contemporary palaeographic and codicological characteristics – painting represented a conjunction of times rather than a perfect reflection of a given era – but rather because they were seeking above all to display writing as a phenomenon shared between the painter, the work, and the audience. The choice of the minuscule, of the red initial, the positioning of a column, or the presence of superfluous rulings was the same whether for use in an altarpiece or in books used in the same period for displaying funerary inscriptions. There is no imitation, but rather a summoning of the whole by the one, a reference to the idea of writing itself rather than to any specific form. Once it is used in the painting for portraying an object as an image, minuscule script imposes itself because of its way of being a sign; this is why other inscriptions in altarpieces, for example, that provide the name of the painter or the patron, or invite one to pray for the painted figures, are not written in minuscule script but in another written form in order to show two different “places” in the image. Minuscule script is the sign; majuscule script is the message. Since it must be fully incorporated into the discourse of the image, it must not resemble the writing of other inscriptions; this is why it must be displayed as an emblem of manuscript writing, sign of the voice (books and scrolls bear words spoken in the image) and the performative effectiveness of the content. This is also the reason why, towards 1450, minuscule script would be abandoned in painting, when painters decided to go back to very ornate minuscule forms then being used in inscriptions, once again making way for the capitals of the pre-humanistic and humanistic scripts, which would be used for preserving the writing effect in paintings.

The use of minuscule script in paintings and elsewhere in epigraphy thus has nothing to do with any transition from manuscript forms to inscriptions, but rather with the convocation of certain properties of medieval writing which, at a given moment, served the purpose of creating inscriptions. Minuscule script is not the product of any sudden appearance of a new graphic type within the writing of inscriptions, but rather the visual sign marking the principle of writing itself at a time when minuscule script was widespread thanks to the change in density, quantity, and recurrence of graphic practices. This is the reason why it was taken up when this principle served the epigraphic discourse; it is the reason why its use disappeared, not due to the inevitable process of palaeographic evolution, but because other forms were

adopted to convey this “emblem” principle. The use of minuscule script in epigraphy does not constitute, therefore, a change in medieval writing practices; rather it is an *ad-hoc* indication, limited in its diffusion, of the fluctuations to which the graphic facts and structures of the Middle Ages were subject. It is also remarkable that minuscule script persisted in inscriptions in its “Gothic” form, meaning the form used at the very beginning, well after the appearance of the humanistic scripts in France up to the 1580s, and in Germany until the end of the sixteenth century.

The fashion system

The distinction between the “feature”, which is a particular quality of a phenomenon or an object, and the “structure”, which is the set of features that are expressed in a set of objects, applies quite appropriately to the use of the epigraphic minuscule script, with inscriptions seeking to either employ the structure so that the object signifies everything – as in the case of the Girona inscriptions – or to make use of one feature only so that the writing calls attention to or refers to something else – as in the case of reliquaries or paintings. From these two notions, one could say that medieval epigraphy did not use minuscule script as it had previously used the capital or Gothic majuscules. It conveyed either certain features of this graphic type or used its structure in a global, even impressionistic, manner. It is thus necessary to broadly return to the fact that minuscule script perhaps constitutes a change, an upheaval, or a revolution in epigraphic history. This is an important phenomenon for what it says about the ability of inscriptions to choose the way to create and transmit their messages; all aspects count, and the choice of the written form is never based on chance or a particular skill available for use only as a last resort. Regardless, I would readily exclude this graphic phenomenon from any notion of how the writing of inscriptions evolved to make it an *ad hoc* means of introducing certain qualities into inscriptions, certain “features” of medieval writing in general.

The distinction between feature and structure is due to Roland Barthes who, in his *The Fashion System* (1967), draws a distinction between a specific element relating to the whole (the fold to a dress, the button to a jacket, the dress to a collection, the jacket to the catalogue) and the general structure of the ensemble of clothing that creates a framework and defines how the consumer belongs to the system. The analogy is certainly forced, but it has the advantage of preferring a complex notion of fashion (as evoked by Roland Barthes), to simpler notions incapable of demonstrating any change or evolution in medieval inscriptions. The social aspects of recognition and distinction represented by clothing, and the general style of a generation or group are indeed those that show that epigraphic writing, through its goal to achieve permanence, sought to redefine its topical nature and anchoring within the practices of the group. The use of minuscule script for certain inscriptions, specifically between 1320

and 1500, is indeed a fashion phenomenon if we comprehend fashion within the anthropological signification of shaping group and individual.

All research performed today on the palaeography of inscriptions in Europe is limited by its access to epigraphic collections, and it is extremely difficult to provide analyses based on reliable accounts, statistics, and data. Even though we could limit our approach to a dated, localised, and identified set of inscriptions to evaluate graphic behaviour (in Girona, Passau, or Roda), the representative nature of these phenomena must be assessed if considered on a supranational scale. Furthermore, the variations between one object and another are sometimes too notable to group them into the same graphic type so that the use of the letter can be assigned a global meaning. This is an acknowledgement of failure, or at least of a limit, that Meyer Schapiro (1930) has already highlighted in his review of Paul Deschamp's work; it is also what the research team of the *Corpus des inscriptions de la France médiévale* concluded in their synthesis article. This is undoubtedly what must be retained from the survey proposed here, which can only work with general impressions and overall views, and not with the documentary precision required to analyse the cultural phenomena of the Middle Ages. The investigation, which nevertheless covers slightly more than 3,000 inscriptions, must be limited to a few theoretical notes on epigraphic minuscule script with the hope that more precise analyses on more reduced sets or specific objects can confirm or contradict the fact that the use of minuscule script in inscriptions of the Latin West is the product of a series of communication-based decisions, rather than the natural consequence of palaeographic evolution.

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Jonatan Pettersson

9 Reflections on Change in Textual Culture

Change is a wellspring of fear and hope, dreams and disappointment, a source of zeal, mixed feelings, and nostalgia. The lexicon of change is surrounded by emotive connotations: birth, rise, fall, development, renaissance, disappearance, and death. Some of these concepts are imbued with feelings in themselves; others may be charged by the context. In political discourse, change is key for creating a sense of a shared purpose. For the storyteller, changes serve as foundational elements in crafting the plot and manipulating readers' reactions. Undoubtedly, historians, too, have found it tempting to employ changes for similar rhetorical purposes, when history is formed into a great narrative.

Refraining from narrative effects and emotionally laden vocabulary in the writing of history is one thing; a more demanding intellectual challenge is to adequately interpret, understand, and describe the processes of change, which pertains both to terminology and to historical analysis. There are many possible misconceptions to be avoided. One illustrative example is captured in the concept of “synoptic fallacy”, proposed by the archaeologist and Maya script and literacy historian Stephen Houston (2007). In his case, the fallacy occurs when the use of a script in a culture spanning a long period of time is thought of as a synchronic and fixed phenomenon, neglecting the diachronic processes and geographic variation within its script communities. Translated into a more general perspective, the synoptic fallacy would represent the failure to recognise the complexity of data in combination with insufficient conceptual tools, which might cause a simplified and erroneous description of the historical process of change.

Understanding change in textual culture is a focal point for the research project behind this volume.¹ How did a written culture – epigraphic as well as penned on parchment or paper – emerge and develop in Scandinavia? How did social networks surrounding textual production and reception evolve? How did the medieval manuscript culture transform into a printed book culture? How do genres and other kinds of texts change? While each investigation has its own challenges in relation to change, there appears, nevertheless, to be a dearth of critical discussions on this subject on a more general level that could inform both general methodology and the writing of the history of textual culture. Should distinctions be made between various types and forms of change, and what consequences would they imply for the history we write? The following is a report from a reflective work on change as concept inspired by the collective

¹ On the research programme behind this volume, see the introductory note in the footer of Chapter 1.

thinking and discussions in the research group behind this publication, as well as the contributions of different scholars on historical examples of change in the volume.²

The challenge of conceptualising time and representing it semiotically

Time cannot be escaped in a discussion on change, as change and time are deeply interwoven in both perception and cognition. Perceptually, time is experienced through change – it is the movement of phenomena around us, like the altered position of the minute and hour hand, that tells us the passing of time; conceptually, change is contingent upon time, as is shown by the difficulty of envisioning a process of change divorced from the temporal dimension.³ This interconnection prompts some brief introductory remarks on time, before I delve into the concept of change regarding the challenges that time presents to our thinking and the implications it holds for how we may construe and describe historical change.

From the perspective of human experience, time is, on the one hand, inherently natural to us, but, on the other hand, it is notoriously challenging to apprehend through thought. This observation is encapsulated in the widely recognised passage by St Augustine on the nature of time:

For what is time? Who can easily and briefly explain it? Who can even comprehend it in thought or put the answer into words? Yet is it not true that in conversation we refer to nothing more familiarly or knowingly than time? And surely we understand it when we speak of it; we understand it also when we hear another speak of it.

2 The contributions include Mary Franklin Brown, “Singers of Halls and Chambers. The Changed Song of the First Troubadours” (Chapter 2); Kathryn Rudy, “Targeted Wear in Manuscript Prayerbooks in the Context of Oath-swearing” (Chapter 3); Stefka G. Eriksen “The Soundtrack and Ecology of Medieval Textual Culture. Multimodal Experience in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*” (Chapter 4); Benjamin Pohl, “Re-Modelling Geoffrey. The Manipulation of Authorship and Generic Identity in Durham, Ushaw College, MS 6” (Chapter 5); Leah Tether, “Running Titles in the Books of Jacques d’Armagnac. A Model for Enacting Generic Change” (Chapter 6); Jonatan Pettersson, “The Vernacularisation of Documentary Writing in the Medieval Swedish Realm” (Chapter 7); and Vincent Debais, “Qualities, Features, and Fashion. Theoretical Notes on the Epigraphic Minuscule” (Chapter 8).

3 See the discussion in the first paragraph of Chapter 1. In his reflection on change from the perspective of sociology, Nisbet (1972) views change as inseparable from the dimension of time. The philosophical discussion on time, such as whether or not it is an a priori category, whether we are extended in time or if we move through it, etc., is deliberately simplified here to frame the discussion within what is directly relevant for writing the history of textual culture. A useful application of a philosophical perspective on time within a historical science (archaeology) is provided in Lucas (2014).

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know.⁴ (Augustine, *Confessions* 11.14.17)

The paradoxical duality of something being both familiar and simultaneously inconceivable also seems to say something about the treatment of the concept of change in historical sciences (see Chapter 1). On the one hand, the sense of familiarity renders explicit discussion unnecessary – everyone understands it; on the other hand, its elusiveness makes it impenetrable – no one can definitively explain it. However, it will be argued here that there are important critical perspectives for a historical analysis to be gleaned from the challenge of understanding time itself and our ways of overcoming it.

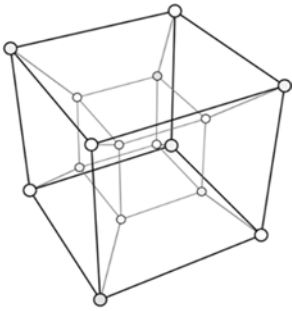


Figure 1: A hypercube. Image by Tilman Piesk. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The trouble with grasping time can be illustrated with the hypercube, a cube in four dimensions (Figure 1). It is a three-dimensional cube with yet another extension “inwards”, which can be taken as the extension of time.⁵ It can be depicted as a three-dimensional object, resembling a smaller cube within a large one, with lines extending from each corner of the outer cube to the corresponding corners of the inner cube. The challenge lies in comprehending all lines of the outer and the inner cube as well as their interconnecting lines (corner to corner) as *of equal length*. This means that the inner cube exists inside the bigger cube but is not smaller in size, and they are interconnected with lines which are stretched out in a direction inwards of each corner. It is a perplexing idea that leaves us in a similar position as Augustine, and the reason to include it here is just to illustrate our limitations in comprehending the temporal extension.

⁴ “quid est enim tempus? quis hoc facile breviterque explicaverit? quis hoc ad verbum de illo proferendum vel cogitatione comprehenderit? quid autem familiarius et notius in loquendo commemoramus quam tempus? et intellegimus utique cum id loquimur, intellegimus etiam cum alio loquente id audimus. quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio” (Augustine, *Confessiones* 11.14.17).

⁵ Lipscomb (2014: 53–55). Time is not equal to the fourth dimension, but might be envisioned in that way.

However, the main point is that just as the temporal extension cannot be comprehended, it also cannot be straightforwardly depicted. Time cannot be semiotically represented without simplifying and translating it into, for instance, graphs, timelines, metaphors, measures of time (seconds, years, etc.), concepts that capture a temporal process, or a sequence of events in a narrative. While such translations are absolutely necessary, and even efficient, the critical question remains what might be lost in the translation as well as what unintended interferences may arise from the translated mode of representation. Words such as “growth” and “wave” are commonly employed to metaphorically describe temporal processes, for instance, the spread of literacy or linguistic innovations. The way they model the temporal process might be adequate enough, but as words and terms from different fields of discourse, they also carry connotations regarding, for instance, causation and patterns of progress which potentially frame the history that is written in ways that are not intended or apparent at first sight.

Such a risk of unintended connotations of terminology echoes Francis Bacon’s warning of the *idols of the marketplace*: misconceptions rooted in the deficient correlation between the meaning of words that we might take for granted and their real-world correlates. ‘For men believe that their reason governs words; but it also happens that words twist and turn back their power over the understanding’.⁶ This predicament is common for scientific discourse in general, but it seems as if the necessary translation of temporal processes into comprehensible modes of representation entails a particularly high risk for such misconceptions. In turn, it might affect the way we write history, where such simplifications and ways of representing temporal processes cannot be avoided. The subsequent discussion on change has largely emanated from critical reflections on different ways of representing the unrepresentable – time – and on modes of writing the history of texts.

Defining different kinds of historical change

A widely acknowledged way of defining change in general is that something has changed “if it satisfies a description at one time that it does not satisfy at another” (Blackburn 2008). A difference has unfolded between two moments in time. From this general definition, two fundamental types of change are derived, identified as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic change*, which will be expounded upon below. A third alternative emerges as necessary in the context of writing of history – *apparent change* – which

⁶ “Credunt enim homines, rationem suam verbis imperare. Sed fit etiam ut verba vim suam super intellectum retorqueant et reflectant” (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, from aphorism LX.). (Translation by the author.)

also implies the categories of *emergence* and *extinction* as distinct forms of historical change.

Intrinsic change embodies what many might intuitively recognise as change, namely, a significant alteration in the inherent qualities and characteristics of something. This is evident, for instance, when an object breaks, an apple transitions from green to red, or when a community alters its language use. Examples of intrinsic changes in medieval textual culture encompass manuscripts' wear, textual modifications by scribes, emerging patterns within an evolving genre, or the adoption of an epigraphic tradition within a population. Thus, intrinsic change manifests itself in individual entities, like a physical book or a single text, as well as in categories or collectives, such as a literary genre or a population.

Extrinsic change occurs when new circumstances render a new description of a phenomenon relevant, even though the phenomenon itself undergoes no inherent transformation. A common example includes a situation where one person, initially the only child of their parents, becomes a "sibling" when the parents have a second child, without any actual change occurring within the first child. A change in the context might redefine the persons involved without the means of any intrinsic change. Another example is when a young person grows taller than their friend, causing the friend to now fit the description of "shorter" without any change in the friend's height.⁷ Unlike intrinsic change, extrinsic change is not substantial, but relative or relational. Nevertheless, similar to the case of intrinsic change, extrinsic change can manifest itself in both individual entities and broader categories or collectives. In the history of textual culture, this type of change becomes relevant in particular in the case of text reception, when texts are incorporated into new contexts and are read and appreciated in novel ways. An illustrative case is the incorporation of courtly literature from high medieval royal and aristocratic courts into manuscripts primarily containing religious content in the Late Middle Ages, which might be interpreted as an indication that the literary works were increasingly valued within a pious readership (Cooper 1999: 696–697). Similarly, Tether's analysis in this volume (Chapter 6) provides an example of a reader who seems to use courtly narratives as historical sources, representing a novel way of utilising old texts. Both instances exemplify extrinsic change.⁸

As alluded to at the outset of this section, a third alternative warrants consideration in historical studies, termed *apparent change*. This occurs when something new

7 Geach (1972: 321–322) associated the general definition of change, which is above quoted from Blackburn (2008), with some Cambridge philosophers and termed it "Cambridge change", which has survived as a term. The variant of change, here called extrinsic change, is in this tradition sometimes called *pure Cambridge change*.

8 However, manipulation of the text to fit into this new context and reading purpose would be an intrinsic change. The running titles in the manuscript in themselves constitute examples of intrinsic changes.

replaces its predecessor without being a direct development thereof.⁹ What might initially seem like a process of change is, in fact, an introduction of an innovation and its replacement of what was before. This phenomenon raises questions about the entities under analysis: are we observing a single phenomenon undergoing transformation or are there several chronologically discrete phenomena that must be understood independently and sequentially? In this context, it is relevant to return to the concept of synoptic fallacy discussed earlier, highlighting the conflation of phenomena that should be examined separately in the analysis. An example reminding us of an apparent change is delineated in the contribution by Debiais in this volume (Chapter 8), where he challenges the conventional ideas about the history of the minuscule in epigraphy as a singular coherent process, arguing that each kind of epigraphy, and perhaps each object, needs to be understood as communicative events on its own terms, and not just symptoms of a palaeographic tradition. A theoretical treatment of the case in question can be found in Miller (2016), who explores genre evolution and genre emergence. Evolution represents a form of intrinsic change, whereas genre emergence signifies the advent of an unprecedented form of text with no direct connection to the past. If an emerging new genre is not recognised as an innovation, it may erroneously appear as an evolution of previous genres.

Implicit in the variant of apparent change is the historical processes of the *emergence* of unprecedented phenomena as well as the *extinction* of existing elements. Strictly speaking, they might not fit the definition of change proposed above, but undoubtedly, these two forms of change might be addressed in historical studies. Their legitimacy may further be discussed from various perspectives. In the case of emergence, the principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit* (“nothing is created from nothing”) dismisses the idea of any unprecedented emergence as a viable case. Although it might be seen as a commonplace rather than an empirically or theoretically grounded axiom, one might encounter it as an argument in historical analyses. For example, it is sometimes argued that there must have been lost vernacular literary works preceding the first preserved works, as the latter often prove to be surprisingly advanced, and one expects a more gradual development from some lost “first attempts”. In contrast to this, Pollock (2006) contends that vernacular literatures typically commence with advanced works because their authors were already highly literate in a cosmopolitan language. Something appears to be created from nothing, but actually borrows models from another culture, effectively “standing on the shoulders” of their prede-

⁹ This problem is related to the central philosophical problem concerning change, namely the inconsistency problem, which questions how one body can have two incompatible properties, as the concept of change suggests (Mortensen 2020, 2013: 914–915). From an historiographical point of view (and in line with one philosophical tradition associated with Bertrand Russell), the contradiction is solved by saying that time allows the same body to have incompatible properties at different times. The problem of inconsistency in this context is empirical and analytical, that is, whether we might say that we are observing the same phenomenon or two different ones.

cessors in other languages. It would thus not be a matter of emergence out of nothing, but neither is there any need of postulating lost work with reference to a preceding void.

The process of extinction might be questioned with reference to the idea expressed in the first law of thermodynamics, which posits that energy is never created or destroyed, but merely transformed. While such a law of physics obviously cannot be rigidly applied to human culture, it might be worthwhile to consider whether something that seemingly disappears should rather be interpreted as transforming into other cultural forms. The Scandinavian rune stones were typically erected near farms with formulaic runic inscriptions commemorating deceased relatives, mainly between the tenth and twelfth centuries. This particular epigraphic tradition vanishes, but one might argue that the commemorative epigraphy developed into new forms in a dynamic interaction between runic and Latin writing as exemplified in Blennow & Palumbo (2021).

A schematic illustration of the different types of historical change proposed in this discussion is presented in Figure 2. Intrinsic change implies an inherent transformation of a phenomenon (A_1) into a new form with new properties (A_2). Extrinsic change indicates that the phenomenon (A_1) is intact and unaltered in itself, but a shift from one context (C_1) to a new context (C_2) results in a new characterisation (A_1+). Apparent change involves the replacement of one phenomenon (A_1) with another (B) without any inherent connection between them. As a consequence of the apparent change, it is also necessary to acknowledge emergence of a phenomenon (A_1) from nothing (\emptyset) and the disappearance of it (A_1) into nothing (\emptyset).

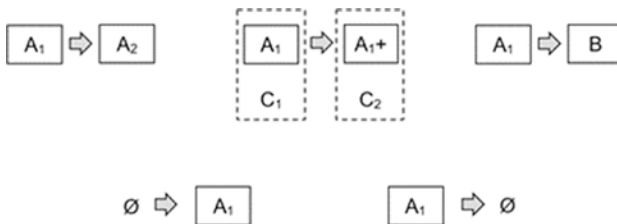


Figure 2: Schematic illustration of five principal kinds of historical change. Top row, from left to right: intrinsic change, extrinsic change, and apparent change. Bottom row, from left to right: emergence and extinction.

While the various types of change may not serve as primarily analytical tools in investigations, they offer distinct models of historical change and historical narratives. Is it a history of a transformation, an exploration of something being redefined or appreciated in a new way, a story of something that is abandoned in favour of the novel, or a narrative of the birth or demise of something? This is not just a matter of rhetorical structure, but of how we conceptualise the nature of the topic under study.

Modelling processes of change in textual culture

To delve further into processes of historical change and the various forms it can take, several conceptual distinctions will be proposed, encompassing: 1) the temporal extension of the change process and its connection to completion, 2) the ontological levels of change, 3) the relationship between variation and change, and 4) the different forms of trajectories of change. To a certain extent, models from language studies will be employed to illuminate changes in textual culture.

Aspects of change: progressive and transitional change

Change is a dynamic process, and a process can unfold over time in various ways. In language, the temporal extension is captured in the grammatical category of *aspect*, which elucidates “how a situation . . . unfolds over time” (Aarts 2014: “aspect”). Various kinds of linguistic aspects exist, including perfective, imperfective, progressive, punctual, repetitive, etc., often expressed through verb forms. In Modern English, a distinction is made between the progressive aspect (*I am/was reading the book*), expressing that something is viewed as on-going or incomplete, and the perfect aspect (*I have/had read the book*), when a situation is viewed as a whole and completed in the past. Other languages employ different grammatical solutions for the same or other aspects. In the current discussion on historical processes of change, the conceptual framework is borrowed from grammatical aspect, while it seems sufficient to maintain two temporal extensions of processes: *progressive* and what is here called *transitional* processes of change. These specifically address whether something is on-going or reaches some kind of endpoint.¹⁰

Progressive processes of change are characterised by the lack of a distinct starting point or endpoint. For example, consider the wear affecting manuscripts in use as discussed in Rudy’s contribution in this volume (Chapter 3). The illumination of any manuscript repeatedly touched by readers will eventually be completely erased, but such a potential endpoint might be inconsequential for the researcher, who is likely more interested in the on-going process of use, how it transforms manuscripts, and what insights it offers into textual culture. Another illustration is the increasing use of written documents in fourteenth century Sweden, as discussed in Pettersson’s contribution (Chapter 7). Although there certainly was a time when there was no literacy at all, and there may be a time when there is a kind of saturation and the annual number of documents no longer rises, the on-going growth of literacy might be the more

¹⁰ “Progressive” in this context is close to its linguistic counterpart, and might as well be compared with the imperfective aspect, describing something not brought to completion but on-going, repeated, or habitual. “Transitional” corresponds partly to what is captured with the categories of perfect as well as the punctual aspect.

pertinent focus in the discussion. Thus, progressive processes refer to instances of historical change that do not necessarily have any clear starting or ending points in themselves but are primarily continuous.

Conversely, a transitional process denotes a scenario where a shift from one state to another occurs, such as when a new literary preference supersedes an old one in a textual culture, a scribe makes alterations to their text in relation to the master text, there is a shift in script, or a message is received by a listening audience. There is a “before” and an “after”. The trajectory between them may assume various forms and take a longer or shorter time to complete, but what the transitional process primarily signifies is that the change is not merely on-going, but involves the replacement of something old with something new.

Some cases might easily be described with one or the other of these two concepts, but in other cases they are more difficult to apply, such as when a new literary trend is embraced only by a segment of the population or when an epigraphic script spreads for a while but later disappears. From one perspective, it may be considered a transitional change, while from another, it appears on-going. However, the value of the concepts lies perhaps not in the mere classification of historical examples, but that they reflect a systematic difference between processes of change which might be employed in analytic descriptions of change.

Change at different ontological levels: the surface-level and underlying structure

In the discourse surrounding change, it is necessary to delineate between alterations occurring on two ontological levels: the empirical surface-level and the level of underlying structures. On the surface-level, any discerned deviation from the previous state can be denoted as a change, as when new letter forms appear for the first time in inscriptions, or a particular formula is first attested in charters. Change at the level of underlying structures is typically contingent upon more than single occurrences. It signifies a substantial and relatively enduring shift in the observations, such as the establishment of a new script in a script community, or the adoption of a new approach to reading old texts within a textual culture.

An illustrative comparison of these two levels can be drawn by examining how language change is addressed in linguistics, where it is customary to differentiate between change and diffusion. While linguistic *change* might indicate a transformation in the language system, including domains such as grammar or phonology, *diffusion* is concerned with the historical and geographical dissemination of linguistic innovations among the actual speakers. Language change revolves around a shared and abstract

underlying structure, whereas diffusion and spread refer to the tangible empirical realities and observable habits among individuals and groups.¹¹

Similarly, in culturally oriented studies, it is customary to differentiate between, on the one hand, the abstract underlying structures encapsulated in interpretative concepts like norms, ideals, fashion, discourses, ideologies, or cultures, and the empirical facts (on the surface-level) that these concepts serve to synthesise and interpret. Both these levels are pertinent for the current discussion, although their primary focus is on the change in underlying structures – the kind of changes typically asserted in interpretations and the conclusions of an investigation. However, it does not seem advisable, as done in linguistics, to restrict the term “change” to one of these two levels. Rather, clarity about the level addressed is sufficient.

Variation and change in different forms: drift changes and shift changes

Variation and change are a prominent pair of concepts in various scientific fields and traditions. Variation is usually associated with the surface-level, discerned as differences within the observed data, while change might be conditioned and reserved for the underlying structures governing or influencing the empirical data. Two forms of variation will be discussed here as relevant for the analysis of textual culture, variation in a continuous quality and variation between a specified set of alternatives, leading to two modes of change, namely *drift changes* and *shift changes*.¹²

Variation in a continuous quality refers to differences in properties that can be evaluated on a scale, with gradations as “more” or “less”. For instance, various texts of the same genre might have a more or less pronounced use of a specific literary trait (e.g., word pairs), letters might adhere more or less closely to the graphemic ideals or vary in height, or books might have experienced different degrees of wear.¹³ All these examples denote variations that can be assessed on a scale, even if quantitative measures are not strictly employed but characterised with approximations or interpretations

¹¹ Diffusion and change attract interest to various extents in different linguistic traditions, as described by Joseph (2012: 412–413), referred to in Chapter 1, footnote 2. In sociolinguistics, as formulated by the leading sociolinguist William Labov (1994: 79–83), change is conditioned in terms of diffusion; a change is considered completed when it is embraced by an entire society and not merely segments of the population.

¹² The two forms of variation relate to the continuous and discrete variables in mathematics and statistics, where the value of continuous variables are obtained by measuring, while the value of a discrete variable is reached by counting. Variation might also be described as either continuous or categorical. However, the two suggested forms of variation in textual culture have other emphases: on the one hand a gradable entity, on the other a set of alternatives.

¹³ In the case of language variation, an example could be how close a certain vowel's pronunciation is to its typical realisation in the variety under consideration.

such as more, less, bigger, smaller, central, peripheral, dominant, marginal, etc. This kind of variation might lead to a drift change, a modification where one or several features is adjusted or pushed in one or another direction, for instance, in a genre change or changes in a script system.

The other form of variation is not graded but pertains to cases when there is only a specific set of alternatives available. For instance, this may involve the choice made between two languages for writing or selecting from a more or less limited set of available texts to translate or copy into a multitext manuscript.¹⁴ The variation does not concern the measurement of a quality, but how frequently one alternative is chosen over another. This form of variation might lead to a shift change, when one alternative becomes preferred over another or merely selected among alternatives.

The question then arises: what criteria must be met for the variation to justify the conclusion that something has changed – regardless of the categories of drift or shift change? In other words, when does surface-level variation turn into structural change? The only general answer that seems possible to offer is that the claim of change must be convincing. Such an answer is impractical, but it highlights the general condition in historical sciences that interpretations must be argued as reasonable and acceptable rather than that a conclusion might be proven in the strict sense. Even for a quantitative analysis, a fixed threshold for structural change can hardly be decided. Statistical analysis might outline what constitutes a significant deviation in the data, and a change-point analysis might show at what moment there is a new distribution in the variation, but interpretative concepts and theoretical frameworks will still be decisive when making sense of the surface-level variation and capturing structural change in textual history.

However, while the moment of change in a process might be difficult to establish, a change might be possible to claim by the observation of the presence of a new norm. In the data of vernacular and Latin documents in Pettersson's investigation (Chapter 7), it is argued from the statistical data that a new norm has emerged in the Swedish 1360s, when Latin documents steadily represent a minority among all documents. Qualitative observations can be as informative about new norms showing what is taken for granted, for instance in the case of which language is used or whether written documents are not expected or presupposed. In both cases, change is a new state, "a new continuity" against which other innovations might present themselves as change.¹⁵

The primary question addressed in this section is how we should distinguish between different kinds of variation and modes of change. The two modes of change proposed here are likely pertinent to various parts of textual culture. Some parts of

¹⁴ In the case of language variation, it could be manifested as the choice between two different word-orders (e.g., determinants before or after their head) or between two synonyms.

¹⁵ As indicated in Chapter 1, continuity has been important to define change in historical disciplines and useful discussions can be found in Burke (1979), Nisbet (1972), and Cohen (1983).

the culture undergo a drift change through the modifications of qualities, while other parts are subject to a shift in respect of alternatives. The logic and the forces influencing these distinct modes of change are presumably different, suggesting the necessity of keeping them separate within a broader theory of change in medieval textual culture.

Trajectories of change

Change may manifest itself along various forms of trajectories, such as a gradual increase, a dramatic breakthrough, or a sudden alteration. While these types of trajectories are, to some extent, encapsulated in the concepts of progressive and transitional change proposed above, the focus here is not on the completion of the process, but on the character and shape of the change trajectory itself.

The trajectories of change describe primarily surface-level changes rather than structural change; they primarily depict the behaviour of data. However, different trajectories also entail different conceptualisations about how historical change unfolds: is history a slow organic “growth”, or is it characterised by sudden ruptures? It is proposed here that four fundamental types encompass the primary forms of trajectories of change necessary for the ensuing discussions: gradual change, abrupt change, dynamic change, and continual variation/incomplete change.¹⁶ While the last category may be debated as a variant of change, it remains crucial to acknowledge instances where there is variation that teeters on the brink of becoming change, but ultimately does not culminate in a completed transformation. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the four types of trajectories in the form of line graphs.

Statistical diagrams are not essential for depicting the various trajectories of change, but they offer a relatively efficient and comparable method of illustration. In the top-left quadrant of Figure 3, there is a gradual change commencing at zero in 1350 and steadily increasing until it reaches the value of 100 in 1410. In the top-right quadrant, an instance of abrupt change is shown, which transitions from zero to 100 in the year 1379. Moving to the bottom-left, there is an example of dynamic change, akin to gradual change but marked by distinct phases where alteration occurs at varying speed. Initially, there is a slow onset between 1350 and approximately 1370, followed by a rapid increase until around 1400, after which the pace gradually slows, reaching 100 at 1429. In the bottom-right quadrant is the example of continual variation/not fulfilled change, where the variation never evolves into a definitive transformation. Each of them will be commented on further below.

¹⁶ Burke (1979: 9) suggests three “shapes of time” – oscillation round a fixed point, gradual rise or decline, and abrupt change – which partly corresponds with the taxonomy suggested here.

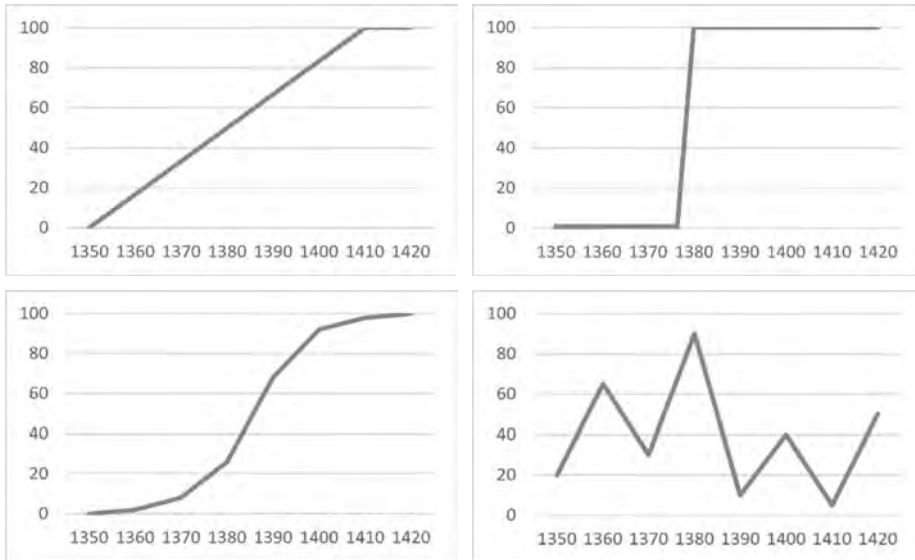


Figure 3: Illustration of four typical trajectories of change processes along an arbitrarily chosen time period between 1350 and 1420: gradual change, abrupt change, dynamic change, and continual variation/incomplete change. (N.B. The four diagrams are crafted as illustrations and are not based on any existing empirical data).

Gradual trajectories of change refers to alterations that occur at a relatively consistent pace without any discernible steps, resembling a continuous rise or decline, typically visually presented by a trend line or fading shades. In Figure 3 it is exemplified as continuous and even progress from zero to 100, but the trajectory of the change should also allow for deviations from the straight line, as long as it is not considered dynamic change (see below). More importantly, it encapsulates the idea of a continuous change regardless of quantitative data or qualitative interpretation.

A gradual progress might be empirically motivated, but it might also emanate from the perspective chosen; from a distance, more or less any development assumes a gradual shape when irregularities and deviations are smoothed out. It might also be derived from calculations or interpretations of trends in oscillating data, as demonstrated in Pettersson's contribution in this volume (Chapter 7), mapping the number of issued letters annually. The absolute number of letters vary considerably from year to year, but a general increase over the decades can be discerned or calculated using a trend line.

Gradual change is inherent within an organic view of historical development, when cultural history is interpreted in vegetal terms, which underlies the term *culture* itself. The problems with vegetal terms like *growth* have already been pointed out above in the section on time. It seems that even ordinary words for change, like *rise*, *increase*, and *decline*, typically refer to gradual processes. While a *rise* might indeed be sudden, the qualifier may need to clarify that the verb does not indicate a

particularly fast gradual progression. Speakers may disagree on word meanings, but the point here is that such words might inadvertently imply a gradual development even when that is not the case.

It is indisputable that gradual processes of change exist in the history of textual culture, such as in the case of the prolonged increase of documentary writing. However, it is possible that this form of change may be more pertinent in synthetic descriptions of macro-level trends derived from extensive data, while it may have less relevance on meso- or microlevels of human groups and interaction.

Abrupt trajectories of change encompasses sudden emergences, extinctions, or shifts in levels. In Figure 3, it goes from zero to 100 in an instant, but the category should be understood as a sudden alteration regardless of which levels are involved. In qualitative terms, it corresponds to sudden appearances or disappearances of cultural phenomena as well as instantaneous transformations.

Abrupt change and discontinuity were favoured by the postmodern understanding of history, as seen in the *epistemes* of Michel Foucault, but it has a long history in historical periodisation in general, particularly for pedagogical purposes. Few would believe that an era ends or begins as abruptly as the historical periodisation might make it appear, but the challenge with abrupt change is perhaps to acknowledge it when it is actually relevant, as it perhaps contradicts general assumptions about history. The already mentioned study by Pollock (2006) argues from vast empirical mapping that vernacular imaginative writing commenced through “sharp beginnings” rather than any gradual evolution from oral literature to sophisticated written works, due to the role of the cosmopolitan language. Abrupt trajectories of change might appear as suspicious simplifications, but trajectories are surface-level patterns, and might be the logical expression of complex underlying explanations.

Dynamic trajectories of change is represented by the s-curve, which could be seen as a compromise between gradual change and abrupt change: the growth is gradual, but in the middle the increase is dramatic, akin to an abrupt change. The first phase signifies the introduction, and the subsequent phase a rapid quantitative expansion, until a third phase where the growth decelerates, possibly leaving a residue unchanged for an extended period. Alternatively, progress could advance stepwise rather than gradually. It is delimited from gradual change through its distinct phases.

The s-curve is observed and applied in studies across various scientific fields, ranging from biology to economics and linguistics. Its utilisation appears less frequent in historical research, especially regarding the Middle Ages. This is possibly due to its association with quantitative analysis, which may pose challenges when dealing with the delicate medieval source material. Nevertheless, there is potential for its use in interpreting the dissemination of cultural innovations, adopting the simple model of phases rather than quantities: the initial introduction of the innovation within restricted groups, perhaps defined as a centre, followed by its spread to wider segments of society, possibly a periphery. Generally, dynamic change appears to become

particularly relevant in the context of shifts (as proposed above), when there is a preference for one alternative over another.

Continual variation/incomplete change is a state of flux or an example of diachronic variation rather than a directional process of change. In language history, the prolonged variation that never results in change has been noted as a fact, as in the classic case of -ing and -in pronunciation of the English -ing-form. The never resolved variation might be a pattern that challenges our thoughts about change and expectations of change, and it also suggests that there are phenomena which do not typically end up in a certain change. One interesting example concerning textual history has been pointed out by translation studies scholar Anthony Pym (1988) after mapping datable translations in the north of Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Instead of a trend in either direction, the data resulted in the following diagram in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Datable translations from Arabic in the Iberian Peninsula, 1100–1300, reproduced from Pym (1998: 84).

One might argue that there are two peaks, but it is hard to speak about a coherent development in one or another direction, and certainly not any kind of long-lasting change. Pym, who has noted similar patterns in the translation rates of other times and areas, suggests that the “roller-coaster frequencies” are explained by something inherent in translation itself:

As a relatively expensive strategy for cross-cultural communication, translation may well be viable for short-term projects only, eventually giving way to alternative strategies involving language learning (when there is more material to be communicated) or noncommunication (when not). (Pym 1998: 85)

If it is not the case of a synoptic fallacy failing to recognise internal variation, yet another possible explanation for this pattern is “saturation”, suggesting that the translation of the most significant works and a sufficiently large share of the less important texts were completed in different periods, leading to a temporary decline in the demand for new translations until an interest in a new group of texts appears. The same explanation might even be relevant for texts of different origins than translation; an analysis of the yearly production of indigenous works could potentially yield similar irregular frequencies. Whatever the explanation, the instances of continual variation/incomplete change provide valuable and perhaps provocative insights into the dynamics of medieval textual culture and deserve to be considered among the other forms of trajectories of change.

The trajectories of change discussed here not only represent patterns in the empirical data but also embody certain ways of thinking about history. How do we envision historical development – gradual, abrupt, or dynamic, or conforming to some other pattern? While patterns in the data are unproblematic in themselves – although they require interpretation – the underlying ideas regarding the historical development need critical reflection, as they can be important tools, but also lead to potential fallacies. The common challenge faced by medieval scholars when writing history from only fragmentarily preserved sources might make the use of general ideas about historical development to “fill in the gaps” inevitable, but it is a concluding approach that requires awareness.

Concluding remarks: concepts as observations of historical change

The origin of these reflections on historical change was the explicit aim to seek a new synthesis of the history of texts in transmission in medieval Scandinavia within the research programme *Modes of Modification – Variance and Change in Medieval Textual Culture*. While the research programme predominantly centres on Scandinavia, it is conceived as an integral component of European textual culture, and the programme has an explicit objective to trace a possible synthesis through dialogue with scholars engaged in texts of diverse types, spanning various languages and historical contexts.

The concepts for change discussed above do not constitute a comprehensive or coherent theory of textual change. But if theory is conceived close to the etymological origins of the Greek *Θεωρία* as “a way of looking at something”, in order to contemplate it and understand it better” (Chesterman 2007: 1), the different concepts and the models they constitute might represent what comes into view from different theoretical observation points. Some of them overlap or run in parallel, while others address completely different aspects.

The value of terminology is not always immediately apparent, as merely associating a historical example with a particular category rarely resolves any issues; whether a historical process is best characterised as progressive or transitional change might seem like a mere academic exercise in meta-language. However, a similar argument could be made about grammatical categories, such as the progressive and perfective aspect, yet few would question their utility, for instance, for the purpose of comparison and identification in the service of a generalised understanding. Could it not be similarly informative to identify and compare, for instance, processes of apparent change in history? Cultural history differs to a great extent from language and grammar, but following Levine's (2017) suggestion discussed in the introduction to the volume (Chapter 1), there are reasons to explore commonalities in history. One need not aim for a "grammar of history", but there might still be recurring patterns that help us understand the whole, and the path to unveil such patterns is guided by concepts, categories, and models.

Additionally, the kind of terminology of historical change proposed above also holds potential as an instrument of critical discussions. While such concepts may not necessarily resolve problems, they can be useful in locating them and in formulating fundamental perspectives for the historical analysis, conceptualisation, and writing of history. Examples were offered in the previous discussion, but the subject merits a more cohesive treatment, in which examples will be given both from the contributions of this volume as well as from other sources.

Acknowledging *extrinsic change* as a certain form of change provides theoretical support for the history of textual reception, including both the interpretation of readers and the rewriting of scribes. An example of extrinsic change is highlighted in Leah Tether's contribution in this volume (Chapter 6), where a book-owner's reading of courtly texts as historical sources is discussed. The extrinsic change of a new readership triggers, in turn, intrinsic changes of the texts as a consequence, through the addition of running titles in the manuscripts. Benjamin Pohl's contribution about a scribe's manipulation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De Gestis Britonum* in a certain manuscript (Chapter 5), goes in the opposite direction; through the manipulations, his text invites a re-modelled reading of the author, constituting an intrinsically induced change with extrinsic processes of change as a potential consequence (the re-evaluation of the author in general). The concept of extrinsic change prompts systematic considerations about the implications for other basic concepts such as text, work, and genre, and it raises the question of how a history of texts should be written without losing sight of the readers, the scribes, and the contexts where texts were used.

Recognising the distinction between *apparent change* and *intrinsic change* can aid us in critically assessing the primary units of the process under study. Are we witnessing something in transformation, or are we dealing with two separate entities with different qualities occurring in chronological sequence? For instance, is the transition between manuscript culture and printed book culture *one* process of intrinsic change, or should it be perceived as an apparent change of one emerging textual culture

replacing the other? Or, as in the case discussed by Vincent Debiais in this volume (Chapter 8), is the adoption of the gothic minuscule in epigraphy an indication of an intrinsic evolution within a palaeographic tradition, or rather the result of individual communicative decisions for specific purposes in different contexts? The concepts define the alternative internal structures of the historical narratives, which have implications for how history is understood and explained.

In the case of *transitional* and *progressive processes of change*, the concepts target fundamental properties of the historical process under investigation, making these qualities a topic of consideration. For instance, the idea of a “transition” between orality and literacy has been persistent, while many argue that the use of writing and reliance on memory and the spoken word represent two parallel solutions to human interaction, each continuing to progress in an increasingly complex society. It could be more rewarding to reflect on the subject in terms of a progressive process (with no endpoint) rather than a transitional one. In the case of language choice for documentary writing, as investigated by Jonatan Pettersson in this volume (Chapter 7), it is indeed relevant to speak of a transitional process of change, but the transition is partial, not complete, which is an important part of the characterisation.

Surface level changes (or variation) and *changes in underlying structures* primarily clarify the targets of descriptions and claims, but reflecting on them might also encourage innovative thinking in terms of methodology and interpretation. To keep empirical categories slim and narrow is generally thought of as a virtue in science, but one might also take another route and, so to speak, widen the empirical surface and assume the holistic perspective of a participant observer (and listener and sensor). Stefka G. Eriksen’s inquiry into the sounds in an Old Norse saga and their contexts is not limited solely to audible phenomena, but employs a wide sensory context of the sounds from a cognitive perspective, allowing her to unveil how audible information becomes relevant and transitive in the story. In the case of change in underlying structures, it is useful to consider the ontological status of the concepts in use, that is, whether concepts like discourse, fashion, quality, and genres are used as ontological concepts that refer to entities with an independent existence, or if they are purely analytical concepts that merely describe, capture, and organise structures on the surface-level. In both cases, the concepts address the surface-level, but with very different claims regarding their essential nature and explanative power.

The two different forms of variation and change captured in the concepts of *shift change* or *drift change* suggest different basic conditions of change and different relations between the nature of the variables. A typical example of drift change is when a genre changes in terms of the prominence of stylistic features. However, the well-known change from verse to prose in late medieval courtly literature would be a shift. The categories of change might also be contextual, such as how the different architectural spaces offer different acoustic pre-conditions for the liturgy and troubadour poetry in Mary Franklin Brown’s contribution (Chapter 2), with consequences for each literary tradition, respectively. Shift choices and changes refer to rather tan-

gible transformations as they juxtapose opposites or mutually excluding alternatives. Sometimes they become targets of debates, for instance, on vernacular or cosmopolitan language, verse or prose, manuscript or printed books. Drift changes seem more likely to go under the radar as they are not dependent on explicit stance-taking. The worn illuminations in Rudy's manuscripts, caused by systematic and targeted physical interaction with the books, might appear as a consequence of a dramatic change, but were the effect of a long process of treatment during which the gradual erosion might not have been perceived by the book owners.

Finally, the different trajectories of change offer tools for addressing basic assumptions about history. While they mainly capture surface-level alterations in the data, they also make up models of historical change that might be adopted as general assumptions about historical processes. This is also, in a way, what this discussion on change as a whole revolves around, to uncover distinctions and conceptions that one as a scholar "professionally concerned with change" (see Chapter 1) is perhaps rarely confronted with, but which become natural in a discussion between a wide range of fields, where differences and similarities, patterns and idiosyncrasies become visible through the contrast. It is, arguably, in this multiperspectival dialogue where clues to a new way of writing the history of texts can be traced.

Several issues regarding change have, however, been left aside in this discussion, including fundamental questions about causes and effects, teleology and explanation, as well as the entire complex of metaphors for change (water metaphors, vegetal metaphors, meteorological metaphors, etc.) and their profound significance in history and historiography. One such metaphor of change is featured on the front page of the volume of this book, the wheel of fortune. Widespread during Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, it influenced how discourses on power and the basic human condition were crafted in art and literature, and it certainly influenced the way people intuitively thought about change. Ideas about change, regardless of their form, constitute powerful configurations of our thinking and also evoke our emotions. These reflections about change in textual culture hopefully illustrate fallacies, misdirections, and idols to be avoided, as well as the possible insights and promising perspectives to be gained through the interplay between theoretical perspectives, concepts, models of change, and various historical inquiries.

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