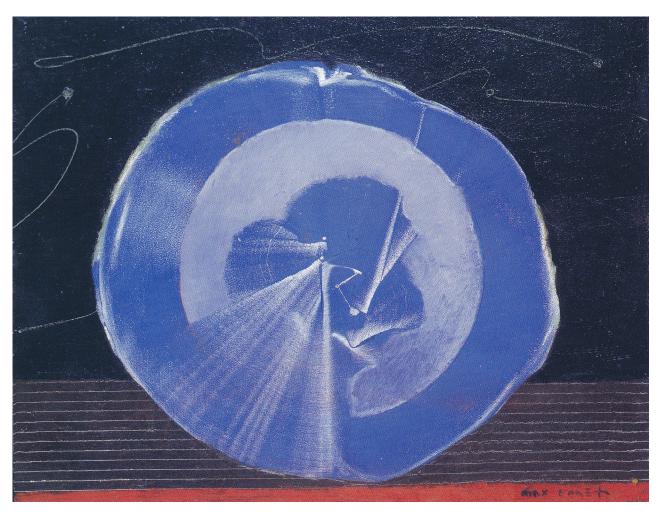# VOL 4 · 2017

Max Ernst, *Fleur Bleue*, non datée, vers 1964, huile sur bois, 21,2 x 27 cm – Inv. Fondation des Treilles 990.110 – Photographie par Jacqueline Hyde (1922–2013) – by SIAE 2017

INTERFACES
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Contents

Introduction to *Interfaces* 4

After three thematic issues – No. 1 on "Histories of Medieval European Literatures: New Patterns of Representation and Explanation," No. 2 on "The Theory and Phenomenology of Love," and No. 3 on "Rediscovery and Canonization: The Roman Classics in the Middle Ages" – No. 4 is the first open issue of *Interfaces*. No. 5 will be another open issue. We hope readers will appreciate the range and quality of the contributions we accepted for publication.

The following two issues of the journal will once more be thematic. The calls for submissions for both No. 6 on "Biblical Creatures – The Animal as an Object of Interpretation in Pre-Modern Abrahamic Hermeneutic Traditions" and No. 7 on "Theorizing Medieval European Literatures, c. 500–c. 1500" have been published on the website of *Interfaces*: the deadlines for submissions are 1 February 2018 and 1 September 2018 respectively. On the website it is also possible to subscribe to be notified of new issues of the journal.

As well as being indexed by DOAJ – The Directory of Open Access Journals, *Interfaces* is now indexed also by ERIH PLUS – The European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, and registered for regular aggregation and indexing in OpenAIRE – The Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe. Recently we have also been listed as a green journal in SHERPA/RoMEO.

As cover illustration for this issue we have chosen Max Ernst's *Fleur Bleue* (oil on wood, c. 1964) owned by the Fondation des Treilles – Centre d'études du bassin méditerranéen and photographed by Jacqueline Hyde. The choice is in homage to the Foundation, which between March and April 2011 and in April 2014 generously hosted two workshops of the Interfaces group ("The Integration of Latin and Vernacular in a New History of European Medieval Literature" and "Rethinking Medieval European Literature") at its estate near Tourtour, in the Var. Not only were those seminars intense and productive, allowing and encouraging participants to share knowledge and ideas with colleagues of other fields, but they also turned out to be inspiring for the designing of both the Centre for Medieval Literature (Odense and York) and the *Interfaces* journal.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Anna Marini. She was a great professional, always full of ideas and solutions: her help and technical support has been crucial for launching and maintaining the journal through the online platform of the University of Milan, developing a proper and complete open access policy, and planning application processes to indexing services. She was also a dear friend, and left us much too early.

The Editors

HENRY BAINTON

Epistolary Documents in High-Medieval History-Writing

Abstract

This article focuses on the way history-writers in the reign of King Henry II (King of England, Duke of Normandy and of Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, d. 1189) quoted documents in their histories. Although scholars have often identified documentary quotation as the most distinctive feature of history-writing from this period, I argue here that the practice of quoting documents has not been properly assessed from a rhetorical perspective. Focusing on epistolary documents in the histories written by Roger of Howden, Ralph de Diceto and Stephen of Rouen, I suggest that scholarship on these texts has distinguished between 'document' and 'narrative' too sharply. My argument, rather, is that epistolary documents functioned as narrative intertexts; they were not simply truth claims deployed to authenticate a history-writer's own narrative. The corollary to this is that scholarship on these texts needs to negotiate the potentially fictive nature of documentary intertexts, just as it has long negotiated the potentially fictive nature of the historiographical discourse that frames them.[1]

2. I use this shorthand to refer to the lands ruled by Henry II (and his sons) both sides of the English channel.

Introduction

The later twelfth century was "a golden age of historiography in England" (Gransden 221). For Antonia Gransden, but also for numerous other more or less standard accounts of the history written in this period, this age was golden both because of the quantity of history-writing that it produced – which is impressive – and also because of its quality. Here was a sort of history-writing that finally looked like something modern. It was written by administrators with a secular outlook; it was focused on the state and its development; and those who wrote it used 'official documents' in the way that all good historians should. Yet, although those documents feature in almost every account of the history-writing of the Age of the Angevins,[2] that history-writing's use of documents has only ever been seriously studied from a diplomatic perspective. That is, modern historians have often "mined" this period's history-writing for its documents, only consid-

3. For a critique of the "mining" of Roger of Howden "first for facts and then for documents," see Gillingham, "Travels" 71. Giry offers a classic diplomatic perspective when he stresses the need to assess the "degré de confiance que mérite l'ensemble de l'œuvre et son auteur" ("the degree of trust that the work as a whole, and its author, merits") in order to assess the value of charters inserted into chronicles (34); Richardson and Sayles follow this advice to the letter, directing a suspicious glare at Roger of Howden – whom they considered "incapable of distinguishing between authentic legislative instruments and apocryphal enactments" – and a deeply suspect historian as a consequence (448).

4. For Howden's career, see Barlow; Stenton; Corner, "*Gesta Regis*;" Gillingham, "Writing the Biography;" Gillingham, "Travels;" Gillingham, "Roger of Howden on Crusade."

5. The *Gesta* covers the years 1170 to 1192. The *Chronica* was a reworking of the *Gesta* that extended its chronological scope back to the seventh century and beyond 1192.

6. The *Abbreviationes* was a universal chronicle running up to the year 1148; the *Ymagines* ran from 1148, and Diceto wrote it contemporaneously with the events that he was recording from the year 1188.

7. Diceto made an innovative survey of his Chapter's property and codified the cathedral's charters as part of the process, and he was one of those English canonists who collected and circulated decretal letters "with an almost incredible enthusiasm" in this period. For the property survey, see Hale; for the charters, see Clanchy 160 and Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, lxx–lxxi, n. 2; for the decretal letters, see Duggan 22.

8. The reliability of Herodotus's documentary evidence has since been questioned, raising "fundamental doubts about his honesty" (West 278–305). By connecting documents with (dis)honesty, West reveals the ideological and moral weight that modern scholarship sometimes makes documents bear.

ering their historiographical framework in the course of determining how "good" or "bad" those documentary reproductions were.[3]

This means that the literary forms and the rhetorical functions of those documents have been dealt with only in passing. And the relationship between documents, the history-writing that quotes them, and the state whose rise they are supposed to demonstrate has never seriously been questioned.

In this article I want to problematize the rhetorical role of documents in high-medieval history-writing. I'm going to focus, at least to start with, on the documents invoked by two history-writers from this period. Both history-writers are famous for using documents. The first of these is Roger of Howden, *clericus regis* and parson of Howden (d. 1201/2),[4] who wrote two chronicles in this period (the *Gesta regis Henrici secundi* and the *Chronica*).[5] Howden used so many documents in his *Gesta* that Gransden argued that it reads "more like a register than a literary work" (Gransden 221). The second history-writer is Ralph de Diceto (d. 1199/1200), who also wrote two chronicles: the *Abbreviationes chronicorum* and the *Ymagines historiarum*.[6] Like Howden, Diceto was a well-connected administrator as well as a history-writer (he was dean of St. Paul's and archdeacon of Middlesex; and had walk-on parts in many of the major political events of his day). Like Howden, Diceto too was a keen user of documents, both in his history-writing and in his administrative work.[7] And, like Howden's, Diceto's documents have long caught the eye of scholars (see *e.g.* Greenway, "Historical Writing" 152).

From one perspective, the fact that scholars have neglected to interrogate the rhetorical role of the documents in these histories is not surprising. Howden's and Diceto's documentary moves have been camouflaged because they seem so routine. When a history-writer like Howden quoted a document, he apparently made a move that is at the very heart of the "historiographical operation," as Michel de Certeau called it. In history-writing, says Certeau, "everything begins with the gesture of setting aside, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into 'documents'" (De Certeau 72). Although Certeau's subject is modern history-writing, the documentary gesture itself is hardly a modern one: almost every canonical premodern writer of history used documents somehow too. Herodotus famously quoted inscriptions in his *Histories*, a use of "evidence" that once made him seem the direct ancestor of the modern historian.[8] Thucydides included a number of documents in his *History of the*

9. For Sallust's profound influence on medieval historical writing, see Smalley 165–75.

10. Bede used the correspondence of Gregory the Great (and others) in his *Historia ecclesiastica*: see, for example, Bede 1.28–32, 2.4, 2.10–11, 2.18. For Bede's use of Gregory's letters see Meyvaert 162–66. Eadmer made extensive use of Anselm's correspondence in his *Historia novorum,* for which see Gransden 139–40. Bede would have encountered Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* in Rufinus's Latin translation.

11. For the importance of documents and literacy in state-formation in this period, see Strayer esp. 24–25, 42–44. For an important critique of Strayer's notion of state-building, see Stein and Bisson.

Peloponnesian War "out of a desire to get small things right, and to emphasize that he had done so" (Hornblower vol. 2, 117). Sallust offers an *exemplum* of the intercepted letter that incriminated Catiline and foiled his conspiracy, allowing readers to see the instrument of his downfall with their own eyes (Sallust 34.2–35.6, 44.4–6).[9] Individual books of the Bible quote letters within their narratives (*e.g.* 1 *Maccabees* 10.25–45, *ibid.,* 11.29–37; 2 *Maccabees* 1.1–11); taken as a whole, indeed, the Bible combines narrative with documents, including letters, law codes and transcriptions of stone tablets. The inclusion of the apostolic letters within the biblical canon in Late Antiquity, meanwhile, provided an especially important model for documentary history-writing, because Eusebius took it up in his *Ecclesiastical History* (which combined his own narrative and the texts of letters of the apostles' successors in the early church [Jones; Momigliano 140–42]; Bede, the towering figure of Insular historiography, seems to have imitated Eusebius's documentary practices in his own *Ecclesiastical history*).[10]

Given these precedents, therefore, it is perhaps understandable that the documentary gesture in the history-writing of the Age of the Angevins has been rendered more or less invisible. But while this invisibility is understandable, it is still surprising. For scholarship has long made high-medieval history-writing's documents bear an especially heavy ideological and theoretical weight. Those documents have played an ideological role in the history of this period because they have been taken as an index of their authors' interest in, and proximity to, the "central government." Howden, Diceto – and their documents – are thus perceived as witnesses to, and participants in, the birth of the state that supposedly took place in just this period – and they are therefore considered especially useful to historians reconstructing that process today.[11] (Gransden, for example, thought that Howden's documents were evidence for Howden's praiseworthy "interest in the central government" [221]; J. C. Holt likewise thought that Howden's copies of Henry II's assizes "must stand as the genuine attempts of a person involved in government to record its actions" [89; see also Haskins 77; Southern 150–52; Bartlett 630–31].) Moreover, Howden's documents in particular have given his chronicle an especially prominent place in English legal and constitutional history. As the sole transmitter of the texts of Henry II's assizes – important milestones in the history of English law – Howden's histories have been exhaustively mined for their documents, leaving them, in the process, "looking worthy but dull" (Gillingham, "Travels" 71).

12. The medieval preference for eyewitness history has its roots in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville: according to Isidore, history took its name from the Greek verb *historein* – to see or to know – because "among the ancients no one would write history unless he had been present and had seen what was to be written down" (Isidore 67). As D. H. Green suggests, eyewitness and documentary history are closely related: in historical writing in an Isidorian mode, Green argues, "reliable written sources may replace eyewitnesses in a civilization whose historical consciousness is matched by a high degree of literacy." (Green, *Medieval Listening* 238).

13. By contrast with literary scholars, medieval historians have tended to think more in terms of 'authentication' than authority (mostly because authenticating things has long been central to the historian's craft), but they too have noted how history-writers used documents to increase the reliability of their narratives. Diana Greenway, for example, thinks Ralph de Diceto "endeavoured to make his work as authentic as possible by incorporating lengthy quotations from contemporary letters" (Greenway 152). And Julia Barrow has noted how William of Malmesbury deployed charters earlier in the twelfth century in order to "support the [historical narrative] by authenticating what is being said" (Barrow 68).

14. These shifters designate "any reference to the historian's listening, collecting testimony from *elsewhere* and telling it in his own discourse." (Barthes 8, original emphasis). As Paul Ricoeur has put it, "history is born from the taking of a *distance*, which consists in the recourse to the *exteriority* of the archival trace" (Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* 139; my emphasis).

15. For the connections between rhetoric and history-writing, see now Kempshall and the papers collected in Breisach.

From a theoretical point of view, on the other hand, documents are thought to have played a newly important role in high-medieval history-writing because they helped persuade its audiences that their narratives were true. This was an urgent concern, because if the Age of the Angevins was the age of documentary history, it was also the period in which literary fiction broke into the cultural mainstream (see *e.g.* Green, *Beginnings*). Because high-medieval history-writing was "thoroughly dependent on the techniques of fiction to represent the reality of the past" (Stein 10) – and because there was "nothing in literary tradition or contemporary thought to suggest that history required a new and special mode of discourse" in the Middle Ages (Partner 196) – history-writers now had to signal clearly to their audiences that the "contract" they were establishing with them was one of history rather than fiction (Otter 9–12). Along with devices such as the claim to have been an eyewitness to an event (Beer 23–34; Fleischmann 301; Morse 144–45; Damian-Grint 75–76; Lodge 266–68), documents are generally considered to have been *the* crucial device with which a history-writer could claim his or her narrative was true,[12] and authoritatively so.[13] There are good reasons, of course, why this was the case (and indeed why it remains the case today). Whereas fictional narratives need refer to nothing but themselves, invoking a document allows history-writers to claim that their narrative has an external referent. Because documents exist outside – before and beyond – the narrative that refers to them, they function as what Roland Barthes called "testimonial shifters" (Barthes 8). A history-writer cannot deny that he or she constructed her narrative themselves. But by invoking a document, he or she can speak through a voice that was apparently there already. The events I'm talking about really happened, the historian insists. And if you don't believe what I say, see for yourself: ask the documents; they're right here.

Of course, medieval history-writers had not read much Barthes. But many of them were familiar with classical rhetorical theory,[15] which among other things provided them with a vocabulary with which to talk about narrative discourse and its relationship with truth (see esp. Mehtonen; Minnis and Scott). Like Barthes, the ancient rhetoricians also emphasized that the exteriority of documents could make their narratives seem true (or *veri similis*) (Kempshall 350–427). Appealing to what the rhetoricians called 'extrinsic testimony' was a crucial way of increasing the verisimilitude of an account of deeds supposedly done in the past. According to Cicero, extrinsic testimony comprised those proofs that "rest upon no intrin-

16. *Cf.* Cicero, *De orat.* 1.16, on the perils of making things up in narratives when "tabulae" testified to something different.

17. For further examples of history-writers using documents explicitly to assert the truth of what they were writing, see Kempshall 219–29.

18. Hayden White complained a long time ago that "it [is not] unusual for literary theorists, when they are speaking about the "context" of a literary work, to suppose that this context – the "historical milieu" – has a concreteness and an accessibility that the work itself can never have." (White, "Literary Artifact" 89). Much has changed in medieval studies since White wrote that, but it remains the case that literary scholarship has been far more interested in the relationship between historical and fictional *narrative* in the twelfth century than in the documents that are apparently so important in signaling a narrative's historicity. As White emphasized, "historical documents are not less opaque than the texts studied by the literary critic" (89).

sic force of their own, but external authority" (Cicero *De orat.* 2.173).[16] As Matthew Kempshall explains, such proof "can be established by various means, but the basic distinction lies, according to both Cicero and Quintilian, between human and documentary sources" (Kempshall 182). Because the rhetoricians felt that "human witnesses are . . . always open to doubt" (Kempshall 182) – they might have been lying, they might have been of dubious moral character, they might have just been plain wrong – they suggested that presenting documents ("tabulae," "tablets") to an audience alongside a narrative was a particularly powerful way of making that narrative feel more true. As Cicero's "Antonius" puts it in an example of such a strategy in the *De Oratore*, "Hoc sequi necesse est, recito enim tabulas" ("This must inevitably follow, for I am reading from the documents") (2.173). One of the many things that medieval history-writers took away from the textbooks of classical rhetoric, therefore, was that documents, in their externality, could work as truth-claims. Paul the Deacon, writing his *Historia romana* in the late eighth century, was thus thoroughly conventional in his assumption that documentary evidence could work as "a guarantee against lying" (Kempshall 219). That view became a historiographical commonplace, and remained so throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.[17]

I do not argue here that documents did not function as "testimonial shifters," or as "extrinsic testimony," or as truth claims in high-medieval history-writing. On the contrary, this is precisely how they did function. But I do argue that we need to be clear about what those documents actually *were* before we can be sure about what documents *did* in the history-writing that quoted them. Literary studies' emphasis on documents' role as truth-claims, I argue, risks opposing the literary to the documentary too starkly.[18] Concentrating solely on documentary truth-claims, that is, risks giving the impression that – unlike historical narrative, whose complicated entanglement with literary forms has long been understood – documents themselves occupied a purely non-literary space, or at least provided a secure representational link to one. I argue here, by contrast, that the kinds of epistolary documents that history-writers used in this period were often characterized by the very same narrativity that characterized the histories that used them. And they had just as complicated a role in representing the past as historical narrative did itself.

Documents and letters

The problematic status of documents in history-writing from this period can be illustrated, first of all, by thinking a little about the modern English word "document." When used colloquially nowadays, the word "document" tends to evoke a domain (or discourse) that is specifically not fictional: "documentary" movies are expected to deal with the real world in a way that dramas, say, are not; a recent edited collection called *Medieval Letters* carried the subtitle "Between Fiction and Document," as if the two words were antonyms (Bartoli and Høgel). More technically, meanwhile – and especially when it is used in connection with history-writing – the word "document" today strongly evokes the positivist tradition of historiography and the scientific criticism of sources that went (goes) along with it. The word "document" evokes that normative historiographical practice, which aims to reconstitute, "on basis of what documents say . . . the past from which they emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them" – a practice in which "the document [is] always treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 6). Documents, therefore, are held to offer "factual or referential propositions" (LaCapra 17), from which the reality of the past can be reconstructed. The trouble with these modern senses of the word "document" is that there was no equivalent to them in the Age of the Angevins. Roger of Howden, for example, used the word "documentum" just once, and that was to describe a didactic maxim he had borrowed from Claudian (Howden, *Gesta* vol. 1, 199).[19] By contrast, the words that history-writers themselves used to describe their documents tended to privilege their form, rather than their historiographical function. So, when Howden refers to what we call documents, he refers variously to *assisae, calumniae, capitula, cartae, concordiae, consuetudines, conventiones, decimae, decreta, epistolae, libera, leges, litterae, mandata, opiniones, pactae, paces, praecepta, placitae, rescripta, scripta, sententiae* and *verba*. And none of these words evoke the documentary as a special ontological or referential domain.

So the medieval Latin word *documentum* did not mean the same thing as the modern English word "document." But history-writers' documentary lexicon nevertheless has a good deal to tell us about how these intertexts worked in the Middle Ages. In particular, the frequency with which Howden designates intertexts as *epistolae* in his chronicles (seventy-six per cent of the intertexts that he rubri-

19. Howden's monastic contemporary, Gervase of Canterbury (d. after 1210), also uses this didactic sense of the word *documentum* in his *Gesta regum*. Gervase mentions the "virorum fidelium documenta" ("teachings of trustworthy men") that can inform history-writers, alongside "scripta autentica," *i.e.* charters and privileges. (Gervase of Canterbury vol. 2, 4).

20. In the *Gesta*, Howden rubricates forty-two of the seventy-five texts that he quotes. Thirty of these forty-two texts carry the rubric "epistola," one has the rubric "litterae," and one is rubricated both as an "epistola" and as "litterae." Howden – like Ralph de Diceto and Gervase of Canterbury – called most of his intertexts *epistolae* because most of them indeed took the form of the letter. Letters – defined here simply as written texts addressed from one named individual or group to another – make up 59% of the intertexts in Howden's *Gesta*, a figure that rises to 69% for his *Chronica*, 73% for Gervase's *Chronica* and 93% for Diceto's *Ymagines*. (Charters and treaties, of course, are also forms of letter, although they are addressed to all those who might "see or hear" them "now or in the future," rather than to named individuals.)

21. See *e.g.* Holt, and Corner, "The Texts." John Gillingham has argued that the twentieth-century mining of Howden's chronicles, first for facts and then for documents, has left them "looking worthy but dull." (Gillingham, "Travels" 71).

cates in his *Gesta*) suggests that in order to understand the relationship between history-writing and its "documents", we need to understand the formal relationship between history-writing and epistolography.[20] Of course, the fact that English history-writers from this period reproduced more letters than any other form of text in their chronicles is in some ways not surprising: as Frank Barlow once pointed out, "it is notoriously difficult to classify medieval documents, because almost all are cast into the form of the letter, and classes shade into one another" (Barlow xliii; *cf.* Langeli 252). From the point of view of standard accounts of these chronicles, however, the epistolarity of these intertexts is very surprising. Because the chronicles have tended to be studied by those interested in administrative and constitutional history, the texts that have attracted the most scholarly attention are the legal codes that they include.[21] In terms of numbers if not constitutional significance, however, it is letters that really dominate these chronicles. This (hitherto unremarked) preponderance of letters suggests that the epistolary form's relationship to history-writing cries out to be understood more fully. And it is this relationship that I want to turn to now.

Letters, narrative and history-writing

One only has to read Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* or John of Salisbury's *Historia pontificalis* – the former is a history written as if it were a letter and the latter a letter written as if it were a history – to see how seamlessly letters and history-writing converged. At the root of this convergence lay a shared entanglement with narrative. History is a narrative discourse by definition – or, at least, "by definition, [it] cannot exist without narrativity" (Abbott 313). Narrative, meanwhile, was also hard-wired into letter-writing as a discipline. When twelfth-century students learned the art of composing letters (the *ars dictaminis*), for example, they learned that one of the principal parts of the letter was the *narratio*, where the sender told her or his recipient what had happened to prompt the letter's writing (Boncompagno da Signa chs 17–19; *Aurea Gemma* ch. 1.6). Nor was this narrativity of letters just a matter of theory. By Howden and Diceto's day, the narrativity of letters came to the fore as a new form of epistolary narrative – the newsletter – emerged, which would become fundamental to public, literate, political life in the later Middle Ages and on into modernity (Bazerman 23–24). Newsletters crisscrossed Europe in

huge numbers in the Age of the Angevins (Gillingham, "Royal Newsletters" 171–86). They announced victories on battlefields and they chronicled defeats, both at home and in the Holy Land. These newsletters were demonstrably epistolary: a named individual would address another and convey information to them in the form of a written narrative. Yet the actual contents of these letters were almost indistinguishable from historiography, and especially from the distinctive "fast historiography," as Lars Boje Mortensen has called it, that emerged during the Crusades (Mortensen 25–39). Chroniclers like Howden (who was a crusader himself) copied such newsletters into the working texts of their histories almost as soon as they received them, often simply absorbing their narratives into their own by removing the letters' addresses, greetings and farewells.[22]

I want to pause at this point to offer a reading of one of these newsletters, which Roger of Howden reproduced in both his chronicles. This letter shows particularly clearly how, on the one hand, the narrativity of letters made them indispensible for history-writers. At the same time, the letter also reveals how that epistolary narrativity makes it hard to distinguish such letters from history-writing itself. Hugh de Nonant (bishop of Coventry, d. 1198) wrote this letter in 1191, addressing it to all and sundry to tell them the news of the spectacular downfall of his hated enemy, William de Longchamp (bishop of Ely, papal legate, royal chancellor, and vice-regent of England in Richard's absence, d. 1197). Nonant had written the letter, he said, because "quae litterarum apicibus adnotantur, posteritati profecto signantur" ("the things that are noted down through the marks of letters are without doubt consigned to posterity") (Roger of Howden, *Gesta* vol. 2, 215). Through the written word, Nonant claims, the present could address the future and teach it about the past. "By these very letters,"[23] he continues, "Eliensis episcopi ad notitiam omnium litteris instantibus volumus in posterum consignari, ut in hoc exemplari semper inveniat et humilitas quod prosperet et superbis quod formidet" ("I want to bequeath to posterity the [tale of the] downfall of the bishop of Ely, so that in this example humility might everafter discover what succeeds, and pride discover what is fearsome") (215). Nonant then provides a long narrative recounting Longchamp's vices (including his stubborn Frenchness) and his humiliating flight from his trial in Canterbury. Longchamp had run away from his trial disguised as a woman, Nonant related, and had tried to swim to France. But he was washed up half-naked on Dover beach, Nonant salaciously went on, before a fisherman blew his cover, hav-

22. See *e.g.* Roger of Howden, *Gesta* vol. 1, 128–30, Roger of Howden, *Chronica* vol. 4, 58–59 and Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, 409–10. Of course, not all the letters in these chronicles contained narratives: some of them simply gave orders (*e.g.* the letter instructing Diceto and the chapter of St. Paul's to elect a new bishop; Ralph de Diceto vol. 2, 63), some of them were exhortations (*e.g.* the letter that Pope Lucius III sent to Henry II, exhorting him to provide for Margaret, his widowed daughter-in-law, Ralph de Diceto vol. 2, 30–31). But such letters are a small minority in Howden's and Diceto's works.

23 "Litteris instantibus" – *i.e.* "by these very graphemes" or "by this very letter:" the ambiguity here between technology and literary form is deliberate.

ing put his hands up his skirt "deputans scortum" ("thinking [he] was a prostitute") and realizing his mistake (219).

Nonant's letter was a very public form of gloating. But he set the letter up as a written *exemplum*, whose narrative about Longchamp would move its readers to embrace humility. It was a didactic *documentum* – it was intended to teach (*docere*) posterity about political hubris – long before Howden used it as a "historical document" to do the same. (As Roy K. Gibson and A. D. Morrison argued, premodern letters have a "natural inclination towards the delivery of instructions, [which,] combined with the relative simplicity of communication style, gives the letter form an astonishing didactic utility and range of application . . . in pursuing a didactic agenda, the letter genre becomes remarkably elastic" [ix–x].) In their didactic stance, therefore, newsletters like Nonant's were already very similar to history written in a demonstrative mode. They were very similar, that is, to much of the history written in the High Middle Ages.[24] In the letter's extended account of Longchamp's career and downfall, meanwhile, Nonant's letter also marks out its debts to the sort of rhetorical narrative on which historiography also depended. (In this case, it resembles nothing so much as a forensic *narratio*, which used evidence of a defendant's bad living to persuade a jury that they had done bad things.)[25] Finally, as a self-consciously written artifact – addressed to posterity and designed to function even though its author was absent – it was already inscribed before Howden transcribed it into his chronicle. It was already history-*writing* before Howden wrote it into his history.

The intertexts in Howden's and Diceto's chronicles are mostly letters like this, whose form and rhetoric signaled that they were addressed to a teachable posterity, and whose authors intended that they should be preserved. Like Hugh's letter, these texts were effectively already history-writing. They were autonomous units of historical narrative, whose authors used the written word to address their storied testimony to distant, future readers. The narrativity of letters, when allied with their writtenness, thus gave them a self-sufficiency that meant that they could wield a didactic, political, or historiographical force long after they had left the hands of their authors. This inscribed narrativity meant that history-writers hardly needed to *do* anything to letters if they wanted to use them in their histories. Because letters already offered self-standing units of narrative, history-writers could simply reuse them as narrative elements within their own stories. Sometimes history-writers signaled that

24. Although Howden says nothing about his purposes, Gervase of Canterbury explains how, in histories or annals "multa quaerenti sedulo bene vivendi repperiuntur exempla, quibus humana ignorantia de tenebris educitur, et in bono proficiat edocetur" ("the diligent seeker [can] discover many examples of how to live well, through which [examples] human ignorance is led out of darkness, and is instructed how it might advance in virtue.") (Gervase of Canterbury vol. 1, 87). Diceto, meanwhile, said that he used the words he did in his chronicles, he said, "ad victorias principum declarandas, ad pacem omnium jugiter recolendam, et semper provehendam in melius" ("in order to shine light on the victories of princes, in order to recall everyone to peace, and in order to improve everyone for the better") (Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, 267). For history-writing and demonstrative rhetoric more generally, see (Kempshall 138–71).

25. According to the rhetorical manuals, the question of "what sort of person" (*qualis est*) a defendant was – which embraced the defendants character (*animus, attributa personis*), their *habitus* and their emotional state (*affectio*) – was central to forensic rhetoric. See now Kempshall 175–77.

26. Howden, for example, sometimes presented the same letter differently in each of his two chronicles. In the account of the year 1188 in his *Gesta,* for example, Howden reproduces a newsletter about developments in the Holy Land as if it were a letter, introducing it with the words "nuncii Philippi regis Franciae … in hac forma scripserunt" (Roger of Howden *Gesta* vol. 2, 51). When he came to rewrite that entry in his *Chronica,* he presented the report in indirect discourse: "Nuncii regis Franciae … domum reversi narraverunt quod …" (Roger of Howden *Chronica* vol. 2, 355*).*

they were using extrinsic material by quoting letters complete with their protocols, and by rubricating them as *epistolae*. But sometimes they silently appropriated epistolary narratives, giving no sign that that is what they had done.[26] History-writers could lay letters down as if they were narrative building blocks, in other words, and combine them with narratives they had composed themselves. As a consequence, chroniclers could – and did – deploy letters and their own narratives in all sorts of different ways in their chronicles. To take Ralph de Diceto's epistolary intertexts as an example: sometimes he connects them to the narrative entries that precede and follow them, using parataxis to do so. (That is, he does not explicitly say how the narrative and the letters are related, but he arranges them in a way that implies that they are.) So during his account of the year 1188, for example, Diceto notes, in narrative form, that the Christian army had surrendered Jerusalem to Saladin in exchange for the captured Guy de Lusignan, and that Count Bohemond of Tripoli had died in captivity. Diceto then inserts a vituperative letter that Frederick II sent to Saladin, upbraiding him for profaning the Holy Land (Ralph de Diceto vol. 2, 56–57). Although Diceto doesn't say as much, Frederick's letter was a direct consequence of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, an event that stimulated all sorts of polemical writing. Diceto's contemporary readers doubtless made the connection between the two things, and understood Frederick's letter in the context of the surrender of Jerusalem. In other places though, Diceto's epistolary intertexts and their neighboring narrative entries have little to do with one another, and sometimes they have nothing at all. In his account of the year 1187, for example, Diceto records the birth of Count Arthur of Brittany in narrative form (vol. 2, 48), before inserting a letter from Urban III directing Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury to stop building his new collegiate church at Hackington (48–49). Here the letter and the narrative are not thematically connected, nor indeed is Diceto's subsequent entry, which records how Henry II and Philip Augustus made peace near Châteauroux in the same year (49). Aside from their shared interest in the shifting power relations of the Angevin *espace,* these three entries have nothing in common. They deal with different actors doing different things in different places. Finally, Diceto sometimes transcribes a bald series of letters, his own narrative fading away entirely. In some places these letters are closely connected with one another – the series of letters about the Norman lands of Diceto's friend Walter de Coutances is a good example (Ralph de Diceto vol. 2, 125–42). But in other places nothing at all

connects the letters that Diceto inserts: a letter relating how the As-
sassins murdered Count Conrad of Montferrat follows a letter from
Celestine III to the province of York announcing Hubert Walter's le-
gation; and it precedes a letter that Richard I had sent to the bishop
of London complaining that the monks of Durham had secretly
elected a new bishop (126–29).

Diceto, therefore, used these letters as self-standing units of his-
torical narrative. Sometimes he used them *alongside* his narrative;
sometimes he used them to *illustrate* his narrative. But often he used
them *instead* of his own narrative. The letters already told their own
stories, and he simply incorporated them into his codex. The impor-
tant historiographical consequence of Diceto's practice is that letters
had no epistemological priority over narrative entries in his chroni-
cle, and narrative entries had no priority over the letters. The letters,
that is, did not obediently serve up "evidence" for a narrative that
made use of it; they did not function as truth claims; epistolary and
narrative entries each carried equal historiographical weight. Dice-
to's summary of the chapters of his *Ymagines historiarum* (Ralph de
Diceto vol. 1, 267–86) illustrates what the equivalence in priority be-
tween narrative and letter looks like on the page. In Diceto's summa-
ry, letters, the dispatch of letters, and Diceto's own narrative entries
share equal emphasis. So, within the space of ten *capitula*, Diceto
summarizes one straightforwardly narrative entry ("Hubertus Can-
tuariensis archiepiscopus legatus creatus est " ("Hubert, archbishop
of Canterbury, was made legate"), one entry saying only that a king
had dispatched some letters ("Philippus rex Francorum tres litteras
scripsit archiepiscopo Rothomagensi," "Philip, king of the French,
wrote three letters to the archbishop of Rouen"), and one entry sum-
marizing the text of a letter – which Diceto presents *as if it were* a nar-
rative entry like the other two ("Ricardus rex Angliae episcopo Eb-
roicensi, 'Significamus vobis'," "Richard King of England, to the bish-
op of Evreux: 'We inform you'") (Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, 284). In Di-
ceto's world, therefore, the dispatch of letters – and letters themselves
– were as much historical events as they were evidence for them.
They belonged to the same order of significance as the narrative en-
tries that he had written himself. The *externality* of letters, meanwhile,
appears not to have played a particularly significant rhetorical role:
nowhere does Diceto claim that his chronicle is more trustworthy or
veri similis on the basis of the letters he included, even if that is what
modern historians think about it.[27]

27. See above, note 12.

Collecting letters, writing history

Letters told their own stories, then, which history-writers re-told in their turn by reproducing them in their chronicles. If this suggests that history-writing and letter-writing were closely related narrative discourses in this period, then contemporary practices of letter *collecting* drive home the closeness of that relationship. It is instructive to think a little about the connections between history-writing and letter-collecting in this period, not least because the age of Howden and Diceto – that "golden age of historiography in England" – was also a golden age of the letter collection. As Howden and Diceto began writing their chronicles, Gilbert Foliot, Arnulf of Lisieux and Peter of Blois – three of the period's great controversialists – were assembling their letters in order to publish them. (Diceto knew all these men, and Howden probably did too.)[28] More significantly perhaps, a new form of epistolary collection also became widespread in this period, which combined letters with narrative and resembled the cartulary-chronicles that had emerged earlier in the Middle Ages.[29] In their use of chronological narrative, the new letter collections were more overtly historiographical than the letter collections of stylists like Peter of Blois. While the latter collections had presented "a controlled and selective image of the author" (Haseldine 336) – they celebrated their authors' personality and their prose style – they did not *tell a story* about them (they were not conceived of "an archival witness to the events of the author's life," says Julian Haseldine [336]). But once Alan of Tewkesbury had redacted Becket's letters and bound them up with John of Salisbury's *Life and Passion of St. Thomas*, he demonstrated what a powerful combination letters and historical narrative could be.[30] Gilbert of Sempringham's followers took Alan's lead and wrote a narrative *vita* of their patron and circulated it alongside his collected letters in order to argue for his canonization.[31] The compiler of Gilbert's letters claimed that together the letters and narrative proved Gilbert's sanctity and the magnificence of his works (*Book of St. Gilbert* 198–9). Gerald of Wales, meanwhile, didn't – quite – claim that he was a saint, but he too demonstrated the polemical potential of the technique by weaving together letters and narrative to recount his disputed election to St. David's (he called it the *Liber de invectionibus*) (Giraldus Cambrensis vol. 3, 3-100).

Despite the fact that the bulk of these epistolary collections were made up of letters rather than passages of narrative, many of their

28. Diceto served Foliot while the latter was bishop of London, and he had studied with Arnulf of Lisieux in Paris (Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, xxxi–ii). All three men were prominent figures at Henry II's court, "in the shadow" of which Howden wrote (Vincent 28).

29. Cartulary-chronicles also combined historical narrative and charters, and they have long been noted both for their complicated relationship with history-writing and for their overtly ideological purposes (typically, they were put together by monasteries in response to threats to their property and privileges). The close relationship between charters, cartularies, and history-writing is now well established. According to Marjorie Chibnall, for example, "History and charters [were] at times composed by the same men and in much the same language" (Chibnall 1). More recently, Monika Otter has noted that "many monastic chronicles are really cartularies, collections of local documents combined with portions of narrative history" (Otter 3); Leah Shopkow, meanwhile, has argued that there is no rhetorical "dividing line between cartularies and serial biographies" such as the *Liber Pontificalis* (Shopkow 23). Karine Ugé also argues this point strongly: "it is now well acknowledged", she says "that the boundaries between different narrative genres interpenetrate one another . . . The historical, commemorative and liturgical nature of charters, cartularies and gesta have long been recognized . . . [and] because of the elasticity of different genres, almost any kind of text could fulfill almost any need." (Ugé 13). Other important studies of the intersection between history-writing and cartularies include Geary esp. 13–26; Iogna-Prat 27–44; Foulds esp. 11–15; and Declercq 147.

30. Alan makes a nice distinction between the letters, which enabled readers to trace the "iter martyris" (the martyr's path), and John of Salisbury's narrative of Becket's life, which accompanied them in Alan's collection, and which "cleared that path" for its readers. "Joannis itaque opus primo perlegatur, per quod iter aperietur ad caetera quae sequuntur"

("John's work should be read first, through which a path will be cleared for the other things that follow") (Tewkesbury 301).

31. For the growth in importance of such compilations of written evidence in the canonization process in this period, see Vauchez 38–39.

compilers nevertheless claimed that they were engaged in a specifically historiographical task when they were gathering the letters together. They did this by foregrounding the distinctive combination of writtenness and narrativity that letters and history-writing shared. On the one hand, the collectors stressed that they had arranged the letters chronologically. This was partly a rhetorical move, designed underscore the authority and truthfulness of their collections. As the compiler(s) of the so-called *Book of St. Gilbert* put it, "exemplaria epistolarum . . . quibus beati G(ileberti) sanctitas et magnificentia operum eius merito commendata est et probata, *in unam seriem congessimus*" ("we have *collected together into one sequence* copies of letters . . . by which the sanctity of blessed Gilbert, and the greatness of his works, are rightfully commended and proved") (*Book of St. Gilbert*, 198–99, my emphasis). The implication seems to be that the singularity and seriality of the collection adds to the authority of the *exemplaria* themselves. After all, as high-medieval rhetoricians had insisted, ordering things accurately was one of the ways one could be sure one was writing history rather than writing fiction,[32] telling the truth rather than telling lies.[33] (Self-consciously following what the rhetoricians called the *ordo naturalis* was a good way of rejecting the *ordo artificialis* favored by "liars" like Virgil, together with the fiction that that *ordo* implied).[34] The compilers may also have been inspired to stress the chronological order of their collections – and the role of historical narrative in holding them together – by Eusebius, whose *Ecclesiastical History* was one of *the* canonical works of Christian history-writing in this period. As Rufinus puts it in his Latin translation of the *History*, Eusebius had "historica narratione in unum corpus redigere" ("united into one body through historical narrative") what his predecessors had written in dispersed places (Rufinus vol. 1, 9).[35] The monk who compiled the *Epistolae Cantuarienses* in the late twelfth century uses Eusebius's words to state that he too had arranged the letters "in ordinem et unum corpus" ("into order, and into one body") (Stubbs 1). The compiler of the *Book of St. Gilbert*, likewise, emphasizes that he had carefully arranged Gilbert's letters into a single chronological sequence (*series*) (*Book of St. Gilbert* 198–99). Becket's biographer Herbert of Bosham, meanwhile, praised Alan of Tewkesbury's "diligence" in arranging Becket's letters "secundum ordinem historiae" ("according to the order of history") (Bosham 396).

Whether they were following the rhetorical textbooks that stressed the *ordo naturalis*, or simply following the example of Eusebius, when letter collectors in this period stressed the chronological

32. As D. H. Green explains, "although there is no hard and fast distinction, [the *ordo naturalis*] is commonly regarded as the hallmark of the historian, and the [*ordo artificialis*] as the characteristic of fictional writing" (Green, *Beginnings* 96).

33. Among contemporary history-writers, Gervase of Canterbury and William of Tyre made this point explicitly. Gervase worried about chroniclers who calculated their chronology incorrectly; such chroniclers had introduced "a great confusion of lies into the Church of God" (Gervase vol. 1, 88). William of Tyre claimed his history of the Holy Land was true because he had "rerum autem incontaminatam prosequi gestarum seriem" ("followed the uncorrupted order of events") (William of Tyre prol. 15).

34. Bernard Silvestris had called Virgil the "father of lies" for disregarding chronology in the *Aeneid* (Minnis and Scott 45). See also Conrad of Hirsau's preference for Dares' strictly chronological account of the fall of Troy over Virgil's (151), and the classical examples compiled in (Lausberg par. 317, and pars. 443–52).

35. For the medieval reception of Eusebius/Rufinus's notion of historiographical collecting, see Guenée 58–63.

ordering of their collections they also emphasized the close relationship between their texts and history-writing. And by transcribing a series of lettered stories, by uniting them "into one body through historical narrative," letter-collectors addressed themselves to posterity and struck a didactic pose, just like the history-writers who used letters as *documenta*. The compiler of the *Epistolae Cantuarienses*, for example – a collection of the privileges of Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury – opens his collection by praising the prudence of those who had committed the "rerum gestarum notitia" to writing. That was a distinctly historiographical turn of phrase, and the compiler aligns himself with those prudent writers of history (or *notitia rerum gestarum*) by using it. When he goes on to suggest that, in compiling letters about the disputes between Christ Church and the archbishops of Canterbury, he too was bequeathing "ea quae gesta sunt" ("those things that have been done") to posterity, he underscores the closeness of that alignment (*Epistolae Cantuarienses* vol. 1, 1). Meanwhile, when Gerald of Wales justified recording "ea quibus in curia Giraldus . . . laudem obtinuit" ("the things by which he won praise at the curia,") because "egregie dicta vel acta . . . ad posteritatis tam instructionem quam imitationem literis annotari solent et perpetuari" ("things said or done excellently . . . are accustomed to be noted down and perpetuated in writing") (Cambrensis vol. 3, 11), he was using a phrase that almost any high-medieval history-writer with a modicum of rhetorical education could have written.

Emplotment and epistolary fiction

In their self-conscious and didactic writtenness, therefore, and in their narrativity, some letter collections in the Age of the Angevins resembled the period's history writing to a strong degree. It seems possible that those who made chronological collections of letters in this period saw themselves as history-writers before they saw themselves as anything else. But if some of this period's letter collections look and feel like history-writing, that resemblance invites us to ask important questions about the relationship between epistolarity and narrativity across the two genres. More specifically, it invites us to think about the relationship between letters, historical narrative and their claims to represent the reality of the past. Because, for all that high-medieval letter collectors stressed the historicity of their accounts – and for all that the letters they collected had (usually) once

been exchanged between real historical agents – modern narratology would point towards the fictiveness of the narrative framework that letter-collectors constructed when they compiled and published those letters. As Alun Munslow has argued, "history is made to cohere – is 'put together' – within an acknowledgement that it is the history (aka the historian) not the past that creates the structure and the shape and form of a history" (Munslow 8). While being careful to avoid conflating historical narrative with fiction, Munslow argues that "every history is a narrative discourse that is the construction of the historian." Historical narrative, therefore, is a "fictive construction:" "it derives directly from the engagement of the historian as an author-storyteller who initiates and carries through the process of 'envisioning' or authorially focusing on the past as history" (8). The same thing, surely, goes for historiographical letter-collectors who used letters to "put together" stories about the past – and who use historical narrative to make those letters "cohere." Using Hayden White's terminology, one could argue that high-medieval letter-collectors 'emplotted' the letters that they put together. The compilers, that is, selected and arranged the letters in such a way to tell a story whose plot they had already prefigured. (White especially emphasizes the importance of emplotment in retrospective accounts of individuals' lives – accounts, that is, like the epistolary accounts of the lives of Becket and Gilbert of Sempringham. "The meaning of real human lives," White goes so far as to argue, "is the meaning of the plots, quasiplots, paraplots, or failed plots by which the events that those lives comprise are endowed with the aspect of stories having a discernible beginning, middle, and end" [White, "Literary Artifact" 83]).[36]

Even if Hayden White's perspectives are not universally accepted by medievalists, many medievalists would agree that letter-collectors actively intervened to shape the documentary record – that they offered "a controlled and selective image" of their subjects (Haseldine 336). Yet if we accept that the letters in letter collections were heavily emplotted by their compilers as they offered that image, this raises the question of whether the same thing can be said of the letters that history-writers like Howden and Diceto reproduced in their histories. At first glance, the answer to this question seems to be negative. Because, despite the similarities of their narrative forms – and despite their common claim to represent the past – there is a crucial difference between historiographical letter-collections and history-writing like Howden's and Diceto's. While letter-collectors might

36. Mary Beard, quite independently of Hayden White, gives a good example of how letter collections can be given the form of a story by being given the sense of an ending: "When, in a parody of editorial dispassion, the editors of Virginia Woolf's letters decided to count her suicide note to Leonard as a 'letter' (number 3710, the last in the book), they made their collection at a stroke quite different from the one that would have ended at number 3709." For Beard, Woolf's editors had opted "for finality and narrative closure – rather than the day-to-day continuity of a writing life" (Beard 120–21).

well have emplotted letters to tell the story of a life now lived (or, in Gerald's case, a career now over), chronicles did not always narrate such discrete and bounded stories.[37] Howden's and Diceto's chronicles had no end under whose sign their epistolary middles could be organized: they simply stop, presumably when their authors died or became too frail to continue writing. Indeed, viewed from Hayden White's perspective, Howden and Diceto were not strictly speaking writing histories at all. Although they might have arranged "elements in the historical field" into the "temporal order of their occurrence," they did not always then organize that "chronicle" into a "story" "by the further arrangement of the events into the . . . process of happening, which is thought to possess a discernible beginning, middle, and end" (White, *Metahistory* 5).[38] In truly historical accounts of the past, White argues, "events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence, but *narrated* as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, that they do not possess as mere sequence" (White, *Content of the Form* 5, my emphasis).[39] On White's reading, chroniclers like Howden simply recorded events and documents in the order in which they originally occurred "under the assumption that the ordering of the events in their temporal sequence itself provided a kind of explanation of why they occurred when and where they did" (White, "Literary Artifact" 93).

But this does not therefore mean that incorporating self-standing epistolary narratives into a broader chronological and historiographical arrangement was an entirely artless business.

As White concedes elsewhere in his work, there is "nothing *natural* about chronologically ordered registrations of events" (White, *Content of the Form* 176, my emphasis). Nor is there anything natural about chronologically ordered "registrations" of letters. For one thing, the very fact that correct chronology – the rhetoricians' *ordo naturalis* – was taken in the High Middle Ages to be a marker of truthfulness means that a chronicle's chronology was itself a scale charged with epistemological value.[40] Moreover, even White accepts that so-called "naïve" chroniclers organized events and letters into something *like* a story, albeit one lacking "the characteristics that we normally attribute to a story: no central subject, no well-marked beginning, middle, and end" (6). As White himself argues in his powerful reading of the *Annals of St. Gall* – a paradigmatic example of annalistic history-writing, in which very little is recorded except the passing of the years – "there must be a story [here], since there is

37. Monastic chronicles that recounted on the history of a particular house from its foundation were more discrete that Howden and Diceto's chronicles, though they were more expansive than saints' lives.

38. Perhaps unwittingly, White here echoes medieval distinctions between histories ("historiae") and chronicles, genres that had been precisely defined by authorities like Isidore of Seville and Cassiodorus. According to Gervase of Canterbury, for example, those who write histories should "strive for the truth, and to soothe [their] hearers or readers with sweet and elegant speech; and to teach truly the actions, manners, and life of him whom he describes . . . The chronicler, on the other hand, calculates the years of the Lord's incarnation and the months and days of the years, and briefly explains the deeds of kings and princes that took place in them" ("proprium est historici veritati intendere, audientes vel legentes dulci sermoni et eleganti demulcere, actus, mores vitamque ipsius quam describit veraciter edocere . . . Cronicus autem annos incarnationis Domini annorumque menses computat et kalendas, actus etiam regum et principum quae in ipsis eveniunt breviter edocet") (87). See now Guenée 1006–07.

39. Paul Ricoeur makes a similar, if more epistemologically inflected, point: "A story," says Ricoeur, "is made out of events to the extent that plot makes events into a story. The plot, therefore, places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity: to be historical, an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot" (Ricoeur, "Narrative Time" 171).

40. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, with whose work White engages but disagrees, the variousness – and value-laden nature – of the chronolo-

gies that history-writers have always used is evidence that myth is at work when chroniclers are selecting events to arrange in chronological order. See now (Lévi-Strauss, 256–69).

41. According to Munslow, "individual facts do not in and of themselves create a meaning or explanation except in the sense of statement of justified belief. What matters in a historical explanation is the ways the statements of justified belief are made to hang together to represent a causal relationship. And the essence of historying is the establishment and description of this causal relationship, that is, which historians of a particular kind define as the most likely story to be told" (Munslow 44).

surely a plot – if by plot we mean a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole" (9).[41] The explicit chronological ordering of the *Annals*, manifested in "the list of dates of the years … confers coherence and fullness on the events . . . the list of dates can be seen as the signified of which the events given in the right-hand column are the signifiers. The meaning of the events is their registration in this kind of list" (9).

The possibility that even chronicles had plots is a particularly important concession when it comes to understanding the relationship between letters and narratives in high-medieval chronicles. Because if "the meaning of the events is their registration" – and if the fact of registration "confers coherence and fullness" on events – then that is as true for the letters that chroniclers reproduced as it was of the narrative entries that they had composed themselves. (It is useful here to recall that the roots of the word "registration" lie in *res gestae*.) To misuse White's formulation, the meaning of *letters* is their registration in "this kind of list." As we have already seen in practice, the chronological registration of letters in chronicles conferred on them a status co-equal to that of historical events – it *made* them historical events by elevating them into the order of historiography, by indexing them against the same set of chronological diacritics that gave historical events their meaning. When chroniclers incorporated letters into their chronological rendering of the past, therefore, they organized those letters into some kind of meaningful plot, even if they did not necessarily marshal them into the heavily emplotted narrative forms that compilers used when they fashioned the lives of others out of letters. And a meaningful plot is a fictive structure, a "fabricated 'historical form' . . . as much intuited by the historian as it is by practitioners in art and literature" (Munslow 99).

42. Historical narratives, White argues, "succeed in endowing sets of past events with meanings . . . by exploiting the metaphorical similarities between sets of real events and the conventional structures of our fictions" (White, "Literary Artifact" 91). And, White argues, while "historians may not like to think of their works as translations of fact into fictions," White argues, "this is one of the effects of their works" (92).

To argue that history-writers incorporated letters into a fictive (and fabricated) structure is not necessarily to agree with White's conclusion that such emplotment is necessarily a "fiction-making operation" (White, "Literary Artifact" 85).[42] As Munslow argues, history-writers "reconstruct or construct the past . . . differently to those authors who produce a fictional narrative-discourse-story. Plainly and conventionally the historian creates a narrative account of events that is convincing because it is consistent with their . . . sources, which may, of course, be structures of data. Historians conventionally are held not to be free to create, invent or design their own stories" (Munslow 118). Yet even if history-writing or emplotted letters

were not fiction – and they were demonstrably not fiction in the Age of the Angevins – this does not mean their shared investment in narrative could not sometimes allow history-writers to strategically blur the lines between those categories. So at this point I want to pause to look more closely at a history that does just that. Because, if nothing else, the games that that text plays with letters casts light on epistolary histories that do not seem interested in playing games at all.

The text in question – Stephen of Rouen's *Draco Normannicus* – stands out for the canny way it uses epistolary narrative to play fiction and history off against one another. Its high metahistorical awareness thus allows us to take a bearing on the relationship between history-writing, letters, and the narrativity that they shared with fictional discourse. And it allows us to chart the implications of the high-medieval *awareness* of that relationship. The *Draco Normannicus* is a narrative poem about Henry II and his ancestors that Stephen wrote at the monastery of Le Bec in the late 1160s (which was also the period when Howden and Diceto began writing their chronicles). The *Draco* is clearly not a chronicle – it is famously chronologically disordered (Kuhl 421–38), and Stephen wrote it in elegiac couplets (Harris 114). But Stephen does use fairly standard historiographical language to claim that he is writing a work of history: he says he will "describere . . . actus" ("record the acts") of Henry II (book 1, line 59), after "scribere . . . gesta" ("writing the deeds") of the Danes in Normandy (1.61) and "narrating" (*narrare*) the battles of William the Conqueror (1.75).[43] Stephen, moreover, cites just the kind of letter that the chroniclers of his era would cite. Like, say, Roger of Howden, Stephen makes close reference to the written discourse of high diplomacy, referring to a letter that Henry the Lion (duke of Saxony, d. 1195) conveyed from his uncle, Frederick Barbarossa, to Henry II (3.234–294). And he directly quotes the letters that Pope Alexander III and the anti-Pope Victor VI sent to one another, each accusing the other of being a schismatic (3.477–520 and 3.521–76).[44] The way Stephen uses these papal letters promises to be particularly revealing, not least because papal letters make up the single biggest group of letters in Howden and Diceto's chronicles (Bainton appendix A). But these letters are also revealing because they demonstrate how history-writers could exploit the fictive nature of epistolary narrative even as they were calling on extrinsic testimony to assert the historicity of their narratives.

Although the rest of this essay could be devoted to unpicking Stephen's papal politics, suffice it to say that he doesn't seem too both-

43. Stephen also invokes Virgil by saying that he will "sing" of Rollo's battles (book 1, line 62) and of the Norman dukes' deeds (1.79).

44. Scholarship on the *Draco* has almost entirely overlooked these letters – and what they reveal about history-writing – not least because it has been so drawn to the exchange of letters between Henry II and King Arthur that Stephen inserts later in the *Draco* (for which see below). For a pathbreaking recent exception, see Kuhl 435–36.

45. Stephen's taste for dialogue is also evident in the "altercatio" between a *Francus* and *Normannus* that he inserts in book two of the *Draco* (lines 831–940), and presumably has something to do with his rhetorical interests ("[Stephen's] chief intellectual interest was in rhetoric . . . the wealth of the Bec library in rhetoricians proves [that] rhetoric . . .[was] one of the chief interests there" (Tatlock 1)). Stephen wrote both a prose and verse introduction to Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, and refers to Quintilian and Cicero many times in his work. For the introductions, see Omont 173–80 and 96. For the connections between (epistolary) dialogue, debate and reported speech in the *Draco*, see Kuhl 431–37.

46. For a nuanced exposition of showing, telling and the relationship of the two to fictionality, see Booth 3–20.

47. "Id est argenti, id est auri," notes the Draco's annotator. (Stephen of Rouen 727 n.2).

ered about which claimant had right on his side. For Stephen, the schism at Rome mainly revealed the Roman propensity for strife (3.394), which had begun (he said) when Romulus murdered Remus, and which had been stoked by Roman avarice ever since (3.459–60). Stephen uses Alexander's and Victor's letters to reveal their authors' politically divisive (and typically Roman) greed. The *Draco* verges towards satire at this point, and it obtains its satirical coloring mainly from the way Stephen arranges the popes' letters in his text. Stephen presents the letters as if they were in adversarial dialogue with one another.[45] Each pope reproaches the other in similar – and similarly divisive – words. Stephen thus opens up an ironical distance between his own voice as a narrator and the voices of the two papal adversaries. This allows those voices to compete with one another, and to tell very different stories about the schism. So Stephen uses the letters to *show* his audience how the ecclesiastical hierarchy squabbled, rather than *telling* them about it, to use the proverbial terminology of creative writing courses.[46]

Stephen's point here is not literary but political. By introducing stories about the schism that compete with the story he was telling about it himself, Stephen raises the possibility that at least one of their narrators might be unreliable – a possibility he raises to the point of certainty in Alexander's case. In particular, Stephen seems to want to question the loud claims that Alexander III had made about his own poverty. In Alexander's letter to Victor, Alexander had insisted that "aurum non cupio, contentus vestibus, esu" ("I don't seek gold, I'm content with my clothes, I'm well-fed") (3.561). Yet immediately *before* reproducing Alexander's letter, Stephen himself had told his readers that Alexander he had rushed to Rome searching madly for the "relics of Rufinus and Albinus" as soon as he had heard about Victor's election. (Those "relics" are "shopworn equivalents for cash discreditably given," [Noonan 200] –[47] "the stock-in-trade of [medieval] satirists" [Barraclough 301, qtd. in Noonan 200].) Alexander says he is poor; Stephen insinuates that he is avaricious, if not a simonist. Who is Stephen's audience to believe?

Stephen uses his own narrative about Alexander's money-collecting in Rome to put Alexander's honesty in doubt. Yet his epistolary satire runs deeper even than this: Stephen opens Alexander's letter to an ironical reading by allowing his reader to know more than Alexander does. As Stephen presents it, Alexander was unaware that anyone else knew about his trip to Rome, still less that they are muttering about it behind his back. Alexander accentuates his poverty in

his own letter to promote his own virtues. Yet because Stephen had already told his readers about Alexander's avarice, those readers know about his simonaical avarice all too well. So Stephen's readers *know* more than Alexander – and they know that they know more – even if Alexander doesn't know that they do.[48]

It is unclear whether Stephen was versifying genuine correspondence between Alexander and Victor here, or whether he made it up.[49] What is more significant, however, is that whilst Stephen was using an apparently historiographical and forensic technique – quoting the text of letters, invoking "extrinsic testimony" – that technique nevertheless uses structures also found in ancient (and modern) epistolary fiction. As Janet Altman explains, "the letter novelist (A) must make his letter writer (B) speak to an addressee (C) in order to communicate with a reader (D) who overhears" (Altman 210). Stephen (A) makes Alexander (B) speak to Victor (C), and we, the readers (D), "overhear." Of course, using a technique also found in epistolary fiction does not make epistolary history-writing fictional. But understanding that technique's role in epistolary fiction nevertheless reveals something of how its rhetoric works in epistolary historiography. By allowing his readers to read over Alexander's shoulder, Stephen allows them (us) to draw conclusions about Alexander on the basis of the mismatch between what we know about him from Stephen's narrative and what Alexander himself says to Victor. By protesting too much about his poverty, Alexander condemns himself in his own words.

Stephen also uses other aspects of documentary rhetoric to blur the distinctions between the internal and external readers of these letters, thereby enhancing the satire he is setting up. For, as well as reproducing the content of the papal letters, Stephen surrounds them with a narrative account of Alexander and Victor reading them. He describes the way the popes baulk at one another's words, showing their adversaries' letters to their own friends and advisors in disgust. Reading Victor's letter, Stephen says, Alexander "fertur in iram;/ ostentat sociis, mandat et ista simul" ("becomes angry: he shows it to his intimates, while composing the following [letter] for [Victor]") (Stephen of Rouen 3.521–22). When Victor received those angry words from Alexander in his turn, Stephen says, he showed Alexander's letter to *his* allies ("Victor Alexandri dum verba tumentia legit/ Legistris sociis intimat illa suis" 'While Victor reads Alexander's bloated words, he reveals them to his lawyer-friends' [3.577–78].) All the while, of course, Stephen is showing those same letters

48. For the irony generated by the romance narrator who knows more than his characters, see Green, *Irony* 233.

49. Neither letter made it into Jaffé-Lowenfeld's *Regesta pontificum Romanorum*, but it is unclear whether this is because the editors thought the letters to be spurious, or whether they were unaware of their existence.

to us, his readers. By letting us *see* the letters' *verba tumentia*, he invites us to react to the adversaries' reactions to one another. We might collude with them, or we might reject them.

This interplay between internal and external readers, which Stephen achieved by narrativizing Alexander's and Victor's respective acts of reading, is typical of epistolary fiction. As Patricia Rosenmeyer notes, in ancient Greek epistolary fiction, readers are always "dealing with two sets of readers: the actual addressee . . . and the wider public, secondary readers . . . who may expect and achieve something entirely different from their reading experience" (Rosenmeyer 3). So while Alexander might have been angered when he read Victor's letter (as Stephen says he was), Stephen's own readers might be sympathetic towards it or perhaps just amused. As Altman suggests, "the epistolary novel's tendency to narrativize reading, integrating the act of reading into the fiction at all levels . . . constitutes an internalizing action that blurs the very distinctions that we make between the internal and external reader" (112). This blurring between internal and external readers seems precisely the effect Stephen sets out to achieve in his accounts of the letters' performance.[50]

A further exchange of letters that Stephen reproduces in the *Draco* suggests Stephen created this blurring effect quite deliberately. The letters in question purport to have been exchanged between Henry II and King Arthur, the latter "fatorum lege perennis" ("ever-living by law of the fates") reigning over the Antipodes and apparently given to intervening in twelfth-century geo-politics (Stephen of Rouen 2.969).[51] According to Stephen, Arthur wrote to Henry threatening to attack him unless he withdraw his troops from Brittany, which he had invaded in 1167. Stephen deliberately puts fiction and history into play here. In "Arthur"'s letter, Arthur supports the Bretons' resistance to Henry by quoting (and versifying) chunks of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum britanniae* (*HRB*) that (he claimed) proved the Bretons to be the rightful rulers of Brittany. The *HRB*, of course, claimed to be a true history of Britons extending from their origins in Troy, but its self-conscious metahistorical games means that it has always been surrounded by the whiff of fictionality.[52] Stephen joins in Geoffrey's games firstly by citing the *HRB* as if it were a true history, and then by versifying the text of a letter that Geoffrey has Arthur send to the Roman emperor to defy him in the *HRB* itself. So a document versified in a history – Arthur's letter to Henry in the *Draco* – refers to a "history" – the *HRB* – that refers to a letter. Unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth, Stephen does not seem to be playing fiction

50. This is not to say that such public readings did not actually happen in the Middle Ages: as I have argued elsewhere, such public readings were precisely what made letters such powerful political tools (Bainton, "Literate Sociability").

51. These letters have mainly attracted scholarly attention because of their contribution to Arthurian literature, and because of the political implications of Stephen's deployment of Arthur: see *e.g.* Tatlock; Aurell, "Henry II and Arthurian Legend" 385–86. Their rhetorical and/or historiographical implications have never been considered at any length, although Aurell notes that the "intellectual renaissance of the time encouraged the reading of the letters of Cicero, and also the letters of Alexander to Darius, which is explicitly mentioned in an annotated passage of Stephen of Rouen, who could have read them in the Latin translation by Leo the Archpriest which his abbey of Bec had." Aurell then accuses Stephen of "indulging in a stylistic exercise" (Aurell, *Plantagenet Empire* 156).

52. For a powerful account of the *HRB*'s engagement with fictionality, see Green, *Beginnings* 168–75.

and history off against each other for their own sake here. Rather, he is using the intersection between history, letters and fiction to make a subtle political point, in this case about Henry II's claims to Brittany. As he did with the papal letters, Stephen makes his point by narrativizing the moment that Henry received Arthur's letter. Henry, Stephen says, "epistolam Arturi coram proceribus suis in silva Britonum legi fecerit" ("had Arthur's letter read out before his barons in the forest of the Britons") (Stephen of Rouen 705). And then, "unperturbed" (*nil pavefactus*) by Arthur's threats, Henry composed his reply to Arthur, "subridiens sociis" ("smiling at his friends") while he did so (Stephen of Rouen 2.1218). Stephen himself makes no comment on the authenticity of "Arthur's" letter. Nor does he discuss the status of the Arthurian "history" that Arthur invokes in the Bretons' support. But by having Henry laugh in the face of Arthur's bellicose letter – "subridens sociis" – Stephen dismisses the entire Breton storyworld in two words. Stephen, therefore, uses Henry's reaction to Arthur's letter to distance himself from its content, to signal that he was not himself taking it seriously. This was not simply a way of warning his readers that the letter was not a genuine truth claim. It was also a way of impugning the whole Arthurian tradition along with its credulous Breton adherents, of a piece with Stephen's call for Henry to adopt a more muscular approach towards his neighbors in France.[53] By narrativizing the reading of letters, therefore, and by allowing his readers to read over his characters' shoulders, Stephen produces layer on layer of distance between the letters and his readers. While doing so, he creates just the ambiguities that one finds in epistolary novels, where the "readings … and misreadings" of characters within the work "must enter into our [own] experience of reading" (Altman 112).

Stephen thus played on the techniques of "documentary" historiography in a way that resembles some kind of epistolary fiction. He did so, it seems, in the name of satire, in order to entertain (*delectare*) his audience and in doing so teach them (*docere*) serious truths about the high politics of the day. His point here was thus simultaneously literary *and* political. Stephen used Arthur's letter, on the one hand, to signal the complicated relationship between letters and fiction. In particular, Stephen seems to use the figure of the absent Arthur in order to thematize the absence that all letters presuppose (according to Cicero and to high-medieval epistolographists, letters had been invented precisely to communicate with those who were not present [Cicero, *Ad fam.* 2.4.1]).[54] On the other hand, Stephen uses that epis-

53. For the politics of the *Draco*, see Harris 112–24.

54. According to Isidore of Seville, it was "appropriate" that the Greeks had called letters "epistolae," because *stola* are "things sent away" (Isidore of Seville 6.8.13, translation modified). Joining the dots between Isidore's position and Cicero's, perhaps, the twelfth-century master of the *ars dictaminis* Buoncompagno da Signa explained that "epistola est cirografus absenti persone destinatus," "a letter is a *cirografus* addressed to an absent person" (Buoncompagno 8.1).

tolary absence in order to emphasize the fictionality of Arthur, or at least his ambiguous historicity (he was living, as he does in "another world," as William of Newburgh might have put it). As a number of critics have implied, letters are fertile material with which to problematize the unity and empirical reality of authors like Stephen's "Arthur." In particular, letters exhibit that "plurality of egos" that Foucault identified specifically with the "author function" (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 129). The "I" in whose voice a letter is written, that is, does not necessarily refer to a single, real, speaking subject. Rather, it refers to the fictive construct that the pioneering theorist of fiction, Wayne C. Booth, christened the "implied author," which embraces the "intricate relationship of the so-called author with his various official versions of himself" (Booth 71). Tellingly, Booth illustrated this "implied author" by invoking the practice of letter-writing. "Just as one's personal letters imply different versions of one-self,"[55] Booth suggested, "so the writer [of fiction] sets himself out with a different air depending on the needs of particular works" (71). Of course, this split between the real and implied author was never more evident than in the Middle Ages, when letters were almost always scribed, and often composed, by someone other than the person in whose name they were sent. If the fictiveness of the epistolary "I" brings letter-writing within the orbit of fictionality from one direction, the fictiveness of the "you" to whom all letters are addressed holds it there from the other. Walter J. Ong insisted on the rule that "the writer's audience is always a fiction," and, like Booth, he used letters to prove it. "Although letters don't immediately seem to fall under this rule," Ong said, "by writing a letter you are somehow pretending the reader is present while you are writing, [so] you cannot address him as you do in oral speech. You must fictionalize him, make him into a special construct" (Ong 19).[56] Small wonder, then, that throughout history those who have sought to upset received typologies of written discourse have found the form of the letter an ideal place to go and make trouble. From Horace's *epistulae* (are they letters or satires?)[57] and Ovid's *Heroides* and *Tristia* (which contain the *real* letters?), right up to Jacques Lacan's seminar on Poe's *Purloined Letter* and Jacques Derrida's *The Post Card,* poets and critics have used letters to make difficult claims about the relationship between literature on the one hand and *littera* on the other – that is, between a form of written, verbal, art and the graphic marks on which all writing depends.

55. Patricia Rosenmeyer has pointed out, "*whenever* one writes a letter, one automatically constructs a self, an occasion, a version of the truth," just as one does in lyric poetry (which "creates a different ego upon each occasion of reperformance") (Rosenmeyer 5, my emphasis).

56. Jacques Derrida wonders whether the "addressee" of his *Envois* should take the direct or indirect object: "Encore en train –– je t'écris entre Oxford et Londres, près de Reading. En train de t'écrire (toi? à toi?)" (38).

57. For Horace's epistolary problematization of poetry, see De Pretis esp. 107.

Stephen of Rouen would feel at home with the trouble-makers; he uses the epistolary form here to make trouble, of both a political and historiographical sort. He is, after all, engaged in some kind of metahistorical game in the *Draco*, which he clearly signals by his decision to write his history in epic Latin verse. (And while there were plenty of Norman precedents for writing history in Latin verse, notably Guy of Amiens's *Carmen de Hastingae proelio*, and Dudo of Saint-Quentin's prosimetric *Historia normannorum*, none of them is versified written correspondence. If it was one thing to compose letters in verse, as Baudri de Bourgeuil had done, it was quite another to render prose correspondence into verse, which necessarily involved changing its word-order and vocabulary and could therefore never claim to be representing an original word-for-word reproduction).

The question that Stephen's practice raises is whether one finds similar games, similar strategies, in the work of prose chroniclers like Howden and Diceto – and what the implications of Stephen's practices are for our reading of that work. It is certainly the case that neither Howden nor Diceto shrink from reproducing letters sent by figures of dubious historicity – the "old man in the mountain," for example (Ralph de Diceto vol. 2, 77), or Prester John (Roger of Howden, *Gesta* vol. 1, 210–12), or even Jesus Christ (of course, Christ was not of dubious historicity in this period, but presumably not everyone believed that he wrote letters about the perils of holding markets on Sundays, the likes of which Howden reproduced in his *Chronica* [vol. 4, 167]). It is also true that both Howden and Diceto sometimes narrativize the reading of letters in a way that resembles the *Draco*. Howden, for example, frequently binds letters to his narrative by following a letter with the words "quibus [litteris] auditis," before going on to explain what the consequences of that letter were – a move that further underscores letters' event-like status.[58] And, as I have shown elsewhere, when the political stakes were particularly high, Diceto and Howden both integrate the reading of letters into the political theatre that they were narrating, and did so as a means of giving voice to some political actors and taking it away from others (Bainton, "Literate Sociability" 30–35). Finally, throughout their chronicles Howden and Diceto used the schema Altman identifies with epistolary fiction: by making the contents of letters available for all to see, a letter-writer is made to communicate with an eavesdropping audience via the letters he or she writes to another party. None of this means, however, that Howden and Diceto were writing epis-

58. See, *e.g.* Roger of Howden, *Chronica* vol. 2. 80, 258, 300, 351; vol. 3, 168 and Ralph de Diceto vol. 1, 369; vol. 2, 107.

tolary fiction. It does not mean that the letters that they quoted were made up. Nor does it mean that they were necessarily interested in thematizing the fictionality of letter-writing, or in exploring the boundary between fiction and history (as Stephen of Rouen did). And nor does the fictiveness of the epistolary "I" (and "you") mean that Howden and Diceto were engaged in "fiction-making" when they reproduced letters in their chronicles. But Stephen of Rouen's games make sense now – and would have made sense in the Middle Ages – precisely because he pushes the "documentary" practices of the likes of Howden and Diceto to their logical conclusions. He highlights the fact that that anyone who used a letter as a narrative building-block *intervened* in the epistolary discourse that they reproduced, whether they were a letter-collector or a chronicler.

Despite Stephen of Rouen's interest in the relationship between history and fiction, we do not necessarily have to think of documentary intervention within the framework of fictionality that Stephen of Rouen proposes. Paul Ricoeur's discussion of different sorts of historical document in his *History, Memory, Forgetting* might be helpful to clarify this point. Ricoeur divides "historical documents" into two categories: "voluntary witnesses," and witnesses "in spite of themselves." "Voluntary witnesses" are what people wrote down specifically with posterity in mind. As *written* testimonies, these documents are "detached from the authors who 'gave birth' to them" (169). Their subsequent deposit in an archive means that they are "handed over to the care of those who are competent to question them and hence to defend them, by giving them aid and assistance." Witnesses "in spite of themselves," on the other hand, are "the target of indiscretion and the historian's appetite" (170). According to Ricoeur, modern historians largely use documents as "witnesses in spite of themselves:" they use documents to tell stories that the documents themselves do not tell (171). It seems to me that the letters that Howden and Diceto reproduce fall into both these categories simultaneously. The self-conscious writtenness, and the manifest narrativity, of letters like that of Hugh de Nonant's suggest that they functioned as Ricoeur's "voluntary testimony." They addressed their storied testimony to a distant audience, either removed in space or time from that of their composition; they told their own stories; and their rhetoric did whatever it could to emphasize its own endurance and stress its need for preservation. The archives, meanwhile, were the histories themselves. By copying documents into their histories, history-writers posed as archivists and registrars, caring for them, defending

59. As Michael Clanchy puts it, chronicles' authority as texts meant that they were "the most secure and productive form of record in existence" in this period (Clanchy 103).

them, giving them "aid and assistance." Howden did not *question* No-nant's letter in the manner of Ricoeur's modern historians. He did, however, defend it against the ravages of time, and gave it "aid and as-sistance" by preserving it within a codex, and within the chronolog-ical framework of a chronicle – a venerable and authoritative frame-work, designed to transmit knowledge of the past safely to the fu-ture.[59] On the other hand, giving letters archival "aid and assistance" like this involved integrating them into a new epistemological frame-work. It involved selecting them and fashioning them parts of a new whole – and it thus transformed them from isolated utterances into elements of a series which conferred on them a new meaning. Ste-phen of Rouen seems to intimate that, potentially at least, this ma-neuver could turn letters into witnesses *against* themselves as much as witnesses in spite of themselves. It is important to acknowledge that potential, and it is important to acknowledge that history-writ-ers in the High Middle Ages acknowledged it, even if it does not mean that every letter that a chronicler quoted was being used against its author.

So how does this change our understanding of documents in the history-writing of the Age of the Angevins? Firstly, "documents," as we call them now, are hard to prize apart from the historical narra-tives that use them: they frequently offered their own narratives, and were sometimes even a form of history-writing themselves. Some-times, meanwhile, the fictive techniques that letter-writing employed could become part of the story that a history-writer was telling (this is the case with Stephen of Rouen). Sometimes history-writers told stories through arranging letters, using the fictive technique of em-plotment as they did so – all the while they stressed the historicity of the *ordo naturalis* (this is the case with, say, the *Book of St. Gilbert*). Sometimes history-writers used letters as mini-narratives in a story that they shaped by nothing more than chronological order (this is the case with Howden and Diceto). What all these cases show, how-ever, is that epistolary intertexts were far more than merely being a tool by which history-writers could distinguish their own discourse from fiction. Epistolary intertexts are as complicated as the histori-cal narratives that used them.

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LUCIE DOLEŽALOVÁ

Measuring the Measuring Rod:

The Bible and Parabiblical Texts within the History of Medieval Literature*

Abstract

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In spite of the acknowledged crucial role it had in forming medieval written culture, the Bible and a wide-range of parabiblical texts still remain largely ignored by histories of medieval literatures. The reason for this striking omission of an important group of medieval texts from the 'canonical' narratives is, as I argue, the strong bias in favour of national, secular, fictional and original texts which shapes literary studies – an inheritance from the nineteenth-century nationalising approaches discussed in the first issue of the *Interfaces* journal. Of course, the discipline of literary studies and therefore selection, hierarchization, and interpretation are complex social, cultural and political processes where almost anything is possible. It is the environment, the interpretive community, in which the interpretation takes place that has a decisive role. And that, too, is constantly being transformed. Thus, there are no final categories and answers because as long as there are interpretive communities, meanings are generated and operate in new ways. That is why the present discussion does not aim to claim that many of the parabiblical texts are literature and should have been included in the canon of medieval literature. Rather, I examine what the nineteenth-century notion of canon did to these texts and how the current questioning and substantial reshaping of notions of canon can transform our understanding of parabiblical texts.

I. Bible and Parabiblical Texts outside of the Canon of Medieval Literature

> *Di heilige scrift an allen wanc / Ist gar swer und lanc.*
> ("The Scriptures, to be sure, are pretty difficult and very long.")
>
> Prologue to *Historie der alden é,*
> an anonymous retelling of the Old Testament in German[1]

1. The text was written in the first half of the 14th c. and edited by Gerhard 2.

It is no longer necessary to carefully justify taking the Bible away from the field of religion and analyzing it as literature in the way that

2. The move, was however, not an obvious one. For an argument against it, see, *e.g.*, Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*.

3. For further groundbreaking studies, see, *e.g.*, Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality*; Alter; Alter and Kermode, eds. There are also some contemporary publications intended for wider readership, some of them rather suspicious (*e.g.* Ryken and Ryken eds.).

Northrop Frye was obliged to do in *The Great Code* (Frye). It is now common to speak not only of the Bible *and* literature but also of the Bible *as* literature.[2] There are many literary studies on biblical language, narrative, imagery, plot coherence, voice and the like.[3] It is also recognized that the Bible inspired and shaped the majority of medieval textual types (*e.g.*, exegesis, sermons, hymns, hagiography, liturgical drama, much of lyrical poetry such as *planctus* etc.), and it was much used or referred to in most other ones or in their framing (*e.g.* historiography or exempla) (see, *e.g.*, Cremascoli and Leonardi). Beside the Bible itself, there were numerous types of parabiblical texts with varied relationship to and distance from the Bible. These include biblical poetry, prose paraphrases, commentaries, sermons, and many other texts. The omnipresence of the Bible in medieval written culture is a fact that does not need to be defended or exemplified.

Yet, in spite of the acknowledged crucial role it had in forming medieval written culture, the Bible and the variety of parabiblical texts still remain mostly out of the picture in histories of medieval literatures. The reason for this striking omission of an important group of medieval writing from the 'canonical' narratives is surely the predilection for national, secular, fictional and 'original' texts, our ambivalent inheritance of the nineteenth century nationalistic approaches discussed in the first issue of the *Interfaces* journal (*cf.* especially Borsa *et al.*). Of course, literary appreciation and therefore selection, hierarchization, and interpretation are complex social, cultural and political processes where a lot (if not everything) is possible. It is the environment, the interpretive community, in which the interpretation takes place that has a decisive role. And that, too, is constantly being transformed. Thus, there are no final categories and answers because as long as there are interpretive communities, meanings are generated and operate in new ways (Fish). That is why the present discussion does not aim at claiming that many of parabiblical texts *are* literature and *should have been* included in the canon of medieval literature. The Bible and parabiblical texts do not fulfill the listed criteria, in fact, these texts are exactly the opposite of what is searched for in the canon, and thus it is no wonder they were not selected. I would like to look at what the 19th century notion of canon, that is, 'the measuring rod', did to these texts, as well as how the current questioning and substantial reshaping of the notion transform that.

1. National vs. Universal

"But even when Latin was used for writing, it was always with patriotic aims, with enthusiasm and national consciousness. The spirit of this Latin writing always remained Czech national spirit …"

A Czech literature textbook from 1907 (Šlejhar 6)[4]

4. The English translation is mine.

Stressing the national aspects in medieval writing means looking for difference: it is a search for features that can be considered distinctive and may be used to define a particular community, a nation. Thus, local specificities come to the fore, and so does the 'pagan' mythical past of individual nations. With this predilection, the Bible and parabiblical texts fell out completely since they did not separate but unite, they presented a universal history of the mankind, and operated within the medieval society across the nations. Approached as literature (its significant religious and social role aside), the universality and omnipresence of the Bible in medieval culture can be explained through its two features: it was believed to be authored by the greatest authority imaginable, God himself, who supposedly encoded the most important teachings about the world and its meaning in it. And, at the same time, it was recognized as a very obscure text. The combination of these two aspects created a notion of a challenge. Although it was impossible to solve the challenge in this life when things were perceived only *per speculum in aenigmate* (2 Cor 13:12), one was expected to keep trying, which was a praiseworthy act in itself. As a perpetual enigma of the highest authority possible, the Bible was actively and creatively received throughout the Middle Ages.

Perceiving the Middle Ages as a cradle of national identities, with national languages as one of the primary identification features of these identities results also in downplaying most of the Latin writing. In a much simplified way, Latin is seen as gradually conquered by the vernaculars which take over the discourse and the space on the manuscript page (see Stein). But sharing the textual knowledge in the Middle Ages was possible also thanks to sharing one language throughout medieval West: the Latin. The parallels sometimes made with English today are not too farfetched: Medieval Latin operated as a language of communication on a wide area, with many local specificities, and generally lower level of complexity than classical Latin but allowed for communication on a large scale. Latin was not no-

5. The reduction of its role within canonical histories of medieval literatures results in a much simplified picture of medieval literature. It is this aspect of canons of medieval literatures that has been most attacked and criticized in recent decades, see, among many others, Stella, "A 'Postcolonial' Approach."

6. Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 29, 5. The whole treatise aims at dissuading Christians from the public shows. The final section (chaps 29 and 30) describes the better shows awaiting Christians, such as watching the others burn in hell.

7. The rescript on Christian teachers is found in his letters, edited in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, transl. Wright vol. 3, 117–23.

body's language but rather everybody's language.[5] And it won its position even though it was not the original language of the Bible: it was a *translation* that became a universal textual commonplace.

2. Secular *vs.* Religious

> *Vis autem et sanguinis aliquid? Habes Christi.*
> ("Would you have something of blood too?
> You have Christ's.")
>
> Tertullian, *On the Public Shows*[6]

The notion of the secular is in fact closely linked to the notion of national: it is a post-reformation concept invented to prevent the idea of a 'nation' from falling apart. While in the medieval West, the society would consist of Christians and those who are 'blind to the truth' (primarily Jews and Muslims), in the modern period religious differences began to play an important role and caused inner division within several nations and states of Europe (especially France, Germany and states in Central Europe). It is only then that the idea of separating religion from the state which would have no sense during the Middle Ages appears. Secularism then worked as a sort of pseudo-religion trying to unite some national communities. This approach not only excludes the Bible and parabiblical texts, but it downplays most of medieval literature, as well as crucial aspects of the few selected texts (*Canterbury Tales* as describing a pilgrimage to the grave of Thomas Becket, Holy Grail stories as a quest for the blood of Christ, etc.).

The early modern fear of promoting religion within a literary canon is not new. It is in fact a sort of reverse situation to the one in the Late Antiquity, when the same considerations concerned the classical ancient writings: can they be used within Christian education without affecting the beliefs of the Christians? Will Christians be able to enjoy them and learn from them without being seduced by their contents? The answers to these questions are well known: Jerome, in his famous dream, promised to stop reading the classics whom he loved and enjoyed and stick forever solely to the Bible (Jerome, Epistle 22.30). Julian the Apostate disarmed Christian teachers efficiently when he prohibited them to use the classics in their education, which, as he argued, was a dishonest activity if they did not share their beliefs.[7] Origen, and after him Augustine justified the usage through the comparison with the Egyptian theft (Ex 12.35–36): Christians are entitled to take from the pagans whatever the pagans

do not use properly but they themselves can employ well (Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.40). It was this thesis that was accepted and using the classics in Christian education worked out fine for over 1000 years.

An example of the use of the ancient heritage in Christian context is 'biblical epic,' that is, retelling parts of the Bible in Virgil-style poetry. It is a problematic literary type – Curtius dismissed it as a *genre faux* (Curtius 462), and it had long been looked down upon as a result of mere school exercises in paraphrase – dressing Christian content with Ancient style (see *e.g.* Roberts; Springer; or Bažil). But is it possible to extract literary devices from the content and see literature as mere form unconnected to religion and politics? The separability of form and content, so well visible in ancient and medieval rhetoric,[8] is not accepted today, the *what* is seen as ultimately intertwined with the *how*.[9]

3. Fiction *vs* 'Truth'

> "I've got a love story and a sex story, with the same woman no less, and both are great […]"
>
> King David in Joseph Heller, *God Knows* 18

The romantic concept of 'literature' included the idea of 'fiction' – a sort of artificial parallel imaginary universe, allowing a temporary escape from truth. In the Romantic and post-Romantic concept, literature is expected to create an autonomous world of its own with its own rules. The Bible and parabiblical texts stand at the other end with exactly the opposite ambition: they insist on offering the only and ultimate truth (*cf.* Auerbach). They usually address the readers and require changes in their lives. They relate to the experienced situation, attack it, and constantly try to alter it. These are texts wishing to have an actual impact. This sort of doctrine is in contrast with the romantic idea of literature pleasing and ennobling the spirit but not bringing about historical and social changes (even, as Oscar Wilde said, being utterly useless).[10] The writings in the periods of conflicts and transitions (such as Late Antiquity or reformation period) were typically presented as times when literature (as opposed to writing) was in decline and was 'abused' for the purposes of propaganda.[11] Also didactic literature was always on the margin of literature, a sort of lower level type, exactly because it has a definite aim. The Bible, of course, contains a great number of stories. But they insist on being true and on trying to teach, too.[12]

8. Their starting point is always the idea that the author knows *what* he wants to say and the aim of the manual is to help him with the *how* of saying it: various 'wrappings' of the message are normally proposed and discussed.

9. Yet, in fact, a number of contemporary web sites devoted to the Bible as literature do insist on this division: *e.g.*, Bible as Literature (accessed May 25, 2017). They usually argue for the separability of form and content, just like the ancient and medieval rhetorics.

10. "All art is quite useless." Wilde.

11. See the very influential Gibbon. This has much changed already several decades ago when the periods of transition receive more attention, exactly because it is possible to detect specific transformation of value system through the texts. See Brown.

12. Curiously, it is included as a positive aspect in books and especially films today, that they are 'based on a true story.'

Just as it is doubtful and much discussed whether pure history is possible, we could ask: is it possible to write pure fiction? Is it possible to create a completely autonomous imaginary world? Cognitive psychology shows that most things happen in our brain anyway: interpretation cannot be extrapolated from the experienced event. In this way it is impossible to write objective history. And, it is also impossible to write pure fiction. Stories we make up necessarily relate to our experience even if they are set in distant future or past. The romantic and post-romantic idea of literature includes the requirement that it should offer something more (or only something else?) than the world – it should offer a different perspective, new approach, new view or reflection. That it needs to step out from what is lived and experienced to do that. Medieval biblical texts do not create this distance. They do not form a controllable environment with clear borders which can be entered and exited. They attempt the opposite, to pull down the borders, invade their readers' minds and live and grow in them.

4. 'Original' *vs* Repetition

> "I shall proceed to speak a little of the investigative journey I made to test the possibility and meaning of repetition. Without anyone knowing about it I went by steamship to Berlin."
>
> Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition* 150

The notion of originality is somewhat losing its appeal lately, especially in connection to the romantic idea of a creative genius and unique unrepeatable creation. Questioning and scrutinizing the concept has, however, not lead to its complete abolishment. The requirement of novelty and surprise is persistent.

The Bible is, of course, an ancient, *not* a medieval creation. Placing into its centre such an 'old' text, stressing continuity and tradition, medieval written culture stands in contrast to the modern search for the new and unheard of. This results also in a different notion of authorship in the Middle Ages – one in which the authors tend to diminish their active and creative role in a text's origin.[13]

The notion of originality has been transformed also through Julia Kristeva's influential concept of intertextuality. Originality may not be searched for only in relationship between text and reality but also in relationships among different texts. And it is exactly this feature that makes medieval parabiblical texts original. The medieval in-

13. On the medieval notion of authorship, see, e.g., Minnis; Ranković *et al.*, eds; D'Angelo and Ziolkowski, eds.

tertextuality is a result of realizing communication possibilities within a society that can rely on generally shared textual knowledge. Such shared knowledge enables the authors to use various ways of intertextuality, and thus offers otherwise inaccessible toolkit of specific writing strategies.

II. The Bible and Parabiblical Texts in the Middle Ages

Biblical retellings were popular throughout the Middle Ages; some of them, like Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* (*c.* 1170) or the late medieval anonymous *Summarium biblie* (see Doležalová, *Obscurity and Memory*) even extremely popular. Some use extra-biblical sources, fill the gaps in the biblical narrative or harmonize places where there are more versions. Many of them actualize the stories. There are direct quotations from the Bible, both precise and approximate, as well as allusions, both close and distant. Sometime a single aspect is chosen and re-contextualized, *e.g.* a character, a setting, or part of a plot. There are numerous retellings, both in prose and in verse, some relying on images. Some of them are edited (*e.g.* Peter Riga, ed. Peter Beichner; Alexander of Ashby, ed. Dinkova-Bruun, and other works by this author; Daub), many more remain still only in manuscripts. What is clear is that dealing with the Bible was in general surprisingly free.[14] What is also clear is that the field is vast and complex, and, exactly for this reason, remains rather unstudied (see, *e.g.* Stella, *La poesia carolingia latina*; Doležalová and Visi).

1. Medieval Biblical Intertextualities

Medieval authors explored the possibilities of biblical intertextuality (although they certainly would not think of it in these terms), and turned out to be very inventive. The examples are numerous, even omnipresent. Here, I will only mention three examples. They can all still be characterized as parabiblical but they are on the margin of the type exactly due to their specific parodic transformation of the Bible. In focusing on the margins of the pool of medieval parabiblical literature, I attempt to show that this pool includes texts that might be shocking to readers today who still tend to associate medieval biblical and parabiblical literature with serious, universal, traditional,

14. There is a nice image comparing the Bible to soft wax that holds any image imprinted on it, as well as that of an oak tree that is cut down and eleven different artisans each take the part that they find useful for their profession, both in the prologue to another popular retelling of the Bible, the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (ca. 1324). See Palmer.

and non-fictional. These texts do not only challenge but simply invalidate the simplistic categories discussed above.

First, the *Cena Cypriani* (Cyprian's feast), an obscure anonymous opuscle written probably in mid-fourth century perhaps in Gaul, describes a wedding feast organized by the king Joel:

> Quidam rex nomine Iohel nuptias faciebat in regione orientis, in Chana Galileae. His nuptiis invitati sunt plures. Igitur qui temperius loti in Iordane adfuerunt in convivio. Tunc commundavit Naaman, aquam sparsit Amos, Iacobus et Andreas attulerunt faenum, Matheus et Petrus straverunt, mensam posuit Salomon. Atque omnes discubuerunt turbae. Sed cum iam locus discumbentium plenus esset, qui superveniebant, quisque ut poterat, locum sibi inveniebat. Primus atque omnium sedit Adam in medio, Eva super folia, Cain super aratrum, Abel super mulgarium, Noe super archam, Iaphet super lateres, Abraham sub arbore, Isaac super aram, Iacob super petram […]

> A certain king, Joel by name, organized a wedding in the eastern region, in Cana of Galilee. To this wedding, many were invited. Thus those, who had earlier bathed in the Jordan, came to the feast. At that time Naaman cleansed, Amos sprinkled water, James and Andrew brought hay. Matthew and Peter lay down, Solomon prepared the table, and the whole crowd reclined at various places. But when the place was already full of the reclining ones, those who arrived later, all, as they could, looked for a place for themselves. So Adam, the first of all, sat in the middle, Eve on leaves, Cain on top of a plough, Abel on a milk churn, Noah on an ark, Japheth on bricks, Abraham under a tree, Isaac on an altar, Jacob on a rock […] (Modesto 14).[15]

15. The English translation is mine.

After the guests sit down, they cook for themselves, eat and get drunk and go home in a festive procession. The following day they return with gifts to the king, but as it turns out that something had been stolen the day before, they are investigated and punished, until the king decides that only one of them, Achan, should suffer. Then the guests kill him, bury him, and return to their homes (see Modesto; Casaretto). In the text, each of the activities is first briefly introduced, and then there follows a list ascribing the biblical characters (each time a different set of them) particular activities which are linked to their

activities in the Bible. In this way, the text approaches the Bible as a space in which the characters can meet. It takes over the names, it turns aspects of their stories into signs (which become little riddles for the reader), and weaves the whole into a new narrative of feast and violence, where finally one person dies for all the guilty ones. Yet this one is guilty here, too, and Jesus participates in killing him (he flagellates him). In this way, also the parallel with the Passion is shifted and twisted.

The text was very actively received during the Middle Ages: there are at least five different rewritings of it and one commentary from the twelfth century; Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor mention it; altogether there are some 103 manuscripts of the text from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.[16] Towards the end of the Middle Ages it became more and more clearly organized and less amusing; it turned into a didactic tool, a biblical mnemonic aid (see Doležalová, "*Cena maletractati*"). While during the Middle Ages themselves, the reception of this text seems to have been unproblematic, later periods found it a bit too entertaining to be considered religious. During the Renaissance, scholars wondered how it could have ever been ascribed to St. Cyprian, and they printed it always with a caveat in the prologue. Umberto Eco, in his *The Name of the Rose*, presents an image of the text as very popular but transmitted among novices in secret, hidden under their pillows (Eco 468).

The second example, the *Sermo de Sancto Nemine* (Sermon on the Saint Nobody) is a late twelfth-century anonymous cento perhaps originating in France made out of the phrases with the word *nemo* (nobody) in the Bible. This Nobody is a very powerful man able to do what nobody can do. The text opens:

> Vir erat in Oriente nomine Nemo, et erat vir ille ut alter Iob inter omnes orientales. Magnus namque erat sanctus iste Nemo in genere et prosapia, magnus in potentia, magnus in scientia, magnus in clementia et in compassione, magnus in honore et reverentia, et magnus in audacia. Et hec omnia per sacram scripturam comprobantur. Primo dico quod magnus fuit iste sanctus Nemo in genere et prosapia, similis Ade, qui nec creatus nec genitus sed formatus, secundum quod habetur per prophetam dicentem: *Dies formabuntur et Nemo in eis*. Fuit etiam de genere militari, secundum illud apostoli: *Nemo militans deo.* [...] Et fuit de genere non qualicumque, sed regali, Ecclesiastici quinto: *Nemo ex regibus sumpsit exordium* [...] Nec solum fuit de stirpe regia sed cum ipso deo

16. See Modesto, further studies of Casaretto (one on each of the rewritings), and Doležalová, "*Quoddam notabile vel ridiculum.*" The medieval commentary was written in an exegetical style by Herveus Burgidolensis (Hervé of Bourgdieu). It is edited and the rewritings are discussed in Doležalová, *Reception and Its Varieties*.

eternaliter legitur semper regnaturus, Ecclesiastes undecimo: *Nemo semper regnaturus.*

There was a man in the East named Nobody, and that man was like another Job among all the people of the East. For this holy Nobody was great in race and lineage, great in power, great in knowledge, great in mercy and compassion, great in honor and reverence, and great in daring. And all of these things are confirmed in Holy Scripture. First, I say that this holy Nobody was great in race and lineage, like Adam, who was neither created nor begotten but formed, as it is said by the prophet: *The days will be formed and Nobody in them.* He was also of a military lineage, according to the saying of the apostle: *Nobody being a soldier to God.* [...] And he was of a race of no other kind than royal, Ecclesiasticus 5: *Nobody took his birth from kings* [...] it is read that he will reign eternally with God himself, Ecclesiastes 11: *Nobody will reign forever.*[17]

17. Bayless, ed., "The Short *Nemo*". Bayless also edits two other recensions of the text.

This simple joke (of the type Ulysses played on Kyklops) goes on in this way, Nobody – hidden in the Bible itself – is the most powerful of all the saints. Again, this text was popular, transmitted in several different versions and its medieval reception seems to have been unproblematic. It was only in modern times that some scholars believed that the medieval author had thought he had indeed discovered an actual so far unnoticed person in the Bible and used this case as an example of medieval naivety (see Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*; Doležalová, "The Absolute Alterity in Cult of Saints").

Lastly, the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium secundum Iesskonem, rusticum quadratum* (The Passion of the Jews of Prague according to Ješek, a square hick / a proper countryman)[18] describes a pogrom on the Prague Jews during Easter 1389, an important historical event that is mentioned (although not precisely described) in a number of other sources in Latin, Czech, German, and Hebrew. To describe the event, the anonymous author used the structure of the Passion narrative as it appears in the Gospels: thus, the Christian persecutors of the Jews operate in the same ways and within the same framework as the Jewish persecutors of Christ in the Bible. For example, the deliberation among the Christians near the beginning of the text reads:

18. For a discussion on how to translate *rusticus quadratus*, see Vidmanová.

Tunc unus ex plebe cristianorum nomine Ieško quadratus, cum esset quasi pontifex anni et temporis illius, prophetavit

dicens: "Expedit vobis, ut omnes pariter Iudei moriantur <pro> populo cristiano, ne tota gens pereat." Ab illo ergo die et ab illa hora cogitaverunt interficere omnes Iudeos dicentes: "Ne forte veniat ulcio Dei super nos, tollamus bona eorum et gentem perfidam de terra vivencium disperdamus."

Then a man from among the crowd of the Christians, called square / proper Ieško since he was a sort of leader for the year and of his time, prophecized, saying: "It is profitable for you that all the Jews alike should die for the Christian people, so that the whole race does not vanish." Thus, from that day and from that hour they plotted to kill all the Jews, saying: "Let us take away their property and eliminate the treacherous race from the land of the living lest God's vengeance fall upon us." (Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum pragensium* 18–19)[19]

This particular version survives in three manuscripts but there are several other surviving variants of the text.[20] The reception, again, seems to have been unproblematic. Only recently there have been claims that the text is not simply anti-Semitic but includes a double inversion within a complex intertextual play.[21]

All the texts briefly presented here are anonymous. They all survive in several manuscripts from different places and periods thus indicating a wider transmission. Each of them seems to have been simply popular and not opposed by the Church. But exactly this fact appeared striking and unbelievable to post-medieval readers who first neglected these texts altogether as not meriting anyone's attention, and then tended to interpret them as blasphemous, extremely naïve, or simply failed opuscula. True, none of these three texts employs special rhetoric colors and figures, they are written in a simple way. They seem to lack final polishing. They include incoherencies. But they are also funny.

Each of these cases is usually labeled 'parody', which is, however, not understood any more today as a strictly subversive genre.[22] In fact, these texts can be used to show that the dividing line between the sacred and the profane was thin, and often not discernible on the textual level – an actual historical, political, social or cultural act is necessary to activate it.[23] These texts are primarily good examples of a functioning of a specific type of writing which, to a great degree, defined medieval written culture as opposed to both earlier and later times. Such medieval 'free' dealing with the Bible, which was tol-

19. The English translation is mine.

20. The mss. are: Třeboň, Státní archiv, A 14, fols 68v–70v, Praha, Archiv Pražského hradu, Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta v Praze, O 3, fols 167r–177r, and Praha, Národní knihovna, XI D 7, fols 130v–133r, ed. Tomek 11–13, reprinted in Lehmann 211–16. A new edition is currently being prepared by Evina Steinová. *Cf.* also her "Jews and Christ Interchanged."

21. For a sort of overinterpretation, see Newman.

22. For a recent important contribution to the topic, see Bartuschat and de Hartmann, eds.

23. I developed this idea in Doležalová, "Passion and Passion."

24. There are biblical retellings then, too, and they are numerous indeed, but each is 'wrapped' through a prologue which controls its reception, the texts are not merely 'thrown' out there. They appear in a context in which the Bible has and keeps its unshakeable authority of a defined fixed text and the area of operation is well defined outside the Bible. Thus, it would not happen in the early modern period that someone would quote one of these retellings and refer to it as a Bible quotation as it does happen with Peter Comestor in the Middle Ages.

25. Many texts, for example, that ended up outside the canon (such as parts of the childhood Gospels or some of the apocryphal acts of the Apostles) continued to appear both in the visual arts and in writing. Jerome's prologues to the individual books were copied together with it and virtually formed part of the Bible. Also within the accepted canon of the Bible itself, the order of the books as well as their chapter numbering was not unified until the end of the twelfth century. See Poleg and Light, eds.

26. Cf. Morey. Morey argues along the same lines: "The Bible in the Middle Ages, much like the Bible today, consisted for the laity not of a set of texts within a canon but of those stories which, partly because of their liturgical significance and partly because of their picturesque and memorable qualities, formed a provisional 'Bible' in the popular imagination. Even relatively devout and educated moderns may be surprised by what is, and what is not, biblical" (p. 6).

27. A database of all medieval biblical quotations and references would show very clearly which biblical passages were omnipresent and which were in the background at which times and places during the Middle Ages. The 'canon' and 'archive' within the Bible clearly emerge from it.

erated and sometimes even welcomed by the Church, is unimaginable in the early modern period.[24]

2. 'Canon' and 'Archive' within the Bible

Approaching the Bible as a single text, as it is sometimes taken for granted, is not obvious, though. Among others, Jacques Berlinerbau argues that Bible is not a "carefully redacted narrative unity", but a "multi-layered, multiple-authored anthology of ancient provenance", and thus the modern tools of literary analysis are not suitable to approach it. It is necessary to "develop theoretical and methodological implements that are properly calibrated to the study of collectively and trans-historically composed works of art" (Berlinerbau; *cf.* also van Liere).

The canonization of the Bible was a long and complex process. The canonical Bible, although copied and symbolically perceived as a clear separable unity throughout the Middle Ages, did not always operate as a unified text.[25] Aleida Assmann's concepts of canon and archive are useful in approaching the medieval Bible. It had been composed of parts that she would have classified as 'canon', as well as of parts she would have called 'archive' (Assmann): some of its parts were more alive than others, were told and retold, analyzed and used, others were only copied within the whole. The 'canonical' part of the Bible can be extracted from sermons, liturgy, exegesis, biblical retellings and other parabiblical texts. The medieval actively operating 'canon' of the Bible emerges from this parabiblical material as concentrating primarily on the narrative parts (*e.g.* Genesis, Gospels, or the Books of Kings), and parts crucial for Christian dogma (Gospels, Paul's Epistles, or parts of the Old Testament prefiguring the New Testament).[26] These 'canonical' parts informally formed a sort of 'popular Bible' (see Utley, "The Bible of the Folk") or unwritten parallel Bible, a virtual composition in the minds of the people. On the other hand, there are biblical books very rarely used, quoted, or commented on throughout the Middle Ages, for example the book of Leviticus with Jewish rules was irrelevant for the Christians unless interpreted in a metaphoric way. This 'archive' was still carried on, that is, copied together with the rest of the Bible in its proper place and available for being brought to light and included in the canon.[27]

Thanks to the persistence in perceiving the Bible as a whole and copying it as such, the exact division between such a 'canon' and an

'archive' within the Bible was flexible: it was transformed throughout the periods of biblical reception and had a large impact on the religious, social, and cultural function of the text. Also, the perception of the authority of the text of the Bible secured its status – never replaced by any of the parabiblical texts, it remained in the background ready to be picked up and used when needed.

3. Medieval Biblical Intertextuality beyond Texts

The 'canonical' parts of the Bible, on the other hand, were constantly retold, adjusted, appropriated and transformed. As a result, it is frequently difficult to claim that it is the Bible itself that is an ultimate source of another text (see Meredith 61). Among the transformations, Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica* was especially widespread and influential, and it is frequently identified as the actual model text even in cases when the authors explicitly claim to be quoting the Bible.

Our concept of intertextuality is (not surprisingly) very much *text*-based. Contemporary databases make it easy to detect textual correspondences; these, however, do not necessarily indicate actual influences. Medieval 'intertextual' texts frequently do not use *texts* but rather ideas created on the basis of texts but also of visual material and imagination. The omnipresent Bible is the prime example of this practice. Not only was it often quoted from memory, but it operated as this sort of a construct (with additions, omissions and other transformations) rather than merely as a text (see Murdoch, or Hamburger). Of course, the mental reflection was flexible and it is difficult (if possible at all) to reconstruct it. What is clear, though, is that narrative concerns played a substantial role in it (*e.g.* apocryphal material is naturally used whenever filling a gap within the plot, non-narrative parts are substantially reduced, unnamed characters like Noah's wife get names, etc.) (see Utley, "One Hundred and Three Names of Noah's Wife"), as did imagination and the practice of visualization (in this way, many particular details were added, for example the fruit of the forbidden tree became a lemon, fig, apple, or peach). Many of these aspects (especially adding concrete details and incorporating non-biblical information) can be found in the 'mental image' of the ('popular') Bible today. The main difference is that the medieval mental construct of the Bible was rooted very deeply and was very influential in producing and consuming further texts.

4. A case of appropriation: *The Versus maligni angeli*

The Bible as a mental construct was not only used in new textual creations but it was also a ready point of reference when reading and interpreting other texts. For example, there is a brief anonymous poem of uncertain meaning and origin, which was quite largely diffused during the twelfth–fifteenth centuries: there are 36 surviving manuscripts and four different commentaries to it.[28] The poem is usually transmitted without an author attribution and a title. The few titles that appear include *Versus maligni angeli* (Verses of a malign angel), *Versus daemonis* (Verses of a demon), *Versus extranei* (Verses from outside), and even *Tractatus de fluvio Oronte* (Treatise on the Orontes River). The hitherto oldest known manuscript is Bourges, Bibliothèque municipale 105 (95) written at the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth century in Chezal-Benoît. It reads:

1   Oppositum montem conscendere cernis Orontem
    Arma tua dextra capies et fer caput extra
    hinc gladio multos umbris mactabis inultos
    Sed prius hoc unus puerorum fert tibi munus
5   Lanx quę cum carne dudum tibi servit agarne
    Iam prolatura tibi constat munera plura
    Hinc et gallina dat vocem pandite lina.
    Panibus indutos piscesque videte minutos
    Trax caput Orontis iacet hoc in corpore montis
10 Quem circumstabant acies et vociferabant
    Amaratunta tili codoxia noxia nili
    Pensa tibi dippus eris hoc in lumine lippus
    Victus amore pio sic cantat maxima Clio.

The very approximate translation I propose is:

Facing the mountain, you note Orontes ascending[29]
You will seize your weapons with your right hand and take the head out
Hence you will slaughter to the shadows many un-revenged with [your] sword
But before [that] one of the boys brings you this gift
A plate with meat which he humbly[30] serves just now
Already about to bring forth to you many gifts
Hence the hen also gives the voice, spread out the ropes
Behold the diminished[31] fishes clad in bread
Thracian head of Orontes, it lies in the body of the mountain
Around which the troops stood and exclaimed

33. Clio or Kleio is the Muse of
history.

Amaratunta tili codoxia noxia nili[32]
Consider for yourself, you will be Oedipus blind in this light
Defeated by pious love, thus sings the greatest Clio.[33]

The original source and purpose of the poem are far from clear. At
first sight, this looks like nonsense. Something is occurring – perhaps
a fight – but the situation is confusing. Two of the words, *amaratun-
ta* and *codoxia*, are *hapax legomena* (*cf.* Du Cange 216). There are al-
lusions to the Gospels (the miracle of the bread and the fish, and the
simile of stretching the ropes, *i.e.*, the nets by the apostles), but also
to classical culture (Oedipus and the Muse Clio). The use of the sec-
ond person, which gives the poem a sense of appellation, is curious.
The other manuscripts include a great number of variants many of
which affect the meaning of the poem; yet, in each manuscript ver-
sion the text remains obscure.

The most striking part of the poem is the totally incomprehensi-
ble line 11: *Amaratonta tili codoxia noxia nili*. Similar lines are found
in many other manuscripts, most notably in *Carmina burana* 55 (*Am-
ara tanta tyri pastos sycalos sycaliri*, ed. Hilka and Schumann 110). As
Hilka notes, it might be connected to exorcism and reflect a much
older formula. My conjecture is that our poem developed around an
exorcist formula, and meaning was gradually added to it. This feature
would thus be responsible for the poem's title *Verses of a malign an-
gel* or *Verses of a demon* – these verses would have been written to be
used against a demon. Although this suggestion cannot be proven
now, its implications are thought-provoking: if the original basis of
our poem was exorcism, that is magic or an incantation, then it was
designed as obscure and enigmatic and was not expected to be inter-
preted at all. Magical incantations are meant to sound unusual and
have an aesthetic dimension (they contain alliterations, rhymes, etc.)
but they may be indiscernible as far as their meaning is concerned.
Of course, some of the words generally remind the listeners of God
and demons, or of other familiar concepts, but in the context of ex-
orcism one is not expected to analyze the meaning and author's in-
tentions.[34] It is not evident in what exact way the exorcist formula
could have been transformed into a poem considered fit for being
commented on independently by at least four twelfth-century exe-
getes. Yet, within the rich medieval tradition of encountering obscu-
rity as a natural part of the created world, this particular obscurity of
an 'external' origin (*i.e.* not created by a human but by a demon or a
devil) might have been a natural challenge to the exegete and an ob-
vious choice for elucidation.

34. Magic formulas in which every
word is meaningful of course also
exist. The relationship between the
two modes (or styles?) has not been,
to my knowledge, fully explored yet.
In any case, 'meaningless' would not
describe any of the formulae either:
the words used always remind one of
something, and there is a sense of
grammar (often Latin grammar). For
more on the language of exorcist and
magic formulas and incantations, see
Heim; or Maguire, ed. There is also a
clear link to the *Ephesia grammata*
(see the free access journal of the
same name).

Each of the four commentaries explains the poem in a different way. Yet, each explanation corresponds with Christian beliefs and ethics, interpreting it either as a fight between Christ and devil, or as encouragement for preachers to fight against heretics, or an urge for Christians to avoid devil's tricks and sinning. Just like in biblical exegesis, the commentators frequently offer several possibilities without choosing between them. Each of them devotes special attention to the question of how it is possible that a devil or a demon authored verses that turn the audience to the good side, and each finds a different response. The commentaries are, on the one hand, similar in appropriating the verses to fit the 'mainstream' culture, while, on the other hand, they substantially differ in particularities where they reveal independent creative and associative treatments. Thus, for example, *Orons*, the Orontes river, is a cold river in Thracia and the place of the devil in the 'novelistic' and in the 'exegetical' commentary; in the 'apologetic' commentary it is a river in Babylon, the city of false and fallen heretics; in the 'moral' commentary it is the river of Egypt, which signifies this world full of inequality.

This example shows the power of the Christian / biblical paradigm: it was not only a source of inspiration but it operated as a key to understanding of the world around. The methods developed and tested in biblical exegesis were employed in interpreting other texts as well as in categorizing and dealing with actual experience. In this way, through invading the mind and the patterns of perception, medieval biblical and parabiblical literature blurred the lines between the world and literature for its readers.

III. The Bible and Parabiblical Texts within the 'Canon of Medieval Literature'?

> "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."
>
> William Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 18, lines 13–14

Today, while the aspects of the national, secular and fictional seem to have been only a specific historical phase in evaluation of literature, the criterium of originality, although recognized as a tricky concept and sometimes rephrased as a feeling of novelty, or an element of surprise, still holds. This 'originality' is now recognized also in selective repetition or adjusted reiteration – that is, a text can be considered original through its intertextuality.

The discussed nineteenth-century criteria for the canon were very efficient in their time because they quickly excluded the majority of the medieval written production and there was not a very big competition among the comparably few texts that were left. Canon, after all, is a list that claims some sort of authority, and as such it should not be too long (it would become unmanageable), and its items should not have too many competitors in order to succeed.

The canon Harold Bloom presented in his provocative *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (Bloom, *The Western Canon*) contains books that "survived the fight" and got over "the anxiety of influence."[35] Bloom did not include the Bible among the 26 works selected for his analysis, but he did insert it into his additional canonical list in the appendix and also mentioned it as the second book (after the collected works of Shakespeare) he would take to the deserted island. From the Middle Ages themselves there is only Chaucer and Dante on his list. No wonder that parabiblical texts discussed above are missing: in many ways, they are simply anticanonical: these texts never competed with 'high literature,' they did not suffer from the anxiety of influence but welcomed influence and searched for it.

Yet, paradoxically (and also only purely incidentally), today these texts fulfill one of Bloom's primary criteria for canon inclusion: they provide 'difficult pleasure.'[36] Since knowledge of the Bible is not widely shared any more, the high level of intertextuality of parabiblical texts startles the reader today. The need for explanation interrupts the flow of the reading and makes it difficult: these texts are not easy to enjoy as pure stories, they rather create a feeling of inferiority in readers not familiar with the text(s) alluded to. They become reading for the elites who spend time and energy on penetrating them.[37]

The reason parabiblical texts are not seen as an integral part of the canon of medieval literature now is complex: they are numerous and not so easily distinguishable. It does not require special effort and active suppressing to exclude them, they are a clear candidate for the grey mass background against which the few original works of authorial geniuses could shine. But can a historian of medieval literature afford to disregard a great portion of the surviving texts? Harold Bloom would answer: of course, there is too little time and too many books, readers should carefully choose with which ones to spend their time. Today, more scholars would answer no. This type of writing is crucial for understanding medieval written culture. The

35. The book, framed by a bitterly resigned introduction and an epilogue criticizing the current anti-elitist politically correct trends that refuse the autonomy of aesthetics, is a somewhat sad read, documenting an end of an era when literature was a noble elite phenomenon, accessible to only a few. See also Mishra and Mendelsohn.

36. "…the strongest, most authentic motive for deep reading of the now much abused traditional canon is the search for difficult pleasure," Bloom, *How to Read and Why* 28.

37. Of course, it can be stated about many medieval texts that the experience of today's readers is far from the original experience of their medieval readers, but there are still differences in the readers' distance from the text.

'bulk' is certainly no grey background but a structured field. To get to know the medieval mainstream is important in order to recognize the difference from it. These texts nevertheless do not raise too much interest today, are not much read, and are definitely no one's choice of a piece of writing to take to the deserted island. Yet, this also means they (so far) succeeded in what they aimed at: interpreting, retelling, and handling the Bible in various ways without taking its authority from it.

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MÁIRE NÍ MHAONAIGH

The Peripheral Centre:
Writing History on the Western 'Fringe'[1]

Abstract

History-writing has a central place in the rich, extensive literature of medieval Ireland and in depicting their past, learned authors employed their own vernacular creatively and confidently. The biblical and classical frameworks within which they constructed Ireland's story, as well as their modes of expression reflect those of their European contemporaries, yet this corpus of texts is rarely considered when the writing of history in the early and central Middle Ages is explored. Focussing on narratives in their manuscript context, this article will situate medieval Irish historical writing within the broader Latinate literary culture of which it formed an integral part. In so doing, the intellectual heritage of scholars such as Marianus Scotus whose formative education was in Ireland will be illuminated, and the debt to the Irish strand in their cultural makeup assessed. Moreover, the relative linguistic harmony in Irish learned circles in which Latin and vernacular written media were interwoven in a mutually beneficial embrace can help better inform our understanding of cross-cultural European elite interaction at the time.

Introduction

2. I have discussed the corpus in greater detail in Ní Mhaonaigh, "Of Bede's 'Five Languages and Four Nations'" and "*Légend hÉrenn.*"

Medieval Ireland boasts a rich and varied textual corpus both in Latin and the vernacular from the sixth century.[2] Latin literacy acquired through Christianity was quickly adapted and applied to Old Irish so that a bilingual literate culture flourished down through the early Middle Ages with both Latin and Irish being used in tandem, the vernacular gaining strength from its association with the high prestige language Latin, the language of learning and the Church. As is well known, Ireland is remarkable for the early date with which the vernacular established itself as a written medium in a learned context. Only Anglo-Saxon England bears comparison, vernacular texts from the early seventh century surviving in the two regions. The presence in both Ireland and England of an elite class who cultivated learning has an important bearing on the special place accorded writing from the beginning of the Christian era. In the case of Ireland, its presence outside the Roman Empire – though not entirely removed from it –

provided an impetus to writing in the vernacular, since the use of Latin had not been as widespread there previously as within the Empire.[3] Creative interaction between the two languages indicates the confidence with which the vernacular came swiftly to be written. The early eighth-century author of a learned text, *Auraicept na nÉces* (The Poets' Primer), places it on a par with the three sacred languages, Latin, Hebrew and Greek (Ahlqvist).

Concern with the nature of language, specifically poetic language, lies at the heart of the *Auraicept*, and its author relates a biblically inspired account of the origins of Irish as part of his discourse. The history of his own language is thus inserted into a universal structure, Irish, like other languages, coming into being at the Tower of Babel, according to this view (Ahlqvist 47–48). In examining how medieval Irish authors presented their past, elucidating their history-writing, the central place of the vernacular is highlighted. What becomes equally obvious, however, is the familiarity of the modes of expression employed in the vernacular, as far as European contemporaries were concerned. Biblical and classical frameworks convey the story of Ireland's history, as will be illustrated in what follows. In focussing on writing history, a literature that is vernacular and European comes into view.

In both their style and variety, texts in the vernacular dating from the seventh century attest to an established tradition of writing in Irish by that date. Old Irish material, that written between *c.* 700 and *c.* 900 CE, encompasses poetry, both devotional and secular, and narrative literature, as well as an extensive body of legal tracts, alongside hagiography, martyrologies and other religious texts.[4] Chronicle-writers employed both Latin and Irish with the vernacular being used more frequently as the Old Irish period progressed (see Dumville, "Latin and Irish"). Genealogies were written in Irish, alongside other material presenting diverse aspects of Ireland's past (see Ó Corráin). Writing history was an important part of vernacular literacy from the start.

This material is only sparsely represented in Ireland's earliest manuscripts. Many that have survived have done so because they became part of institutional libraries in continental Europe. In such circumstances, not surprisingly, manuscripts in Latin predominate, though vernacular glosses and commentary, as well as more extended pieces of poetry and prose are also found within their pages.[5] Old Irish material is preserved extensively, however, in manuscripts written in the Middle Irish period (*c.* 900 to *c.* 1200 CE).[6] Furthermore,

7. One of the most frequently cited lost codices is *Cín Dromma Snechtai* (The Book of Druimm Snechta); for a discussion of the texts it contained, see Carey, "On the Interrelationships."

8. There is a diplomatic edition of the manuscript: Best and Bergin. Various aspects of it are discussed by the contributors to the volume edited by Ó hUiginn.

9. Duncan, "The Palaeography," has argued that 'H' is likely to represent the work of six separate hands, rather than a single scribe, though this remains debatable; Carey has discussed the contribution of 'H' to the manuscript: "H and his World."

10. Best and Bergin 89 (text) and x–xi (translation and brief discussion). For further discussion of this episode, see Ó Concheanainn 71–72. The manuscript's later history is discussed in detail by Ó hUiginn, "Lebor na hUidre" and Ó Muraíle.

11. "Orait do Moelmhuiri mac Ceileachair mac meic Cuind na mbocht ro scrib ocus ro scrút a lebraib egsamlaib in lebur sa" ("A prayer for Máel Muire son of Célechar, grandson of Conn of the Poor, who wrote and extracted from various books this book"): Best and Bergin 89 (text), x (translation).

12. "Fland tra ocus Eochaid eolach hua Cérin is iat ro thinolsat so a llebraib Eochoda hui Flandacan i nArd Macha ocus a llebraib Manistrech ocus asna lebraib togaidib archena […]" The "excellent books" are subsequently named and something of their history is provided: "namely from the Yellow Book missing from the strong-room at Armagh, and from the Short Book in Monasterboice which the student took in theft across the sea and it has not ever been found after" (".i. asin Libur Budi testo asin carcar i nArd Macha ocus asin Libur Girr boí i mManistir ocus is side ruc in mac legind leis i ngait dar muir ocus ni frith riam di éis"): Best and Bergin 94 (lines 2919–24). For discussion, see Ó Concheanainn 77–78 and Herbert 92–93. I adopt Herbert's translation of the passage here.

earlier codices, now lost, are sometimes specified as sources by Middle Irish authors who clearly had a wealth of written material upon which to draw.[7] An extensive, expansive array of texts in the vernacular survives from this period in contemporary manuscripts. Deeds of heroes, kings and saints are celebrated. Ireland's Christian history is recounted in a way that allows accommodation of its pre-Christian past. Surviving manuscripts bear tangible witness to how this was achieved.

Manuscripts and Scholars

Lebor na hUidre (The Book of the Dun Cow)

The earliest extant vernacular manuscript, *Lebor na hUidre* (The Book of the Dun Cow), was written around the year 1100. It was the product of at least three scribes and is a substantial compilation providing ample evidence for skilful scholarship, as well as for the breadth of subject matter supported by written learned culture at the time.[8] A working book, it was altered and augmented by one or more scribes, whose addition of homilies has given rise to the appellation 'H.'[9] It was also a treasured book; in the mid-fourteenth century it was acquired as royal ransom for the release of a captive. Its reacquisition by force well over a century later is celebrated in the pages of the manuscript itself in the form of an invocation for the hero who secured its return.[10] Another addition made in the fourteenth century is a prayer for one of the original three scribes, Máel Muire mac Célechair, who died in 1106. According to this, Máel Muire "wrote and extracted from various books this book."[11] Similar insight into the process of literary production is provided by 'H,' a colophon to a particular text noting that "it was Flann and Eochaid the knowledgeable ua Céirín who assembled this from the books of Eochaid ua Flannacáin in Armagh and from the books of Monasterboice, and from other excellent books […]."[12] The references are to well-known eleventh-century ecclesiastical scholars whose work has survived elsewhere, the most famous of whom was Flann Mainistrech of the monastery of Monasterboice also specified by 'H.' Intensive scholarly contacts between that church, the other learned centre mentioned, Armagh, and Clonmacnoise, the monastery in which *Lebor na hUidre* took form, is also suggested by this remark (see further Herbert).

These internal contacts were supplemented by interaction within a wider intellectual milieu. *Lebor na hUidre*, as we have it, opens

13. The Irish version of the text is discussed by Dumville, "The Textual History." Clancy has suggested that the translation of the text was undertaken in Scotland.

14. *Amra Choluim Chille*, an elegy to Columba, is the third text in the manuscript, as it has survived. A vision text associated with Adomnán is also preserved therein (*Fís Adomnáin*), as is an account of the conversion of a recalcitrant Irish king, Láegaire mac Néill (*Comthóth Lóegairi*) and of a perceptive human-mermaid, Lí Ban, who also became Christian (*Aided Echach meic Maireda* "The Death-tale of Echaid mac Maireda"). The manuscript's interest in salvation history is discussed by Boyle; and Toner, "History."

15. The version in *Lebor na hUidre* has been edited and translated by O'Rahilly. An accessible translation based on this and other versions is that of Carson.

16. *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind* (The Magical Chariot of Cú Chulainn): Best and Bergin 278–87.

17. *Scél Tuain meic Cairill* (The Story of Túán mac Cairill): Best and Bergin 42–46; see Carey, "Scél Tuáin."

18. This is further defined as *i nEspáin ocus i nErind* (in Spain and in Ireland): Best and Bergin 305, line 10069.

19. *Cethri Arda in Domain* (The Four Parts of the World): Best and Bergin 305.

20. See Ó Concheanainn 76 and Carey, "The LU Copy." Commonly known as the Book of Invasions, the title translates literally as "The Book of the Taking(s) of Ireland." For an insight into this long, extensive narrative, see Carey, *A New Introduction*.

with a fragmentary version of *Sex aetates mundi*, a rendering into Irish of a medieval staple, "The Six Ages of the World" (Ó Cróinín, *The Irish*; Tristram, *Sex aetates mundi*). And in this history of the earth's nations, the Irish are accorded their place. It is followed by another text surviving only in part, an Irish adaptation of a ninth-century text purporting to relate a history of the Britons, the *Historia Brittonum* (History of the Britons) attributed to Nennius.[13] These and other such compositions share vellum space with narratives of Irish heroes and kings, as well as voyage and vision tales. Moreover, engagement with this diversity of material reflects a common approach. Though no longer fully intact, what the manuscript in fact presents is an expansive history from the time of Noah, via pivotal events of pre-Christian Ireland to the conversion period and on to the time of early saints such as the sixth-century founder of Iona, St Columba (Colum Cille), and his hagiographer, the late seventh-/early eighth-century abbot of Iona, Adomnán.[14] The greater part of *Lebor na hUidre* is concerned with the depiction of figures from the remote past and it contains the earliest extant account of the celebrated composition, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), a narrative detailing an encounter between the men of the north and west of Ireland (Ulster and Connacht) ostensibly driven by the acquisition of a brown bull.[15] In another narrative concerning Cú Chulainn, the main hero of that tale, St Patrick resurrects him in a demonstration of power designed to make the pagan king, Láegaire mac Néill, believe in God.[16] Other encounters across epochs are less confrontational: Túán mac Cairill who is presented as a recently-baptized character of remarkable longevity conveys knowledge of Ireland's antediluvian past to a Christian saint, Finnia.[17] Furthermore, Fintan mac Bóchra, presented as one of three men in Ireland before the Flood, is designated the historian of the western world,[18] alongside two descendants of Noah who preserved the history of the north and south, and a great-grandson of Adam who commanded knowledge of the eastern part.[19] This biblical framework underpins an elaborate history of Ireland, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (The Book of Invasions) which is preserved in other manuscripts but known to have once formed part of *Lebor na hUidre* as well.[20]

Lebor na hUidre, therefore, is an exercise in writing history; furthermore it is history of a recognisable kind. Acutely conscious of their own place in a deeper scheme of things, the manuscript's scribes and the predecessors upon whose work they drew presented their perception (constructed or otherwise) of what had gone before, sit-

uating characters and events in a broader framework, ever mindful of their own place in the overall whole. In this, they adopted an approach familiar throughout Western Europe in the early Middle Ages. Thus in the eighth-century *Liber historiae Francorum*, for example, the Franks are accorded a past within the wider history of the Roman Empire.[21] The concept of God's chosen people was also highly prevalent and in the image of the Israelites, the portrayal of many medieval communities, including the Irish, was cast (see Garrison). Yet, notwithstanding the fact that Ireland's prolific authors participated in this common enterprise, they have been relegated to the fringes of learned European historicising culture, with the exception of those who got away.

Marianus Scotus and Modern Scholars

Among the many scholars who went abroad was Marianus Scotus. An Irish monk who may have been a contemporary of the scribes of *Lebor na hUidre*, Marianus spent much of his adult life in the second half of the eleventh century in ecclesiastical centres at Cologne, Fulda and Mainz. It was in the latter monastery that he produced a universal history in the broad tradition of chronicles by Bede and the earlier fourth-century Chronicle of Jerome. In his adopted homeland, he may have been familiar with history-writing of a similar hue being engaged in by his exact contemporary, Lambert of Hersfeld, as well as with the history of kings and emperors produced by the slightly earlier scholar, Thietmar, Bishop of Merseburg. Yet his earliest intellectual influences were Irish. As Máel Brigte (tonsured one, *i.e.* devotee, of Brigit), he formed part of learned circles associated with the monastery of Moville (Co. Donegal) which was within the ambit of larger ecclesiastical educational centres such as Bangor and Armagh in the north of Ireland. It was from this formative milieu that he departed for the Continent in 1056 in his late twenties; the books he brought with him suggest he sought to inform in his new environment, as much as to learn. In creating his *Chronicon* which has survived in a contemporary manuscript written in part by an Irish amanuensis,[22] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 830,[23] he utilised the diversity of material at his disposal, gathering it together, as his fellow scholars were doing at home.[24] Among the prefatory matter is a list of Irish kings, nestling alongside a catalogue of Popes (Mac Carthy 7–8). A form of this Irish king-list may have been among the documents he carried with him from Ireland. That material is also likely

21. See McKitterick 9–13, and for a more detailed account of the text, see Gerberding.

22. In a marginal note he states that "I have written this book because of friendship for you [Marianus] and for all *Scoti*, *i.e.* Irishmen, for I am myself an Irishman" ("scripsi hunc librum caritate tibi et Scotis omnibus .i. Hibernensibus, quia sum ipse Hibernensis"): Ó Cuív, "The Irish Marginalia" 50–51.

23. Mac Carthy; this is an account rather than an edition of the manuscript and it includes texts not from the manuscript itself.

24. The Irish term he uses in connection with his compositional activity is *tinólaid* 'collects, gathers': see Herbert 100. In a final flourish at the end of his Chronicle, ingeniously embedded in a series of initial letters in a Latin poem, is the phrase "Moel Brigte clausenair romtinol" ("Máel Brigte, *inclusus*, gathered me [the Book] together"): Ó Cuív, "The Irish Marginalia" 46. This parallels an earlier Latin expression used, "Marianus, inclusus, congregavit": Mac Carthy 9. Clarke has an excellent discussion of this passage in a forthcoming publication, "Merger and Contrast," of which he has generously provided me with a copy.

26. His system is explained in detail by Nothaft; I owe this reference to Dr Immo Warntjes.

27. For the continued engagement by the Irish with computistics, see Ó Cróinín, "The Continuity."

to have included a versified biblical history by an early eleventh-century Irish scholar, Airbertach mac Coisse; three stanzas from this work are quoted in a margin of Marianus' Chronicle (Ó Cuív, "The Irish Marginalia" 54–55).[25] His interest in his insular homeland endured and he continued to receive information about it; the obits of some Irish and Scottish kings who had died after his departure for the Continent are also recorded in his Chronicle (Ó Cuív, "The Irish Marginalia" 45). For Máel Brigte *alias* Marianus, and for others like him, the learned activity he practised in ecclesiastical centres abroad resembled that he had practised at home.

Marianus is best known for his complex chronological system in which twenty-two years were added to the length of Christ's life.[26] He would first have encountered the art of chronography in Ireland whose scholars had been deeply concerned with computistics and the reckoning of time since the seventh and eighth centuries.[27] Their interest in the science of time formed part of a wider European phenomenon and Marianus' continental contemporaries would have provided added impetus to this aspect of his work (Nothaft 479–80). The latter were also influenced by the Irishman's Chronicle, including Sigebert of Gembloux whose own universal *Chronicon* was indebted to Marianus who had come to Mainz during Sigebert's tenure as archbishop there (Nothaft 461–62). Sigebert's history came to be highly influential and thus indirectly, as well as directly, Marianus' work was of major significance for writers of German imperial universal history (see Goetz, "On the Universality" and "Universality"). Its importance also resonated in the insular sphere, Marianus' Chronicle forming the basis of the universal history, *Chronicon ex chronicis*, written by the twelfth-century English historian, John of Worcester, who augmented it considerably with English affairs (see Lawrence-Mathers 256–57).

The centrality of Marianus as an imperial chronicler has long been acknowledged but his debt to the Irish strand of his cultural makeup is generally overlooked. It was in the north of Ireland he first engaged with the basic tenets of an ecclesiastical education in an intellectual context not dissimilar to that of medieval European centres elsewhere. The concepts he went on to cultivate as part of the key contribution he made to universal history writing throughout Europe were also informed by this Irish phase of his learning. The texts in both Latin and the vernacular he brought with him were incorporated into his Chronicle, as we have seen, and he remained engaged with insular writing while working in an imperial milieu. The

compilatory activity which, combined with critical appraisal of sources, formed the basis of his chronicle-writing was a core feature of writing history in Ireland, as it was in Carolingian Europe and later (see McKitterick; and Reimitz). In his training and writing, Marianus embodies two sides – Irish and imperial – of a common intellectual heritage. And just as the Irish manifestation of this shared elite culture must be taken into account to understand fully the Irish imperialist's Chronicle, in any exploration of writing history in Ireland in this vibrant era, a broader European cultural heritage has an important part to play.

This heritage needs reiteration, as notwithstanding the wealth of written literature surviving from Ireland in the Middle Ages it is repeatedly deemed "off the mainstream" (see Edel). When treated alongside medieval writing from elsewhere (frequently in a section with its equally 'deviant' proto-relation, Welsh literature), its differences are most often discussed. "Celtic literature is archaic in virtually every respect"; its authors "Celtic poets […] were shamanistic figures"; "Christianity has made little ostensible impact," much less influences emanating from a centre further east (Tymoczko, "Celtic Literature" 165–66 and see "The Nature"). Literary scholars have neglected it, as "although to a certain extent inspired by Western mainstream literature, [it] quite obviously does not meet its standard" (Edel 24). Modern literary taste may underlie a continued focus in recent general descriptions of this literature on sagas and particular types of poetry, yet medieval Irish literature is implicitly reduced to a fraction of its glorious whole as a result.[28] Moreover, this compartmentalisation does not reflect the approach of medieval author-scribes, as our brief discussion of *Lebor na hUidre* has shown.

Rawlinson B502 and Rawlinson B503

Nor were the architects of *Lebor na hUidre* in any way exceptional in this regard. The diverse subject matter of that manuscript and the broad learned framework within which texts of all types were juxtaposed and interpreted is similarly a feature of other codices of the time written in Irish. Another twelfth-century slightly larger manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 502, opens in its current form with the vernacular versification of biblical history upon which Marianus Scotus drew. This is followed by a more complete version of *Sex aetates mundi* than has survived in *Lebor na hUidre*. Narratives relating the major life events of pivotal Irish figures span-

28. For an example of this approach, see Ní Bhrolcháin, as noted by Bronner.

29. For a description of the contents of the manuscript, see Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 182–200.

ning the pre-Christian and Christian periods follow. A variety of information pertaining to poets, saints and kings is also provided.[29] The specifically Irish matter is implicitly presented as part of wider world history; in a story beginning with creation the Irish are shown to have played a pivotal part.

This is made explicit in another manuscript of this period, bound together with Rawlinson B. 502 'proper' in the seventeenth century, but originally an independent work (Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 181–82). Preserved in fragmentary form, it constitutes a version of what is known as the 'Irish World Chronicle.' A history of the world based on sources such as Eusebius, Orosius and Bede which were also used by Marianus Scotus and other chroniclers, it accommodates within this wider chronology pre-Christian Irish literary heroes who are thereby assigned a place in a universal scheme. Thus, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* is dated to the year of the birth of Mary, mother of Christ (*Maria mater domini nata est*; *Slógad Tána bo Cualngi*) and Cú Chulainn's death is recorded ten years later when Caesar Augustus reigned (Stokes 406–07). A second version of this creative work is preserved in another manuscript of our era. In Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 503, it forms the first part of a southern Irish chronicle, 'The Annals of Inisfallen' (Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 201–07). Copying from an earlier exemplar, a late-eleventh century scribe reproduced this world history and a chronicle of predominantly Irish affairs down to 1092. It was continued by a series of annalists throughout the Middle Ages ending with the entries for 1450.[30] This is living history, therefore; it is the kind of scholarship in which contemporary authors were actively engaged more broadly. Indicative of that engagement is glossing on the 'Irish World Chronicle' text of Rawlinson B. 502 by a number of later scholars, one of whom has been identified as *Lebor na hUidre*'s 'H' (see Best, "Palaeographical Notes"; and Oskamp).

30. There is a facsimile edition by Best and Mac Neill. The text was edited and translated by Mac Airt, *The Annals*.

The Book of Leinster

In their judicious use of glosses and commentary, Irish scribes employed the scholarly apparatus familiar also elsewhere in medieval Europe (see Herbert 89–91). In their application of these explicatory techniques, however, Latin and vernacular interact on the manuscript page, as is evident in the easy code switching between the reference in Latin to the birth of Mary and its synchronisation in Irish with the hosting of the Cattle-Raid of Cooley noted above (Stokes

406–07). The two languages are also brought together in the largest surviving manuscript from this era, the Book of Leinster, also known as *Lebor na Núachongbála* (The Book of Oughavall), in which monastery it was once housed (Best, Bergin, O'Brien and O'Sullivan). Written over a number of decades in the second half of the twelfth century, like *Lebor na hUidre* it too is primarily a vernacular tome. However, alongside a longer copy of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* than that surviving in the earlier manuscript is found a skilful adaptation of *De excidio historia Troiae*, a fifth-century account of the Trojan War attributed to Dares Phrygius. This text was of major influence throughout Europe and served as a source for chroniclers and writers of history from the seventh century, as witnessed by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* (Krusch; and Wallace-Hadrill).[31] It inspired literary retellings from at least the twelfth century in both Latin and vernaculars, including a poem in Latin hexameter, *Daretis Frigii Ylias* (The *Iliad* of Dares Phygius), and a French verse version, *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure (Gompf; Roberts; Constans; Baumgartner and Vieillard).[32] The earliest Irish manifestation of Dares' account predates these, however. *Togail Troí* (The Destruction of Troy), extant in the twelfth-century manuscript, the Book of Leinster, was not the first vernacular adaptation of *De excidio historia Troiae* composed in Ireland; an eleventh-century version is preserved in later manuscripts and there may have been a tenth-century one now lost (see O'Connor 13–15). Within the ambience of the Troy tale in the Book of Leinster, the *Táin* and other accounts of legendary Irish heroes found within the same manuscript tell a more local story but one that in concept and intent may be said to parallel the grand historical narrative of the Trojan war (see Clarke, "An Irish Achilles"; and Poppe and Schlüter). The work of contemporary scholars whose poetry was also recorded in the manuscript reveals a similar approach. In their work which could be described as versified historical syncretising, typological parallels between Irish dynasties and significant world kingships such as the Babylonians and Macedonians are drawn.[33] One of these poets, Flann of Monasterboice, was alluded to in passing in the earlier manuscript *Lebor na hUidre*, as has been noted; he and other named poets, present their record of Irish happenings with a wide-angled lens extending well beyond Ireland itself.

The work of Flann and others cherished in the Book of Leinster formed part of *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, an elaborate, influential prosimetric account of the origin of Ireland and her peoples, noted in passing above. It once formed part of the earliest vernacular manu-

31. See Clarke, "International Influences" 78–79 and especially his "The *Leabhar Gabhála*" 462–65. For general discussion of the use of the Troy story in this early period, see Innes.

32. The secondary literature is extensive; for surveys of this material, see, for example, Ziolkowski; and Solomon (I owe the latter reference to Professor Michael Clarke).

33. See, for example, Mac Airt, "Middle-Irish Poems." For a general discussion of this genre of poetry, see Smith.

34. For discussion, see Carey, "*Lebor Gabála*" and the essays in the volume edited by him, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*.

script, *Lebor na hUidre*, as we have seen, though that version has not been transmitted to us. A copy has been preserved, however, in the Book of Leinster. The self-confident expression which underlies the identification of the wandering of the Irish (*Gaídil*) with the Exodus of the Israelites indicates a mature learned class, skilled in the arts of their scholarly contemporaries elsewhere with whom they were engaged in an active, ongoing dialogue.[34] That interaction manifests itself in a further international strand evident in *Lebor Gabála*, the situation of a nation's beginnings in the area of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia, as Michael Clarke has argued. And it was in the context of Carolingian global and national histories that the Irish came into contact with and developed this aspect of their origin legend, as Clarke has shown ("The *Leabhar Gabhála*"). The material continued to evolve and the type of national history preserved therein has been compared in approach and outlook with an historical mythology, *Historia Anglorum*, produced for England by the secular cleric and one time canon of Lincoln, Henry of Huntingdon in the twelfth century (Greenway, *Historia Anglorum*). Indeed *Lebor Gabála Érenn* was being revised and rewritten as the English historian composed his own account. What links these disparate texts is their focus on "the unity, the identity, the ethnic homogeneity of a people," as Rees Davies noted (20). Chief among their many differences, however, is the language in which their stories are recorded and thus the audience at whom they are addressed. Henry's moralistic work had as its patron a bishop of Lincoln though it went on to have very wide appeal (see Greenway, "Authority" and "Henry of Huntingdon"). *Lebor Gabála Érenn* presented a continuous history of Ireland in the vernacular for a learned and secular elite whose ancestors were accorded biblical forebears. When related as part of Old Testament and Christian history, the story of Ireland and the Irish acquired status and esteem. In the same way, the vernacular itself was granted prestige through its association and interaction with Latin. As will be evident from the preceding, manuscript evidence demonstrates two well-established written media interlocking in a variety of ways in a mutually beneficial embrace.

Medieval and Modern Scholars

This linguistic harmony, as far as the Irish learned context is concerned, is obscured by the opposition between sacred language and vernacular set up by scholarly models of interpretation which take

Carolingian literary practice as a widespread norm. Arguably, even in the case of Western Europe's perceived heartland, this approach may misconstrue the nature of cross-cultural interaction at the Carolingian court itself. The dominant focus on an authoritative, prestige language has rendered it difficult to perceive other conversations of a multilingual hue. According to the prevailing binary view, Carolingian learning with its powerful promotion of Latin and reluctance to use the vernacular shaped the linguistic landscape down to the twelfth century. Yet it is likely that this has the effect of minimising the productive, continuous exchange taking place throughout the early medieval period among scholars who were highly skilled and linguistically dexterous. After all Charlemagne himself is said to have commissioned a grammar of his own language, though if it was produced it has not survived.[35] There is evidence, however, that Carolingians engaged with the vernacular in other intellectual circles, most notably the clerics, Grimbald and John, who were involved in Alfred's translation of Boethius' *Pastoral Care*, alongside the king's Welsh-speaking biographer, Asser (Sweet 7; see Keynes 29). Both Anglo-Saxons and Irish continued to be a presence in European courts, the latter in such numbers that Old Irish must have been a medium of communication between them in some situations at least (Contreni 79–80). Moreover, bilingual and Old Irish glosses in the Latin manuscripts they produced attest to their use of the vernacular in a scholarly context also. One ninth-century bishop of Laon is said to have employed Irish, as well as other vernaculars (*scottica et alia barbara*) amidst his Latin prose (Contreni 81, 88, n. 16). For the most part, however, the output of these exiled Irish scholars was in Latin, including the body of significant work produced by a pair of prominent Irish literary figures, Sedulius Scottus (*fl.* 850) and John Scottus Eriugena (810–77), who were active at the court of Charles the Bald. As in the case of Marianus Scotus some two centuries later, their early education was in Ireland in a period during which the role of the vernacular in scholarship was gaining significance.[36] Irish was certainly not set aside on their arrival in Francia where multilingualism was clearly a feature of the court.

The strong vernacular voice of medieval Irish writing more generally has been acknowledged in modern scholarship but its timbre is deemed too different to allow entry into the medieval literary choir. Thus, for the most part, discussion of written culture in Western Europe has ignored Ireland's rich evidence or made passing reference to a heritage deemed to be steeped in a pre-Christian, myth-

35. "Inchoavit et grammaticam patrie sermonis": Holder-Egger 33; Ganz 38.

36. Thomas Charles-Edwards 591 and n. 27 has noted that John Scottus Eriugena does not appear to have been either a monk or in orders. The question of the type of intellectual training he received in Ireland, therefore, must remain open.

ological past. That pagan inheritance has coloured the extant literature but in ways which are difficult to measure; moreover it was literate, educated Churchmen who controlled the artistic brush. In this institutional context the encounter with Latin proved invigorating. Modes of discourse were established which lent authority to each of the languages in turn. The concepts and methods involved will be elucidated in the context of our focus on history writing, specific aspects of which will be addressed in what follows.

Writing History: How and Why?

Irish History and World History

Irish written culture was undoubtedly historical in focus, as our glimpse at the contents of the primary eleventh- and twelfth-century surviving manuscripts has shown. Access to the past was provided by texts and controlled by their authors. Interpretation of texts was directed by their juxtaposition on the manuscript page. The framework is familiar, constructed out of the raw materials to which medieval scholars more generally had recourse. Among these, the Bible was paramount, as is most evident in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, in which descent of all of Ireland's incomers is claimed from Japheth son of Noah. In his provision of what is termed in another contemporary text, "the certain historical knowledge (*coimgne*) of a fair race,"[37] the author of this enterprising composition had access to historical poems by previous scholars, as noted above.[38] Thus, his approach to historical writing built on that of scholarly predecessors. His own creative input was considerable, however, and the resulting monumental 'history' immediately found favour with the scholarly community, being revised and copied repeatedly in the twelfth century (see Carey, *A New Introduction 6*).

Closely connected with *Lebor Gabála* is *Sex aetates mundi* preserved in two of the earliest vernacular manuscripts, as we have seen. Concerned with a broader remit than *Lebor Gabála*, namely the chronological scheme of the six ages and the universal genealogy of mankind, it provided the wider structure within which the specifically Irish strands of the later work might best be interpreted. Ascribed to an eleventh-century poet, Dublittir ua hUathgaile, in one early manuscript, it is far more likely that he was the author of a related composition, *Rédig dam, a Dé do nim* (Explain for me, heavenly God), as Uáitéar Mac Gearailt has argued. This poem also survives

37. "coimgne cinte cóem-cheneóil": Gwynn, vol. III, 20–21 (line 265).

38. In addition to Flann of Monasterboice (Flann Mainistrech mac Echthigirn, died 1056), already mentioned, these include Gilla Coemáin mac Gilla Shamthainne (died 1072) and Tanaide (died c. 1075) about whom little is known; the poems attributed to them are listed in Carey, *A New Introduction* 5, nn. 11–14.

39. It is edited and translated by Ó Cróinín, *The Irish* 97–108; Ó Cróinín took Dublittir to be the author of both *Rédig dam* and *Sex aetates mundi*.

in the Book of Leinster,[39] and Dublittir practises the same art of historical writing as do the enterprising creator of *Lebor Gabála* and his poetic predecessors. History writing in this period had adopted a particular hue.

That is not to say that bland uniformity prevailed. Another historical text contemporary with *Sex aetates mundi* was *Lebor Bretnach*, the Irish version of the 'History of the Britons' (*Historia Brittonum*), and the two texts are contiguous in *Lebor na hUidre*, as already remarked (see Hogan; and van Hamel). The Trojan ancestry accorded to the Britons in the *Historia* is not adopted in *Sex aetates mundi*, however, which makes them part of a biblical scheme. The classical material from which the Troy explanation was ultimately developed constitutes, alongside the Bible, the other main body of matter to which authors in diverse regions had recourse. A strong classicizing tendency is a common feature of eleventh- and twelfth-century European compositions. Henry of Huntingdon's contemporary, William of Malmesbury, acknowledges it directly stating that he wishes to flavour his work "with Roman salt" ("Romano sale": Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, vol. 1, 14–15; see Campbell 134). It is detectible in the style adopted by other writers of this period, including perhaps the author responsible for the Book of Leinster version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (see Dilts Swartz). A range of texts relating the classical past were adapted into Irish in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including *De excidio historia Troiae*, as outlined above. This version of the Troy tale and the Irish Aeneid predate their vernacular continental counterparts, the well-known *romans d'antiquité* (see Kruger). Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *roman de Troie* is considerably later than *Togail Troí*, as we have seen.[40] *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (The Wandering of Aenias), a loose prose rendering of Virgil, is closer in date to its French metrical equivalent, *roman d'Enéas*, but nonetheless precedes it by perhaps some fifty or so years (Calder; and Petit). Notwithstanding the assignation of these and other continental texts to the genre of romance, their authors were concerned with the historicity of 'the Matter of Rome' (see Green 153–68). The interest of the Irish too was in these works as historical narratives, as has convincingly been shown (Poppe, *A New Introduction*; and Myrick 70–71). As well as providing readily accessible versions of the classics to the learned community in their own right, these adaptations furnished information to medieval scholars who need not necessarily, therefore, have had direct access to classical sources themselves.

40. Clarke, "International Influences," has argued persuasively that later versions of *Togail Troí* were drawing on international Troy texts, including Benoît.

These include the twelfth-century historical poet, Gilla in Choimdid Ua Cormaic, whose synchronic poem, *A Rí ríchid réidig dam* (King of Heaven, explain for me), drew on *Togail Troí* (Miles 48). Both compositions are also found among the Book of Leinster's pages. The Irish Troy tale was also the source for the sustained comparison between Irish heroes and classical counterparts in a poem of similar date, *Clann olloman uaisle Emna* (Children of Ollam are the Nobles of Emain) (Byrne; see Miles 49–50; and Ní Mhaonaigh, "The Hectors"). In this metrical composition not only is Troilus compared with Cú Chulainn but the *Táin* is specifically equated with Troy ("Alexandair Naíse nertmhar/ – rena néim Troí ocus Táin" ["Powerful Naíse is Alexander – their beauty caused Troy and the *Táin*"]: Byrne 62, 76, stanza 5). Classicization goes further, however, than in the matter of the cause of the encounters (see Poppe and Schlüter 134). The Irish text has been read as a direct parallel to the story of Troy, both narratives seeking in Clarke's words "to arrive at the authoritative version of the events of an ancient war, one pivotal to the Matter of Rome, the other to the Matter of Ireland" ("An Irish Achilles" 244). In this way, the account of the battles between the Ulstermen and the rest of Ireland which constitutes the Irish narrative forms part of an intellectual project which encompassed *Togail Troí*, which the scribe responsible for *Táin Bó Cuailnge* recorded alongside it in the Book of Leinster.[41] The *Táin* was considered to approximate reality and be in that sense historical, as is clear from the starting point of one of two colophons added to his version of the story by the scribe in the Book of Leinster. He would naturally have regarded the text as *historia* (see Toner, "The Ulster Cycle" 8), but as he queried the truth of certain aspects of it, he categorised some parts as *figmenta poetica* which would ordinarily belong to the realm of the implausible, *fabula*. His mastery of medieval rhetoric is evident in his nuanced pondering of the truth value of the tale (see Ó Néill, "The Latin Colophon"). These issues were of concern to his contemporaries in England and elsewhere in Europe also who simultaneously explored the question of truth and falsehood, specifically in relation to Troy and Rome (see Green 134–201).

If the events of the *Táin* and those related elsewhere in medieval Irish narrative material *could* have happened, the attempt to relate them and their protagonists to an actual genealogical and chronological structure is easily understood. Troy provided one such framework to which we will return; the Bible provided another which was creatively utilised by the author of *Lebor Gabála Érenn* and other

41. Clarke, "An Irish Achilles" 245, terms it "one of the major intellectual adventures of medieval Ireland: the project of shaping both a narrative and world history […]."

learned contemporaries. One application of this can be observed in the 'Irish World Chronicle' noted in passing above. This text furnished various versions of pre-Christian history and it survives as part of annalistic compilations that traditionally begin with the coming of Christianity with St Patrick in the fifth century. Characters and events from an Irish story world appear alongside biblical figures and significant happenings from world history in the presentation of what aims to be a continuous Christian history. Such synchronisation is also sometimes reflected in the tales themselves. Thus, the crucifixion of Jesus serves as an important chronological marker in many texts. Conchobar mac Nessa, king of the Ulstermen at the time of the *Táin*, is said to have died when news reached him of Christ's murder (Meyer, *The Death-tales* 2–23). This ultimate warrior-king can be seen to undergo a baptism of blood in death. Moreover, it is in the context of the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection that Ireland's history (*senchas hÉrend*) is related to the appointed historian (*senchaid*) of the west, Fintan mac Bóchra, according to a tale, *De Shuidigud Tellaig Temra* (Concerning the Settling of the Manor of Tara), preserved only in later manuscripts (Best, "The Settling" 138–89). As Christ died calamitously on the cross, the Irish simultaneously lost their shared knowledge or history (*coimgne*). An authoritative version is provided to Fintan by a giant-like being, Trefhuilngid Treochair, whose mythological appearance is deceptive, since he is described as "God's angel" ("haingel Dé") or indeed God himself ("nó fa Día féisin") in the tale (Best, "The Settling").[42] As Christ rises, the Irish are reborn through their acquisition of an accepted Christian history and, significantly, one which encompasses all branches of learning. The learned version of the past has acquired a seal of Christian approval. Poems put into the mouth of Fintan mac Bóchra who is accorded a descent from Noah, form part of the Book of Leinster version of *Lebor Gabála*. With the imprimatur of no less than God himself, he can claim with some authority that he can recount accurately "every colonization it [Ireland] has undergone since the beginning of the pleasant world."[43]

What is apparent, therefore, is that in writing history and constructing an account of Ireland's past, medieval Irish scholars were concerned with *historia*, as they sought to present plausible history which was – or at least could have been – real. Variety was the hallmark of Ireland's sanctioned story: "[…] a fis, a forus, a foirceatol, a bág, a breithemnus, a comgne, a comairle, a scéla, a senchasa […]," ("[…] her knowledge, her foundation, her teaching, her alliance, her

42. The point must have been reinforced by the transparent etymology of his name "Three-branched Upholder." "Upholder" is used elsewhere of Christ: Mac Airt, "*Filidecht*" 148.

43. "[…] cech gabáil rostob / ó thús bethad bind": Best, "The Settling" 128–29.

judgement, her chronicles, her counsels, her stories, her histories […]") (Best, "The Settling" 146–47). *Stair*, the vernacular equivalent of *historia*, included *fesa*, *foirbesa*, *togla* (tales of feasting, sieges, destructions) and many other such themes. Categorised as *scéla* (tales) and *coimgneda* (the plural form of *coimgne*, historical knowledge),[44] this material formed the building blocks out of which Ireland's history was created. Similarly, the list of tale-titles enumerated in the Book of Leinster would have been regarded as referring to plausible historical events and thus a legitimate part of Ireland's past.[45] Those designated with the task of interpreting these events, of recording history, therefore, should be able to recollect "coimgneda ocus sceoil ocus senchusa ocus gabala Erenn" ("the knowledge, tales, history and invasions of Ireland") (Mac Airt, "*Filidecht*" 143, n. 5).

It is in this broader conceptual context that the important collections of place-name material (*dindshenchas*) should be considered, a metrical version of which is preserved in the Book of Leinster.[46] Places formed a key constituent element in the writing of history and the creation of onomastic aetiology formed an important part of the portrayal of Ireland's landscape of the past. As depictions of specific *loci* might furnish historians with the requisite information, lists of *dramatis personae* might also be required. It is no coincidence, therefore, that numerous regnal lists, as well as genealogical material and catalogues of saints also survive from the eleventh and twelfth century in Ireland, as they do from elsewhere.[47] A text narrating the history of women (*Banshenchas*), primarily as mothers or wives of kings, might have served as a similar resource; it too is found in the Book of Leinster and has been associated with the twelfth-century poet, Gilla Mo Dutu Ua Casaide.[48]

Senchas, therefore, of all types, played a key role in the learned culture of eleventh- and twelfth-century Ireland and historiography appears to have been the primary intellectual endeavour of the day. In this too Ireland was not unusual, Susan Reynolds having documented the extent to which historical writing in general, and myths of common descent in particular acquired a new purpose from the tenth century. As stories binding a particular people, they came to epitomise the unity of a group owing loyalty to what was an increasingly powerful leader, contributing to the construction of newly evolving kingdoms in the process (Reynolds). The so-called *ríg co fressabra* (kings with opposition) represent one aspect of an Irish phase of this development, in which eleventh- and twelfth-century

44. They are thus categorised in one version of *Lebor Gabála Érenn*: Mac Airt, "Filidecht" 145.

45. For discussion of this and the other extant tale-list, see Toner, "Reconstructing."

46. The term is comprised of *senchas* (history) prefaced by *dind* (a notable place).

47. Among the material used by John of Worcester, for example, to augment the universal chronicle of Marianus Scotus were royal genealogies and episcopal lists; his contemporaries drew on similar sources: see Brett.

48. This term too is a compound of *senchas*, in this instance the 'history' of women (*ban* being the gen. pl. form of *ben* 'woman'). For Gilla Modutu's literary output, see Murray 158–59.

territorial rulers competed with each other for supreme position, claiming to be *rí Érenn* (king of Ireland) or its symbolic equivalent *rí Temra* (king of Tara) in turn. Fostering a kind of 'corporate' identity by means of a universal origin myth to which a whole community could ascribe enhanced a shared sense of solidarity. Ambitious rulers turned the conceit of collective ancestry articulated in such texts as *Lebor Gabála Érenn* and authenticated in narratives like *De Shuidigud Tellaig Temra* to their advantage when their place in the political pecking order allowed. Writing this particular brand of history flourished as a medieval industry precisely because aspiring, ambitious rulers had a vested interest in its promotion.

Textual Culture and Troy

49. For discussion see, for example, Southern; and Wolf. There is an overview of the European classical material in Ziolkowski; the Irish material is surveyed in O'Connor.

One framework within which Ireland's version of this type of history was being constructed was biblical, as we have seen. In addition, its creators drew freely on the classical story-world, as noted already, a body of material forming the other main strand of historical writing elsewhere in Europe at the time.[49] The universal popularity of the Troy-legend in particular has also been linked to the changing nature of European nobility, its Virgilian construction of history with an emphasis on genealogy and prophecy providing an increasingly mighty aristocracy with useful tools with which to buttress their power. In Francis Ingledew's words speaking of Europe more generally, "the production of the Book of Troy was intimately bound to the definition of an aristocratic textual culture" (669). Moreover, its conception of history was secular and provided a useful contrast with the Augustinian alternative "that construed the human condition as a state of pilgrimage and exile and that made the heavenly city or patria each person's proper goal" (Ingledew 676). When the earliest extant version of the Troy tale was written in Ireland, a vernacular reworking of Dares' *De excidio Troiae* of tenth- or eleventh-century date, secular nobility and clerical scholars were intimately intertwined. They continued to be so for some time, as indicated by the presence of a later version of *Togail Troí* in a thoroughly monastic codex, the Book of Leinster. Thus, the dual strategy of genealogical depiction of the past and firm prediction of the future which served to legitimise aristocratic power was affected in Ireland in an ecclesiastical milieu. Close connections between clerics and the ruling classes similarly underlie Troy retellings elsewhere: a particularly influential example, *Historia regum Britanniae,* was composed by a secu-

lar cleric, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who himself had Anglo-Norman links. Yet as a secular cleric, Geoffrey was of a different breed whose cultural centre was a royal court rather than a monastery. His story of Britain's Trojan origins may have been cast in Latin but it was the product of an increasingly secularised age.

The engagement of medieval Irish scholars with the story of Troy, while both detailed and deep, did not extend to acquisition of classical ancestry, however, unlike their British neighbours or Normans (and others) further afield. In this they resembled the Anglo-Saxons who quite deliberately eschewed descent from Troy, as Elizabeth Tyler has shown. Neither people was conquered by the Romans which may explain in part their mutual avoidance of Trojan origins (Tyler, "Trojans" 3). What is clear, however, is that their eschewal of a Trojan connection was a conscious intellectual choice (see Tyler, "Trojans" and Clarke, "The *Leabhar Gabhála*" 466–68). Both groups drew abundantly on Troy material in other contexts; the work of Dares Phrygius was translated early into Middle Irish, as already noted. Roughly contemporary with the Old English translation of Orosius' *Historiae adversus paganos* (History against the Pagans) which was written in the late ninth or early tenth century and presented a late antique view of Graeco-Roman history, was an Irish retelling of the career of Alexander the Great (*Scéla Alaxandair* [The Tidings of Alexander]), drawing partly on the same Orosian text (see Peters; and Meyer, "Die Geschichte").[50] In this tenth-century learned milieu, knowledge of the *Aeneid* can be assumed, although the earliest extant Irish adaptation of Virgil, *Imtheachta Aeniasa* (The Wanderings of Aeneas), is a century or so later, as noted above. Virgilian commentaries serve as important sources in this period, suggesting intensive study of the text.[51] Moreover, their extensive usage provides valuable evidence for the learned, scholarly, explicatory context in which translation of classical matter took form.

It was a context in which both clerical and lay audiences functioned, as the increasing use of Middle Irish, and to a lesser extent Old English, to communicate these classical stories reveals. They served as a broader framework against which local political issues and more immediate concerns were cast into sharp relief. In the course of a sensitive close reading of two eleventh-century English narratives, *Encomium Emmae reginae* and the *Life of Edward the Confessor*, Tyler has shown how for their continental authors and courtly patrons, Troy shaped contemporary political discourse and was central to an exploration of the concepts of history and truth ("Tro-

50. The English and Irish vernacular texts are compared by Tristram, "Der insulare Alexander." For the Old English Orosius, see Bately, *The Old English Orosius*; for discussion of date, see lxxxvi–xciii and her article, "The Old English Orosius." The use to which the text of Orosius was put in eleventh-century England, as argued persuasively in Tyler, "Writing," is highly relevant for the theme explored here. (I am grateful to Professor Tyler for providing me with a copy of this article prior to publication).

51. For examples, see Ní Mhaonaigh, "'The Metaphorical Hector'" 152–53 and Miles 60. Knowledge of the *Aeneid* in England at this time, and of Servius' commentary of it, is discussed by Tyler, "Trojans" 8–9.

jans"). On the other side of the Irish Sea, another group of deliberate non-Trojans exploited the same story-world to elucidate their own experiences in broadly similar though subtly different ways.

By way of example, we may cite a work of political propaganda, *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* (The War of the Irish against Foreigners [Vikings]) written sometime after the *Encomium* and *Life of Edward* in the opening years of the twelfth century. Ending in a pivotal battle between the forces of King Brian Boru (Brían Bórama) of Munster and a combined host of Leinstermen, the Norse of Dublin and Scandinavian allies from overseas, the learned author included frequent allusions to the Graeco-Roman past in his portrayal of an historical encounter which had taken place near Dublin in 1014 and which assumed key significance for the powerful dynasty claiming descent from Brian. In a climactic passage in the text, the latter son's, Murchad, the *de facto* battle-leader, is compared carefully and skilfully with Hector. This is no mere heroic equivalence, however, and the superiority of the classical warrior is extoled. By placing both heroes as beginning and end points in a complex chronology based on the ecclesiastical scheme of the 'Six Ages of the World,' the cross-cultural comparison assumes added importance, according Murchad his proper place on a world-historical stage. Employing the learned motif of *senectus mundi* (the ageing world), Murchad's valour must of necessity be less than that of Hector who flourished in an earlier age when the world was in its youth. Yet both represent the pinnacle of heroism in their own allotted time (see Ní Mhaonaigh, "'The Metaphorical Hector'"). As a defining comparator, Troy was accorded a fixed point on a universal timeline, one with which a foundational, prehistoric Irish battle, *Cath Maige Tuired* (The Battle of Mag Tuired), was crucially synchronised ("úair is a n-áonaimsir rogníadh cath Muigi Tuired ocus togail Traoí" ["for the battle of Mag Tuired and the destruction of Troy occurred at the same time"]: Gray 40–01, §69). As interpretative tool, Troy was effective, since contemporary events were related precisely to it in both space and time.

In this context, the fate of Hector and the Trojans might well have been read as resonant of that of Murchad, his father Brian, and their allies at the Battle of Clontarf. Defeated in battle like the fallen heroes of Troy, the Munstermen and their supporters ultimately triumph through the supremacy of their descendants. As learned authors utilised the Troy material to comment perceptively on aspects of eleventh-century English court life, as Tyler has shown in her analysis of the *Encomium* and Edward the Confessor's *Life* ("Trojans" and

Tyler, *England in Europe*), so too did their Irish counterparts draw on their detailed knowledge of classical narratives to provide a nuanced reading of developments in their own time. Latinate learning, whether expressed in the predominantly vernacular voice of the Irish material or in Latin, informed the world-view of the ruling elite. Moreover in their extensive use of a range of European texts, of which the Troy material is merely exemplary, insular scholars demonstrate their awareness of current trends. The sophistication with which external ideas are invigorated through cross-cultural interplay of the type evident in the texts discussed above reveals a confidence born of a highly-developed written tradition and one in which for both England and Ireland the vernacular had for long played a key, and from a wider European perspective, distinctive, part.

Conclusion

In the case of Ireland in particular, the vibrant role of the vernacular has contributed to its marginalisation by modern scholars on the medieval European literary stage. Its early manuscripts have been mistakenly viewed predominantly as repositories of native myth; the involvement of their scribes in an international, intellectual endeavour has been continually downplayed. The main hand in *Lebor na hUidre*, however, responsible for our earliest extant versions of Old and Middle Irish narratives, including *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, is also attested in a Latin manuscript of Boethius' *De re arithmetica*, a core component of the medieval curriculum (see Duncan, "*Lebor na hUidre*"). There is also evidence for extensive study and glossing of Boethius in the twelfth century in the monastery of Glendalough where another vernacular codex discussed above, Rawlinson B 502, may have been compiled about the same time (see Ó Néill, "Irish Glosses"). Vernacular renditions of classical texts, such as the copy of *Togail Troí* contained in a third contemporary manuscript, the Book of Leinster, display intense engagement with both Latin source and commentary. In the same way, extensive use of biblical and other ecclesiastical material displays the skill and sophistication and playfulness that only deep understanding of a Latinate, learned culture can bring. Texts and tenets central to the thought processes of medieval Europe's educated and elite were moulded and modified by Irish scholars, as they were by authors not deemed peripheral in any way. Re-

thinking medieval western literature will involve both perceived marginal and middle occupying the same central space.

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ISABEL VARILLAS SÁNCHEZ

La edición del libro sagrado:

el 'paradigma alejandrino' de Homero al Shahnameh

Abstract

One of the most significant current discussions in World Literature is the dating of the Homeric poems. Although the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are traditionally dated to the eighth century BCE, there are many testimonies since the Greek Archaic period connecting the editing of these texts with later times and authors, primarily with Peisistratus, the tyrant of Athens. Some sources add that Peisistratus was helped by a group of seventy or seventy-two wise men in order to accomplish this goal. The pattern of a 'powerful king' who calls together a group of seventy or seventy-two wise men to carry out a philological work, such as an edition or a translation, reminds us of the story of the *Letter of Aristeas*, in which Ptolemy II Philadelphus gathered in Alexandria the same number of wise men to translate the Jewish Torah into Greek. The similarity between the two accounts seems to indicate that there is a contamination between the process of editing two of the most important texts bodies of Western culture: the Homeric poems and the Bible. The aim of this paper is to go further into this theory, in an attempt to establish which of the two comes first, and to see if the pattern is traceable in other cultures with a foundational book, such as the Qur´an, the Persian Shahnameh, and Avesta.

1 La comisión de 72 sabios

Nuestra cultura occidental actual es heredera de la grecolatina y la judeocristiana. Al margen de nuestras creencias personales y de los conocimientos de estas tradiciones que tengamos, es innegable que están presentes en nuestro mundo y que existen varios paralelismos entre ambas. La relación que pretendo tratar en este artículo es una de las que pueden establecerse entre los libros que podemos considerar 'fundacionales' de dichas culturas: los poemas homéricos, sin duda la obra más importante de la cultura griega, y la Torá, la Ley judía que forma parte del Antiguo Testamento cristiano. Respecto a ellas, la tradición nos ha legado dos historias distintas pero con bastantes paralelismos entre sí: una nos cuenta cómo el tirano Pisístrato de Atenas convocó a 72 sabios en el siglo VI a.C. para ordenar y

editar los poemas homéricos; la otra, que ese mismo número de sabios fue el responsable de la traducción de la *Septuaginta* tres siglos más tarde.

La Septuaginta

Para definir correctamente el término de Septuaginta nos remitimos a la introducción general de su obra *La Biblia griega Septuaginta* donde Natalio Fernández Marcos expresaba:

> Originariamente el nombre de *Septuaginta* – οἱ ἑβδομήκοντα en griego, 70 – indicaba el número de setenta / setenta y dos eruditos que, según la legendaria *Carta* de Aristeas,[1] tradujeron la Torá judía en tiempos del rey Ptolomeo II Filadelfo (285–46 a.C.) en la ciudad de Alejandría. Dicho número de traductores pasó a designar la obra traducida, que en un principio abarcó solo el Pentateuco. No obstante, desde los orígenes de la tradición cristiana se extendió el nombre a todos los escritos que integran la Biblia griega. (Fernández Marcos, *La Biblia griega Septuaginta* 11)

En la citada *Carta* encontramos indicado varias veces[2] que el número de 72 traductores responde a la fórmula de 6 sabios de cada una de las 12 tribus de Israel. Esto implica una discrepancia evidente en los números y una pregunta fundamental: si en la *Carta* de Aristeas pone claramente que fueron 72 los eruditos hechos llegar a Alejandría, ¿por qué se impuso el término *Septuaginta*, Biblia de los 70? El motivo es que ni la tradición ni los expertos modernos están de acuerdo con la historicidad del número 72. Para empezar, ambos aparecen en las fuentes en distintas ocasiones. Dos siglos después de la escritura de la *Carta* de Aristeas, el historiador Flavio Josefo (37–101) parafraseó casi en su totalidad su contenido en el libro 12 de su obra *Antigüedades de los judíos*, mezclando la fórmula de 6 sabios de cada tribu con el número total de 70[3] sin justificarlo ni comentarlo. Esto resulta extraño porque en otras partes del pasaje se remite explícitamente a su fuente,[4] la *Carta* de Aristeas. Si en el texto de la misma que a él le llegó ponía 72 cabría esperar que explicara por qué no está de acuerdo; si en cambio aparecía 70, la fórmula de 6 miembros de cada tribu debería haberle llamado la atención y comentarla o modificarla. Por su parte Filón de Alejandría, quien también atestigua esta historia en la *Vida de Moisés* 25–45, no refiere ni insinúa ningún número. A partir de ese momento la cantidad de traductores osciló

1. La *Carta de Aristeas* es un texto del siglo II a.C. en el que aparentemente uno de los personajes de la historia narra, en forma de epístola a su amigo Filócrates, todo el proceso de traducción de la Ley judía al griego por parte de 72 sabios en Alejandría. La narración comienza con la propuesta de Demetrio Falero a su rey, Ptolomeo II Filadelfo, de pedir a Eleazar, sumo sacerdote de los judíos, una comisión que pudiera traducir la obra al griego para enriquecer la biblioteca. Desde Jerusalén llegan 72 sabios, cada uno de los cuales hace su propia traducción; cuando las comparan al final, milagrosamente todas resultan ser idénticas. Se mantiene el nombre de *Carta* aunque los expertos consideran que el encabezado y despedida responderían a intereses estilísticos, y que nunca habría tenido esa finalidad. Véase al respecto el trabajo de Pelletier.

2. Aparece hasta en tres ocasiones la fórmula ἀφ᾽ ἑκάτης φυλῆς ἕξ (§ 32, 39, 46) y en otras tres el número explícito de sabios, ἑβδομήκοντα δύο (§ 50, 273, 307).

3. Encontramos la fórmula ἀφ᾽ ἑκάτης φυλῆς ἕξ en 12.39, 12.49, 12.56 mientras que en 12.57 y 12.86 leemos ἑβδομήκοντα τῶν πρεσβυτέρων.

4. *Antigüedades de los Judios* 12.100: ὡς τῷ βουλομένῳ τὰ κατὰ μέρος γνῶναι τῶν ἐν τῷ συμποσίῳ ζητηθέντων εἶναι μαθεῖν ἀναγνόντι τὸ Ἀρισταίου βιβλίον, ὃ συνέγραψεν διὰ ταῦτα ("el que quiera conocer lo que se dijo en el banquete puede consultar el libro de Aristeo, quien escribió sobre el particular").

en la tradición entre 72 y 70 hasta que este último se impuso, dando lugar al nombre de *Septuaginta* para referirse al texto griego.

Varios estudiosos como Sylvie Honigman, Ekaterina Matusova o Luke Neubert, de cuyas hipótesis hablaré a continuación, han especulado acerca del origen del número 72. Opinan que no tiene relevancia en la cultura hebrea, como sí la tendría el 70 con una mayor presencia y simbología en ella dado que aparece en el Antiguo Testamento en dos ocasiones (Éxodo 24 y Números 11.16) como el número de ancianos de Israel hechos llamar por Dios a través de Moisés. La pregunta entonces resulta evidente: ¿cuál es el origen del número 72 o de la fórmula de 6 miembros de cada tribu? Honigman, en su trabajo sobre la *Septuaginta*, propone que el autor de la *Carta* de Aristeas tenía en mente efectivamente a los 70 ancianos de Moisés, pero que para respetar un 'modelo cívico' y no infravalorar a ninguna de las 12 tribus de Israel se debía pedir a todas el mismo número de traductores (Honigman 57–58). Otros estudiosos (como Matusova 60–62 o Neubert 272 ss.) buscan en cambio el origen de este número en la recensión por parte del tirano Pisístrato de los poemas homéricos.

Ilíada y Odisea

Tradicionalmente se considera que *Ilíada* y *Odisea* fueron escritas por Homero en el siglo VIII a.C. No obstante, ya desde la Antigüedad muchas voces[5] relacionaron la edición de estos textos (no así su composición, que siempre se atribuyó al padre de la épica) con momentos y personajes posteriores, fundamentalmente con el tirano Pisístrato de Atenas del siglo VI a.C. De entre todos estos testimonios hay algunos muy tardíos en los que se dice explícitamente que el tirano reunió a un grupo de 72 sabios (igual que en el caso de la *Septuaginta* según la *Carta* de Aristeas) para llevar a cabo esta empresa.

Cuatro son las fuentes griegas a través de las que nos ha llegado esta historia con el número de sabios de manera explícita: dos pasajes realizados en el siglo VI d.C. en sendos comentarios a la *Gramática* de Dionisio Tracio, uno atribuido a Melampo o Diomedes y otro a Heliodoro,[6] y otros dos más tardíos, el llamado 'Segundo Anónimo de Cramer' y los *Prolegómenos a la Comedia de Aristófanes* del erudito bizantino del siglo XII Juan Tzetzes, quien menciona la historia hasta tres veces.

5. La lista es larga pero, además de los que comentaremos en este artículo, podemos citar a Cicerón, Pausanias, Eliano, etc. Sobre el tema de la recensión de los poemas homéricos por parte de Pisístrato, véase Wolf (109) y el trabajo de Jensen (149 ss.); sobre la literatura en la Grecia arcaica recomendamos el trabajo de Signes Codoñer (*Escritura y literatura en la Grecia arcaica*).

6. No es fácil datar los escolios de la *Gramática* de Dionisio Tracio ya que de sus autores normalmente no conocemos mucho más que el nombre. Tradicionalmente se acepta la opinión del propio Hilgard en el prefacio de su obra y muchos, entre ellos Diomedes, Melampo y Heliodoro se sitúan en el siglo VI, aunque en casos como el de este último se ha propuesto con posterioridad (Theodoridis) retrasar su fecha al menos dos siglos; no obstante como señala Signes Codoñer "el nombre pagano Heliodoro parece difícilmente asumible en la cristiana Bizancio para los siglos IX–X." Véase Hilgard (V–XVIII), Stammerjohann (243–44 y 386–89) y Signes Codoñer (*La quimera de los gramáticos*).

En los dos testimonios más antiguos, los de los comentaristas de la *Gramática*, la equivalencia palabra por palabra a lo largo de toda la historia hace evidente suponer que están copiados de una misma fuente que no nos ha llegado, ya que Dionisio Tracio (s. II a.C.), al que comentan, no menciona la historia. Además, ambos narran el proyecto a propósito de la palabra *rapsodia*. Sólo he incluido una parte del pasaje de Heliodoro, posiblemente la fuente de los otros dos que veremos a continuación o al menos de Tzetzes por lo que él mismo nos dice:

φασὶ δὲ ὡς ἀπώλοντο τὰ τοῦ Ὁμήρου· τότε γὰρ οὐ γραφῇ παρεδίδοτο, ἀλλὰ μόνῃ διδασκαλίᾳ καὶ ὡς ἂν μνήμῃ μόνῃ ἐφυλάττετο· καὶ ᾔδει ὁ μὲν τυχὸν ἑκατὸν στίχους, ὁ δὲ πεντήκοντα, ἄλλος δὲ ὅσους ἂν ἔτυχε· καὶ ἤμελλε λήθῃ παραδίδοσθαι ἡ τοιαύτη ποίησις. ἀλλὰ Πεισίστρατος θέλων καὶ ἑαυτῷ δόξαν περιποιήσασθαι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Ὁμήρου ἀνανεῶσαι, τοιοῦτόν τι ἐβουλεύσατο· ἐκήρυξεν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἑλλάδι τὸν ἔχοντα ὁμηρικοὺς στίχους ἀγαγεῖν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐπὶ μισθῷ ὡρισμένῳ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον στίχον. [...] καὶ μετὰ τὸ πάντας συναγαγεῖν παρεκάλεσεν ἑβδομήκοντα δύο γραμματικούς, συνθεῖναι τὰ τοῦ Ὁμήρου ἕκαστον κατ᾽ ἰδίαν, ὅπως ἂν δόξῃ τῷ συνθέντι καλῶς ἔχειν, ἐπὶ μισθῷ πρέποντι λογικοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ κριταῖς ποιημάτων, ἑκάστῳ δεδωκὼς κατ᾽ ἰδίαν πάντας τοὺς στίχους ὅσους ἦν συναγαγών.

καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἕκαστον συνθεῖναι κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γνώμην, εἰς ἓν συνήγαγε πάντας τοὺς προλεχθέντας γραμματικούς, ὀφείλοντας ἐπιδεῖξαι αὐτῶν ἕκαστον τὴν ἰδίαν σύνθεσιν, παρόντων ὁμοῦ πάντων. οὗτοι οὖν ἀκροασάμενοι οὐ πρὸς ἔριν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ πᾶν τὸ τῇ τέχνῃ ἁρμόζον, ἔκριναν πάντες κοινῇ καὶ ὁμοφρόνως, ἐπικρατῆσαι τὴν σύνθεσίν τε καὶ διόρθωσιν Ἀριστάρχου καὶ Ζηνοδότου· καὶ πάλιν ἔκριναν τῶν δύο συνθέσεών τε καὶ διορθώσεων βελτίονα τὴν Ἀριστάρχου.

(Dicen que los [versos] de Homero se perdieron; pues entonces no se transmitían por escrito, sino a través de la enseñanza, de modo que se preservaban sólo por la memoria. Y uno cantaba quizás cien versos, otro quinientos, y otro los que fuera; y esa poesía iba a caer en el olvido. Pero Pisístrato, queriendo obtener fama para sí mismo, y recuperar las obras de Homero resolvió lo siguiente: proclamó por toda Grecia a través de heraldos que quien tuviera versos homéricos los

7. En las líneas que elimino, por falta
de espacio, cuenta cómo efectiva-
mente los griegos acudieron a esta
llamada, algunos con versos falsos
para así cobrar más, los cuales
habrían sido marcados por los
gramáticos con un óbelo.

llevara ante él a cambio de un estipendio definido por cada verso.[7] [...] Y después de reunirlos todos mandó llamar a setenta y dos gramáticos para que compusieran los poemas de Homero cada uno según su criterio, como le pareciese bien al que los componía, con un sueldo apropiado para hombres que eran sabios y críticos de los poemas, habiendo entregado a cada uno todos los versos que había reunido.

Y después de que cada uno compusiera según su juicio, reunió en un único lugar a todos los gramáticos anteriormente mencionados, debiendo cada uno de ellos recitar su propia composición, estando todos presentes en el mismo lugar. Así pues estos, después de escucharlos, no por rivalidad sino en honor a la verdad y a todo lo que se adecúa a la gramática, todos juzgaron en común y por consenso que eran superiores la composición y edición de Aristarco y la de Zenódoto; y, luego, juzgaron que de entre las dos composiciones y ediciones era mejor la de Aristarco.)[8]

Dejando de lado la sorprendente presencia de Zenódoto y Aristarco (que sin duda serán Zenódoto de Éfeso, primer director de la Biblioteca de Alejandría y Aristarco de Samotracia, último gran filólogo a cargo de la institución, ambos editores de los poemas homéricos entre los siglos III y II a.C.) en la Atenas de Pisístrato, la similitud entre esta historia y la anteriormente referida de los *Septuaginta* va mucho más allá de la presencia del número 72, como ya apuntaron Honigman y Matusova:

- un gobernante (Pisístrato o Ptolomeo II Filadelfo) emprende un importante proyecto filológico (en un caso edición y en otro traducción)
- el texto en cuestión es de gran importancia en ambos casos (textos fundacionales) y por tanto la empresa les reportará fama
- para llevarla a cabo hace llamar a 72 expertos-sabios
- cada uno de los eruditos realiza primero el trabajo individualmente
- después hay una lectura y puesta en común de las 72 versiones en presencia de sus autores: en el primer caso se decide cuál es la mejor edición mientras que en el segundo se sorprenden al comprobar que las 72 traducciones son idénticas (presencia de la divinidad y sacralización de la traducción)

Tantos paralelismos nos llevan a pensar que debe existir o un patrón general o una probable contaminación entre ambas historias. Honigman habla del 'paradigma alejandrino' puesto que el ambiente filológico existente en el siglo II a.C. en Alejandría, con la edición de Aristarco de los poemas homéricos como cierre de un periodo de auge para la Biblioteca y los estudios filológicos acerca de Homero sería el marco perfecto para desarrollar la historia narrada en la *Carta* de Aristeas, datada en ese mismo periodo (Honigman 41). No obstante, otros elementos como, fundamentalmente, la presencia de una comisión de 72 miembros en ambas parece exigir otra explicación más ajustada.

Los testimonios del Segundo Anónimo de Cramer, del que se incluye un pasaje a continuación, y de Juan Tzetzes inclinan la balanza hacia una contaminación entre ambas tradiciones de la que ya se habría dado cuenta este último que, crítico consigo mismo, intentó esclarecerla y subsanarla como veremos a continuación. Los textos de estos autores presentan rasgos importantes en común: (i) parecen inspirados en los testimonios de los comentaristas ya que contienen todos los elementos antes señalados junto al anacronismo de Aristarco y Zenódoto como parte de los 72; (ii) están insertados en textos referentes a la comedia, (iii) recogen también la historia de la traducción de la Torá y (iv) algo muy llamativo, no hablan de un único grupo de gramáticos convocados por Pisístrato sino de dos, uno de 72 y otro de 4 cuyos nombres indica. De esta segunda comisión no tenemos ninguna otra referencia en toda la tradición griega pero sí un escolio latino transmitido en un manuscrito humanista perdido, el Escolio Plautino (Ritschl 3):

τὰς δὴ οὖν τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν σοφοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐξ ἑκάστου ἔθνους τήν τε οἰκείαν φωνὴν τήν τε τῶν Ἑλλήνων καλῶς εἰδόσι τὰς ἐξ ἑκάστου ἐγχειρίσας, οὕτως ἑρμηνευθῆναι αὐτὰς πεποίηκεν εἰς τὴν ἑλλάδα γλῶτταν, ὅτε δὴ καὶ τὰς τῶν Ἑβραίων διὰ τῶν ἑβδομήκοντα ἑρμηνευθῆναι πεποίηκεν. οὕτω μὲν οὖν μετενεχθῆναι τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν εἰς τὴν ἑλλάδα φωνὴν πεποίηκε· τὰς δέ γε σκηνικὰς Ἀλέξανδρός τε, ὡς ἔφθην εἰπών, καὶ Λυκόφρων διωρθώσαντο. τὰς δέ γε ποιητικὰς Ζηνόδοτος πρῶτον καὶ ὕστερον Ἀρίσταρχος διωρθώσαντο.

κaίτοι τὰς ὁμηρικὰς ἑβδομήκοντα δύο γραμματικοὶ ἐπὶ Πεισιστράτου τοῦ Ἀθηναίων τυράννου διέθηκαν οὑτωσὶ σποράδην οὔσας τὸ πρίν· ἐπεκρίθησαν δὲ κατ' αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον

τὸν καιρὸν ὑπ' Ἀριστάρχου καὶ Ζηνοδότου, ἄλλων ὄντων
τούτων τῶν ἐπὶ Πτολεμαίου διορθωσάντων. οἱ δὲ τέσσαρσί τισι
τὴν ἐπὶ Πεισιστράτου διόρθωσιν ἀναφέρουσιν· Ὀρφεῖ Κροτω-
νιάτῃ, Ζωπύρῳ Ἡρακλεώτῃ, Ὀνομακρίτῳ Ἀθηναίῳ καὶ
Ἐπικογκύλῳ. ὕστερον δὴ ταύτας ἁπάσας σκηνικάς τε καὶ
ποιητικὰς πλεῖστοι ἐξηγήσαντο· Δίδυμος, Τρύφων, Ἀπολλώνι-
ος, Ἡρωδιανός, Πτολεμαῖος Ἀσκαλωνίτης, καὶ οἱ φιλόσοφοι
Πορφύριος, Πλούταρχος καὶ Πρόκλος, ὡς καὶ πρὸ αὐτῶν
πάντων Ἀριστοτέλης.

(Así pues los libros de los otros pueblos [Ptolomeo II] hizo
que fueran traducidos a la lengua griega por sabios de cada
pueblo, que conocieran bien su lengua propia y la de los
griegos, encargándole a cada uno los que les correspondían, y
también los de los hebreos los hizo interpretar por los 70. Y
de esta manera hizo que vertieran los libros de los otros
pueblos a la lengua griega. Y Alejandro y, según acabo de
decir, también Licofrón corrigieron las obras de teatro, y las
de poesía las corrigieron Zenódoto primero y después
Aristarco.

Y ciertamente los libros homéricos que antes estaban
dispersos los colocaron en este orden setenta y dos gramáti-
cos durante el gobierno de Pisístrato, el tirano de los atenien-
ses: y en aquel momento fueron seleccionados por Aristarco
y Zenódoto, siendo estos otros [distintos] de los que los
corrigieron durante el gobierno de Ptolomeo. Otros atribu-
yen a cuatro personas la corrección durante el gobierno de
Pisístrato: a Orfeo de Crotona, Zópiro de Heraclea, Onomá-
crito el ateniense y Epicóncilo. Y después en efecto muchos
comentaron todas estas obras teatrales y poéticas: Dídimo,
Trifón, Apolonio, Herodiano, Ptolomeo de Ascalón, y los
filósofos Porfirio, Plutarco y Proclo, como también Aristóte-
les antes que todos estos.)

En la primera parte de este pasaje del Anónimo de Cramer los ele-
mentos están claros, pero cuando comienza a hablar de los textos ho-
méricos parece que empieza a repetirse (el número 70/72), a super-
poner distintas versiones de un mismo hecho (las dos comisiones)
o incluso a inventar para justificarse, como cuando puntualiza que
existieron dos Aristarcos y dos Zenódotos relacionados con la edi-
ción de los poemas homéricos, algo que no volvemos a leer en nin-
guna otra parte.

9. Proemio 1.144: ὡς ἄρτι ποτὲ τὴν ἔφηβον ἡλικίαν πατῶν καὶ τὸν αἰθέριον ἐξηγούμενος Ὅμηρον πεισθεὶς Ἡλιοδώρῳ τῷ βδελυρῷ εἶπον συνθεῖναι τὸν Ὅμηρον ἐπὶ Πεισιστράτου ἑβδομηκονταδύο σοφούς, ὧν ἑβδομηκονταδύο εἶναι καὶ τὸν Ζηνόδοτον καὶ Ἀρίσταρχον ("Justamente, cuando despreciaba la temprana edad e interpretaba al celestial Homero, convencido por el odioso Heliodoro, dije que, por mandato de Pisístrato, compusieron [la obra de] Homero 72 sabios, entre los que estaban también Zenódoto y Aristarco").

Por su parte Tzetzes, la primera vez que aborda el tema de la recensión pisistrátida al final del primer proemio de los *Prolegómenos a la Comedia de Aristófanes*,[9] lo hace reconociendo el error que cometió, según parece, en una obra anterior que no conservamos y atribuyendo dicho fallo a su juventud y al equívoco testimonio de Heliodoro. Probablemente se refiere al texto del comentario a la *Gramática* de Dionisio Tracio que hemos leído más arriba, como ya apuntara en 1866 Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl (33–35). No obstante, en el testimonio del comentarista no tenemos ninguna referencia a esta lista de 4 gramáticos por lo que, o bien el texto de Heliodoro que hemos leído antes no es la fuente (o no la única), o la versión del mismo que le llegó a Tzetzes y probablemente al autor del *Anónimo* había sido alterada y ampliada con respecto a la que conocemos. En cualquier caso, estos pasajes revelan que el sentido crítico de estos filólogos bizantinos se mostró reticente ante la presencia de una comisión de 72 sabios de la que formaran parte Zenódoto y Aristarco. En el *Anónimo* esta situación se justifica, como ya señalamos, alegando que serían distintos a los alejandrinos.

Juan Tzetzes va más allá y reconstruye el pasaje entero con las referencias a la *Septuaginta* y la labor de recensión de Licofrón y Zenódoto en el segundo *Proemio*, colocando cada elemento y cada nombre en su lugar temporal y geográfico: los 72 sabios, no 70, fueron los traductores de la Ley judía por orden de Ptolomeo Filadelfo; Zenódoto y Aristarco, en este orden, los que en ese mismo contexto pero con algunos años de diferencia editaron los textos homéricos; por último Epicóncilo, Onomácrito, Zópiro de Heraclea y Orfeo de Crotona, bajo el gobierno de Pisístrato varios siglos antes, habrían sido los encargados de recoger y ordenar los versos homéricos. Veamos el pasaje:

> τότε δὲ συνηθροισμένων ἁπασῶν τῶν βίβλων τῶν ἑλληνίδων καὶ ἔθνους παντὸς καὶ σὺν αὐταῖς τῶν Ἑβραίων, ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἀφειδὴς βασιλεύς, ὃν ποταμὸς χρυσορρόας, ἀλλ᾽ ἑπταστόμως ἔκρεων, τὰς ἐθνικὰς μὲν ὁμογλώσσοις ἐκείνων ἀνδράσι σοφοῖς καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἑλληνίζουσιν εἴς τε γραφὴν ὁμοῦ καὶ γλῶσσαν ἑλλάδα μετήμειψεν, ὡς καὶ τὰς ἑβραΐδας δι᾽ ἑβδομήκοντα δύο ἑρμηνέων ἑβραίων σοφῶν πεφυκότων καθ᾽ ἑκατέραν διάλεκτον. τὰς ἐθνικὰς μὲν οὕτω μετεποίησε βίβλους· τῶν ἑλληνίδων δὲ βίβλων, ὡς καὶ προλαβὼν ἔφην, τὰς τραγικὰς μὲν διώρθωσε δι᾽ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Αἰτωλοῦ, τὰς τῆς κωμῳδίας δὲ διὰ τοῦ Λυκόφρονος, διὰ δὲ Ζηνοδότου τοῦ Ἐφεσίου τὰς τῶν λοιπῶν

ποιητῶν, τὰς ὁμηρείους δὲ κατ' ἐξαίρετον, πρὸ διακοσίων καὶ
πλειόνων ἐνιαυτῶν Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Φιλαδέλφου καὶ τῆς
διορθώσεως Ζηνοδότου συντεθείσας σπουδῇ Πεισιστράτου
παρὰ τῶν τεσσάρων τούτων σοφῶν, Ἐπικογκύλου Ὀνομακρί-
του τε Ἀθηναίου Ζωπύρου τε Ἡρακλεώτου καὶ Κροτωνιάτου
Ὀρφέως. οὕτω μὲν ἐν χρόνοις τοῦ Πεισιστράτου τοῖς τέσσαρι
τούτοις σοφοῖς αἱ ὁμηρικαὶ συγγραφαὶ τεμαχίοις περιφερόμεναι
συνετέθησαν καὶ βίβλοι ἐγένοντο· χρόνοις δ', ὡς ἔφην, τοῦ
Φιλαδέλφου παρὰ τοῦ Ζηνοδότου ὠρθώθησαν.

(Entonces, una vez reunidos todos los libros de los griegos y
de todas las naciones y junto a estos los de los hebreos, aquel
pródigo rey, como río que era que fluía oro y manaba de siete
bocas, pasó los escritos de los gentiles a la escritura y a la
lengua griega por medio de ancianos de aquellos pueblos que
hablaban la misma lengua y hablaban correctamente el
griego, al igual que los textos hebreos, mediante 72 sabios
intérpretes hebreos conocedores de ambas lenguas. Y así
tradujo los libros de los gentiles: de los libros griegos, como
también avancé yo antes, las tragedias las corrigió por medio
de Alejandro el Etolio, los libros de comedia por medio de
Licofrón, y por medio de Zenódoto de Éfeso los de los
restantes poetas, pero especialmente los homéricos, puesto
que habían sido compuestos 200 años o más antes de Ptolo-
meo Filadelfo y de la corrección de Zenódoto, por empeño
de Pisístrato por estos cuatro sabios, Epicóncilo, Onomácrito
el ateniense, Zópiro de Heraclea y Orfeo de Crotona. De este
modo, en tiempos de Pisístrato, por estos cuatro sabios los
escritos homéricos que circulaban por partes pequeñas
fueron compuestos y surgieron los libros. Y en los tiempos de
[Ptolomeo] Filádelfo, como ya dije, fueron corregidos por
Zenódoto.)

Esta 'puesta en orden' de Tzetzes parece responder a la pregunta que
ya indicamos pero no resolvimos a propósito de la *Septuaginta*, apli-
cable también en este caso ¿cuál es el origen de los 72 gramáticos?
Con la reordenación del pasaje parece que Tzetzes considera, ya que
elimina ese número de la tradición de los poemas homéricos y lo fija
en la primera parte (y en eso estaríamos de acuerdo con él), que la
cifra fue interpolada a partir de la historia de la traducción de la Bi-
blia griega, lo que explica también la anacrónica presencia de Aris-
tarco y Zenódoto entre ellos. En el contexto descrito en la *Carta* de

Aristeas el número 72 y el ámbito alejandrino se combinaban de manera históricamente aceptable, lo que no ocurre en la tradición clásica griega en la que este número tan alto no tenía significado ni connotaciones especiales, aunque algunos estudiosos intenten demostrar lo contrario (Matusova 79; Neubert 273). Una contaminación a partir de la historia de los *Septuaginta* explica también por qué su fuente hablaba de dos comisiones distintas, en una de las cuales había filólogos alejandrinos: porque esta debía de haber sido creada a partir de la historia de la *Carta* de Aristeas mientras que la otra era la que tradicionalmente se situaría en la Atenas del siglo VI a.C. Una comisión más pequeña, de cuatro gramáticos, se adapta mejor a la época clásica aunque de estos cuatro como grupo no tenemos más referencia. Esto no significa necesariamente que el número 72 provenga de la cultura hebrea, ya que varios especialistas lo niegan y ciertamente la tradición lo ha ido desplazando en beneficio del 70, pero desde luego no proviene de la cultura griega clásica.

2 El 'paradigma alejandrino' en otras tradiciones

El Corán

Circulan diversas tradiciones sobre la edición del Corán, en cuya historicidad no entramos, pero que nos interesan porque en algunos puntos se cruzan con nuestra tipología. Todas ellas parten de la idea de que Mahoma no dejó a su muerte ninguna copia completa del Corán por escrito. A partir de esto serían necesarios en cualquier contexto 'tres pasos,' como apunta Gabriel Said Reynolds, para la realización de una edición escrita del Corán:

> Recopilar el texto a partir de fuentes orales y escritas, establecer el esqueleto del texto árabe en consonantes y terminar el texto completamente vocalizado que será aceptado como el estándar canónico. (Reynolds 73)

De acuerdo con una versión bastante aceptada, el profeta habría recitado ante personas cercanas las suras que por distintos medios (revelaciones divinas, por medio del ángel Gabriel, en sueños, etc.) le eran reveladas y este público las habría copiado en los soportes que tuvieran a mano, como cuero u hojas de palma, o memorizado. No consideraron necesario hacer una copia completa de las suras ni siquiera tras la muerte del Profeta hasta que en la batalla de Yamama (632/633) murieron la mayoría de aquellos que habían memorizado

todas las revelaciones. Entonces el futuro califa Umar se dio cuenta de que sin una edición oficial completa el texto se acabaría perdiendo o mutilando. Al llegar a este punto la tradición es menos unánime. Unas versiones dicen que Umar intentó convencer al califa Abu Bakr (632–34) de llevar a cabo la edición y o bien este no le hizo caso, o bien la empezó pero no pudo concluirla. Por ello Umar, convertido en califa a la muerte de su predecesor (634–44), la habría realizado, comenzando por ordenar que todos aquellos que conocieran o tuvieran por escrito alguna sura se la llevaran; una comisión de expertos determinaría si los versos que la gente presentaba, por escrito o de memoria, eran correctos. La comisión daba por válidos aquellos pasajes que fueran atestiguados por al menos dos 'hombres íntegros.' Otras versiones en cambio indican que la edición sería cosa del siguiente califa, Utman (644–56), basándose tal vez en la recopilación de suras ya existente – la de Umar u otra (Nöldeke 223).

La presencia del pueblo como conservador y transmisor de un texto fundacional antes de que hubiera una edición escrita completa es un elemento que observábamos también en el pasaje de Heliodoro y que aparece en otros testimonios de la recensión pisistrátida en los que no nos detendremos ahora. Hasta tal punto este dato es definitorio en ambas tradiciones que en el siglo IX un árabe cristiano melquita – no musulmán – llamado Qustā Ibn Lūqā al-Ba'albakkī comparó la compilación del Corán con la de los poemas homéricos precisamente por la posibilidad, que ambos sistemas de recopilación dejaban abierta, de introducir versos falsos en estos textos fundamentales:[10]

(146) Se cuenta que 'Umar Ibn al-Jaṭṭāb [califa ortodoxo, 634–44] o Ut-mān no admitió nada del Corán sin testigo, con excepción tan solo de una única sura que le fue recitada por un beduino. A propósito de ésta, no tuvo duda alguna, la aceptó de él y la inscribió en la recopilación sagrada sin otro testimonio. (147) Si por lo tanto admitió una parte sin testigos y no admitió otra más que con la declaración de testigos, esto prueba que consideraba posible el plagio y que se podía introducir en el texto lo que éste no tenía, sin que se notase la diferencia y sin que esto fuese evidente.

(148) Por el contrario, se cuenta que un rey entre los reyes de los griegos, llamado Pisístrato, quiso compilar la poesía de Homero. Dio orden a un pregonero para que proclamara que quien entre los griegos aportara versos de los

10. El texto está editado y traducido al francés por Samir y Nwyia. La traducción que utilizo aparece en el artículo "Homero en tierras del Islam" de Signes Codoñer (1010–11), en el que se puede leer un somero análisis del texto.

poemas de Homero recibiría una cantidad de dinero considerable. (149) Los griegos acudieron a él de todos los confines de la tierra, con este poema. Quienquiera que le aportaba un verso del poema de Homero o de otro similar a éste, lo aceptaba y le daba la cantidad de dinero establecida; no rechazaba a nadie, para no impedir, mediante este rechazo, que otros le aportasen versos.

(150) Ahora bien, en su época había personas que componían poemas y sobresalían por ello. De forma que algunos deslizaron en el conjunto de los versos uno o dos versos, o bien completaban un verso que no habían podido preservar entero, a fin de obtener una cantidad mayor de dinero. (151) Habiendo compilado todo lo que pudieron de esta poesía, el rey hizo venir a los eruditos de la lengua. Cuando se presentaron, ellos expurgaron para él este poema y lo pusieron en orden. No tuvieron ni dudas ni vacilaciones con respecto a lo que era apócrifo. Todos supieron distinguir qué era auténtico y qué era apócrifo.

(152) Sucedió que entre los versos apócrifos, algunos eran excelentes; en otros, el primer hemistiquio era de Homero, mientras que alguna otra persona había completado el segundo. El rey ordenó que se preservaran esos versos en la obra poética porque eran hermosos y bien compuestos, pero que se los marcara con un signo a fin de que el lector supiera que no eran parte de la obra auténtica de Homero sobre la que no albergaba duda alguna, puesto que nadie podía imitar su poesía. Y el rey no tuvo necesidad, en esto, de testigos: cuando un verso extraño se introducía, se descubría por sí solo. (153) Admitiendo que este relato sea, también para ti, verídico, y como tú sabes que nadie, en los tiempos antiguos, conocía las rimas fuera de la poesía métrica y que no había costumbre de utilizarlas, ¿no piensas que Mahoma estaba seguro y ha sabido sin dudar que nadie aduciría contra él una sura contraria a las suyas?

Aunque al principio puede llamar la atención que se establezca una comparación en igualdad de términos entre el Corán y los poemas homéricos y no con la traducción de la Biblia, cuya historia Ibn Lūqā debía de conocer, esto resulta natural: el trabajo realizado por los sabios en la *Septuaginta* era únicamente de traducción y no de edición como en los otros casos, los estilos literarios del Corán (prosa rimada) y poemas homéricos (hexámetros) se prestan más a una compa-

ración que el empleado en la Biblia, más simple y sin rima; además, la relación entre libros religiosos revelados resultaría problemática. Según relata el proceso de edición de los poemas llevado a cabo por Pisístrato, los paralelismos entre ambas historias, igual que cuando hablamos del 'paradigma alejandrino,' son más que evidentes: el gobernante, califa o tirano, ordena que quienes conozcan algún verso de estos textos fundacionales, de memoria o por posesión escrita del mismo, se lo presenten para que una vez recopilados todos una comisión de expertos determine cuáles son válidos, los ordenen y realicen una edición canónica del texto.

En relación con esa comisión de sabios, hay otro testimonio que nos interesa particularmente: en el siglo IX al-Yaqubi, uno de los primeros historiadores del Islam, en su *Historias* (2:152) relata que la comisión encargada de realizar la compilación y edición del Corán habría estado formada por 75 miembros: 25 Quraysh, de la tribu del profeta y 50 Anṣaris, habitantes de Medina. Además de que el número sea muy parecido al que hemos analizado antes, volvemos a ver la distribución territorial y tribal como pauta para la elección de los agentes del trabajo igual que en el caso de la *Septuaginta*.

El Avesta y el Shahnameh

En la cultura persa también vemos que el aprendizaje de memoria se utilizó como medio de conservación y transmisión de textos épicos y religiosos durante siglos antes de su puesta por escrito. En el caso de los himnos religiosos del Avesta que son el texto base de la religión principal del imperio persa, el Zoroastrismo, según expertos como Alberto Cantera las partes más antiguas habrían sido compuestas a partir del segundo milenio a.C. y las más modernas antes del siglo V a.C.; desde entonces se habrían transmitido oralmente a lo largo y ancho de todo el imperio hasta que se pusieron por escrito en época sasánida en el siglo VI d.C. (Cantera 1). Los sasánidas fueron una dinastía persa que derrocó a los arsácidas partos en el 226 y gobernó el imperio iranio hasta la absorción y conquista de este por parte del califato árabe de los Omeya en el 650.

Para que después de tanto tiempo se llevara a cabo una edición escrita, esta debió de ser promovida por el rey como figura principal del estado, o por una élite política; también parece bastante probable que para su realización se hubiera convocado a distintos sabios y sacerdotes que conocieran los himnos para asegurarse de que la edición era lo más exacta posible. Según indicó Antonio Panaino (82):

> We must point out that the organization of the official Canon
> as well as that of the (contemporary) ritual compositions
> [...], was also a matter of political relevance, which needed a
> strong and well-organized center of control and propulsion,
> in other words, a compelling authority with the power and
> the necessary organization to impose a final (written) version
> of the Dēn. We must imagine that a number of wise and
> learned priests from various corners of the Empire were
> summoned and asked to deliver their own knowledge under
> the supervision of a Persian sacerdotal elite, which normal-
> ized and edited the final version of the Abastag and is ritual
> applications.

La dificultad para desligar la puesta por escrito de los himnos zoroás-
tricos de una situación política estable y fuerte que pudiera, entre
otras cosas, sufragar los altos costes de la misma lleva a los expertos
a considerar la última etapa fuerte de gobierno sasánida, con Cos-
roes I (531–79), su hijo Hormisdas IV (579–89) y su nieto Cosroes II
(589–628), último gran emperador antes de la caída del imperio en
manos de los árabes en el 650, como la más apropiada para la edición
escrita del Avesta. Por un lado, no parece posible situar la existencia
del alfabeto Avesta, que se creó *ex professo* para escribir estos him-
nos, mucho antes de ese momento. Por otro, la conquista árabe su-
puso un descenso de los privilegios de los sacerdotes zoroástricos y
de su número y nivel de formación, lo que dificulta o más bien im-
posibilita la creación por su parte de un alfabeto. Además, los árabes
consideraban a los zoroástricos ʿAhl al Kitāb, "gentes de libro" (Mon-
not 119–22), lo que para Panaino es otro indicio explícito de que el
Avesta ya había sido puesto por escrito antes de la conquista árabe
(Panaino 83).

Precisamente esta ocupación hace que haya que esperar hasta
que una dinastía de origen iraní vuelva a subir al poder para que se
realice la compilación por escrito de la épica nacional, el Shahnameh
o *Libro de los Reyes*, que narra las leyendas e historias de los reyes ira-
nios desde tiempos inmemoriales hasta la conquista de Irán por los
árabes en el 650. Basado en los ciclos épicos de transmisión oral, fue
escrito por el poeta iranio Ḥakīm Abū-l-Qāsim Firdusī Tūsī (940–
1019), conocido como Ferdousi, a finales del siglo X en época de los
Samánidas (819–999). Esta fue una dinastía musulmana de origen
iranio caracterizada por un fuerte rasgo nacionalista que les llevó a
independizarse de los Omeyas y reivindicarse frente a los árabes. En-

tre otros proyectos de mecenazgo promovieron la composición de poemas en persa (aunque en métrica árabe) así como la puesta por escrito de la épica tradicional que se había transmitido durante siglos oralmente, como aparece recogido en el prólogo de la obra:[11]

> All have gone sweeping in the garth of lore
> And what I tell hath all been told before,
> But though upon a fruit-tree I obtain
> No place, and purpose not to climb, still he
> That sheltereth beneath a lofty tree
> Will from its shadow some protection gain;
> A footing on the boughs too I may find
> Of yonder shady cypress after all
> For having left this history behind
> Of famous kings as my memorial.
> Deem not these legends lying fantasy,
> As if the world were always in one stay,
> For most accord with sense, or anyway
> Contain a moral.
>   In the days gone by
> There was an Epic Cycle spread broadcast
> Among the learned archmages, and at last
> A certain paladin, of rustic birth,
> A man of courage, wisdom, rank, and worth,
> An antiquary, one who ransacked earth
> For any legends of the ages past,
> Intent on learning what might yet be known,
> Called hoar archmages out of every clime,
> To ask about the annals of the throne,
> The famed successful heroes of old tune,
> What men were doing in those days that we
> Inherit such a world of misery,
> And how each day beneath auspicious skies
> They carried out some daring enterprise.
> The archmages told their legendary store,
> How this world fared and what kings undertook,
> And as he listened to the men of lore
> He laid the basis of the famous book,
> Which now remaineth his memorial,
> Amid the plaudits both of great and small.

12. Es difícil precisar más porque hay pocas referencias biográficas precisas en lo que a este autor se refiere. Dado que Ferdousi comenzó a trabajar en el Shahnameh hacia el año 977, esta podría ser la fecha de la prematura muerte del Daqīqī, lo que, unido a otras referencias, haría proponer su nacimiento poco después del 932. Véase Khaleghi-Motlagh.

Fue el poeta Daqīqī, Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad, también del siglo X,[12] el primero que emprendió la puesta por escrito de todas estas historias, para lo que tuvo que viajar por el imperio recopilando todas las gestas que hasta entonces se transmitían oralmente, según se narra en el propio prólogo de la obra. En este caso aunque el proyecto esté respaldado por el poder político, es el editor el que tiene que desplazarse, a diferencia de los otros casos que hemos visto, en los que la empresa estaba más centralizada. Pero Daqīqī murió antes de poder concluirlo y por ello Ferdousi, que tomó el relevo, incluyó gran parte de los versos compuestos por su predecesor:

> Now, when the readers of the book had brought
> The stories into vogue, all hearts were caught,
> At least among the men of parts and thought.
> A brilliant youth well skilled in poetry
> Arose, of ardent mind and eloquent;
> "I will retell these tales in verse," said he,
> And every one rejoiced at his intent;
> But vicious habits were his friends, though we
> Should hold all vices foes that we should dread,
> And death, approaching unexpectedly,
> Imposed its gloomy helmet on his head.
> [...] Mine ardent heart turned, when Dakiki fell,
> Spontaneously toward the Iranian throne;
> "If I can get the book I will retell,"
> I said, "the tales in language of mine own."
> I asked of persons more than I can say,
> For I was fearful as time passed away
> That life would not suffice, but that I too
> Should leave the work for other hands to do.
> There was besides a dearth of patronage
> For such a work; there was no purchaser.
> It was a time of war, a straitened age
> For those who had petitions to prefer.

Parece que no tenemos ninguna comisión en esta tradición, pero es fácil ver otros de los elementos a los que nos hemos estado refiriendo a lo largo de todo este artículo: el gobernante que emprende un importante proyecto filológico de un texto de gran repercusión así como el valor inestimable de la transmisión oral para la conservación en un primer momento de dicho texto.

Además, de acuerdo con las fechas que hemos ido viendo, no podemos dejar de resaltar el hecho de que el Corán y el Avesta pudieron compilarse con muy pocos años de diferencia (menos de veinte si relacionamos el Avesta con Cosroes II).

3 Conclusiones

Estos paralelismos y elementos comunes nos permiten extraer varias conclusiones. En las culturas que hemos tratado, el paso de oralidad a escritura (o de una lengua a otra como veíamos en la *Septuaginta*) de la literatura fundacional, ya sea épica o religiosa, está estrechamente ligado a un poder político fuerte que tiene intereses en la preservación de ese legado cultural, en gran medida como autopropaganda, ya que su nombre sería recordado junto a esas obras literarias. No se da un elemento sin el otro, aunque el papel del gobernante suele limitarse, como promotor y mecenas de la empresa, a encargar a las personas apropiadas (una o varias) la realización del proyecto y costear los gastos del mismo, algo que en el caso del Shahnameh, a juzgar por lo que cuenta Ferdousi en el prólogo, no se dio.

Esta estrecha relación entre poder y edición del libro sagrado, presente en tradiciones sobre la puesta por escrito de los poemas homéricos, el Corán, el Avesta, el Shahnameh y de la traducción de la Biblia, nos lleva a proponer que la denominación 'paradigma alejandrino' resulta demasiado limitada para la realidad a la que se refiere: el caso de la traducción de la Biblia en Alejandría es una de las múltiples variantes que podemos analizar de este patrón, cuyo caso más antiguo de los que hemos abordado es el de los poemas homéricos en la Atenas de Pisístrato. Aunque asumimos que no hay unanimidad entre los estudiosos a la hora de aceptar esta leyenda y este contexto para la primera edición escrita de la obra de Homero, consideramos que la repetición de este patrón en otras culturas debería tenerse en cuenta en futuros estudios.

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WIM VERBAAL

Voicing your Voice: The Fiction of a Life

Early Twelfth-Century Letter Collections and the Case of Bernard of Clairvaux

Abstract

In following the evolution of the ordering principles of letter collections of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this contribution tries to demonstrate that a *corpus epistolarum* is much more than a collection of individual missives. The collection as a whole has a message to convey. Careful analysis of the arrangement of the letters and of the different accents it creates does not perhaps teach the modern reader much about events of the time but it does have a great deal to teach him or her about the compilers' qualities and the messages they wanted to convey. The article wants to achieve this aim by presenting the epistolary collections of Gerbert d'Aurillac, Hildebert of Lavardin and Bernard of Clairvaux.*

1. Introduction: The Problem of Letter Collections

Nearing the end of his still fundamental and classic exposition on letters and letter collections (1976), Giles Constable in a (very) small paragraph touches on the problems encountered in the edition of letter collections.

> With regard to editions of letter collections, the editor is faced with the series of questions, outlined above, concerning authorship, compilation, sources, and arrangement. From a practical point of view, the most troublesome of these is likely to be arrangement, since the editor must decide whether to print the letters in the order found in the manuscripts (or in a manuscript) or to rearrange them as best he can in terms of chronology, subject-matter, or recipient. […] No one of these solutions is fully satisfactory […] and they illustrate the difficulties facing the editor of a collection with a complicated text-history. (Constable, *Letters* 65)[1]

1. To illustrate his point, Constable refers to the article of Schaller.

Nothing more is said about this process of editing and the reader is left with a somewhat uncomfortable impression. This uneasiness is increased by the relatively large amount of attention given to the importance of collections as the sole means of conservation of medieval letters (Constable, *Letters* 56–62). The open-endedness of Constable's conclusion with regard to the edition of letter collections appears to be the result of a real sentiment of impotence regarding the editorial choices to be made. And it leaves open the door to editors to interfere freely with their sources and to impose on them the message they themselves want to convey to the public, or rather the approach they prefer for reading these letters.

One particular approach appears to dominate the editing of premodern letters, which can be summarized along these lines:

> Like most of the collections of the period, these letters carry no dates and are not arranged in a coherent order in the manuscripts. Several letters of the same date or relating to the same topic are often found together, as we should expect; but sometimes companion letters are widely separated. […] Most of the intervening letters cannot be dated, but those which can do not suggest any approximation to a chronological order; and the position of a letter in the manuscript is never secure evidence of its date. (Millor *et al.* lii)

It would appear that in these lines the "coherent order," *i.e.* the order "we should expect," is equated with "a chronological order." The editorial choice then is obvious: "We have arranged the letters so far as possible in chronological order" (Millor *et al.* lii). Similar chronologically oriented expectations for the supposed normative way of conservation and transmission of letters can be found throughout the history of text edition and criticism. Introducing his commentary on Cicero's *Ad Familiares* of 1555, Girolamo Ragazzoni explains his own approach to the letters:

> Since the letters were put together in ancient times without preserving the order of dates, our goal must be that the letters are separated according to their individual times, and transcribed. Various benefits result from this operation, above all – through joining events with their times – the easier comprehension of the one from the other, and the possession of a continuous history both of Cicero himself and of those years.[2]

2. "Id est, ut, quoniam nullo servato temporum ordine compositae quondam fuerunt, ipsae per tempora sua digererentur, atque describerentur. Quo ex labore cum alia multa commoda consequuntur, tum illa in primis, ut propter negociorum, temporumque coniunctionem et facilius alteram ex altera intelligamus, et ipsius Ciceronis, eorumque annorum contextam historiam habeamus." Quoted and translated by Gibson, "Letters" 395–96. I am grateful to Cristiana Sogno for drawing my attention to the articles of Roy Gibson that form a welcome complement to the largely historical approaches of the abundant medieval letter collections.

And in the online commentary on the edition of Hildegard's letters by Oxford University Press, the editor, J. L. Baird is praised, because "[f]reed from the organizational restraint of the Latin edition of the letters, he has arranged them in roughly chronological order […]. As a result, this fascinating collection serves as a kind of life in letters."[3]

Both quotations show the motivation behind this seemingly obsessive quest in modern scholarship for chronology in pre-modern letter collections. Letters are considered an important source for historiography. As such it is not the collection as a whole that matters, but the individual letter. The collection is considered a more or less casual compilation of independent documents and the primary task of any editor should be to bring order, *i.e.* chronological consistency to the 'chaos' of textual transmission.

This attitude, however, forces pre-modern mentality into a specifically modern frame of reference. Roy Gibson has rightly remarked concerning ancient letter collections "that the preference for ordering principles other than the strictly chronological was, in fact, a *cultural* preference" ("On the Nature" 72).[4] Atomizing pre-modern letter collections into their constituent parts thus is tantamount to an utter denial of their reason for existence and erects an insurmountable barrier for a true understanding of both the textual material and the compiler (be he the author or not) or context linked to it.

Of course, similar objections have already been made since the rise of scholarly interest in medieval letters and letter collections.[5] Editors nonetheless continue to re-order letters chronologically, *i.e.* in the most convenient way for their primarily historicizing purposes. The reasons for this scholarly stubbornness are easy to understand. Few pre-modern text forms have had a comparably complicated transmission. Normally speaking, no two manuscripts offer the same arrangement. An authorized autograph, of course, is always missing and its reconstruction is made even more difficult whenever it is clear that there exist different redactions of the same corpus and by the same redactor. For many letter collections from the twelfth century, rightly labelled the Golden Age of Latin letter-writing, this is known to be the case, as we will see below.

In such cases, choices have to be made, but unfortunately editors do not always mention the original arrangement in the manuscript tradition. In many cases, they give the already quoted argument that there is no "coherent order in the manuscripts" (Millor *et al.* lii), that the collection "has no apparent organizing principle behind it"

(Haseldine xxxvi), or that the letters "are in no ascertainable order" (Constable, *The Letters* 2:79). On closer inspection, however, these statements become much less evident than one might at first presume. Most pre-modern letter collections are definitively organized according to some consistent ordering principles, though these are often of a very different nature than our modern preconceptions would lead us to expect.

Pre-modern cultural preference turns out to be based not on historical presuppositions with their chronological premises but rather on rhetorical principles. Gibson distinguishes two major patterns of arrangement in ancient letter collections: the arrangement by addressee or general topic (either separately or in combination) and the arrangement for the sake of (artistic) variety ("On the Nature" 64). The former structural principles have long been known to scholars of medieval letter collections. The latter, however, is all too often forgotten. "Modern scholars often equate the rhetorical principle of *varietas*, *i.e.* the successive alternation of similar texts, with a lack of structure and thus tend to qualify the often open composition of a letter collection as a chaotic succession of individual pieces" (Köhn 689).[6]

The all too emphatic historical focus of many scholars, when dealing with medieval letter collections, seems to have blindfolded them to the actual "organizing principles." Taking into account the different "cultural preference" of pre-modern authors, based on rhetorical instead of historical principles, our approach to letter collections should start from an entirely different perspective. They can no longer be perceived as 'merely' a compilation of separately interesting source materials. They have their own meaning, based on their individual constituents but transcending them as a whole.

For this reason, a study of a letter collection in its integrity may render more results when it is approached for what it is: a macro-text, *i.e.* a "sign" or "semiotic unit" "in its own right generated by independent texts, whose meaning does not correspond to the mere sum of the meanings of the individual texts," but whose constituents although they "compose a new and broader semiotic entity, in turn autonomous and independent," "do not lose their original autonomy" (Santi 147).[7] A letter collection indeed consists of originally independent units with an originally autonomous signification, put together to form a new meaningful unit that derives its significance from its constitutional parts but also informs the tenor of each of its constituents as far as they can no longer be regarded uniquely as au-

6. "Moderne Forscher setzen freilich manchmal das rhetorische Prinzip der varietas als Abwechslung in der Abfolge ähnlicher Texte mit mangelnder Gliederung gleich und qualifizieren die zugegebenermaßen offene Komposition einer Brief-sammlung als chaotische Reihung von Einzelstücken ab."

7. Santi refers to Corti. I am grateful for the stimulating discussions with Mara Santi on this topic.

8. Santi 152: "[…] the short story collection is a potentially metamorphic form because in different editions of a collection authors can change not only the components of the macro-text but also their sequence. In this respect, it is noteworthy that while in a novel or in a single short story a redefinition of the narrative sequence changes the plot but not the story, in the macro-text each alteration of the sequence modifies the structure of the book, and the structure affects the function and the meaning of each text within the whole […]."

9. Ysebaert 29–31 exposes the artificiality and untenability of the categorizations proposed by scholars. See Constable, *Letters* 56–57 for one of the most influential attempts.

10. Perhaps a word is in order about the translation and projection of terms and techniques from modern literary scholarship onto medieval letters and letter collections. The terminology of macro-text is borrowed from short-story-studies. One might ask if an equation between narrative texts and letters is admissible here. A letter is indeed not a narrative text. It rather constitutes an element in a larger 'narrative' context, if one permits the application of narrativity to the historical sequence of events in which the letter has its part. It will be clear, however, that, viewed from this perspective, the letter does not truly change its constitutive functionality. Its 'narrative' frame changes from factual to textual but the letter functions as a constitutive element within both frames. Yet, as we will see, exactly this transition from fact to text allows the compiler of a collection to remodel the historical narrative of factuality into a much more self-fashioned narrative of textuality. This remodelling of factuality into text will contain one of those potentialities of fictionalizing history that has been the focus of my research in recent years. See Verbaal: "How the West was Won," "Trapping the Future," "Getting Lost in Worlds" and "Epistolary Voices."

tonomous entities but likewise have to be considered parts of a whole.

This changed perspective will have some far-reaching consequences for the scholarly approach to medieval letter collections. When the collection itself is considered as the transmitter of a preconceived message, its tenor will depend in the first place on the arrangement of the letters. A different arrangement changes the meaning of the collection.[8] This explains the rather nebulous boundaries between the different categories of letter collections that scholarship has tried to establish.[9] An originally 'literary' collection can be re-arranged to constitute a manual of the *artes dictaminis* and thus become an entirely didactic collection. It can also be re-arranged in order to offer a more coherent linear narrative or a chronological history of events. In that case, the collection is likely to take the form of an administrative or archival record, a so-called register, or that of a modern historical reconstruction.[10]

The same set of letters can potentially give rise to a range of collections with differing significations. In all of these cases, the arrangement of the collection depends on the objectives of the compiler. And even these may be subject to fluctuations. For it is altogether imaginable that in arranging successive collections one and the same compiler will change his perspective and thus give a different meaning to the different redactions.

All these preliminary remarks are necessary to understand the approach taken in this contribution. Here, individual letters will not be treated as documents *in se*, but rather as the building blocks that help give meaning to the entity of which they are part and from which they receive their new context (that is, in fact, their unique context for both the modern scholar and the original reader). The starting point of our approach is the significance of the collection as a whole, and to understand it we have to discover the rationale behind its arrangement of the letters it contains and behind the changes it underwent. Only in this way does it become clear how the early twelfth-century collections discussed in this chapter escape all attempts at systematic categorization.

2. The Epistolary Turn of the Eleventh Century

In sketching the evolution of the genre of medieval letter-writing, Giles Constable assigns a pivotal role to the letter collection Gerbert

11. No reason for this particular emphasis is given, however.

12. Previous letter collections of non-monastic origins tend to be limited to the archival type or 'registrum.' They are not (or less) characterized by a deliberate, artificial or thematic arrangement.

13. That is to say, the first editor made this letter number 217 of the collection but did not want to edit the text, because "Das Stück gehört weder der Form noch der Überlieferung nach zur Briefsammlung Gerberts. Es ist kein Brief, sondern eine umfangreiche Abhandlung[…]." ("The piece does not belong with respect to form nor with respect to transmission to the letter collection of Gerbert. It is not a letter but an extensive treatise […].") Weigle 258 note.

14. Such is the arrangement in the oldest manuscript kept in Leiden Universiteitsbibliotheek (Vossianus lat. Q. 54), written at the monastery of Micy during the earliest years of the eleventh century. See Riché and Callu 1: xi–xv and xxii–xxx.

d'Aurillac compiled and edited himself during his second stay at Reims, between 984 and 997 (*Letters* 31).[11] Several aspects indeed seem to characterize this collection as a turning point when compared to the preceding period. First of all, it is not a monastic collection, even though it contains Gerbert's letters while he was abbot of Bobbio.[12] Furthermore, it constitutes a well-considered unit whose backbone is formed by two successive and closed series of letters, preceded and separated by a choice of texts that for the most part are not letters but that actually give the entire collection its final significance.

A short survey of its contents will be necessary to understand the importance attributed to this specific collection. It opens with the acts of the contemporary Episcopal Council, held at St. Basle in 991, during which the current archbishop of Reims, Arnulf, was deposed and Gerbert nominated as his successor. Then follow excerpts from the acts of the Councils of Carthage (418–24), assembled by Gerbert to defend the legitimacy of the Episcopal Council against papal attacks. A long letter to Wilderod, bishop of Strasburg, opens the first part of the actual epistolary corpus. In this letter (incorporated in the corpus as Ep. 217 by the modern editors[13]), Gerbert gives another account of the way he was elected to the archbishopric and defends its legitimacy against the papal accusations. This is followed by the first series of letters (Ep. 1–180), largely arranged in chronological order and covering the period from Gerbert's nomination as abbot of Bobbio in 983 to his departure from France and installation in Germany as the teacher of Otto III in 997. This first sequence is closed by a second conciliar file, concerning the Synod of Mouzon and the Council of Reims, both in 995, on which occasions Gerbert defended his position once more. Then follows the second series of letters (Ep. 181–212), in which chronology no longer plays a part. It opens with the later letters, concerning Gerbert's departure from France in 997, and continues with letters testifying to his contacts and activities as an archbishop and focusing on the years 994–97. The collection closes with a letter on the construction of a celestial sphere, addressed to Gerbert's friend Constantin of Micy, who probably was the addressee of the entire collection.[14]

As this is not the place to enter more deeply into all the secrets of this extraordinarily interesting collection, we will limit ourselves to pointing out a few aspects that can be of importance when compared with the later collections that will occupy us. First of all, the collection is divided into two separate sections that could be rough-

ly characterized as devoted to the external and the internal aspects of Gerbert's archbishopric, or its context and its responsibilities. This bipartition will return over and again.

Furthermore, the collection is enriched by documents that strictly speaking do not belong to an epistolary corpus, as most modern editors would understand it: the excerpts from different Councils and Synods. But they give the entire collection its apparently political meaning. Gerbert actually assembled this collection in order to support his defence of a legitimate election to the archbishopric. For this reason, it did not need to be exhaustive. It contains only a selection of Gerbert's correspondence during these years. Other letters that belong to this same period and even to this same topic have come down to us, yet they were not included in the collection because they did not contribute to the overall meaning the collection (a macro-text forming an autonomous semiotic unit) was meant to convey (Riché and Callu 1: xxiii–xxvi).

Yet, the political message was not the only one. The collection covers a wide variety of different topics, mostly concerning Gerbert's scientific interests. Even poems are inserted, thus creating a collection that in many aspects reminds one of the classical models Gerbert apparently had in mind, notably Symmachus' correspondence (Riché and Callu 1: xxviii–xxix). Thanks to these aspects the collection could be used as a model for letter-writing and some of his letters indeed are transmitted in later manuals. It remains uncertain if this was also Gerbert's primary objective, but given his pedagogical talents and preoccupations it cannot be excluded as an option.

Gerbert's collection shows the importance of an overall interpretation of an epistolary corpus as a meaningful entity in itself. It also points to a renewed awareness around the year 1000 of the possibilities of collecting and editing one's letters for a specific use. In Gerbert's case, his objective might have been both political and pedagogical. Both objectives remain important during the eleventh century, when the Investiture Controversy in particular gave rise to numerous letter collections of political intent. However, to our purposes these are less interesting. Instead, we consider an entirely different collection that had an enormous impact upon almost all the later corpora of the twelfth century.

The letter-collection of Hildebert of Lavardin († 1133), bishop of Le Mans (1096–1125), archbishop of Tours (1125–33), is generally acknowledged to be one of the most influential of the entire Middle Ages. It quickly became an official model at the schools and Peter of

Blois († 1211/1212) still referred to his having learned by heart the entire correspondence and its beneficent influence upon his own letter-writing.[15] More than one hundred manuscripts transmit Hildebert's letters, half of which come from the twelfth or very early thirteenth century,[16] which proves its success at the schools. In spite of this importance, however, or rather as a consequence of it, given the enormous number of manuscripts, a modern edition of the letters is still lacking.

The collection itself has known a transmission that largely goes back to two related traditions, one of which, labelled the A-tradition, appears to contain an older nucleus that may have been assembled by Hildebert himself. To this oldest corpus of fifty-seven letters,[17] all dating from the period of his bishopric at Le Mans, other texts and letters were added, probably after his death, to make a kind of memorial for the deceased archbishop. The collection is thus bipartite, like the collection of Gerbert, but with the difference that in Hildebert's case the second part (Ep. 58–93) apparently was not revised and edited by the sender himself (von Moos 332–34).

Our attention will thus be devoted primarily to the oldest part of the collection, containing the letters 1–57, that may have been collected and edited by Hildebert while still bishop of Le Mans.[18] When one looks closely at this corpus, its arrangement seems less disordered than has been suggested.[19] Basically, we can recognize a certain chronological organization in which the letters proceed in time from *c.* 1106 to 1120. This timeline, however, only offers a very loose frame and many of the letters are not placed in a strictly chronological order. Other structural principles were recognized by von Moos: the grouping together of letters to the same addressee or on the same or a similar topic, the gathering of letters in a rhetorically higher style at the beginning of the corpus, the accumulation of the longer sermon-like letters near to each other but with shorter letters in between. His conclusion therefore was that the arrangement "seems to point to a refined arranger, who was more interested in literary than in biographical aspects" of the collection (von Moos 332–33).[20]

This conclusion is amply confirmed when one analyzes the collection from a rhetorical (or poetical) point of view.[21] Immediately it strikes the eye that some more obvious structural principles that one might expect to find are not applied at all or only in a loose way, such as the chronological one. The letters are not, for example, arranged by addressee, although von Moos seems to have recognized such an arrangement in Hildebert's collection. Letters to or concerning the

15. Peter of Blois, Ep. 101: "Profuit mihi, quod epistolas Hildeberti Cenomanensis episcopi styli elegantia et suavi urbanitate praecipuas firmare et corde tenus reddere adolescentulus compellebar." ("It proved helpful to me that as a youngster I was obliged to study and to learn and memorize the letters of Hildebert, bishop of Le Mans, as they excel in their stylistic elegance and their high culture.") Quoted by Köhn 693 n. 29.

16. All information on Hildebert's letters is still largely based upon the classic work by von Moos. For the list with manuscripts, see 360–65.

17. In the older editions, letters 56 and 57 are usually edited under one heading, while in the manuscripts they are clearly divided (von Moos 326).

18. There is, however, no evidence that points towards an independent circulation of this oldest core. All manuscripts seem to show that the collection was transmitted only in its final form, containing ninety-three letters. Perhaps only one indirect and very feeble argument could be put forward to plead for the independent circulation of the oldest nucleus, as we will see later. Otherwise this primary collection must have been limited to a circle of close friends or perhaps even only to personal reading in such a literary circle.

19. Notably by Dieudonné, who was the first to draw new attention to Hildebert, making use of his letters in a historical context. See esp. p. 142: "[…] à dire vrai, en dehors des motifs qui ont fait préférer telle lettre à l'exclusion des autres, nous ne croyons pas qu'aucun ordre ait présidé à l'arrangement de ces morceaux choisis." ("[…] to tell the truth, leaving aside the motives behind the choice of a certain letter to the exclusion of the other ones, we do not believe that any order governed the arrangement of the chosen pieces.")

20. "Im Gegenteil, das Ineinander verschiedener Einteilungsgesichts-punkte, die sich ergänzen, scheint auf einen feinsinnigen, mehr literarisch als biographisch interessierten Ordner hinzuweisen."

21. Influenced by Antiquity, we tend to approach pre-modern texts from a 'rhetorical' point of view, but especially in the period we are concerned with these rhetorical premises were applied more in poetics than in prose, thus legitimating somehow the equation of both labels (poetics as rhetoric). I do not think the difference sometimes made between rhetoric as concerned with discourse in general and poetics as applying to concrete texts is really helpful.

same person are scattered over the entire corpus, as is the case with those addressed to Serlo of Séez (Ep. 7, 40, 50). The letters to Matilda of England, given as an example by von Moos, in reality appear at different positions within the corpus (Ep. 10, 15, 16, 44, as well as Ep. 49 on her death). Hierarchy forms an important structural principle in many collections, but is not applied in this one either: the letters to pope Paschalis II (Ep. 18, 19) are positioned between letters to addressees of completely different stations (Ep. 17 to an archdeacon, Ep. 29 to Adela of Blois) and the sequence of the different stations does not correspond to any existing secular or spiritual rank.

A desire for variety surely must have played its part in the final distribution of the letters. Yet, it is too weak as a structural force to satisfactorily explain the entire arrangement, which seems to obey other coordinating concepts. The opening and closing of the corpus prove to be deliberate choices within a well-conceived plan (von Moos 332). The first letter, addressed to William of Champeaux and known under the heading *De conversione* (On conversion), praises the famous master of the cathedral school of Paris for leaving behind his ambition and the cupidity of secular teaching and choosing the monastic life. Hildebert moreover wants to dispel certain reproaches that, as a monk, William ought not to teach any longer.[22] The last two letters (Ep. 56 and 57) are addressed to Henry I of England. They console the king on the death of his only son and heir, who perished in the White Ship disaster (1120). Hildebert does not write a lamentation but he wants to remind the king of his duty to make himself his own first subject. His letter can be read as an exhortation to the Stoic *apathia*, the spiritual force that knows how to face up to adversity (von Moos 107–18).

Both at the start and at the end of the collection, Hildebert appears as a spiritual guide for leading personalities in the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. Moreover, the collection apparently spans an evolution from the beginning of spiritual life (the conversion of William) to the mortal end of man. An educational aspect comes to the fore. William is a teacher of the young. Henry has lost his son. Hildebert thus positions himself as the guide or teacher of those who are confronted with the young.

This pedagogical strain seems to be one of the most important leitmotifs in the collection. For example, it contains an entire treatise on the spiritualization of the three female states: those of the widow (Ep. 31), of the virgin (Ep. 36) and of the mother (Ep. 42). But the theme is spread over three different long letters, close to each

22. A summary and interpretation of Ep. 1 can be found in von Moos 103–07 and 136–38.

other but not adjacent. The corpus also includes an entire treatise on the virtues and vices of government: the importance of mortality to Matilda (Ep. 15), of *clementia* to Adela (Ep. 26), of the combination of the active with the contemplative life to an abbot (Ep. 37), the dangers of cupidity to a bishop (Ep. 48) and the importance of moral strength to Henry (Ep. 56 and 57).

Besides the pedagogical strain, man's mortality returns as a common thread in the collection's evolution as expressed by the succeeding letters. The first letter to Matilda congratulates her for recovering from her illness (Ep. 10). In the manuscripts, it is followed by Hildebert's Carmen Minor 4, which sometimes bears the title *De morte*. It reminds Matilda that death does not make any difference between the social ranks. The last letter concerning Matilda (Ep. 49) is addressed to Bernard, bishop of St. David. Hildebert thanks him for the notice about Matilda's death and promises to pray for her. In between, Hildebert writes Matilda on her marriage and all she enjoys as free gifts in life (Ep. 15), thanks her for the gift of some candleholders, of which he gives a mystical interpretation (Ep. 16) and assures her of his continued affections (Ep. 44).

These letters form a coherent narrative about life and death and about Hildebert's relation with the queen. They are not grouped together, however, because their arrangement is governed by the rhetorical device of disjunction or *articulus*, as it is called in the poetics of Hildebert's friend Marbod of Rennes.[23] Indeed, when we take a closer look at the corpus, it becomes clear that different strains or different narrative lines are interconnected and interwoven. This can already be noticed in the spiritual treatises: the letter to the abbot on the combination of the active and the contemplative life (Ep. 37) follows the letter on virginity (Ep. 36).

But the letters concerning marriage also seem to form a consistent narrative. It opens with a letter to Serlo, bishop of Séez, where Hildebert submits a problematic or even uncanonical marriage to his judgment (Ep. 7). The same topic returns in a letter to Walter, archdeacon of Séez (Ep. 17), and in the letter to Geoffrey, archbishop of Rouen (Ep. 34). This strand concludes with a letter to Raynald, bishop of Angers, requesting that he lift the excommunication of a certain Lisiardus, who has been unjustly accused of forcing a girl into an uncanonical marriage (Ep. 43). Meanwhile, spiritual marriage is treated in the letter to a widow (Ep. 42).

The letters concerning Raynald of Angers similarly constitute a proper narrative strand. They open with the letter to Rudolf,

23. Marbod of Rennes, *De ornamentis verborum* 11: "Articulus dicitur, cum singula verba intervallis distinguuntur intercisa oratione." ("When single words are separated by intervals because of a cut-up phrasing, it is called Articulus.") Marbod of Rennes 10–11.

archbishop of Tours, in which Hildebert advises against Raynald's consecration because of his uncanonical election (Ep. 9). Then Hildebert addresses two letters to Raynald himself, in which he first tries to persuade him in a kindly and somewhat paternal fashion (Ep. 12), but then takes a sharper tone in the next letter (Ep. 13). In a following letter, he asks Raynald to let him know the content of a letter Raynald has received from the pope (Ep. 29). Apparently, this papal letter has settled the entire situation, because Hildebert then recommends Raynald's brother to Henry I (Ep. 32). Tensions, however, remain, because Hildebert apologizes in a letter to Marbod for having recommended the latter's nephew to Raynald in vain. He accuses Raynald of ingratitude, given that his nomination was greatly due to Marbod's influence (Ep. 35). Two other letters conclude this strand, both addressed to Raynald: one on the excommunication of Lisiardus (Ep. 43), the other asking Raynald to be merciful to a priest who had forgotten to provide himself with unleavened bread and thus used leavened bread for the Eucharist (Ep. 45).

The collection seems carefully constructed in order to follow several narrative strains that intertwine, sometimes coincide, sometimes develop themes that have been or will be treated in a more didactic way in the longer letters. Simultaneously, succeeding letters are often linked by the technique of *concatenatio* or *conduplicatio*, as it is presented in Marbod's poetics.[24] Most often this link is thematic, as almost every letter continues a topic from the preceding one while it opens up a new topic that will be taken up again in the next one. In a few cases, the link is the addressee. But it can be a quotation: Ep. 30 and 31 both quote from Augustine's *Ad Macedonium*. Or it can be a person: Ep. 37 is addressed to the abbot of St. Vincent, who is mentioned in Ep. 38 as a mediator.

Hildebert's letter collection offers the reader a very elaborate arrangement that can only be characterized as refined artificiality. There is no doubt that this artistic subtlety must be considered an integral part of the message the collection conveys. Hildebert was known as one of the most refined poets of his day.[25] His poems are scattered over numerous anthologies and poetry books that bring their editor or scholar to even greater despair than his letter collections.[26]

Yet, the attention he paid to the composition of the whole proves that the collection was more to him than just a codex with letters. He made it into a book *in* letters and it has to be understood as such. Now, its narrative is not a simple (auto)biographical one. It shows

24. Marbod of Rennes, *De ornamentis verborum* 25: "Conduplicatio est, cum ratione amplificationis, aut miserationis unius, aut plurium verborum iteratio fit." ("Conduplicatio is when for reasons of amplification or of pity one or more words are repeated.") Marbod of Rennes 20–21.

25. He is considered the most important representative of the so-called school of the Loire, to which Marbod and Baudri of Bourgueil also belong. I am preparing a work on the poetics of this movement.

26. Gibson, "On the Nature" 72 rightly draws a parallel between letter collections and poetry books.

the reader many of Hildebert's affairs and relationships with people, but it does not show them in some historical or clearly didactic frame. The key to the correct understanding of the collection seems to lie in its opening letters, which plead for the combination of an active ecclesiastical life with study and literature. William is pressed not to quit his teaching – as if he were even considering it. The letter addressed to him by Hildebert is not meant to change William's intentions but rather to explain Hildebert's own attitude as presented in the letters. It is an introductory letter to the collection that offers an image of Hildebert as the ecclesiastical dignitary who remains a teacher, not of secular philosophy but of the true Christian philosophy. The letters present their author from the beginning to the end in the guise of the truly spiritual philosopher.

But he is not only a teacher of the true philosophy; he is also a poet and exquisite literary writer, combining a dedication to stylistic refinement with his official duties. The second letter to Rivallo, a poet and pupil of Marbod, touches upon this problem. Rivallo apparently suffers exile and is on some military expedition. Yet, in spite of this, he manages to remain a poet. He writes and reads and Hildebert praises him for doing so given the turmoil that surrounds him. This is exactly the message his book *in* letters wants the reader to understand. In spite of all his obligations and duties, Hildebert manages to remain a poet and refined literary scholar. We might even gather that it is precisely because of his combination of refined literature with true Christian wisdom that Hildebert remains the high-class teacher who not only passes on his knowledge but also knows how to elevate his pupils both spiritually and in the concrete world.[27]

3. The First Reactions: Peter the Venerable and Bernard of Clairvaux

As mentioned above, Hildebert's letter collection quickly met with great approval and exercised a huge influence on the twelfth-century cult of letter-writing. Its immediate effects might be recognized in two letter collections whose earliest redactions can be dated to around 1140. At that date, Peter of Poitiers, secretary of Peter the Venerable, put together the first collection of letters of his beloved abbot that can be reconstructed (Constable *The Letters* 2: 16). Apparently, he based his collection on an already existing one that had been arranged by Peter the Venerable himself, to which he added the letters

27. Of this last aspect, several of his recommendation letters can bear witness. In the last letter of the corpus, just before the concluding ones to Henry I, Hildebert thanks Aimericus, bishop of Clermont, for the nomination of William of Séez to the function of archdeacon. It forms the conclusion of another series of letters concerning William: Ep. 14, 51, 54 and possibly also 4.

he could get hold of and had kept himself. This resulted in a collection of 108 letters that would increase to 196 letters in the final, posthumous redaction.

In the edition of *c.* 1140 two parts can be discerned according to different ordering principles. From letter 58 onward, the arrangement is chronological. In this letter, Peter the Venerable reproaches his secretary for having left his service, and tries to convince the latter to return and resume his duties towards his abbot and friend. Peter of Poitiers obeyed and from 1134 on remained the faithful companion and notary of his abbot. When organizing the first letter collection around 1140, he apparently used this long letter as an introduction to the part of the correspondence that he had been compiling himself (Constable *The Letters* 2: 79–80).

The organization of this earliest corpus may lead us to two remarkable conclusions. First, Peter of Poitiers' personal intervention led to a strictly chronological arrangement of the letters which he had been collecting. He followed what may have been his personal archives, or, alternatively, a chronological strand of his personal experience as Peter's secretary. Letters 1–57, moreover, the collection he found and used as the nucleus of this first editorial work, "are in no ascertainable order," as the modern editor states (Constable *The Letters* 2: 79).

However, is it a pure coincidence that this first collection contains exactly fifty-seven letters, *i.e.* the number of letters Hildebert's collection also contains?[28] If Peter the Venerable had knowledge of this earlier collection and took it as his model, limiting himself to the same total, could it not be that in that case he followed another arrangement founded on what I have termed 'refined artificiality'? I cannot analyze the organization of the collection thoroughly here, but a first closer look at the sequence of the letters immediately shows that those to Pope Innocent II form the structural backbone of the collection. Each letter to the pope introduces a new topic, even if the topic is treated in only one further letter. Neither a chronological nor a hierarchical succession seems to have been important for Peter's choices. The papal letters constitute a structural element, nothing more. Yet, they demonstrate that Peter the Venerable has been pondering the possible organization of his letters and that he did not automatically organize them chronologically.[29]

Peter the Venerable's earliest collection gives an indication of the impact Hildebert's letter collection may have exercised upon future collectors. The way the corpus of letters of Bernard of Clairvaux came

28. Peter of Blois' first letter collection contains a selection of 93 letters, *i.e.* the same number contained in Hildebert's final collection. See Köhn 693.

29. This contradicts Bernhard Schmeidler's much disputed assumption that a chronological arrangement of letters in a collection is typical for a sender's arrangement while a non-chronological order rather suggests that the collection is based upon an addressee's archive: Schmeidler 7–9. See the discussion of his thesis and the reactions to it in Ysebaert 18. One could even come to a somewhat opposite conclusion: a chronological arrangement might be due to the intervention of secretaries who will stick more to the factual order and be less inclined to rearrange the letters according to literary or artificial criteria.

30. Leclercq, "Lettres" 125–225 and Leclercq, "Introduction" 1974. But also, Haseldine, "Friends" 243–79.

31. The ending of the ultimate collection Pf is unclear. The edited version contains three letters (308–10), of which letter 308 is certainly spurious and the authenticity of 310 is much disputed. Many manuscripts do not contain them.

32. No argument is given to support this statement.

33. Morimond was the fourth daughter abbey of Cîteaux, founded in 1115, *i.e.* almost contemporaneously with Clairvaux, and put under the guidance of Arnold. After ten years of difficult survival, Arnold decided to leave the foundation and to travel to the Holy Land where he hoped to found a new monastery. As he had not asked permission of Stephan Harding, abbot of Cîteaux, who was absent at that period, Bernard took the lead in trying to persuade Arnold and the monks that followed him to return. Arnold refused but died on January 3rd 1125. For a short survey and bibliography, see Gastaldelli 1048–50 (commentaries to the letters 4–6). In B letters 359 and 4 of the modern edition appear at the positions 61 and 62.

34. Bernard more often used an a-chronological or even anti-chronological narrative sequence. The most remarkable example is his Third Sermon for the Annunciation. See Verbaal, "Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermons for the Liturgical Year" and Verbaal, "An Introduction."

into being could give another. The letter collection of Bernard has been the object of extensive studies, notably by the editor, Dom Jean Leclercq.[30] He distinguished three different redactions: a short one (B), containing seventy letters and datable before 1145 as it does not contain any letters later than 1143; an intermediate one (L), containing 241 letters and datable to around 1147 (no letters from after 1146); and the final one (Pf), containing up to three hundred letters, which was completed posthumously (Leclercq, "Introduction").[31]

Bernard's letter collection has thus known an evolution similar to those we have already encountered. It was subject to a strong selection and knew a slow growth into the final version. Yet Bernard's collection is different from the others. Firstly, because each phase of its evolution has left clear and visible traces and secondly, because the differences between the first redaction B and its successive versions show a radical change in arrangement. This first collection B survives only in thirteen manuscripts all stemming from the filiation of Morimond, which in general preserves the older versions of Bernard's oeuvre (Leclercq, "Lettres" 158).

The editor did not consider B to be the result of Bernard's own editorial work, but rather a compilation based upon an addressee's archive (Leclercq, "Lettres" 160).[32] A closer analysis of the collection, however, contradicts a similar conclusion. The arrangement appears to be highly artificial, even displaying a sort of deliberate anti-chronology. While the temporal range covers the early 1120s to 1143, the letters concerning the problems of Morimond in 1124–25 appear only at the very end of the collection.[33] Similarly, the opening block of five letters, concerning contacts with the Orders of the Benedictines and the Carthusians, contains letters from 1129, 1127, 1136, 1124/5, and 1133.[34]

The structural principle of this first collection seems to be rather based upon "loose topic" (Gibson, "On the Nature" 64). The letters are organized according to topics, starting in the monastic world and ending in the secular Church, just as the first and last letters in Hildebert's collection were deliberately chosen for these positions. The collection opens with a long *laudatio* to the abbot of Anchin, in which he is praised for his being a father rather than a judge, when confronted with injuries his monks inflict upon him (Ep. 65).[35] B concludes with the long letter-treatise on the duties of a bishop (Ep. 42), dedicated to Henri de Boisroque, surnamed the Sanglier (Boar), archbishop of Sens.[36]

35. SBO [= Sancti Bernardi Opera] VII: 159–61. The letters are numbered according to their position in Leclercq's edition, based upon the final, posthumous collection Pf.

36. SBO VII: 100–131. See Gastaldelli 1068–72 for commentary, note 1068–69 for the political context of the letter.

Bernard's first letter collection thus opens and ends with two emphatically meaningful letters, just like Hildebert's did. The first half, more or less until the thirty-seventh position, is mostly monastic in orientation, while the second half focuses upon the secular Church. In the monastic part, love as the foundation of an abbot's acts seems to be the central leitmotiv, manifesting itself in all different kinds of relations and problems the abbot has to deal with. Letters treating the conversion of younger people to Cistercian monasticism return at regular intervals and give a kind of rhythm to this part. In the second half, letters concerning the papal schism take up a similar role, framing several other topics that present themselves in this way as consequences of the disorder in the Church.[37]

Looking at the collection as a whole, it seems to convey the image of Bernard as a spiritual teacher, not so different from the role Hildebert ascribed to himself in his original collection. It distinguishes itself, however, by its emphatically monastic perspective – as if Bernard wished to stress the fact that only the monastic life could form ideal spiritual counsellors for the Church. The entire letter book then becomes an answer to Hildebert's edition, almost trying to transcend it and thus reduce its significance. Many of the themes Hildebert touched upon return, but often with a remarkable twist. An abbot who made a mistake out of negligence during Mass gets an answer and advice from Bernard himself, whereas Hildebert referred the priest in a similar case to his immediate ecclesiastical superior. In turn, Bernard addresses countesses, nuns, abbots and masters. He advises the latter to give up their secular teaching for the true philosophy of Christ, thus opposing his view to that of Hildebert. The most eloquent indication that Bernard put together this collection as an answer to Hildebert may be the insertion of his own letter to Hildebert, in which he reproaches the archbishop of Tours for not having acted according to the example of Innocent II during the papal schism (Ep. 124). It can be read as an indirect indication that Hildebert is not the true spiritual teacher, given that he had been unable to make the correct spiritual choices.

Bernard's oldest letter collection clearly is not the work of some unknown monk, acting on his own authority. Rather, it unmistakeably betrays the hand of a master, of Bernard himself. He organized a selection of his letters into a coherent entity[38] that was meant to answer Hildebert's collection as it must have become known in the late 1130s. The character of the collection is therefore not only artistic due to the arrangement, but due to the fact that the arrangement amounts

37. Another indication of the highly artificial arrangement can be found in the total number of seventy letters. Bernard pays much attention to numerical or mathematical structures, as can also be seen in the construction of his *Sermons on the Song of Songs* and in his *Sermons for the Liturgical Year*. See Verbaal, "The Sermon Collection."

38. That this first collection B contains a strict selection is clear when comparing it to the later collections. For the same period (early 1120s to 1143) the number of letters included increases from seventy in B to 220 in L and to 230 in Pf! Around 1140, Bernard was also working on his two other greater compositions. He was occupied with writing the *Sermons on the Song of Songs* (eighty-six when finished) and he made the first selection from his liturgical sermons in order to create a homiliary for the Liturgical Year, of which four different versions are known. See Verbaal, "The Sermon Collection" xii–xxii and Leclercq, "La tradition" and "Introduction" 127–30.

to a true piece of literature: a literary reaction to the highly-sophisticated writing of the archbishop of Tours. The spiritual significance of the collection even seems to be less important than its being a response to Hildebert's collection, and perhaps this purely literary motivation displeased Bernard so much in the end that he decided to take up the project once again and give it an entirely different form, with a completely different meaning.

4. Constructing your Life

When Bernard resumed his project to collect his letters in a meaningful corpus, he changed their arrangement radically. In both later versions L and Pf, the letters are put in a strictly chronological order. Apparently, he departed completely from the original thematic and literary composition. Yet, his choice of a, to modern eyes, seemingly normal chronological structure after having tried a more overtly artistic one does not mean that he abandoned all his literary ambitions. On the contrary, the new collection shows even a more exquisitely literary character. All the artifices Hildebert applied in his corpus are implemented but often in a less conspicuous way. And this seems almost inevitable when the increased number of letters is taken into consideration.

That the arrangement becomes, in Bernard's hands, an artistic technique of the highest degree, can best be demonstrated by the analysis of some of the constituent blocks within the corpus. The letters concerning the confrontation with Abelard and his condemnation at the Synod of Sens in 1141 (Ep. 187–96) make up a separate and impressive file that had not been inserted in the first compilation B. In their final state, they are arranged in such a way as to offer the successive documents of a true lawsuit, containing the Exordium (Ep. 187–88: *captatio benevolentiae* and *propositio*), the actual Charge (Ep. 189–91: *narratio*, *argumentatio* and *peroratio*), the Exhortation of the Jury (Ep. 192–93), the Verdict (Ep. 194) and the Implementation or rather the Consequences (Ep. 195–96).[39]

This coherent block on Abelard is inserted against the backdrop of a wider juridical context in the collection that first arises in letter 150 with a *laudatio* of the pope for several interventions in ecclesiastical problems and closes in letter 205 with the defence of a master who was unjustly accused and punished. In these fifty-six letters, smaller and greater conflicts are touched upon, but the *affaire*

39. I have elaborated this part of the corpus in Verbaal, "Sens: une victoire d'écrivain." As to the date of the Synod of Sens in 1141 instead of the traditional 1140, see Mews 342–82. Within this file, both letters 189 and 190 (the most fundamental both in the juridical file and in the appreciation of Bernard's historical part in the Synod) were clearly written for the collection itself and played no role in the actual trial.

40. Apparently, it is not the master himself who is considered the danger but his teaching that is continuously connected with the revolutionary preaching of Arnold of Brescia. Abelard is presented in his person and in his teaching as subversive to the established authorities. As such he is considered co-responsible for the assaults on authority that are evoked in the preceding cases and letters.

41. Fulco was persuaded by his uncle to leave the regular canons after having joined them. Robert entered Cïteaux and followed Bernard to Clairvaux. He was, however, approached by the prior of Cluny who reminded him that his parents had promised to let him enter Cluny. Robert was prevailed upon and left Clairvaux. Both these events took place around 1119. Bernard wrote his letter to Fulco almost immediately (*c.* 1120) but the letter to Robert was only written in 1125. The reason for this delay is not clear. As Robert left Clairvaux, Bernard was recovering from a grave illness and was separated from the community for a year. See for context and commentary Gastaldelli 1046–48.

42. The letter to Robert is known as the letter in the rain without rain, because Bernard dictated it to his secretary when it had started to rain. Only the letter remained dry, no raindrop falling upon it. That is why Bernard's secretary, Geoffrey of Auxerre, said he put the letter in the opening position. Geoffrey mentions the miracle and his placing the letter in front in his Fragmenta nr. 21. See now Geoffrey of Auxerre 285 lines 341–54.

Abelard clearly constitutes the core topic and is presented somehow as the climactic result of the impotence of the Church to intervene and to resolve the preceding cases. In the letters that follow the section on Abelard, several smaller problems are touched upon, but all of them seem to head towards a satisfactory solution, as if the condemnation of the master had allowed for the peace to return in the Church.[40]

As this example shows, the return to chronology as an ordering device automatically implies the return of narrativity. While the collections of Hildebert and Peter the Venerable convey, first of all, a non-narrative signification, Bernard's choice for the more traditional order gives him the opportunity to create a continuous narrative through his letters, supported by the texts themselves. He combines this narrative with the literary artifices that had been introduced by Hildebert in order to endow the sequence of his activities in life with a more encompassing and transcending significance as well as providing a chronological account of his activities. To arrive at a proper understanding of the ultimate meaning of the second version of the collection, it is appropriate to look at its first letters. Hildebert used the first letters of his collection as an introduction that steered the reader into a correct reading attitude. In his first collection, Bernard had proven himself a good Hildebert pupil. His first letters had also laid the foundation for the interpretation of the entire corpus. This also applies to his final letter collection.

This final version of the collection opens with two letters to young men who had promised to join the Cistercian adventure but, in the end, did not keep their word. Both letters appear in the first collection B but there they appear only after the monastic opening block. Already in the second version of the collection, L, they are moved to the front, thereby gaining in importance and in a way constituting the key to a right interpretation of all that follows. Moreover, their order is inversed. Originally, the letter to Fulco of Aigremont (Ep. 2) was placed first, followed by the letter to Robert of Châtillon, Bernard's nephew (Ep. 1).[41] According to Geoffrey of Auxerre, Bernard's secretary, it was he who inverted the order of the two letters, but that would have been acceptable only if Bernard himself had already placed them in front position.[42] When they were inverted, their chronological order was also inverted. The letter to Fulco preceded the one to Robert, but the original order also reflected an interior succession: Fulco did not live up to his word, while Robert broke the vow he had already pronounced.

43. Ep. 2.6 to Fulco: "Alioquin oportet te solvere vota tua, quae distinxerunt labia tua" (SBO VII: 17). Almost the same in Ep. 1.9, SBO VII: 7. In Robert's case, moreover, Bernard asks whose words have the most weight: the vow of the father on behalf of his son or the vow the son made himself (Ep. 1.8, SBO VII:6).

The central point in both letters is the accordance of word and deed. A man has to fulfil the promise he has made. "You need to keep your vow, the one your own lips pronounced," may be considered to be the central phrase of both letters.[43] Unity between word and deed is presented as the topic of these opening letters and thus becomes one of the more important interpretative strands within the collection. This, however, gives the letter collection an entirely different and even bewildering significance.

The disjunction between word and deed indeed proves to be one of the central themes within the collection, connecting almost all the different events, even those that seem to have no connection at all. Bernard repeatedly depicts the schism, for example, as a scission between the word of the Church, standing for unity and justice, and the reality of her factionalism and division. The disjunction between word and deed reappears in the many conflicts over bishoprics or other ecclesiastical functions, in the conflicts between the King of France and his most important vassal, Theobald of Blois-Champagne, in the dissension between the masters at the schools, in deviant opinions on religious matters, etc. And in all these circumstances, Bernard's voice strives to restore unity, to bring those in discord back to ecclesiastical authority, to speak as the voice of the Church.

Reading the corpus, one is baffled by the evolution Bernard's voice undergoes. Halfway through the collection his voice takes on an authority that equals that of the Church herself and climbs to prophetic heights (and finally even seems to identify with the Vox Dei). Bernard presents himself as the herald of the Church (Ep. 150), as David confronting Goliath (Ep. 189) or as the Bride herself (Ep. 187). He repeatedly takes up the words of Paul or Christ as if they were his. With the vigour of the Old Testament prophets, he excites, damns and bans. And then, all of a sudden, in the last part of the collection, cracks begin to show. The voice becomes tired, ill and broken.

When considering the corpus as a macro-text, one is struck by the tragic narrative it incorporates. The organization of the letters in their smaller units within the chronological frame offers a widely-varied range of different elements, but each topic is linked to the preceding and the following one(s) so as never to surprise the reader. Actually, one of the major messages of the macro-text is the interconnection of the different affairs. One sees how the sender of these letters, the main character of the narrative, simply slides from one affair into the other. Taking up his responsibility in one case makes it almost impossible to not do so in the next one – an all too common

human problem. Bernard's occupations tear him ever more outside the monastic atmosphere, and for this reason the blocks of letters dealing with monastic affairs are inserted at crucial positions within the entire collection. They occur as points of self-accusation and reflection, becoming ever rarer in the second part.

It is no accident that, in two significant places, two telling images occur of the monk Bernard had been. Just before his involvement in the papal schism, Bernard compares the life of a monk with that of acrobats who walk on their hands. Like the latter, a monk offers a spectacle to the world by living his life the opposite of the way people in the world live their lives (Ep. 87). This statement becomes important when trying to explain Bernard's actions as depicted in the letter collection. His interventions have to be considered as those of the outsider whose views and objectives are different from those of people living in the world and he can for that same reason voice the perspective of the ultimate Outsider.

After his actions in the world and just before the final part of the collection, Bernard accuses himself of being the chimaera of his century, neither cleric nor layman (Ep. 250). At this point in the macro-story, it sounds like a painful self-analysis, announcing the last part of the collection, in which disappointment and failure throw their shadow over almost all letters. Actually, this is the same accusation he had launched against Abelard, *homo sibi dissimilis*, earlier in the letter collection: "who has nothing of the monk except the name and the habit."[44] Bernard thus constructs a conscious link between himself and the master he fought.

Bernard organized his letter collection to give an account of a man attempting to bring order into the world, to give a direction to worldly affairs from within the spiritual core that is the monastery. What makes the macro-text so much more than just a historical document, however, is the tragic context in which the letters are embedded. The final part of the collection shows us a man who has failed – perhaps not from the point of view of his own convictions but surely in terms of what he has achieved and how his achievements were appreciated in the world. The image Bernard fashioned of himself in his letter collection proves to be much less heroic and self-laudatory than generally presumed. It is the image of a man who realizes that he has spent much energy on a lost cause. And the events he has had to confront are not presented to offer a view of early twelfth-century history, but in order to show us the tragic story of a man whose growing conviction of being a tool of God, of being the Voice of God,

44. Ep. 193: "nihil habens de monacho praeter nomen et habitum." SBO VIII: 44–45. Compare to "Nam monachi iamdudum exui conversationem, non habitum" ("Long ago I took off the life of a monk but not his habit.") Ep. 250.4, SBO VIII:147.

gives way to a realization in the end that the world has never been and will never be ready to hear and accept the Word of God. And that God never spares his prophets.

Conclusion

In following the evolution of the ordering principles of letter collections of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this contribution has tried to demonstrate that a corpus epistolarum is much more than a collection of individual missives. The collection as a whole has a message to convey. Careful analysis of the arrangement of the letters and of the different accents it creates does not perhaps teach the modern reader much about events of the time but it does have a great deal to teach him or her about the compilers' qualities and the messages they wanted to convey, be they political (Gerbert), literary (Hildebert) or a combination of both. Bernard's portrayal of a tragic life through his letters would have been impossible without Hildebert's discovery of letters as a literary medium. This potential had to be grasped before letters could become the building blocks of a new narrative, telling the story of their compiler's choice.[45] For, as much as the reader may be drawn into the tragic story of Bernard's monastic life, Bernard himself as its compiler and organizer will always remain the ultimate outsider with respect to the story he is telling and with respect to us who read it.

45. It must be noted that Abelard, Bernard's lifelong rival, also discovered the potential of the letter medium as a means to fashion your own life story. His *Historia calamitatum* and the entire correspondence with Heloise can be considered as a constructed file for the use of the Paraclete. See Verbaal, "Trapping the future" and Verbaal, "Epistolary Voices." Bernard did visit the Paraclete around 1131 as member of a papal visitation, for which the correspondence to my assumption could have been arranged. Did he get to know these texts at that occasion? Personally, I doubt it. It remains remarkable, however, how kindred these two men were in almost everything they touched. For Bernard visiting the Paraclete, see Abelard's Letter 10 in Smits 120–36.

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JONAS WELLENDORF

The Formation of an Old Norse Skaldic School Canon in the Early Thirteenth Century

Abstract

The academicization of the skaldic art in the twelfth century led to the production of model verses illustrating various meters and variations in the highly formalized poetic imagery, and, later, to skaldic treatises laying out the rules of the art form. In the following it will be argued that it also led to the formation of a clearly demarcated school canon of exemplary skalds. *Skáldskaparmál* is the text that gives us the clearest picture of the school canon of skalds that emerged in the early thirteenth century. By counting the number of times individual skalds were cited as well as the number of their lines that were cited, this article identifies the *höfuðskáld* (chief poets) of the school canon.

1. According to the list of poets and patrons, *Skáldatal* (Enumeration of skalds) Einarr Skúlason composed in honor of no less than seven different rulers of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (*Uppsala Edda* 100–17). A few years after Einarr's Danish sojourn, King Eysteinn of Norway commissioned from him a poem in honor of St. Óláfr. Einarr performed the resulting poem, the magnificent *Óláfsdrápa* (Drápa about St. Óláfr) or *Geisli* ([Sun]beam), in Christ Church in Þrándheimr in the presence of an elite audience that included all three kings of Norway as well as the archbishop of the newly established archbishopric of Niðaróss.

2. It is occasional stanza 3 in Einarr's oeuvre (*Lausavísur* 570).

3. Saxo Grammaticus reflects a similar tradition when he recounts how Sven discarded traditional Scandinavian usage in favor of practices imported from Saxony (XIV.9.1–2).

If one's ability to appreciate skaldic poetry were considered as a test of cultivation and refined taste, the Danish king Sveinn svíðandi (Sven Grathe, r. 1146–57) would probably have failed. Around 1150, Einarr Skúlason, arguably the foremost skaldic poet of the twelfth century, visited the Danish court wishing to salute the Danish king with an encomium he had composed in his honor. At this point in time, Einarr had already established himself as an encomiast of great repute.[1] Yet Einarr was met with indifference at the Danish court. If the Danish king listened to the poem at all, he did not deem Einarr's efforts worthy of reward. Einarr's encomium to the Danish king has not survived. Neither has any other skaldic poem about Sveinn, with the exception of a single stanza in which Einarr lampoons the conspicuous lack of taste at the Danish court where the king prefers the light entertainment of jugglers and jesters to the noble traditional art form of the skalds.[2] The Danish king Sveinn fell in battle a few years later, but Einarr's stanza has survived, and thus the king's preference for easily digestible entertainment has been immortalized.[3] This anecdote, which illustrates the durability and longevity of the skaldic word, is reported by *Knýtlinga saga* (*Danakonunga sögur* 275). The

4. An overview of the fortunes of skaldic court poetry focusing on Norway and Iceland is provided by Gade, "Poetry and its Changing Importance" 76–86.

5. One example is found in *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* (The Tale of Sarcastic Halli) (*Eyfirðinga sögur* 261–95). Occasionally, as in *Þáttr Þórmóðar* (*Vestfirðinga sögur* 279–84), anecdotes focus on the unwillingness of the kings to reward the skalds.

6. On the status of jugglers in Scandinavia in general, see Lindow 118–23. If the evidence of Þorbjörn hornklofi's *Hrafnsmál* st. 22–23 is accepted (115–117), jesters and jugglers were already present in the retinue of the Norwegian king in the days of king Haraldr hárfagri (d. *c.* 930).

7. Two examples are Gísl Illugason's *Erfikvæði* about Magnús berfóttr and Ívarr Ingimundarson's *Sigurðarbálkr* about Sigurðr Slembidjakn.

8. Guðrún Nordal, "Samhengið," interestingly links this new kind of poetry with the emergence of historical writing in Iceland. See Wellendorf, "No Need for Mead," for a study of *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, one of the great *sagnakvæði* of the turn of the thirteenth century.

9. Early in the twelfth century, the Orcadian earl Rögnvaldr Kali Kolsson and an otherwise unknown Icelandic poet by the name of Hallr Þórarinsson composed *Háttalykill*, a long poem illustrating different meters (41 in the present form, but the poem is only fragmentarily preserved). On the background and inspiration for *Háttalykill*, see Helgason and Holtsmark 121–34. Einarr Skúlason's *Øxarflokkr* (more on this poem below), and the many versified lists of synonyms, transmitted along with *Skáldskaparmál*, might also belong to the same period.

accompanying stanza is the last skaldic stanza quoted in *Knýtlinga saga* and it may be considered indicative of the diminishing appreciation for skaldic poetry in the southernmost part of Scandinavia.[4]

Competition for the attention and goodwill of kings is a recurring theme in anecdotes about the experiences of court poets.[5] In the early period, poets mainly competed with one another. However, in the twelfth century their status at court became increasingly precarious as they faced competition from at least two quarters. Broadly speaking, the skalds appear to have fulfilled two different functions at court: they were encomiasts and entertainers. As encomiasts, they fixed accounts of the deeds and munificence of kings and their ancestors in skaldic verse. As entertainers, they amused the king and his retinue. In both these areas of expertise, the skalds encountered increasing competition as the twelfth century wore on. Their importance as preservers of the knowledge of the deeds of kings of old as well as the reputation of their lord began to be threatened by the increasingly widespread historiographical use of Latin and vernacular parchment literacy at the royal courts, while their role as entertainers at court came up against serious competition from jesters and jugglers.[6]

One skaldic reaction to these challenges was to attempt to increase the prestige of their craft through academicization. Although some twelfth-century court poets began to compose encomia in a more simplified and readily understandable style,[7] the general trend in the development of skaldic poetry is towards an increased complexity as well as verbal and formal acrobatics that demand much more of the practitioner and their audience. Thus *formal* skaldic poetry became an art form cultivated by men who had received schooling and perhaps a clerical ordination. This in turn must have alienated the primary audience of the court poets further, so the skalds directed their efforts away from the praise of kings of the present or the near past, towards subjects of the more distant past in the new genre of the *sagnakvæði* (historical poems) as well as to religious themes, as can be seen in the twelfth century *drápur*.[8] The foremost twelfth-century practitioner of this new learned style was the priest Einarr Skúlason.

The academicization of the skaldic art led to the production, first, of model verses illustrating various meters and variations in the highly formalized poetic imagery,[9] and, later, to skaldic treatises laying out the rules of the art form, separating the artful application of stylistic devices from the unartful. As I argue in the following, it also led

to the formation of a clearly demarcated school canon of exemplary skalds.[10] Most prominent among these treatises was *Skáldskaparmál* (*Skm*) (The language of poetry) commonly attributed to Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241).[11] The main body of *Skm* is taken up by a rather systematic illustration of the elaborate traditional system of *kenningar* (noun paraphrases) and lists of poetic synonyms (known as *heiti*), and the work is addressed to "those young poets who wish to learn the language of poetry and expand their vocabulary with ancient poetic synonyms."[12] The work consists of authoritative (if occasionally confusing) statements about formal aspects of the system, some mythological background information, and exemplary quotations of specimens of poetry. Most of these examples are drawn from the work of named poets. Because the examples given are not chosen casually or at random but have been singled out, this selection and the poets who composed them can be said to make up a school canon of Norse poetry. Upon these select skalds was thus conferred a status somewhat akin to that of the canonized Latin *auctores* studied in medieval schools by those students who had progressed beyond functional literacy and the study of elementary texts.[13]

If *Skm* was indeed put together in the 1220s, much skaldic poetry probably still primarily existed in the form of a vast poetic archive stored in the minds of the practicing skalds. The skalds knew the classics of their trade and must have been able to recite some of them when called for. This is the only way to account for the centuries-long oral transmission of their poetry.[14] But, like so many other quotidian practices, the recitation of older skaldic poetry goes largely unmentioned in the sagas, and it is only a single anecdote found in one manuscript of *Sverris saga* that allows us to glimpse what was once an everyday occurrence at royal courts.[15]

10. On the new (learned) form of skaldic poetry in the twelfth century, see Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 19–40 and *Skaldic Versifying*. The latter contribution focuses on Einarr Skúlason.

11. *Skáldskaparmál* is generally considered to be a part of *The Prose Edda* (from the 1220s?). However, it is also transmitted independently of *The Prose Edda*, and the organization of the text varies considerably from manuscript to manuscript. See the survey of the manuscripts provided by Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 41–72 and, with reference to *Skm*, 213–232. Given the instability of the text *Skm*, I avoid referring to it as a work of Snorri Sturluson. This textual instability also makes it difficult to generalize about the work *Skm*. The observations in the following are therefore, unless otherwise specified, based on the version of *Skm* that is found in *Codex Regius* (R = Reykjavík, GKS 2367 4to, c. 1300–1325) of the *Prose Edda*, the manuscript on which most modern editions of the text, including that of Faulkes (in three volumes 1988, 1998, 2007) used here, are based. R is generally felt to reflect Snorri's original arrangement of the work most accurately (*Skm* I li), but see Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 49–50.

12. "ungum skáldum þeim er girnask at nema mál skáldskapar ok heyja sér orðfjölða með fornum heitum" (*Skm* I 5).

13. The Latin *auctores* included, among others, Virgil, Lucan, and Statius, and Christian authors such as Juvencus and Prudentius.

14. More generally on the performance of skaldic poetry, see Würth, who also argues that the main purpose of *Skm* is hermeneutic and that it is concerned with comprehension rather than production of skaldic poetry.

15. This anecdote involves the twelfth century skald Máni who performs Halldórr skvaldri's poem about the journey of Sigurðr Jorsalafari (*Útfarardrápa*) for Magnús Erlingsson (r. 1161–1184). The anecdote is only found in København, AM 327 4to, c. 1300. It should be noted though that there is information about travelers who bring memorized poems from Iceland to Scandinavia. One such traveler was Steinn Skaptason who was himself a notable skald. *Óláfs saga helga* tells how "Skapti, faðir hans, hafði or drápu um Óláf konung ok hafði kennt Steini. Var svá ætlat, at hann skyldi fœra kvæðit konungi" ("Skapti, [Steinn's] father, had composed a *drápa* about King Óláfr and had taught it to Steinn. The plan was that Steinn should bring the poem to the king") (*Heimskringla* II 243). The famous episode where Þormóðr performs the *Bjarkamál* the night before the battle of Stiklastaðir does not count in this connection, since *Bjarkamál* is anonymous and not a skaldic poem in the traditional sense.

16. This is partly suggested by those instances in which sagas quote only the beginning of longer poems. Earlier sagas also include stanzas, but it is a far cry from the 18 skaldic citations included in the edition of *Sverris saga* (2007) to the 328 stanzas of the recent edition of *Morkinskinna* (2011). *Egils saga* includes 60 stanzas in addition to the text of the three longer poems (*Höfuðlausn* (20 sts), *Sonatorrek* (25 sts), and *Arinbjarnar-kviða* (25 sts)) that might not have been included in the main text of earliest written version of the saga. On the poetry of *Egils saga* as well as the possible functions of first-stanza quotations, see Quinn.

17. Faulkes (60) also emphasizes the importance of memorized stanzas.

18. Simek's estimate in "Snorri Sturluson statistisch" that Snorri had somewhere between 2000 and 4000 stanzas at his disposal nevertheless seems too high.

19. With reference to Fidjestøl, "On a New Edition" 323, Guðrún Nordal has recently written: "There is virtually no overlap between the skaldic corpus in the kings' sagas and *Snorra Edda* on the one hand, and that incorporated into the Sagas of Icelanders on the other [...]. Even though we find verses by the same poets, they are not typically drawn from the same poetic corpus (Guðrún Nordal, "*Ars metrica*" 41).

Skm was first composed at a point in time when vernacular writers had begun to cite stanzas in their historiographical prose works (examples include the kings' saga *Morkinskinna* and *Egils saga*, both conventionally dated to the 1220s), although the lion's share of the corpus probably still resided primarily in the memory of trained skalds.[16] The process of selecting examples for inclusion in *Skm* must therefore have entailed both an examination of written sources as well as a mental scrutiny of the poetic corpus memorized by the author or his fellow tradition carriers.[17] Such trained skalds would have known hundreds of stanzas by heart and, given the relatively restricted thematic breadth of the main body of the preserved poetry, will often have known many stanzas illustrating a particular feature.[18] The selection of appropriate illustrative examples must therefore have entailed a de-selection of other stanzas and must be taken to demonstrate the author's – and his peers' – view of what constituted the most exemplary poetry.

It has frequently been observed that the poetry contained in *Skm* belongs to a corpus that is distinct from that of the sagas of Icelanders (see e.g. Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 78).[19] At the same time, the skaldic corpora of the kings' sagas and *Skm* are often treated as a single corpus, as when Guðrún Nordal writes about "the established skaldic canon of historical saga writing in the kings' saga and *Sturlunga saga*, and in *Snorra Edda*" (*Tools of Literacy* 84). But, as I will show below, not all skaldic poetry of the historical genres enjoyed canonical status. A canon must necessarily be the outcome of a process of demarcation, of selection and deselection, and the collection of examples in *Skm* is a result of such a process. Its purpose was to illustrate how the canonical skalds have composed and how one, by imitation of these, ought to compose. Since court poetry was considered the most prestigious branch of skaldic poetry, it is only natural that parts of the material of *Skm* coincide with the corpus of poetry found in the kings' sagas. But, in fact, the corpora of *Skm* and the kings' sagas diverge considerably from one another. This difference is most easily explained by the dissimilar functions of the skaldic poetry in *Skm* and the kings' sagas. While the author of *Skm* has selected the stanzas that best illustrate what the author considered exemplary usage of the linguistic devices characteristic of skaldic poetry, the poetry of the kings' sagas is to a large extent, but not exclusively, included in order to testify to the historical accuracy of the accounts of events related in the sagas. This usage of skaldic poetry in the kings' sagas is well known and the saga author's/authors' reliance

on such poetry is also stated outright in the medieval prefaces to the *Separate Saga of St. Óláfr* and *Heimskringla* (*Heimskringla* vol. I 7 and vol. II 422). This, however, does not make all the skalds cited in the kings' sagas canonical. With Aleida Assmann's useful distinction between canon and archive, we might characterize the corpus of the kings' sagas as a written instance of the courtly skaldic archive, while a canon is delimited and identified in *Skm*. *Skáldskaparmál*, for example, does not appear to have had any patience with the compositions of Björn krepphendi and does not include a single line of poetry by this early twelfth-century court poet. Nevertheless, Björn krepphendi's poetry appears to have survived at least one hundred years of oral transmission, and the early thirteenth century authors of the kings' sagas *Morkinskinna* and *Heimskringla* readily included eleven (half-)stanzas of his poetry. The same can be said about Gísl Illugason and Ívarr Ingimundarson, who are both quoted at length in *Morkinskinna* (20 and 46 citations respectively) but who are not quoted a single time in *Skm*. The stanzas of Björn, Gísl and Ingi are not cited at such length in the kings' sagas because of their canonical status or high quality but because of the historical facts they contain.

Chief Poets and the Poets of Old in the Grammatical/Rhetorical Corpus

In *Skm* and elsewhere, the most highly regarded skalds are designated *höfuðskáld* (chief poets). Scholars often equate this term with the Latin *auctores* (see e.g. Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 23 and Clunies Ross, *A History* 162). This section and the following will show that '*auctores*' must be considered a special technical sense of the term *höfuðskáld*. In the Old Norse grammatical/rhetorical tradition, as it is represented by *Skm* and *Háttatal*, this term refers exclusively to the exemplary poets whose poetry was considered worthy of imitation by the compilers of Old Norse treatises on poetics. Furthermore, in this body of writings, the *höfuðskáld* are contrasted with the *fornskáld* (poets of old) whose compositions were considered classics as well, although they were not considered worthy of imitation. The term *höfuðskáld* is also found outside of the grammatical/rhetorical tradition, in historiographical works. Here it is used to designate poets who were important in their day, although their poetry is not held up for imitation in the grammatical/rhetorical literature.

The exemplary nature of the poetry of the *höfuðskáld*, in the tech-

nical sense, is clearly illustrated when *Skm* lists thirteen poetical syn-
onyms for the sky and states that one, when composing poetry,
should only use those which have already been used by the *hö-
fuðskáld*:

> These [following] names for the sky are written, but we have
> not found all these terms in poetry. Concerning these
> poetical synonyms, as well as others, it seems to me to be
> unfitting to use them in poetry unless one can already find
> such terms in the works of the chief poets [*höfuðskáld*]: [the
> terms are listed]. [20]

Skm could have been more helpful if it had singled out those syno-
nyms of the thirteen that were in fact used by the *höfuðskáld* and were
thus approved for the use of the aspiring poets of the thirteenth cen-
tury. However, such a list is not given.[21] Elsewhere in *Skm*, it is stat-
ed that one should not "exclude those kennings from poetry which
the chief poets (*höfuðskáld*) have been happy to use."[22] Finally, a
number of examples are said to illustrate how the chief poets have
found it fitting to use certain synonyms and kennings (*Skáldskapar-
mál* I 6). *Háttatal* (The enumeration of meters), the last part of *The
Prose Edda*, also includes a normative statement in which the *hö-
fuðskáld* are held up for imitation.[23] The treatise explains that there
are three kinds of numbers in the rules concerning verse forms: the
number of lines in a stanza (normally eight), the number of syllables
in a line (normally six), and the number of verse forms (or meters)
that have been found in the poetry of the chief poets (*höfuðskáld*).[24]
Both *Skm* and *Háttatal* thus make it clear that the standards of the
höfuðskáld should be adhered to in three respects, namely in relation
to the poetic vocabulary, the poetic imagery, and the poetic meters;
arguably the three most distinctive features of skaldic poetry.

That the *höfuðskáld* constitute a particular group in the grammat-
ical/rhetorical literature is clarified by the use of the related term
fornskáld (poets of old) in the same body of works. The poetry of po-
ets of old is, like that of the chief poets, an important part of the skal-
dic corpus. It has been transmitted orally for centuries and some of
it might be included in the kings' sagas and other saga genres, but it
is not exemplary. It should not be forgotten, but, as *Háttatal* explains,
neither should it be imitated:

> Differing rhyming patterns or metrical errors are widely
> found in the works of the poets of old (*fornskáld*), and one

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20. "Þessi nöfn himins eru rituð, en eigi höfum vér fundit í kvæðum öll þessi heiti. En þessi skáldskaparheiti sem önnur þykki mér óskylt at hafa í skáldskap nema áðr finni hann í verka hǫfuðskálda þvílík heiti: Himinn, hlýrnir, heiðþornir, hregg-Mímir, Andlangr, ljósfari, drífandi, skatyrnir, víðfeðmir, vet-Mímir, leiptr, hrjóðr, víðbláinn" (ed. Faulkes 1988, I, 85). The main source of this list appears to be a versified list of synonyms for sky that is cited later on in *Skm* (st. 516, *Skáldskaparmál* I, 133; see also p. xv of the introduction to this edition). Three of the synonyms (*ljósfari*, *drífandi*, and *leiptr*) are found in the following versified list of synonyms (st. 517), listing synonyms for the sun.

21. One suspects that the reason for this might be found in the fact that these terms were not much used in the poetry before *c.* 1220; perusal of Finnur Jónsson's *Lexicon poeticum* reveals that the majority of them are in fact not attested outside the versified lists of synonyms. The unmarked term *himinn* is quite frequently used, and so is *leiptr* (which is used to designate some-thing shining, *i.e.* 'sun' rather than 'sky'). In later poetry, one finds a few instances of *andlangr*, but the numbers are not impressive.

22. "[T]aka ór skáldskapinum fornar kenningar þær er höfuðskáld hafa látit sér líka" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 5).

23. On *Háttatal*'s attitude to the skaldic tradition, see Myrvoll.

24. "Sú er ein tala hversu margir hættir hafa fundizk í kveðskap höfuðskálda. önnur tala er þat, hversu mörg vísuorð standa í einu eyrindi í hverjum hætti. In þriðja tala er sú, hversu margar samstöfur eru settar í hvert vísuorð í hverjum hætti" (*Háttatal* 3).

25. "Víða er þat í fornskálda verka er í einni vísu eru ymsir hættir eða háttaföll, ok má eigi yrkja eptir því þó at þat þykki eigi spilla í fornkvæðum" (*Háttatal* 26).

should not imitate that even though it is not held to blemish the poetry of old.[25]

A comparable statement is made in *Háttatal*'s treatment of kennings, where it is said that even though the poets of old (*fornskáld*) used a particular complicated form of kenning, it is "now [considered] unacceptable" (*nú ónýtt, Háttatal* 8) to do so.

The "Chief Poets" Outside of the Grammatical/Rhetorical Corpus

Outside the grammatical/rhetorical corpus, the term *höfuðskáld* is used in a more general sense. It is first attested in the poetry of Einarr Skúlason (see Nordal, *Skaldic Versifying* 11–12), the poet cited most often in *Skm* (see the following section), and of Oddi inn litli Glúmsson, a minor skald who figures in *Orkneyinga saga*.

Einarr Skúlason begins his *Geisli* composed in 1153 in honor of St. Óláfr, by praising God, and by asking his audience, the three kings Eysteinn, Sigurðr, and Ingi, the newly appointed archbishop Jón of the archdiocese of Nidaros, and all men to listen to the poem. He then situates his poem in relation to the tradition of skaldic encomia by invoking two of his most prolific skaldic predecessors, each of whom had also celebrated Óláfr, while simultaneously distancing himself from them. Since the two earlier poets have already praised king Óláfr's martial deeds, Einarr will focus on Óláfr's saintly aspects:

12. Sigvatr, frák, at segði
sóknbráðs konungs dáðir;
spurt hefr öld, at orti
Óttarr um gram dróttar.
Þeir hafa þengils Mœra
– þvís sýst – frama lýstan,
(helgum lýtk) es hétu
höfuðskáld (fira jöfri)
(Einarr Skúlason, 'Geisli' 17).

(I have heard that Sighvatr recounted the deeds of the battle-swift king. People have heard that Óttarr composed about the lord of the retinue. They, who were called chief poets [*höfuðskáld*], have described the prowess of the king of the people of Mœrr [*i.e.* Óláfr]. That is done. I kneel for the holy prince of men [*i.e.* Óláfr].)

26. The two skalds were related in that Óttarr's mother was Sighvatr's sister. Both skalds also praised other dignitaries in poetic form.

27. The figures here and in the following for *Óláfs saga helga* are based on the useful database of The Skaldic Project, edited by Tarrin Wills. Figures for *Skm* are based on my own count.

28. "En bók þessa hefi ek látit rita eptir því, sem segir í kvæðum þeira Sigvats ok Óttars svarta, er jafnan váru með Óláfi konungi ok sá ok heyrðu þessi tíðendi […]." The prologue goes on to mention other sources: "sögn Ara prests ok annarra frœðimanna" (*Heimskringla* II 421) ("the utterances of Ari the priest and other learned men.") This (shorter) version of the prologue to the independent saga about Óláfr Haraldsson is only found in two mss: København, Den Arnamagnæske Samling, AM 325 V 4to, *c.* 1300–1320 and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Isl. Perg. Fol. 1, *c.* 1400–1425.

29. Seventeen stanzas by Þórarinn loftunga are cited as well, although his poetry is mainly presented in two longer unbroken sequences of verse. As for the other skálds cited in *Óláfr saga helga*, they are only represented by a few stanzas each.

30. Both are illustrations of a *heiti* for lord, *sinnjór* (a loanword from Old French *seignor*). Stanza 411 is identical to the first two lines of st. 386.

31. This stanza, st. 42, is in *Óláfs saga helga* given to corroborate the statement that Óláfr along with his men boarded the ship of Earl Sveinn Hákonarson (*Heimskringla* II 63). In *Skm* the second half of this stanza is cited as st. 286 as an illustration of a *heiti* for 'retainer,' namely *heiðþegi* (salary-receiver).

Sighvatr and Óttarr, the two poets mentioned to by Einarr Skúlason, were Sighvatr Þórðarson and Óttarr svarti. Both were court poets of Óláfr Haraldsson and both are cited on multiple occasions in the corpus of king's sagas, in particular but not exclusively, in relation to Óláfr Haraldsson.[26] Eighteen stanzas or half-stanzas by Óttarr svarti and no fewer than 106 stanzas or half-stanzas by Sighvatr are cited in *Óláfs saga helga* as it is printed in *Heimskringla* vol. II.[27] For every stanza of Óttarr, there are thus almost six stanzas by Sighvatr. The same two skalds are singled out in the prologue to the independent saga of Óláfr Haraldsson, where the author writes: "I have let this book make according to that which is said in the poems of Sighvatr and Óttarr the black, who invariably were with the king and saw and heard these events […]."[28] The saga writer, Einarr Skúlason, and their audiences, then, must have considered these two skalds the foremost skalds of Óláfr and so important that they should be singled out above the other skalds who are cited in the saga.[29] Einarr Skúlason and the authors of the kings' sagas then must have considered Sighvatr and Óttarr the foremost among Óláfr's skálds, his *höfuðskáld* or 'chief poets.'

Four observations about the use of Sighvatr's and Óttarr's poetry in *Óláfs saga helga* and *Skm* should be made at this point. First, although Sighvatr's poetry is very well represented in the king's sagas, he is rarely cited in *Skm.* In fact, he is only cited on five occasions in *Skm*, and the fifth citation (st. 411) is a duplicate of the fourth (st. 386).[30] Second, *Skm* and *Óláfs saga helga* draw on different parts of Sighvatr's oeuvre: only a half stanza of Sighvatr's poetry is cited in both *Skm* and *Heimskringla*.[31] Third, Óttarr svarti's is cited four times as often as Sighvatr in *Skm* (12 citations), although there are two duplicates.[32] This is enough to place him as the ninth most cited skald in *Skm*. Finally, only two of Óttarr's stanzas are cited by both *Skm* and *Óláfs saga helga*.[33] All this shows that the two works draw on dif-

32. Although *Skm* sts 196 is identical to 287 (albeit with variant readings), and 217 is identical to 314, they illustrate different features of the poetry. Stanza 196 illustrate the kenning *brjótr gullsins* (breaker of gold) for man, in st. 287 the same lines illustrate the heiti *inndrótt* (inner retinue) for retainers. Stanza 217 illustrate that the noun *stafr* (stave) can be used as a base word in kennings for warrior *ógnar stafr* (stave of threat/battle,) and in st. 314 the same lines illustrate the use of the heiti *láð* (meadow(?) land) for land (*láð* is cognate with OE *læð* and the second element of Danish *fælled* "village green," see De Vries).

33. The second half of st. 82 in *Óláfs saga helga* (*Heimskringla* II 172–173) is identical to *Skm* st. 408, and the second half of st. 100 in *Óláfs saga helga* (*Heimskringla* II 280–281) is identical to st. 217 (= 314) in *Skm*.

34. This difference between the historiographical corpus and the grammatical/rhetorical one becomes even more conspicuous if one considers the fact that *Heimskringla* and *Skm* traditionally are assigned to the same author: namely, Snorri Sturluson.

35. The second half-stanza says: "Trað hlunnbjörn | und höfuðskaldi | Áta jörð | Akrsborgar til" ("The roll-er-bear [SHIP] trod the ground of Áti <sea-king> [SEA] to Acre beneath the chief skald") (Oddr inn litli, "*Lausavísur*" 618).

36. See the material made available online by the *Old Norse Prose Dictionary*.

37. The second part of the same anecdote is also found in the fragmentarily preserved (and probably misnamed) *Oldest saga about King Óláfr* (*Otte brudstykker* 4–6) in Oslo NRA 52, *c.* 1225.

38. "Herra […] til þess em ek eigi fœrr at setjask í rúm höfuðskálda þeirra sem hér hafa verit. Fyrir því at ek em ekki reyndr at því at yrkja um þvílíka höfðingja [sem þér eruð]" (*Legendary saga* 53); the bracketed words are from the same anecdote as it is told in *Þáttr Þormóðar* (*Vestfirð-inga sögur* 279) in *Flateyjarbók* (1387–1394).

39. Another, later, version of the same anecdote mentions Þórarinn loftunga, Hallvarðr [Háreksblesi], Óttarr [svarti], and Sighvatr [Þorðarson] (*Saga Óláfs konungs* 803). Óttar and Sighvatr have already been mentioned in connection with Óláfr Haraldsson. Hallvarðr is more obscure, although *Skm* includes six citations of his poetry, and two of his stanzas are quoted in the kings' sagas.

40. "Ekki var þess líkligt um hríð at Þórarinn myndi heðan brott, enda man mér ok at því reynask fyrir því at ek em eigi jafngótt skáld" (*Legendary saga* 53).

ferent corpora and that the most important skalds, the *höfuðskáld*, of *Geisli* and *Óláfs saga helga* are not necessarily the same as the *höfuðskáld* of *Skm*.[34]

The other early skaldic attestation of the term *höfuðskáld* is, as mentioned, found in the poetry of Oddi inn litli. Only five stanzas of this poet are preserved. Not much is known about Oddi, but he accompanied Earl Rögnvaldr Kali Kolsson of Orkney on his crusade to the Holy Land in 1151–53. While they stayed in Acre, many men, including a certain skald named Þorbjörn svarti, died of an unspecified disease. At this point *Orkneyinga saga* (230–31) cites two stanzas in which Oddi laments the dead Þorbjörn. In the first, he relates how ships carried the *höfuðskáld, i.e.* Þorbjörn, to Acre;[35] in the second, he relates how he was buried in the *höfuðkirkja* (chief church) there. There is, as Jesch points out in her commentary to Oddi litli's poetry, nothing that indicates that Þorbjörn svarti was a particularly important skald, and the use of the designation *höfuðskáld* might therefore primarily have been motivated by the use of the term *höfuðkirkja* elsewhere in the sequence. At any rate, the parallel between the two compounds with 'chief-' is conspicuous (618).

Outside the grammatical/rhetorical corpus, the term *höfuðskáld* is also attested a few times in prose.[36] The oldest attestation is found in the beginning of an anecdote related in *The Legendary Saga about St. Óláfr*, preserved in Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, De la Gardie 8, *c.* 1225–1250.[37] Here King Knútr inn ríki, Cnut the Great of Denmark and England (d. 1035), offers the Icelandic skald Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld entry into his retinue. Þormóðr, however, has other plans and he seeks to excuse himself by saying that he is no match for the skalds who have composed about Knútr earlier: "Lord […] I am not suited to occupy the seat of great poets (*höfuðskáld*) such as those who have been here, because I have no experience composing about chiefs such as [you]."[38] The context makes clear that the *höfuðskáld* of King Knútr to whom Þormóðr refers are Þórarinn loftunga and Steinn Skaptason.[39] Since Þormóðr is seeking to avoid entering into the service of Knútr by belittling his own abilities and by flattering the king, his words as given in the saga cannot be taken entirely at face value. On the other hand, both Þórarinn and Skapti are included among the skalds of King Knútr listed in *Skáldatal* (*Uppsala Edda* 112) so it is likely that they were indeed considered among the chief poets of the Danish king. Þormóðr also reminds the king that Þórarinn barely survived his first meeting with the king, and that Þórarinn is a much better skald than he is.[40] Þórarinn here alludes to

41. "Knútr verr grund sem gætir | Gríklands himinríki" (*Heimskringla* II 307).

42. Steinn's sad end is only recorded in the saga of St. Óláfr as it is told in the manuscript *Tómasskinna* (København, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Gammel Kongelige Samling 1008 fol., *c.* 1450–1500): "Hann braut skip sitt við Jotlandssiðu ok komsk einn á land. Hann var þá enn skrautliga búinn ok hafði mikit fé á sér ok var dasaðr mjök. Kona nökkur fann hann er fór með klæði til þváttar. Hon hafði vífl í hendi. Hann var máttlitill ok lá í brúki. Hon sá at hann hafði mikit fé á sér. Síðan fór hon til ok barði hann í hel með víflunni ok myrði hann til fjár at [<af] því er menn segja eða hyggja. Nú gafsk honum svá af ofmetnaði ok óhlyðni við Óláf konung" ("He wrecked his ship on the coast of Jutland and was the sole survivor. At that point, he was still lavishly dressed. He and had many valuables on his person and was almost senseless. A woman who was on her way to wash some clothes found him. She had a bat in her hand. He lay exhausted among the seaweed. She walked up to him and beat him to death with the bat and, according to what people say or think, killed him for gain. This was what he got for his pride and disobedience of King Óláfr." (*Saga Óláfs konungs* 810).

43. Additional attestations in prose of the term *höfuðskáld* outside the grammatical/rhetorical tradition are found in the anecdotal material concerning Þjóðólfr Arnórsson, a prolific, and – if the tales told about him are to be believed – somewhat pompous court poet primarily associated with Magnús góði (r. 1035–1047) and Haraldr harðráði (r. 1046–1066) (*Eyfirðinga sögur* 264 and 267).

44. Clear examples include *þjóðá* (great river), *þjóðlygi* (great lie), *þjóðsmiðr* (great smith).

a well-known episode recounted in *Óláfs saga helga* where an insulted King Knútr threatens to hang Þórarinn from the highest tree because he had dared to compose a *flokkr* in his honor instead of using the more prestigious form of the *drápa*. Þórarinn only saves his life by turning his *flokkr* into a *drápa* overnight, thereby adding the refrain "Knútr protects the land, as the protector of Greece [protects] the kingdom of heaven."[41] Since then the resulting poem was known as *höfuðlausn* (head-ransom). The other poet of king Knútr with which Þormóðr compared himself unfavorably was Steinn Skaptason. This skald is primarily known from a long episode in *Óláfs saga helga* in which he has a falling out with king Óláfr. The outcome of this is that Steinn leaves for England, where he joins the retinue of the Danish King Knútr (*Heimskringla* II 243–49). At Knútr's court, Steinn's vanity and covetousness again brings him into trouble, and he is forced to vacate Knútr's court (as told in *The Legendary Saga* 58–59).[42] Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld probably had many reasons for not wanting to join the retinue of King Knútr, but when he is shown as referring to Þórarinn loftunga and Steinn Skaptason with the term *höfuðskáld*, he is clearly intended to designate the famous poets of Knútr rather than the canonical ones.[43]

Related to the term *höfuðskáld is þjóðskáld* (master poet). This second term, which has acquired the meaning "national poet" in Modern Icelandic, is attested three times in the material of the Old Norse prose dictionary. The core meaning of the noun *þjóð* is "people, nation", but as a prefix it might also mean "great, big."[44] This meaning is most clearly seen in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskáld* (*Eyfirðinga sögur* 228). More interesting is the oldest attestation of *þjóðskáld*, which is found in the context of another anecdote about Þjóðólfr Arnórsson. In this tale, King Haraldr harðráði has challenged Þjóðólfr to improvise a stanza with a particular rhyming scheme. The resulting stanza contains a formal error, and upon hearing this, the king exclaims: "Listen to the master poet (*þjóðskáld*), you rhymed *gröm* with *skömm*."[45] When the king addresses Þjóðólfr as *þjóðskáld*, he is clearly ironical, and he is probably also making a pun on Þjóðólfr's name, which might be taken to mean Great wolf (< *þjóð-úlfr*).

This section has shown how the term *höfuðskáld*, when used outside of the grammatical/rhetorical tradition, should generally be understood to refer to a chief poet or an important poet of some king.

45. "Heyr, þjóðskáld, kvattu svá: Gröm, skömm" (*Morkinskinna* I 286 [the editors take the king's words to be a question rather than a statement of fact]). On the different variants of this anecdote see Fidjestøl, "Tåtten om Harald." See also *Morkinskinna* I 286 n.1. The assonance is erroneous because of the unequal length of the final consonants in *gröm* and *skömm*.

The Skalds of the Old Norse School Canon

Who, then, are the *höfuðskáld*, or vernacular *auctores*, of the learned grammatical and rhetorical tradition? The texts do not tell us, as no lists of such exemplary poets are given in *Skm* or elsewhere in the learned grammatical/rhetorical treatises.[46] The *höfuðskáld* can perhaps most easily be identified by examining attribution of the poetical examples given in *Skm*. By my count, seventy named skalds (and an unknown number of unnamed skalds) are cited in the first part of the *Skm* (cps 1–64), these skalds span the entirety of the known skaldic tradition from the oldest preserved poetry of the ninth century (assuming that the traditional dates assigned to these poems are reliable) to poetry roughly contemporary with the composition of *Skm*.[47] The (editorial) numbering of stanzas in this part of *Skm* runs to 411 stanzas.[48] In the second, remaining, part of the text (cps 65–75), 106 versified lists are cited as well. These lists are anonymous and generally held in a simple meter.

Despite these impressive numbers, the reader of *Skm* soon notices that the author has some favorites and that a select group of poets are cited more often than others. Since it is reasonable to assume that the number of citations of a given poet correlates with the perceived exemplarity of the same poet in such a way that the most exemplary poets are also the ones that are most cited in the text, one can get a clear sense of who the *höfuðskáld* were perceived to be by identifying the poets cited most frequently in the text. A listing of the twelve most cited poets along with the number of citations of these poets is found in Table 1 below.

Table 1

	Poet	Number of Citations
1	Einarr Skúlason	35
2	Arnórr jarlaskald	21
3	Bragi Boddason	16
4	Einarr skálaglamm	15
5	Eyvindr skáldaspillir	15
6	Hofgarða-Refr	14
7	Þjóðólfr Arnórsson	13
8	Úlfr Uggason	12
9	Óttarr svarti	12
10	Hallfrøðr Óttarsson vandræðaskáld	11
11	Egill Skallagrímsson	8
12	Markús Skeggjason	8

46. The most extensive list of poets is *Skáldatal* which organizes court poets chronologically by patron. This means that skalds who composed about more than one king may be listed more than once. *Skáldatal* is found in two versions, one in the Uppsala manuscript of the *Prose Edda* (DG 11) where it follows immediately upon *Gylfaginning* and is followed by two additional lists (*Ættartala Sturlunga* and *Lögsögumanntal*). These three lists are followed by *Skm.* The other version of *Skáldatal* appears to have followed *Heimskringla* in the now lost *Kringla* manuscript and is only extant in later copies (see Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 220–30). Guðrún Nordal suggests that *Skáldatal* originated in conjunction with the writing of *Heimskringla* (223). Its function in the *U* manuscript of the *Prose Edda* may be to provide a chronological framework for the citations that follow in *Skm* as well as to highlight the international importance and historical achievements of the skalds (Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy* 126). See also Pálsson's discussion in *Uppsala Edda* lxxv–lxxvii.

47. The oldest poetry preserved in *Skm* is arguably the stanzas of Bragi Boddason, Ölvir hnúfa, and Þjóðólfr inn hvínverski. The only poet of the early thirteenth century cited in *Skm* is Máni. Máni's dates are unknown but he is reported to have performed for Magnús Erlingsson in 1184, and *Sturlunga saga* cites a stanza by him about gifts sent from Earl Hákon galinn (d. 1214) to Snorri Sturluson. In the poem, which Finnur Jónsson dates to *c.* 1213, Máni refers to Snorri in laudatory terms as *afreksmaðr* (valiant man) and *göfugr gæðingr* (honorable nobleman) (*Skj* B I 520).

48. The majority of these stanzas can be considered skaldic stanzas, but there are also a significant number of Eddic stanzas and versified lists.

The poetic citations in *Skm* are of varying length. Most examples are half-stanzas (*i.e.* four lines), but occasionally citations contain long sequences of stanzas. The table above, which is exclusively based on the number of *citations*, therefore gives a slightly skewed picture and needs to be counterbalanced by the information in Table 2 below, which shows the number of lines cited by the different poets.

	Poet	Number of Lines Cited
1	Eilífr Guðrúnarson	168
2	Þjóðólfr ór Hvini	164
3	Einarr Skúlason	144
4	Bragi Boddason	132
5	Arnórr jarlaskáld	74
6	Eyvindr skáldaspillir	65
7	Einarr skálaglamm	60
8	Þjóðólfr Arnórsson	58
9	Hofgarða-Refr	52
10	Úlfr Uggason	44
11	Óttarr svarti	40
12	Hallfrøðr Óttarsson vandræðaskáld	40

Table 2 differs from Table 1 in that the two lowest ranked skalds in the first table, Egill Skallagrímsson (10th cent.) and Markús Skeggjason (11th cent.), have had to give way for two skalds composing on pagan subjects who have entered at the very top of the table: Eilífr Guðrúnarson and Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. The first of these is only cited on four occasions in Skm, but one of the citations is the long narrative mythological poem *Þórsdrápa* (152 lines = 19 stanzas). Þjóðólfr is cited on six occasions, but two of these are extended sequences from his long ekphrastic mythological poem *Haustlöng* (160 lines, or rather 159 as one line appears to be lost = 20 stanzas) and four of the total of six citations repeat stanzas also cited in Haustlöng.[49] The length of these single citations from Eilífr and Þjóðólfr shows that the primary purpose for citing these stanzas is unlikely to have been to illustrate a particular poetic device. Rather, they were probably included in Skm because of the story they tell or the mythological information they contain.[50]

In order to identify the *höfuðskáld* of the grammatical/rhetorical tradition more securely than merely by the counting numbers of citations or the number of lines quoted, one might combine the information found on these two lists and leave out poets who do not fig-

49. The attribution of the last stanza (nr. 9) to Þjóðólfr is contested (see *Skáldskaparmál* I 157).

Table 2

50. These extended quotations from *Þórsdrápa* and *Haustlöng* are not found in the oldest manuscript of the *Prose Edda* (Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, De la Gardie 11, *c.* 1300), and neither are two extended quotations from Bragi Boddason in *Skm* (sts 154–158 and 250–254 of 36 lines each). This has been taken by some to mean that these passages are later additions to *Skm* (see *Skáldskaparmál* I xli), but the textual relationship between the Uppsala manuscript and the mainstream tradition is still an unresolved issue. See most recently Sävborg, who has argued that the text of the Uppsala manuscript has been shortened.

ure on both lists. In doing so, one ends up with the following ranked list of ten *höfuðskáld*:[51]

1	Einarr Skúlason	12th cent.[52]
2	Arnórr jarlaskáld	d. c. 1075
3	Bragi Boddason	9th cent.
4	Eyvindr skáldaspillir	d. c. 990
5	Einarr skálaglamm	10th cent
6	Þjóðólfr Arnórsson	11th cent.
7	Hofgarða-Refr	11th cent.
8	Úlfr Uggason	fl. c. 1000
9	Óttarr svarti	11th cent.
10	Hallfrøðr vandrœðaskáld	d. c. 1007

This calibrated list looks quite a lot like Table 1, but some names have been shuffled around in the middle tier. Most of the names on the list are well known to readers of Old Norse literature today, since they or their poetry figure prominently in Kings' sagas.[53] Bragi Boddason and Úlfr Uggason do not figure in the Kings' sagas, but they are well known today because of the cultural-historical importance of their compositions, which count among the major sources for Old Norse mythology.

It is also noteworthy that, while the majority of the poets on the list are of the eleventh century, the highest-ranking poet is the only representative of the twelfth century. This is Einarr Skúlason, the poet with whom this paper began, the *höfuðskáld par excellence*, and the only one who can be confidently said to have had a clerical ordination.[54] Einarr is the main representative of the new learned skaldic poetry, and among the many quotations of Einarr's poetry in Skm one finds a number of stanzas that have been characterized as "instructional verse" by Guðrún Nordal (*Skaldic Versifying* 11).

In *Skm*, no fewer than ten (half-)stanzas by Einarr (sts 145, 146/232, 147–149, 183, 193–194, 244–245) describe an axe inlaid with gold said to be given to Einarr by a king. This set of stanzas is now conventionally referred to by the editorial title *Øxarflokkr* (Poem about an axe). In *Øxarflokkr*, the king is referred to by complex, but also standard, kennings such as "well-doer of the swan of strife" (*gœðandi svans gunnar*), the conventional image of the warrior who feeds scavengers (ravens) with the bodies of his slain enemies, but he is never actually named. In this set of stanzas, Einarr repeatedly uses kennings that refer in various ways to the Norse goddess

Table 3

51. I arrived at this ranking by giving the highest ranked poets in the two preceding tables the score 12. The second highest ranked received the score 11 and so on. For all poets found on both lists I added the two scores. Einarr Skúlason thus ended up with the accumulated score 22 (12 + 10), Arnórr jarlaskáld ended up with the score 19 (11 + 8) and so on. After these calculations, some skalds ended up with the same score: Arnórr jarlaskáld and Bragi Boddason both scored 19, Einarr skálaglámm and Eyvindr skáldaspillir both scored 15 and Hofgarða-Refr and Þjóðólfr Arnórsson both scored 11. In these cases, I have given more weight to the number of citations than the number of lines and ranked the skald with the most citations the higher.

52. The dates in this table are derived from Faulkes' index of names in *Skm* II 443–528.

53. Hallfrøðr vandrœðaskáld is also the protagonist of one of the sagas of Icelanders (*Hallfreðar saga*).

54. In the sagas, he is occasionally called Einarr priest, and his name also figures on the list of Icelandic priests from 1143, where he is listed among priests in Western Iceland (*DI* I, 186) (Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske* II: 62).

Freyja. Of the ten stanzas on this subject matter, st. 149 may serve as an example:

> Gaf sá er erring ofrar
> ógnprúðr Vanabrúðar
> þing- Váfaðar -þrøngvir
> þróttöflu<g>a mér dóttur.
> Ríkr leiddi mey mækis
> mótvaldr á beð skaldi
> Gefnar glóðum drifna
> Gautreks svana brautar (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál* I 44).

(The threat-brave compeller of Váfuðr's assembly, he who displays valor, gave me the strength-mighty daughter of the Vanir-bride; the powerful controller of the meeting of the sword led the maiden of Gefn, covered with the embers of the paths of Gautrekr's swan, to the bed of the skald.)

In this example Einarr Skúlason gives, in the typically convoluted manner of the skalds, expression to the idea that the warring ruler gave him a precious object. The audience needs to possess a certain amount of mythological knowledge in order to be able to appreciate the stanza, although the burden of decoding the meaning is alleviated by the fact that Einarr Skúlason gives expression to the same idea twice, once in each half-stanza. In both half-stanzas, the ruler is referred to by stylized warrior-kennings based on the model "governor of battle," while the precious object is referred to through a complex kind of wordplay known as *ofljóst* (lit. 'too clear') as "the daughter of Freyja" = Hnoss = hnoss, which denotes a precious object.[55]

Abram labels *Øxarflokkr* as "a backward looking exercise in traditional compositional techniques" (*Myths* 197, see also "Einarr Skúlason, Snorri Sturluson"). This might well be a fitting characterization, but, by virtue of their inclusion in Skm, the stanzas might also be intended to perform an exemplary function as model verses for future poets. The sheer number, the thematic monotony, and the unspecific nature of the stanzas ascribed to *Øxarflokkr* also points to their origin as rhetorical set pieces (variations on a theme) rather than from a praise poem on a particular axe given to Einarr Skúlason by a particular king.[56] In general, the very number of stanzas attributed to Einarr Skúlason in *Skm* shows that the author of this text pos-

55. Freyja was the Vanir bride of the stanza and another name of Freyja is Gefn. *Gylfaginning*, the first major part of *The Prose Edda*, explains that Freyja's daughter was named Hnoss, and that her name came to signify any precious object: "[Freyja] giptisk þeim manni er Óðr heitir. Dóttur þeira heitir Hnoss. Hon er svá fögr at af hennar nafni eru hnossir kallaðar þat er fagrt er ok gersemligt" (Prologue and Gylfaginning 29) ("Freyja married that man which is called Óðr. Their daughter is called Hnoss. She is so beautiful that all objects that are beautiful and precious are called *hnossir* (pl. of *hnoss*) after her name.")

56. Although the two different origins are not necessarily mutually exclusive of one another.

sessed a deep knowledge of the poetic corpus of this particular skald, knowledge he might have acquired through formal training in skaldic poetry.

Returning to the list of the *höfuðskáld* compiled above, it should also be noted that the only real surprise on the list is the relatively obscure Hofgarða-Refr Gestsson.[57] The stanzas of this eleventh-century skald can, just like those of Einarr Skúlason, be linked to a setting in whose background schooling or at least a kind of formalized training looms. No anecdotes about Hofgarða-Refr have survived, and not much is known about him although *Skáldatal* lists him among the poets of Óláfr Haraldsson. His line of descent is nevertheless fairly well established, thanks to a few genealogies that are traced to him in *Landnámabók*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Kristni saga* and elsewhere.[58] Besides these genealogies, Hofgarða-Refr is also said to have been the foster-son of the Gizurr Gullbráskáld, one of the skalds attached to the retinue of Óláfr Haraldsson.[59] Two of Refr's half-stanzas are probably unique in that they refer to his training as a skald, a theme never touched upon in other preserved skaldic stanzas. In these somewhat obscure but precious testimonies, Refr praises his foster-father as the one whom he has to thank for the "drink of Falr" (*Skm* st. 17) and the one who "often brought me to the holy cup of the raven-god" (*Skm* st. 4).[60] The "drink of Falr" and "the holy cup of the raven-god" are both conventional variations on the kenning types 'mead of dwarfs,' Falr being the name of a dwarf, and 'Óðinn's cup' (see e.g. Kreutzer, *Dichtungslehre* 100–101 and 107–109). In other words, Refr pays tribute to his teacher of skaldic poetry.[61]

If Hofgarða-Refr pays tribute to his own teacher in these two stanzas, five stanzas cited elsewhere in *Skm* might reflect some of Hofgarða-Refr's own instructional or pedagogical efforts. In Skm sts 124, 126/347, 127, 354, and 363, we have a set of stanzas that describe a voyage across a stormy sea in impressive but also slightly generic terms. These five stanzas are almost completely devoid of human agents.[62] Instead, inanimate entities (the sea, the ship, or its components) have been given life. Skm sts 126/347[63] and 354 provide two examples:

Fœrir björn, þar er bára
brestr, undinna festa
opt í Ægis kjapta,
úrsvöl Gymis völva (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál* I 93).

57. Hofgarða-Refr is also one of the few poets cited in *Háttatal* (8).

58. It is perhaps interesting to note that these genealogies are traced to him but not further than him. This implies that he was a towering figure whose fame outshone that of his descendants (if any).

59. *Heimskringla* mentions Gizurr among Óláfr Haraldsson's poets (*Heimskringla* II 358 and 381–382) as does the version of *Skáldatal* which is believed to have been associated with *Heimskringla* (see fn. 46 above) (*Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* III 253), while the version of *Skáldatal* found in DG 11 lists Gizurr among Óláfr Tryggvason's poets (*Uppsala Edda* 104).

60. "Þér eigu vér veigar [...] Fals [...] gjalda" (ed. Faulkes 1998, I, 9–10) and "Opt kom[...] at helgu fulli hrafn-Ása mér" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 9–10).

61. More conventional is Hofgarða-Refr's praise of the martial prowess of Gizurr in a stanza cited in *Heimskringla* (*Heimskringla* II 382).

62. The only exception is an intercalary statement in which the poet gives vent to his expectation that land will soon come into view before the prow of the ship (in st. 124).

63. *Skm* cites this stanza twice, first in the section on kennings for the sea and second in the section on heiti for the sea.

(The moist-cold witch of Gymir brings the bear of the wound ropes into the jaws of the sea where the bore breaks.)

Barðristinn nemr brjósti
borðheim drasill skorðu
—nauð þolir viðr—en víði
verpr inn of þröm stinnan (Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál* I 94).

(The steed of the prop takes the stem-carved plank-land with its breast, the wide sea is thrown over the stiff gunwale. The timber suffers need.)

The first of these half-stanzas describes how waves break over the ship and engulf it, while the second describes how the bow of the ship lands after being tossed by the waves and the splashing water. Just like Einarr Skúlason's ten deft but rather unspecific verses about an axe supposedly given to him, Hofgarða-Refr's evocative stanzas on a journey across a stormy sea can be seen as model-verses on a particular topic. This impression becomes even stronger when all five half-stanzas are read as a set and one clearly sees how the skald repeatedly presents images of an animated ship that traverses a stormy sea and of the personified sea that grabs hold of the ship.

The preserved skaldic poetry shows how skalds often had occasion to praise a valuable object given to them (as well as the magnanimous leader who gave the object). Seafaring is also a recurrent theme in the preserved corpus.[64] Although Hofgarða-Refr appears to have been active a full century before Einarr spearheaded the new learned skaldic poetry, it is not difficult to imagine his stanzas on the ship that crosses the sea being transmitted in a pedagogical context as model-verses showing how one can compose such stanzas. In any case, although their pedagogical purpose cannot be ascertained with absolute certainty, their pedagogical use is amply witnessed by the text that has preserved them to the present time, namely *Skm*.

Skm is then the text that gives us the clearest picture of a school canon of skalds as it emerged in the early thirteenth century. By counting the number of times individual skalds were cited as well as the number of their lines that were cited, a list of ten *höfuðskáld* was established. This canon was by no means a stable and fixed one. By studying different manuscripts of *Skm* and the later *Third Grammatical Treatise*, one will be able to see how the canon was adjusted over

64. Examples of other stanzas on the same theme can be found in *Skm* sts 260, 346, 356, 358, 361, 365 and elsewhere. Outside the grammatical-rhetorical literature, one of the most notable examples is found in *Egils saga* 172.

65. So *e.g.* the short introduction by Whaley and the anthologies by Frank and Turville-Petre.

66. Frank includes the two half-stanzas from Skm in which Refr commemorates his teacher (*Old Norse Court Poetry* 97) while Turville-Petre has a wider selection consisting of four half-stanzas from *Skm* and a stanza from Heimskringla (*Scaldic Poetry* 91–93).

67. He stresses Refr's "udviklede sans for en i teknisk henseende skön og harmonisk form" (*Den oldnorske og oldislandske* I: 600) and mentions that "Einars stærkeste side [er] hans fuldkomne teknik og strænge systematik" (*Den oldnorske og oldislandske* II: 72).

68. The author of *Skm* might have found a poet such as Egill Skalla-Grímsson to be too idiosyncratic to be exemplary. At the other end of the scale, a skald such as Sighvatr, who looms large in the material about St. Óláfr, might have been perceived to stray too far in the other direction endeavoring for *claritas*.

the course of time. In a sense, this gradual fine-tuning of the canon continues until the present day although its purpose has changed. Today, most would agree that Egill Skallagrímsson numbers among the most important skalds, but he did not make it into the canon of *Skm* as it was construed above. While the importance of Einarr Skúlason for the development of skaldic poetry is generally recognized among scholars, his presence in the canon is much diminished today. Shorter introductions to skaldic poetry occasionally pass over Einarr in silence, and two of the most important anthologies of skaldic verse do not include samples from Einarr's works.[65] Hofgarða-Refr fares better, although he does not get much press either.[66] In his colossal literary history, Finnur Jónsson treats of more or less all known skalds, discussing among other things their merits (or, in his view, lack thereof). His comments on these two skalds show how highly he regarded them and that he fully recognized Einarr's importance for the development of skaldic poetry. Finnur Jónsson paid particular attention to their technical abilities, writing that Refr possessed "a well-developed sense for a, in technical terms, beautiful and harmonious form," and that "Einarr's strongest side [is] his perfect technique and his strict systematism."[67] *Skm* and *Háttatal* are both preoccupied with systematizing the traditional skaldic poetry by imposing strict rules by which right can be separated from wrong and the artful from the inferior. From this perspective, the particular slant of the skaldic canon as it is presented in Skm becomes perfectly understandable. The young skalds are encouraged to imitate their predecessors but not to do so indiscriminately. The poets held up as models follow strict rhyming patterns and use the traditional poetic vocabulary and traditional kennings.[68]

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