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‘The revolt of the medievalists’. Directions in recent research on the twelfth-century renaissance

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Abstract

This historiographical article contains two basic parts. First, it discusses recent approaches to the twelfth-century renaissance in the last two decades by focusing on some selected themes. These themes basically derive from Charles Homer Haskins’ notion of the renaissance and include individualism, rationality, secularisation, and the question of the emergence of a ‘critical mentality.’ From this point of departure, the article addresses the question of thematic innovation with regard to the twelfth-century renaissance. The second part of the article discusses the effect of the so-called linguistic turn on renaissance studies in general and on the twelfth-century renaissance in particular. In conclusion, some suggestions for further research are singled out.

Keywords: Historiography; Twelfth-century renaissance; Linguistic turn

Ever since Wallace K. Ferguson contributed to making ‘the revolt of the medievalists’¹ a slogan for the medievalists’ attack on the modernity of Jacob Burckhardt’s Italian renaissance,² the

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¹ Wallace K. Ferguson, *The renaissance in historical thought: five centuries of interpretation* (Boston 1948). The author extends thanks to Lars Boje Mortensen and Sverre Bagge for comments on this present article.

² Jacob Burckhardt, *The civilization of the renaissance in Italy*, vols 1 and 2 (New York, 1958).

question of ‘renaissance’ or ‘renaissances’ has been much discussed.³ Needless to say, Charles Homer Haskins and his *The renaissance of the twelfth century* played a leading part in Ferguson’s presentation of the revolt.⁴ Between Ferguson’s historiographical outline of ‘five centuries of interpretation’ from 1948 and the present stress on ‘alterity’ in medieval research, approaches to the twelfth-century renaissance have developed immensely.⁵ The half century which has passed since Ferguson’s much-quoted characterisation has not only seen a virtual explosion of research into the twelfth-century renaissance, but also felt the methodological implications of the so-called ‘linguistic turn’.

These two aspects are from one perspective two sides to the same coin; the liberation of medieval studies from the methodological and thematic straight jacket imposed by the heritage of Ranke has led to a stress on ‘alterity’. If the ideological concern of Haskins and his followers was to ‘modernise’ the middle ages, much of the present concern with the twelfth century can be called ‘de-modernisation’.⁶ According to R. I. Moore, ‘the first European revolution’ – including the cultural developments of the twelfth-century renaissance – also witnessed the ‘formation of a persecuting society’, creating a less tolerant and more hostile society.⁷ The same story can be told for post-war renaissance studies.⁸ As for the middle ages, new themes and approaches have emerged next to the ‘old’, creating a middle ages more diverse and pluralistic. Needless to say, the once central question – ‘the middle

³ For general descriptions of the different ‘renaissances’, see R.R. Bolgar, *The classical heritage and its beneficiaries* (Cambridge, 1954); Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval foundations of the western intellectual tradition, 400-1400* (New Haven and London, 1998). Bolgar presents a balanced view, stressing both the strength and weaknesses of the Carolingian and the twelfth-century renaissance as compared with the later Italian renaissance. Colish, however, is overtly positive as to the contribution of the middle ages in general and the twelfth century in particular and in terms of laying the foundation for the Italian renaissance. See also Frederick B. Artz, *The mind of the middle ages. An historical survey A. D. 200-1500* (Chicago and London, 1980); Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval civilization 400-1500* (Oxford, 1988 (first pub. 1964)). For a bibliography, see Chris D. Ferguson, *Europe in transition. A select, annotated bibliography of the twelfth-century renaissance* (New York, 1989).

⁴ Charles H. Haskins, *The renaissance of the twelfth century* (Cleveland and New York, 1957 (first pub. 1927)).

⁵ P. Freedman and G. Spiegel, ‘Medievalisms old and new: the rediscovery of alterity in North American medieval studies’, *The American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), 677: ‘Thus we are especially interested in the shift over the last 20 years from a middle ages represented as being in tune with modernity...to a more vivid and disturbing image of medieval civilization as the west’s quintessential ‘other’, in which the salient traits of the middle ages derive from its marginal and unsettling character, its ‘hard-edged alterity’ in the words of one scholar, a view radically different for the confident foundationalism in the vogue during most of the twentieth century.’

⁶ Freedman and Spiegel, ‘Medievalisms old and new’, 693.

⁷ R.I. Moore, *The formation of a persecuting society. Power and deviance in western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford 1987). R.I. Moore, *The first European revolution, c. 970-1215* (Oxford, 2000).

⁸ The alleged modernity of the ‘renaissance’ both in its medieval and early medieval form has been considered largely an American invention. The civic and humanistic sides to the renaissance were a meta-theoretical guiding line underlying the conception of Haskins and his followers, as well as prominent American ‘renaissancists’ such as Hans Baron and Erwin Panofsky, see Freedman and Spiegel, ‘Medievalisms old and new’, 682: ‘The progressive middle ages in its American guise is essentially the creation of Haskins...’; Carl Landauer, ‘Erwin Panofsky and the renaissance of the renaissance’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47 (1994), 267: ‘Panofsky’s American writings, I would argue, form part of the American discourse on the renaissance, a discourse which idealized the renaissance for its classical erudition and its celebration of the human.’; See also Edward Muir, ‘The Italian renaissance in America’, *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), 105-118. However, there are not many, if any, that subscribe to the Baron thesis today, particularly after the devastating critique of James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian renaissance* (Leiden 1991).

ages – romantic or rationalistic?’⁹ – is no longer a viable point of departure for medieval studies. Likewise, renaissance studies have also questioned the viability of taking the ‘modernity’ of the renaissance as a guiding line.¹⁰

The following sketch will not deal with the ‘alterity’ of the twelfth-century renaissance, but rather provide an overview of directions in research over the past two decades that more or less continues the ‘revolt of the medievalists’ and thus also Haskins’ approach to the renaissance. I will start by briefly sketching the most important aspects of the early treatments of the twelfth-century renaissance.¹¹ Thereafter, I will focus on the revisions of Haskins’ understanding at the fiftieth anniversary of his book in 1977.¹² In the first main part of this article, I will discuss research undertaken in the last 30 years with regard to important aspects of the twelfth-century renaissance, namely individualism, the question of rationality, secularisation, and the extent to which the period witnessed a new critical mentality.¹³ From this point of departure, I will briefly address some thematic innovations in recent research into the twelfth-century renaissance,¹⁴ before discussing the question of new methodical insight.¹⁵ Although this last section touches upon general problems in medieval studies – periodisation and categorisation – and I will relate these problems to the relationship between the different medieval renaissances on the one hand and to the much-discussed connection between the twelfth-century renaissance and the Italian renaissance on the other. In conclusion, I will offer some suggestions for further research.¹⁶

The ‘renaissance’ in the historical consciousness

Burckhard’s renaissance takes place in northern Italy. It starts in the fourteenth century and reaches its culmination a hundred years later. This event is presented as the real cultural bloom in western history, marking the birth of several traits characteristic of early-modern Europe: individualism, a secularised worldview, and the creation of the ‘state as a work of art’.¹⁷ Burckhard’s understanding of the renaissance is also the story of an emerging critical historical approach. Basically, a new secular and rational understanding of the historical past was a direct result of how the past ceased to be regarded as a static God-given order. According to Burckhardt, the past was conceptualised and contextualised in terms of its individual properties. The renaissance’s grasp of the past was thus no uncritical imitation of the ancient way of life, but a conscious adaptation of some traits of the historical past.¹⁸

⁹ J.S. Tatlock, ‘The middle ages – romantic or rationalistic?’, *Speculum*, 8 (1933), 295-304.

¹⁰ See for instance, William J. Bouwsma, ‘The renaissance and the drama of western History’, *American Historical Review*, 84 (1979), 1-15.

¹¹ See section, The ‘renaissance’ in the historical consciousness.

¹² See section, Beyond Haskins?

¹³ See section, Thematic continuity?

¹⁴ See section, Thematic innovation?

¹⁵ See section, New methodological insight?

¹⁶ See section, Concluding remarks: suggestions for further research.

¹⁷ Burckhardt, *The civilization of the renaissance in Italy*.

¹⁸ Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and renaissances in western art* (Stockholm, 1960), 108.

Long before Haskins, medievalists encountered Burckhardt's interpretation,¹⁹ using terms such as 'a period of new life'²⁰ and 'an open society'²¹ to characterise the twelfth century. This revisionism reached a preliminary climax in 1928 as Haskins published *The renaissance of the twelfth century*. Haskins presents the renaissance as the period in which several of the traits which Burckhardt assigned to the fifteenth century originated. By focusing mainly on the classical literary revival, Haskins maintained that it was not the Italian cities, but rather the medieval monasteries and cathedral schools that laid the groundwork for rationalisation as well as secularisation.²² Haskins, then, made the renaissance the cultural hallmark of the middle ages, only to be replaced by scholasticism around 1250.²³

In the post-war period, several facets of Haskins' renaissance were further elaborated. In his remarkable book, *The making of the middle ages* (1953), Richard W. Southern describes this making as a quiet revolution. He stresses the historical problem in portraying such a development, namely that its profound depth is only manifested through a diffusion of social structures and processes. Still, the twelfth century witnessed, according to Southern, nothing less than an emerging 'civilisation'.²⁴ Research in the 1960s continued to regard this predominantly Latin renaissance and its concomitant humanism as the culmination of the Latin high culture's self-aggrandizement and as a hallmark of the cultural life of the period.²⁵ However, variations on Haskins' renaissance did occur.²⁶ Jean Leclercq, for instance, underlined the continuity between the ancient culture and the culture of the twelfth century, thus questioning the singularity

¹⁹ We should distinguish between Burckhardt's original conception and its later elaboration. Burckhardt himself admired several facets of the medieval period, and there has been a tendency to interpret certain passages as indicating an antithesis between the two periods on the part of Burckhardt. See for instance the highly acclaimed analysis of Thomas M. Greene, *The light in Troy: imitation and discovery in renaissance poetry* (New Haven, 1982), 8-12, 36 and 143. Greene applauds the renaissance for its 'humanist piety' and attributes to the middle ages only a certain charm and distinction. See also Roberta Garner, 'Jacob Burckhardt as a theorist of modernity: reading the civilization in Italy', *Sociological Theory*, 8 (1990), 48-57.

²⁰ Dana C. Munro, 'A period of new life', in: *The twelfth-century renaissance*, ed. C.R. Young (New York, 1969), esp. 7-9.

²¹ Friedrich Heer, 'An open society', in: *The twelfth-century renaissance*, ed. Young, 16.

²² Haskins, *The renaissance of the twelfth century*. See also Charles H. Haskins, 'The Greek element in the renaissance of the twelfth century', *The American Historical Review*, 25 (1920), 603-15; *Studies in the history of mediaeval science* (Cambridge, 1929); *Studies in mediaeval culture* (Oxford, 1929).

²³ Charles Young, 'Introduction', in: *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Young, 1-2: 'Haskins places the origins of his renaissance before 1100 and holds that it ended about 1250, when it was replaced by the scholasticism of the later thirteenth century. In so doing, he emphasizes only cultural trends, omitting all mention of the other changes and developments that characterized the age.'

²⁴ Richard W. Southern, *The making of the middle ages* (New Haven, 1953); See also Christopher Brooke, *The twelfth-century renaissance* (London, 1969).

²⁵ For different perspectives on twelfth-century humanism, see R.W. Southern, *Medieval humanism and other studies* (Oxford, 1970); John D. Baldwin, *The scholastic culture of the middle ages, 1000-1300* (Massachusetts, 1971); Rodney Thompson, 'John of Salisbury and William of Malmesbury: currents in twelfth-century humanism', in: *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. M. Wilks (Oxford, 1984), 117-27; R.W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe. Vol. 2, Foundations* (Oxford, 1995) and *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe. Vol. 2, The heroic age* (Oxford, 2001). For a dated, but still valuable sketch of the debate, see Denys Hay, *The renaissance debate* (New York, 1965).

²⁶ For analyses that stress clear lines of continuation between the twelfth-century renaissance and the Italian renaissance, see for instance Paul Renucci, 'The Italian renaissance an outgrowth of the twelfth-century renaissance', in: *The twelfth-century renaissance*, ed. Young 107; Walter Ullmann, *Medieval foundations of renaissance humanism* (London, 1977). For a more negative view upon the elements of continuation, see Eva M. Sanford, 'The twelfth century renaissance or proto-renaissance', in: *The twelfth-century renaissance*, ed. C.W. Hollister (New York, 1969), 38, 43.

and innovatory character of the renaissance.²⁷ Étienne Gilson as well as David Knowles stressed that the scholastic culture underwent a humanisation too. Hence, they thereby questioned Haskins' sharp termination of the renaissance in the middle of the thirteenth century as a result of the dominance of a sterile and 'inhuman' scholasticism.²⁸

Beyond Haskins?

The arguably most forceful reflection of Haskins' understanding of the renaissance, however, appeared in 1977 at a conference organised to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the appearance of Haskins' book. The conference aimed at constructing a 'conceptual framework for reflection' based on modifications of Haskins' scheme.²⁹ First, rather than offering a definition of the renaissance, the contributors attempted a more contextualised understanding of the renaissance as a historical process.³⁰ Second, where Haskins presented secularisation as the most distinct trait of the renaissance, the focus in 1977 was on a 'new approach to the sacred'. The religious worldview in itself did not alter significantly; rather it was approached in a more critical fashion. Differentiation into several theologies – a monastic, a scholastic, and a speculative theology – was a vital side to this new religious worldview.³¹ Third, several contributors considered the more extensive use of reason to be the key for grasping the new critical approach. Reason in this case denoted a capacity to perform a critical evaluation as well as to draw conclusions from a past which earlier had been regarded as the immutable source of truth. This use of reason took many forms, one being the increasing use of interpretation in theology,³² in jurisprudence,³³ and in logic.³⁴ Another use of reason was manifested in new approaches to dialectical reasoning.³⁵ Fourth, this new critical approach, in its turn, was considered as paving the way for a new conception of historical time on the one hand,³⁶ and an awareness of the specific historical periods' defining traits on the other.³⁷ Fifth, the

²⁷ Jean Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God. A study in monastic culture* (London, 1978).

²⁸ Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian philosophy in the middle ages* (London, 1955); David Knowles, *The evolution of medieval thought* (London, 1962).

²⁹ *Renaissance and renewal in the twelfth century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Toronto, 1991), xvii-xxx.

³⁰ See the discussion of methodical issues regarding terms of renewal: Gerhard B. Ladner, 'Terms and ideas of renewal', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 1-33.

³¹ Jean Leclercq, 'The renewal of theology', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 68-87.

³² Nikolaus M. Häring, 'Commentary and hermeneutics', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 173-200; Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, 'Statim invenire: schools, preachers, and new attitudes to the page', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 201-25.

³³ Stephan Kuttner, 'The revival of jurisprudence', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 299-323.

³⁴ Normann Kretzmann, 'The culmination of the old logic in Peter Abelard', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 488-511.

³⁵ Leclercq, 'The renewal of theology', 68-88.

³⁶ John F. Benton, 'Consciousness of self and perceptions of individuality', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 284: 'A heightened sense of history is a form of self-consciousness, and in both theology and in the study of *res gestae* the twelfth century was a great age of historical awareness.'

³⁷ Robert L. Benson, 'Political *renovatio*: two models from Roman antiquity', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 383: 'In short, political struggle and legal thought – not least, disputes over the legacy of ancient Rome's governing authority – led the twelfth century to an intensified consciousness of historical period. For the twelfth century was cultivating a new and sharpened sense of 'modernity' (one encounters the term *modernitas* late in the century), of the distance between past and present, as well as between a more remote and a more recent past, or, as we would say, of the break between antiquity and middle ages.' See also Peter Classen, '*Res gestae*, universal history, apocalypse: visions of past and future', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 387-417.

modification of Haskins' scheme resulted in the fact that the process of individualisation was extended also to affect theological³⁸ and artistic³⁹ as well as political conceptions.⁴⁰

In conclusion, the conference also recommended three points for further research. A first suggestion was to look towards the reform movement and the Investiture Contest, and search for possible links between this struggle and aspects of the renaissance.⁴¹ A second guideline was to investigate the connection between the ecclesiastical development and the wider social and cultural evolution.⁴² The final suggestion was in fact a reiteration of Haskins' own advice — to push the research back to the 'dark period of origin in the eleventh century'.⁴³

Thematic continuity?

To what extent have these modifications of Haskins' renaissance been elaborated? What about new approaches to the cultural history of the twelfth century since the late 1970s? And finally, have the recommendations for further research proposed at the 1977 conference been followed up? In the following section, the main trends in recent research into the twelfth-century renaissance are discussed from a thematic as well as from a methodological point of view.

a. Individualism

Individualism constitutes one area of interest over the last 20 years. Earlier contributions by Walter Ullmann,⁴⁴ Peter Dronke,⁴⁵ and Karl J. Weintraub⁴⁶ all found a dynamic and developing 'individualism' in the middle ages. Ullmann's 'political individualism' was a direct result of the reception of the Aristotelian corpus of political writings in the middle of the thirteenth century and the concomitant political vocabulary available for describing the 'individual' as a source of political power. Dronke, on the other hand, traced the emergence of a poetic individualism starting in France around 1050 and reaching a culmination in the twelfth century. As for Weintraub's search for the individual in biographies from the antiquity to the modern times, writers in the high middle ages composed autobiographies of greater complexity than those few from the early middle ages. However, it is only with Petrarch (1303-74) in the early Italian

³⁸ Chrysogonus Waddell, 'The reform of the liturgy from a renaissance perspective', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 91, 95: 'What commanded the perspectives of our twelfth-century humanist was not only the fact that man had been created in the image and likeness of God, but that God himself had become man — no slight source of dignity for the thinking believer...The twelfth century is characterized by a tendency toward individuation of groups, with a concomitant sensitivity in those areas which render each group distinct.'

³⁹ See the contributions on literature and the arts in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 537-727.

⁴⁰ Benton, 'Consciousness of self and perceptions of individuality', 263-93.

⁴¹ See for instance, Giles Constable, 'Renewal and reform in religious life: concepts and realities', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 37-67; Waddell, 'The reform of the liturgy', 88-109; Robert L. Benson, 'Political *renovatio*', 339-86.

⁴² See for instance Duby's analysis of the intellectualisation of the courtly culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: Georges Duby, 'The culture of the knightly class. Audience and patronage', in: *Renaissance and renewal*, ed. Benson and Constable, 248-62.

⁴³ Benson and Constable, *Renaissance and renewal*, xvii-xxx.

⁴⁴ Walter Ullmann, *The individual and society in the middle ages* (London, 1966).

⁴⁵ Peter Dronke, *Poetic individuality in the middle ages. New departures in poetry 1000-1150* (Oxford, 1970).

⁴⁶ Karl J. Weintraub, *The value of the individual. Self and circumstance in autobiography* (Chicago, 1978).

renaissance that a modern biography emerges. These approaches — concerned with ‘political’, ‘poetic’, and ‘literary’ individualism respectively — underline continuity rather than a break between the medieval ‘individualism’ and Burckhardt’s ‘new man’ of the renaissance.

Colin Morris set the terms for much of the more recent discussion through his *The discovery of the individual* (1973),⁴⁷ arguing for the origin of the individual and individualism in the period 1050-1200. Summing up the preliminary results of this discussion, the different facets of the particular medieval individualism have been further stressed. These include ‘political’,⁴⁸ ‘poetic’,⁴⁹ ‘literary’⁵⁰ and ‘intellectual individualism’,⁵¹ as well as efforts to come to terms with the different mentalities of medieval Europe.⁵² Another manifestation of this individualism is the new view of love in the twelfth century. Accompanied by an extensive literature on the subject, love became a form of aristocratic self-presentation. It also started to include women in a public discourse on love, immortalized by the love letters of Abelard and Heloise.⁵³ From a communicative point of view, the letter emerged as the prime means for expressing inner thoughts, either in form of letter-poems⁵⁴ or love letters.⁵⁵ The twelfth century also experienced a reassessment of Latin verse and poetry⁵⁶ — providing one point of departure for the culture of courtly love, a feature of the lay culture of the twelfth century and beyond.⁵⁷

This recent focus on numerous variants of individualism notwithstanding, several warnings against such an approach to twelfth-century individualism have been put forward. First, and from a methodological perspective, recent research has pointed to terminological difficulties in the use ‘individualism’, ‘individual’, and ‘individuality’ on the medieval period,⁵⁸

⁴⁷ Colin Morris, *The discovery of the individual 1050-1200* (Toronto, 1987).

⁴⁸ Janet Coleman, ‘The individual and the medieval state’, in: *The individual in political theory and practice*, ed. J. Coleman (Oxford, 1996), 1-33.

⁴⁹ Haijo Westra, ‘Individuality, originality and the literary criticism of medieval Latin texts’, in: *Poetry and philosophy in the middle ages. A festschrift for Peter Dronke*, ed. J. Marenbon (Leiden, 2001), 281-93.

⁵⁰ Sverre Bagge, ‘The individual in medieval historiography’, in: *The individual in political theory and practice*, ed. Coleman, 35-57.

⁵¹ Sverre Bagge, ‘The ‘autobiography’ of Abelard and medieval individualism’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 19 (1993), 327-50; Peter Dinzelsbach, ‘“Ego non legi...” Bernhard von Clairvaux zwischen modernem Individualismus und traditioneller Autoritätsgebundenheit’, in: *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, ed. J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer (Berlin, 1996), 722-47.

⁵² John F. Benton, ‘Consciousness of self and perceptions of individuality’, in: J.F. Benton, *Culture, power and personality in medieval France* (London, 1992), 327-56 and, ‘Individualism and conformity in medieval western Europe’, in: *Culture, power and personality*, Benton, 313-26.

⁵³ For recent analyses, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling love. In search of a lost sensibility* (Philadelphia, 1999); *Listening to Heloise. The voice of a twelfth-century woman*, ed. B. Wheeler (Basingstoke, 2000).

⁵⁴ Gerald A. Bond, ‘“Iocus amoris”: the poetry of Baudri of Bourgueil and the formation of the Ovidian subculture’, *Traditio*, 42 (1986), 143-93 and *The loving subject: desire, eloquence, and power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia, 1995).

⁵⁵ Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and community: the monastic experience 350-1250* (Kalamazoo, 1988); C. Stephen Jaeger, ‘Ironie und Subtext in lateinischen Briefen des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts’, in: *Gespräche, Boten, Briefe: Köpergedächtnis und Schriftgedächtnis im Mittelalter*, ed. H. Wenzel (Berlin, 1997), 177-92.

⁵⁶ See T.M.S. Lehtonen, *Fortuna, money, and the sublimar world. Twelfth-century ethical poetics and the satirical poetry of the Carmina Burana* (Helsinki, 1995); P. Methonen, *Old concepts and new poetics. Historia, argumentum, and fabula in the twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Latin poetics of fiction* (Helsinki, 1996).

⁵⁷ See C. Stephen Jaeger, *The origins of courtliness. Civilizing trends and the formation of courtly ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia, 1985).

⁵⁸ Christian Strub, ‘Singularität des Individuums? Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Problemskizze’, in: *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, ed. Aertsen and Speer (Berlin, 1996), 37-56.

particularly with regard to the anachronistic implications of applying a modern notion of the individual as comparative point of departure.⁵⁹ Second, Caroline Walker Bynum has criticized Colin Morris' approach to individualism for neglecting the 'community-context' of twelfth-century individualism. According to Bynum, twelfth-century religion was characterised by the discovery of the group and the 'outer man' as well as by the discovery of the interior landscape and of the self.⁶⁰ Bynum's contribution to the discussion is important because she not only criticises the anachronistic use of terms such as 'individualism', but also puts forward alternative definitions that seem to fit better the characteristics of the religious life of the period.⁶¹ Fortunately, these timid warnings seem to have been followed by recent research.⁶²

b. 'Rationality' in science, law, theology, and philosophy

Recent research has discussed 'reason' or 'rationality' in relation to medieval science on the one hand, and in connection with developments in canon law, Roman law, theology, and philosophy on the other. Already Lynn White's pioneering efforts to understand medieval science came to the conclusion that the twelfth century witnessed numerous technical innovations that in turn affected the mental fabric.⁶³ The continuous interest in the theme is reflected in works by M. D. Chenu,⁶⁴ Alexander Murray,⁶⁵ Brian Stock,⁶⁶ Robert Bartlett,⁶⁷ Tina Stiefel,⁶⁸ and Andreas Speer,⁶⁹ in addition to several collections of essays dealing with the subject.⁷⁰ All the investigations underline the extent to which the twelfth century experienced an intellectual renaissance in terms of the conception of the relationship 'nature'-'man'; rather than taking the divinely instituted nature for granted, contemporary intellectuals began to ask questions as to possible laws of nature. However, medieval science did not suddenly become modern; Christianity imposed restrictions on the dominating Platonic worldview. Consequently, several

⁵⁹ Jan A. Aertsen, 'Einleitung: Die Entdeckung des Individuums', in: *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, Aertsen and Speer (Berlin, 1996), xiv-xvii.

⁶⁰ See C.W. Bynum, 'Did the twelfth century discover the individual?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), 1-17.

⁶¹ Consequently, Walter suggests that the phrase 'the discovery of the individual' should be replaced by the phrase 'the discovery of the self' in which the latter phrase should be given two precise meanings: first, the twelfth century 'discovers the self' in the sense that interest in the inner landscape of the human being increases after 1050; second, the twelfth century 'discovers the self' in the sense that knowing the inner core of human nature within one's own self is an explicitly theme and preoccupation in literature of the period: Bynum, 'Did the twelfth century discover the individual?', 4.

⁶² See for instance C.W. Hollister, 'Introduction', in: *Anglo-Norman political culture and the twelfth-century renaissance. Proceedings of the Borchard conference on Anglo-Norman history, 1995*, ed. C.W. Hollister (Woodbridge, 1997), ix. Hollister mentions that the 'birth of individualism' was considered a misleading characterisation of the twelfth century (as well as of the Italian renaissance) by the participants at the conference.

⁶³ Lynn T. White, *Medieval technology and social change* (New York, 1964).

⁶⁴ M.D. Chenu, *Nature, man, and society in the twelfth century. Essays on new theological perspectives in the Latin west* (Chicago and London, 1979 (first pub. 1968)).

⁶⁵ Alexander Murray, *Reason and society in the middle ages* (Oxford, 1978).

⁶⁶ Brian Stock, *Myth and science in the twelfth century. A study of Bernard Silvester* (Princeton, 1972).

⁶⁷ Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223* (Oxford, 1982).

⁶⁸ Tina Stiefel, *The intellectual revolution in twelfth-century Europe* (New York, 1985).

⁶⁹ Andreas Speer, *Die entdeckte Natur. Untersuchungen zu Begründungsversuchen einer 'scientia naturalis' im 12. Jahrhundert* (Leiden, 1995).

⁷⁰ *Die Renaissance der Wissenschaften im 12. Jahrhundert*, ed. Peter Weimar (Zürich, 1981); *Adelard of Bath. An English scientist and Arabist in the early twelfth century*, ed. Charles Burnett (London, 1987).

of the studies maintain that a new and more scientific approach only appeared in the thirteenth century, largely as a consequence of the rediscovery of the Aristotelian corpus. This corpus provided contemporaries with an approach more oriented toward empirical analysis. The general impression gathered from recent research is that twelfth-century science was characterised by an uneasy relationship between a wide array of methodologies – inductive, deductive, empirical, and mathematical. The result was relatively isolated intellectual innovations that achieved institutional form only with the university in the later middle ages.

While the new initiatives in relation to canon and Roman law will be treated below in relation to the conference's suggestions for further research,⁷¹ our knowledge of scholastic theology has been enlarged by a number of works dealing with prominent intellectual figures. These include Abelard,⁷² Berengar of Tours,⁷³ Anselm of Canterbury,⁷⁴ Lanfranc of Bec,⁷⁵ Rupert of Deutz,⁷⁶ Allan of Lille,⁷⁷ Gilbert Porreta,⁷⁸ Gerhoh of Reichesbach,⁷⁹ Peter Lombard,⁸⁰ and Bernard of Clairvaux.⁸¹ This research has broadened our understanding of mainly three aspects of the renaissance's approach to theology. First, not only has the differentiation into several strands of theology been confirmed. In addition, the studies have also specified these 'new approaches to religion', particular in relation to their influence upon later medieval schools of thought.⁸² Moreover, the studies have shown the extent to which these intellectuals worked within loosely defined intellectual communities, borrowing, elaborating, and criticising each others work. Finally, this research has underlined the fact that the notion of 'systematic theology' hardly can be considered unitary; during the twelfth century, several interpretative approaches competed for hegemony. As such, there seems to be agreement on the fact that the intellectual innovations, in science as well as in theology, were the result of individual efforts rather than the outcome of a collective effort on the part of an institutionalised environment. Consequently, the innovations in the renaissance cannot be said to function in accordance with the paradigmatic characteristics of modern science.

The intellectual heritage of Anselm can serve as an example. From one side, the innovative elements of his method have been hailed by modern research, predominantly by referring to the pioneering effort to apply a rational method to scripture. But Anselm was scarcely read in the

⁷¹ See section, New thematic approaches? Thematic innovations.

⁷² Michael T. Clanchy, *Abelard. A medieval life* (Oxford, 1997); Constant J. Mews, 'Peter Abelard on dialectic, rhetoric, and the principles of argument', in: *Rhetoric and renewal in the Latin west 1100-1540. Essays in honour of John O. Ward*, ed. C.J. Mews, C.J. Nederman and R.M. Thompson (Turnhout, 2003).

⁷³ Toivo J. Holopainen, *Dialectic and theology in the eleventh century* (Helsinki, 1995).

⁷⁴ G.R. Evans, *Anselm and a new generation* (Oxford, 1980); R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: a portrait in a landscape* (Cambridge, 1990); Giles E.M. Gasper, *Anselm of Canterbury and his theological inheritance* (Aldershot, 2004).

⁷⁵ Margaret Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford, 1978); H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc. Scholar, monk, and archbishop* (Oxford, 2003).

⁷⁶ John H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley, 1983); Maria Lodovica Arduini, *Rupert von Deutz (1076-1129) und der 'Status Christianitatis' seiner Zeit. Symbolisch-prophetische Deutung der Geschichte* (Köln, 1987).

⁷⁷ G.R. Evans, *Alan of Lille. The frontiers of theology in the later twelfth century* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁷⁸ Olaf Nielsen Lauge, *Theology and philosophy in the twelfth century. A study of Gilbert Porreta's thinking and the theological expositions of the doctrine of the Incarnation during the period 1130-1180* (Leiden, 1982).

⁷⁹ Erich Meuthen, *Kirche und Heilsgeschichte bei Gerhoh von Reichersberg* (Leiden, 1959); Peter Classen, *Gerhoch von Reichersberg: eine Bibliographie mit einem Anhang über die Quellen, ihre handschriftliche Überlieferung und ihre Chronologie* (Wiesbaden, 1960).

⁸⁰ Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vols 1 and 2 (Köln, 1994).

⁸¹ G.R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York, 2000).

⁸² See section, Beyond Haskins? Thematic continuity.

twelfth century, and it is only with the scholasticism of the thirteenth century that Anselm seems to exert influence. The reason for this is mainly institutional; those whom Anselm influenced in his own day worked within monastic environments and not in the schools.⁸³ In addition to attest to the difficulties in measuring influence in a context where the institutions of learning were rudimentary, the example also contains a methodological reminder. From a twelfth-century point of view, Anselm hardly deserves to figure among the leading theologians of the age. It is only when a receptionist approach is replaced by one focusing on the history of ideas or intellectual history that the theological innovations of the monk of Bec become visible. Both approaches are necessary, but they ought to be distinguished in order to differentiate between the ‘contemporary renaissance’ on the one hand, and the ‘renaissance in the historical consciousness’ on the other.⁸⁴

The research into the philosophical side to the twelfth-century renaissance has lagged behind, largely as a consequence of its ambivalent relationship to theology.⁸⁵ In fact, it has been questioned whether it makes much sense to distinguish not only between philosophy and theology in this period, but also between philosophy on the one hand and other types of thought, including logical, grammatical, or scientific on the other.⁸⁶ The overlap between the disciplines is reflected in the fact that several of the prominent intellectuals of the period – Anselm of Canterbury, Abelard, Alan of Lille, and Gilbert Porreta – also wrote philosophy. The great philosophical movement of the twelfth century was the Neo-Platonism initially associated with the school of Chartres.⁸⁷ By adding religious motifs to the Platonic heritage, the philosophical heritage achieved a particular complexion,⁸⁸ seen for instance in the works of Thierry of Chartres⁸⁹ and William of Conches.⁹⁰ The influence of Stoicism, another important ancient philosophical school, was restricted.⁹¹ This is also the case with the Aristotelian

⁸³ Evans, *Anselm and a new generation*, 7.

⁸⁴ For an elaboration of this theoretical point, See Leidulf Melve, ‘Intentions, concepts, and reception. An attempt to come to terms with the materialistic and diachronic aspects of the history of ideas’, *History of Political Thought* (forthcoming).

⁸⁵ Peter Dronke, ‘Introduction’, in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. P. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 1, 13, 17: ‘Till now, the histories of philosophy have lagged behind. ... There are a number of anonymous philosophical texts of which, in our present state of knowledge, we cannot even say with confidence that they originated in a secular or a monastic milieu. ... What we can offer, however, is something for circulation, not for hoarding; not a fixed corpus of information that will somehow encapsulate twelfth-century philosophy, but above all an opening-up of problems, and an invitation to take them further.’

⁸⁶ John Marenbon, *Early medieval philosophy (480-1150). An introduction* (London, 1983), vii.

⁸⁷ Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and poetry in the twelfth century. The literary influence of the school of Chartres* (Princeton, 1972).

⁸⁸ Tullio Gregory, ‘The Platonic inheritance’, in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 56-80.

⁸⁹ Peter Dronke, ‘Thierry of Chartres’, in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 384: ‘Thierry’s originality lay in combining an extreme Platonism...with a far-reaching naturalism.’

⁹⁰ Dorothy Elford, ‘William of Conches’, in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 308-27.

⁹¹ Michael Lapidge, ‘Stoic inheritance’, in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 112: ‘It is fair to say in general, however, that these twelfth-century thinkers treated the question of fate as a cosmological notion only; they did not go on to explore the role of man’s free will in a universe so strictly ordered. That exploration was left to theologians of a later period: Albertus Magnus, Ulrich of Strasbourg, Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas.’ See also Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic tradition from antiquity to the early middle ages. II. Stoicism in Christian Latin thought through the sixth century* (Leiden, 1990).

corpus: reception of Aristotle is mainly found in the political philosophy of John of Salisbury⁹² and in medical thought.⁹³

The problem of distinguishing between philosophy and theology in the twelfth century is put into perspective when it is remembered that only in the late middle ages did intellectuals become guided by a philosophical system. Not even the scholastics of the thirteenth century succeeded in placing philosophy safely among the *artes*.⁹⁴ However, it is wrong to say that the twelfth century failed to contribute to the development of medieval philosophy. In particular two figures have been considered as offering philosophical solutions to Christological problems. One is Anselm whose main contribution was a rational approach to the questions of the existence of God, Trinity, divine omnipotence and free will, and the origin of the soul. Abelard is the second twelfth-century intellectual that made significant philosophical contributions, particularly in the fields of ethics and logic. Although logic experienced a short upsurge in the Carolingian period, the twelfth century witnessed a great leap forward in terms of complexity and consistency.⁹⁵ John Marenbon has recently offered a convincing argument for regarding Abelard not only as mainly a critical thinker, using the methods of logic in treating Christian doctrine. Abelard was also a constructive and systematic philosopher both in ontology, epistemology and ethics. Consequently, Marenbon suggests that earlier research's concern with two disparate profiles – Abelard the logician and Abelard the humanist – should be turned into a fuller portrait of Abelard the philosopher.⁹⁶

How, then, are we to summarise the findings of recent research in this respect? First, the numerous works on individual twelfth-century scholars have underlined the variations between the different scholars, in spite of their working in a common discursive framework. Second, these detailed investigations of individual scholars have contributed to a vastly greater knowledge as to the textual culture of the twelfth century. In other words, the arguably most important aspect of Haskins' renaissance – the new reception of the ancient Latin culture – has been underlined by showing the details and variation in twelfth-century intellectuals' approach to the textual past. Third, there seems to be agreement on the fact that the period witnesses the development of a systematic, argumentative method of theology as well as more sophisticated logical techniques for semantic analysis and for the study of argument.

c. Secularisation and a new critical mentality?

Whereas the rational surge of the twelfth century has been confirmed by recent research, this is hardly the case in regard to secularisation and to the question whether the period witnessed

⁹² Cary J. Nederman, 'Aristotelianism and the origins of 'political science' in the twelfth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991).

⁹³ See Danielle Jacquart, 'Aristotelian thought in Salerno', in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 427: 'True, the teachers in the famous school directed medicine decisively towards philosophy, but their recourse to Aristotle appears more as a consequence of this trend than as a determinant impulse.' See also Enzo Maccagnolo, 'David of Dinant and the beginnings of Aristotelianism in Paris', in: *A history of twelfth-century western philosophy*, ed. Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), 429–42. For a recent historiographical overview, see Christoph Flüeler, 'Politischer Aristotelismus im Mittelalter. Einleitung', *Vivarium*, 40 (2002), 1–13.

⁹⁴ G.R. Evans, *Philosophy and theology in the middle ages* (London, 1994), 7.

⁹⁵ John Marenbon, 'The twelfth century', in: *Medieval philosophy*, ed. J. Marenbon (London, 1998), 180: 'The great writers of the first half of the century – Abelard, Gilbert of Poitiers (and some would wish to add William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres) – posed and tackled philosophical questions with an originality which makes the model of assimilation inappropriate. The second half of the century did not produce any philosophers of the same stature...'

⁹⁶ John Marenbon, *The philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997).

a new critical mentality. As for secularisation, an extensive discussion would go beyond the scope of this article, and only a few reflections will be offered. At the outset, parts of the discussion have been based on wrong premises; in terms of the previous discussion of rationality, it should be evident that secularisation cannot be treated as separate from other intellectual currents in the period.⁹⁷ Instead of framing the discussion in terms of mutually exclusive categories, ‘authority’–‘reason’, ‘revelation’–‘authority’, the intellectual pluralism of the period should be taken as a point of departure.⁹⁸ Second, there is a danger in deriving general intellectual currents from a particular historical incidence. For instance, J. R. Strayer’s much-quoted claim that the Investiture Contest demanded the creation of the secular state and his concomitant advocacy for the secularisation thesis should not be taken *prima facie* as evidence for a general secularisation.⁹⁹ Similar, P. E. Schramm’s secularisation thesis that still provides interesting reading should be considered a thesis more than a statement of a fact.¹⁰⁰ Rather, if secularisation is a valid description of the period, it should be regarded as only one of several factors that together gave the period its characteristic ring.

Those arguing for the emergence of a new critical mentality have found both defenders and critics. Perhaps the boldest claim for a change of mentality is put forward by Charles M. Radding. According to Radding, western Europe experienced a profound change of mentality around 1050, the result of which lasted until the mechanical revolution of the seventeenth century. The main reason for its long duration was its intellectual sophistication: critical apprehending of the textual past, abstract reasoning, logical deduction, and argumentative sophistication.¹⁰¹ Few, if any, seem to follow Radding’s bold claims. Instead, recent research has, as we have seen, largely traced intellectual innovation within particular fields and subjects such as science and law on the one hand and with individual scholars on the other. What can be said with regard to the critical impetus of the historical writing of the twelfth century? As in most cases, opinions are divided. Beryl Smalley, for instance, argues that twelfth-century historians were too concerned with authorities and lacked a proper scheme of periodisation in order to approach history in a relatively objective manner.¹⁰² Smalley wrote her book in 1974, and it is indicative of more recent approaches to twelfth-century historiography that modern criteria only rarely are used as points of comparison. Partly as a result of an effort to understand

⁹⁷ Thomas N. Bisson, ‘Conclusion’, in: *Cultures of power. Lordship, status, and process in twelfth-century Europe*, ed. T.N. Bisson (Philadelphia, 1995), 330: ‘It has often been suggested that the religious peace was secularized in the twelfth century, yet it may prove instructive to think of pacification as a persistently clerical and cultural influence on the remodelling of justice in the twelfth century. ... What happened in the twelfth century was that ways of interacting and of thinking about power were juxtaposed or run together more easily than in societies with well developed and specialized institutions and discourses.’ See also Giles Constable, *The reformation of the twelfth century* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁹⁸ The problem of categorisation is treated in the section, New methodological insight? Categorisation.

⁹⁹ J.R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state* (New Jersey, 1970). See also J.R. Strayer, *Medieval statecraft and the perspectives of history* (New Jersey, 1971).

¹⁰⁰ P.E. Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom, Renovatio. Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedankens vom Ende des karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit* (Leipzig, 1929).

¹⁰¹ Charles M. Radding, *A world made by men: cognition and society, 400-1200* (Chapel Hill, 1985). See also Radding, ‘Evolution of medieval mentalities: a cognitive-structural approach’, *American Historical Review*, 83 (1978), 597: ‘In general then, focusing on logical structure helps us to realize the dimensions of the break that began in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. ‘Renaissance’ is too weak a word to characterize this shift, which comprised much more than a return to antique canons of style or the recovery of classical texts.’ See also Harald Kleinschmidt, *Understanding the middle ages. The transformation of ideas and attitudes in the medieval world* (Woodbridge, 2000).

¹⁰² Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the middle ages* (London, 1974).

medieval writers on their own terms, the historiography of the period has been appreciated anew. While some have spoken of a new conception of historical time,¹⁰³ others have focused on the source-critical method of William of Malmesbury¹⁰⁴ or Otto of Freising's sophisticated treatment of historical schemes.¹⁰⁵ Aware of the great variety of historical writing appearing in the twelfth century,¹⁰⁶ several studies have also looked critically at old categorisations, for instance that distinguishing between a 'secular' and a 'monastic' historiography. John O. Ward, although admitting that it still makes sense to talk about a new critical methodology in the monastic historiography of the twelfth century, underlines the innovative contributions from archdeacons and others on the fringes of the Church. Basically, it was the tension between archdeacons and monks that paved the way for a new critical historical methodology.¹⁰⁷ C. Warren Hollister has similarly argued that the burgeoning of history in the Anglo-Norman world should be considered as a result of a number of factors, not only Benedictine strength.¹⁰⁸

The thematic continuity with Haskins' renaissance, then, is hard to overlook. As such, the book certainly has aged well, still providing a framework for research. This being said, the cultural achievements of the period have been found to be much less unitary than Haskins imagined; the period was not strictly 'rational' or 'secular', and neither did a full-blown individualism emerge. Instead, the period is characterised by the uneasy coexistence between traditional themes and a plurality of new approaches. The lasting achievement of the renaissance varied markedly from subject to subject. This last point is nicely illustrated by the discussion as to whether the historiography of the twelfth century can be deemed 'critical'. Not only is there a lack of agreement as to what should be used as criteria when measuring the critical impetus, in addition, even if agreed-upon criteria for measurement were established, recent research has only started to come to terms with a diversity that rarely admits general characterisations such as 'critical'.

Thematic innovations?

The three suggestions for further research mentioned at the 1977 conference – looking at the Investiture Contest, investigating the relationship between the ecclesiastical and the secular culture, and searching for the origin of the renaissance in the eleventh century – have all been followed up. Not surprisingly, the relatively few thematic innovations in

¹⁰³ For a general positive view upon the historical writing of the twelfth century, see Franz-Josef Schmale, *Funktionen und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1985); Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Working with ancient Roman history: a comparison of Carolingian and twelfth-century scholarly endeavours', in: *Gli umanissimi medievali*, ed. C. Leonardi (Firenze, 1998), 411-20; Hans-Werner Goetz, *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im hohen Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1999). More negative views are those of Smalley, *Historians of the middle ages*.

¹⁰⁴ Rodney Thompson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 1987).

¹⁰⁵ Hans-Werner Goetz, *Das Geschichtsbild Ottos von Freising: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Vorstellungswelt und zur Geschichte des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Köln, 1984); Sverre Bagge, 'Ideas and narrative in Otto of Freising's *Gesta Frederici*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 22 (1996), 345-77.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Magdalino, 'Introduction', in: *The perception of the past in twelfth-century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino (London, 1992), xiv: 'The overall impression that emerges, at least from 'old Europe' is one of great variety...'

¹⁰⁷ John O. Ward, 'The monastic historiographical impulse c. 1000-1260. A re-assessment', in: *Historia. The concept and genres in the Middle Ages* ed. T.S. Lehtonen and P. Mehtonen (Helsinki, 2000), 71-100.

¹⁰⁸ C. Warren Hollister, 'Anglo-Norman political culture and the twelfth-century renaissance', in: *Anglo-Norman political culture and the twelfth-century renaissance*, ed. Hollister, 1-16.

recent research are found within the confines of these recommendations. Three in particular deserve a mention: a new interest in medieval communications, the Investiture Contest seen as the ‘dark period of origin’, and a focus on the ‘non-Latin culture’ of the twelfth century.

a. Medieval communication

A concern with the communicative framework is strictly speaking not a new theme: the relationship between the so-called high culture in form of the Latin Christian culture and the low vernacular culture has long been seen as problematic.¹⁰⁹ It is only recently, however, that the communicative interrelationship between these ‘two cultures’ has been investigated, providing for new thematic approaches to the twelfth-century renaissance. The most important work in this respect is Brian Stock’s monumental *The implications of literacy* (1983), presenting the theory of the ‘textual community’: according to Stock, in order to understand the intellectual configuration of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is necessary to acknowledge the extent to which the more literate Latin culture of the period laid the premises for intellectual innovations in law, philosophy, and theology. The increased use of the written word triggered a more critical approach to the textual past — seen for instance in Berengar of Tours’ divergent interpretation of the Eucharist. This new interest in interpretation was not reserved for a tiny intellectual elite commanding the ability to read and write. In certain cases — the early heretical movement is the prime example — literate interpreters presented the message to groups of semi- or illiterates by aural or oral means. Oral and written forms of communication in combination thus bridge the gap between the high and the low culture, providing for what Stock calls a ‘textual community’. The characteristic trait of this entity is the extent to which the interpretation of a text provides for the social identity and cohesion of the entire community.¹¹⁰ Stock traces a number of such communities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, all displaying an interpretive and critical approach to the textual past.

Stock’s insight has been applied to numerous contexts, such as antiquity,¹¹¹ the early middle ages,¹¹² the late middle ages,¹¹³ and even to Old Norse culture.¹¹⁴ However, there is, to my knowledge at least, no other study that deals specifically with the twelfth-century renaissance in terms of the relationship between oral and written communication.¹¹⁵ This

¹⁰⁹ For a recent discussion mainly dealing with the early middle ages, see Michel Banniard, ‘Language and communication in Carolingian Europe’, in: *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. 2 c. 700-c.900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 695-708.

¹¹⁰ Brian Stock, *The Implications of literacy. Written language and models of interpretation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (New Jersey, 1983). See also Brian Stock, *Listening for the text: on the uses of the past* (Philadelphia, 1996).

¹¹¹ Thomas F.X. Noble, ‘Literacy and the papal government in late antiquity and the early middle ages’, in: *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 82-108; Peter Heather, ‘Literacy and power in the migration period’, in: *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. A. Bowman and G. Woolf (Cambridge, 1994), 177-97.

¹¹² S. Lerer, *Literacy and power in Anglo-Saxon literature* (Lincoln, 1991); Martin Irvine, *The making of textual culture: ‘grammatica’ and literary theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹¹³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹¹⁴ Guðrún Nordahl, *Tools of literacy. The role of Skaldic verse in Icelandic textual culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries* (Toronto, 2001).

¹¹⁵ Janet Coleman touches the subject in her *Ancient and medieval memories*, but from a different point of view. See section, Concluding remarks: suggestions for further research.

is a bit strange, not only in terms of the wide reception of Stock's work, but also because the last 20 years have seen a growing interest in medieval patterns of communication.¹¹⁶

b. The Investiture Contest

The revolutionary sides to the Investiture Contest have long been recognised.¹¹⁷ Still, it is only recently that this struggle has been analysed in relation to the twelfth-century renaissance, resulting in a stress on the German contribution to the renaissance.¹¹⁸ New approaches to legality have been the main focus of interest. In this period, canon law emerged from its previous unsystematic and customary state by way of systematic attempts at 'harmonising discordant canons'. Several studies have thus shown the extent to which the canon law activity in the wake of the Investiture Contest prepared for the later canon law science associated with the canon law collection of Gratian from about 1140.¹¹⁹ For instance, the works of several of the canonists writing during the Contest – Ivo of Chartres and Anselm of Lucca in particular – were included in Gratian's collection.

But canon law was not the only legal tradition that developed considerably during the Investiture Contest.¹²⁰ Also the secular law tradition in the form of Roman law was rediscovered. From one perspective, the subsequent Roman law renaissance of the twelfth century has been seen as a continuation of the pioneering efforts of the eleventh century.¹²¹ Although the sketchy use of Roman law during the Investiture Contest hardly warrants the label renaissance, it nevertheless showed progress over the few Roman law references found in the early middle ages. In one case at least – Peter Crassus' defence of King Henry IV from 1080 or

¹¹⁶ For an overview of recent research, see Leidulf Melve, 'Literacy, aurality, and orality. A survey of recent research into the orality/literacy complex of the Latin middle ages', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 78 (2003), 143–98.

¹¹⁷ See for instance, Karl Leyser, 'On the eve of the first European revolution', in: *Communications and power in medieval Europe. The Gregorian revolution and beyond*, K. Leyser (London, 1994), 1–21.

¹¹⁸ The literature on the Investiture Contest is enormous. A selection includes Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *Der Investiturstreit* (Stuttgart, 1982); Gerd Tellenbach, *Die westliche Kirche vom 10. bis zum frühen 12. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1988); Wilfried Hartmann, *Der Investiturstreit* (München, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Recent entries include John Gilchrist, *Canon law in the age of reform, 11th-12th centuries* (Aldershot, 1993); Bruce C. Brasington, 'Prologues to canonical collections as a source for jurisprudential change to the eve of the Investiture Contest', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 28 (1994), 242: 'The compilers reveal the development of canonical jurisprudence from its foundations in late-antique rhetoric and theology to the investiture contest, which ushered in the so-called renaissance of the twelfth century.'; Kathleen G. Cushing, *Papacy and law in the Gregorian revolution. The canonistic work of Anselm of Lucca* (Oxford, 1998). For recent investigations on Gratian, see Anders Winroth, *The making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge, 2000) and the discussion in *Revue de droit canonique*, 51:2 (2001).

¹²⁰ For an attempt to push the rediscovery of Roman law back to the late tenth and early eleventh century, see Charles M. Radding, *The origins of medieval jurisprudence: Pavia and Bologna 850-1150* (New Haven, 1988). The attempt has been met with mixed reception, from total rejections to appraisals for extending the confines of the study of the reception of Roman law. All in all, however, it is probably too early to conclude as to the implications of this revisionist attempt in relation to the study of medieval Roman law.

¹²¹ The arguably most far-reaching claim is that of Harold J. Berman: the Contest led to revolutionary legal changes in western Europe. The effort of Pope Gregory VII to change practical behaviour through reliance on the written word, paved the way for legal codification of the whole social fabric, see Harold J. Berman, *Law and revolution. The formation of the western legal tradition* (Harvard, 1983). See also Manlio Bellomo, *The common legal past of Europe 1000-1800* (Washington, 1995); Maurizio Lupoi, *The origins of the legal order* (Cambridge, 2000).

1084 – there are signs of a more profound reception of the legal corpus.¹²² In general, we are miles away from the more elaborate reception of the corpus in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹²³ As for theology, it is indicative that several of the prominent theologians of the twelfth century – Rupert of Deutz, Anselm of Canterbury, and Gerhoh of Reichersberg – were involved in the Contest. Is it also indicative that the disciplines that most forcefully have been seen as manifestations of the twelfth-century renaissance – canon and Roman law, theology, and political theory – were addressed in the intellectual debate during the Investiture Contest. Philosophy, however, was only rudimentarily dealt with during the Contest, although the contribution of Peter Damian and Manegold of Lautenbach are two notable exceptions.¹²⁴

c. *The non-Latin renaissance*

The contributions to the third thematic innovation are in fact a mixed bag, the common element being a focus on the non-Latin culture. As such, it not only goes beyond Haskins' renaissance, but also the modifications at the 1977 conference. One such approach has been called the 'vernacular renaissance' and treats the vernacularisation of written discourse in the twelfth century.¹²⁵ Four contributions illustrate different facets of this renaissance: Peter Damian-Grint, in analysing the English translation literature of the twelfth century, argues that this process of vernacularisation was one of the most lasting legacies of the twelfth-century renaissance.¹²⁶ Suzanne Reynolds, in dealing with vernacular reading practices and the uneasy relationship between vernacular texts, finds that this led to the discovery of intention as one of the central categories of twelfth-century thought.¹²⁷ Sarah Spence, in focusing on the function of the vernacular in forging new conceptualisations of self and reality, maintains that the use of the vernacular enabled identification between the text and the body which in turn resulted in a definition of the self through the process of identity and difference.¹²⁸ Finally, Rita Copeland discusses vernacular translations of Latin texts within an academic environment and the way the ideas of translation were shaped in the 'actual strategies of academic practice'.¹²⁹ Common to these entries is a concern with the cultural diffusion between the Latin and the vernacular cultures, the social context of the use of the text, and the social implications of the emergence of a vernacular culture.

A second new thematic approach addressing 'non-Latin' refers to cross-cultural interaction between Christians on the one hand and Jews and Arabs on the other. The main emphasis has been on how these cross-cultural currents offer a means to explain the Latin renaissance. In the

¹²² For an analysis of the Roman law reception in the Investiture Contest, see Leidulf Melve, *The medieval public sphere. Continuity and innovation in the polemical literature of the Investiture Contest* (Ph.D. thesis, Bergen 2004).

¹²³ See Johannes Fried, *Die Entstehung des Juristenstandes im 12. Jahrhundert. Zur sozialen Stellung und politischen Bedeutung gelehrter Juristen in Bologna und Modena* (Köln, 1974); Hermann Lange, *Römisches Recht im Mittelalter. Band I. Die Glossatoren* (München, 1997).

¹²⁴ See Melve, *The medieval public sphere*. See also section, *New thematic approaches? Thematic continuity*.

¹²⁵ In her treatment of the twelfth-century renaissance, Colish has drawn attention to the increasing two-way traffic between Latin and vernacular literature, see Colish, *Medieval foundations of the western intellectual tradition*, 176

¹²⁶ Peter Damian-Grint, *The new historians of the twelfth-century renaissance* (Woodbridge, 1999).

¹²⁷ Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval reading. Grammar, rhetoric and the classical text* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹²⁸ Sarah Spence, *Texts and the self in the twelfth century* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹²⁹ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, hermeneutics, and translation in the middle ages. Academic traditions and vernacular texts* (Cambridge 1995), 6.

case of the Jews, the pioneering work of Anna Sapir Abulafia has shown the extent to which the twelfth-century renaissance as a European Latin renaissance defined itself by excluding Jewish intellectual currents. In fact, recent research has suggested that in several areas — vernacular literature, biblical exegesis, and piety and religious life — there were parallel developments in the Christian and the Jewish cultures. Both cultures went through a transformation in the twelfth century from a monastic or synagogue- and chapel based practice to a more school-based, grounded with reason and logic.¹³⁰ The questions of influence and of how to explain the twelfth-century renaissance have also been a focus of attention with regard to the Arabic influence. In one such reading, an important part of the renaissance — the scholasticism — has been considered dependent on cultural loans from Islam.¹³¹ A different type of approach to the question of explanation, has attempted to explain the more lasting contribution of the twelfth-century renaissance in Europe, compared to its results in Islam and China. Following Toby E. Huff, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was as much a product of the twelfth century as of the early modern period. The renaissance in the west was able to exert such an influence largely because it early on became institutionalised in the form of the university, thereby providing an environment for the accumulation and scrutinising of knowledge.¹³²

In sum, recent research into the twelfth-century renaissance does not abound in new approaches. Those that exist have, together with the further elaboration of the themes of Haskins' renaissance, made the renaissance more elusive. If one trait stands out from the numerous works over the last 20 years or so, it can perhaps be called 'innovation within continuity'; the renaissance was prepared by the spread of literacy in the preceding century as well as by the new approaches to law evident from the Investiture Contest. The 'institutionalisation' of these beginnings, however, started in the twelfth century by the establishment of environments of learning either in the form of a specific work — Gratian's *Decretum* or the Roman law corpus — or a place of learning — Bologna, Paris, or Salerno.¹³³

New methodological insight?

The recent discussions of methodological approaches to the twelfth century have focused on 'categorisation' and 'periodisation'. These discussions are partly a result of the impact of the so-called 'linguistic turn' and partly a consequence of the truce reached with the renaissance specialists concerning the role of the twelfth-century renaissance. Rather than

¹³⁰ See the contributions in: *Jews and Christians in twelfth-century Europe*, ed. Michael A. Signer and John Van Engen (Notre Dame, 2001).

¹³¹ This controversial thesis is put forward by George Makdisi, *The rise of humanism in classical Islam and the Christian West: with special reference to scholasticism* (Edinburgh, 1990).

¹³² Toby E. Huff, *The rise of early modern science. Islam, China, and the west* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹³³ For recent studies on the development of the university, see *Rebirth, reform and resilience. Universities in transition, 1300-1700*, ed. J. M. Kittelson and P. J. Transue (Columbia, 1984); Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, *Universities in the middle ages* (Cambridge, 1992). See also C. Stephen Jaeger, *The envy of angels. Cathedral schools and social ideas in medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia 1994).

addressing the discussion of the ‘linguistic turn’ in its many disguises – the ‘new philology’,¹³⁴ the ‘new cultural history’,¹³⁵ and the ‘cultural turn’,¹³⁶ – it should suffice to note that one result of the discussions has been to stimulate an already existing interest in the relationship between the ‘text’ and the ‘social reality’ within medieval studies.¹³⁷ Beyond this, the influence of the ‘linguistic turn’ can also be found in sub-disciplines concerned with book history,¹³⁸ rhetoric,¹³⁹ literary theory,¹⁴⁰ and the visual or aesthetic dimension to the text.¹⁴¹

a. Periodisation

Basically, the neat temporal frame to which Haskins assigned the name the twelfth-century renaissance, 1050-1250, has been questioned. This questioning, moreover, indicates an awareness of the artificial dividing lines between the medieval and renaissance periods. Perhaps paradoxically, the questioning is a result of the new knowledge about its pre-history, leading to an awareness of the extent to which the twelfth-century renaissance only institutionalised developments of past centuries. In addition, the replacement of Haskins’ use of the Latin culture as criterion with one which includes the vernacular cultures has also contributed forcefully to the fragmentation of the unitary view of the renaissance. Similarly, the introduction of ‘non-Latin’ elements in addition to the vernacular cultures – the Hebrew and the Islamic tradition for instance – has shattered the geographical placement of the renaissance in western Europe. As to the abrupt termination of the renaissance in 1250, Haskins’ notion relied on an erroneous view of scholastic culture: the vitality of the renaissance was replaced with a sterile and pedantic scholasticism. Few today talk about scholasticism as an impediment to the development of medieval thought. Rather, the scholastic theology is now considered a vital and lasting element of the intellectual climate of the middle ages. Scholastic theology, in turn, has been linked to several of the defining traits of Haskins’ renaissance: it was, along with canon law, the prime site for fostering critical thought levelled against authorities on the one hand, and stimulated a new interest in the subjective experience of the faith and intentionalism on the other.¹⁴²

¹³⁴ See the discussion by Suzanne Fleichman, ‘Philology, linguistics, and the discourse of the medieval text’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 19-37; Siegfried Wenzel, ‘Reflections on the (new) philology’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 11-8; R. Howard Bloch, ‘New philology and Old French’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 38-58.

¹³⁵ See *The new cultural history: essays*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1989).

¹³⁶ See *Beyond the cultural turn: new directions in the study of society and culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell (Berkeley, 1999).

¹³⁷ See for instance the work of Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the past. The rise of vernacular prose historiography in thirteenth-century France* (Berkeley, 1993).

¹³⁸ Jesse M. Gellrich, *The idea of the book in the middle ages. Language theory, mythology, and fiction* (Ithaca, 1985).

¹³⁹ Milada Buda, *Medieval history and discourse. Toward a topography of textuality* (New York, 1990); Ruth Morse, *Truth and convention in the middle ages. Rhetoric, representation, and reality* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹⁴⁰ Irvine, *The making of textual culture*; Dennis H. Green, *The beginnings of medieval romance: fact and fiction, 1150-1220* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹⁴¹ Karl F. Morrison, *History as visual art in the twelfth-century renaissance* (London, 1992); Mary Carruthers, *The craft of thought: meditation, rhetoric, and the making of images, 400-1200* (Cambridge, 1998), 5: ‘Specifically, the twelfth century in Europe marks the development of a much larger, much more disparate, more urban audience with a large contingent of vernacular-speaking, uncloistered, married laypeople. Such a citizenry makes for very different rhetorical dynamics than does the relatively small, relatively homogenous citizenry of a monastery.’

¹⁴² Marcia L. Colish, ‘Haskins’s renaissance seventy years later: beyond anti-Burchardianism’, *The Haskins Society Journal*, 11 (1998), 1-17.

These and other contributions to the evolution of medieval thought, then, have fragmented the temporal and geographical confines of the once unitary renaissance.

Problems of categorisation are perhaps most severe in relation to the term ‘renaissance’. In general, the term is used in two senses. First, it has been used to refer to a certain kind of civilisation considered superior to the preceding. Second, renaissance has also denoted developments within the cultural sphere such as innovations in art, science, or literature.¹⁴³ It goes without saying that these two senses do not necessarily have the same reference, and they can therefore not be used indiscriminately. On a terminological level, the term has to be precisely defined. If not, it becomes useless for comparative purposes and at worst, meaningless.¹⁴⁴ But, even if the term is defined in either of these two senses, it can legitimately be questioned whether it makes sense to use renaissance as a periodic description at all. The huge regional differences in medieval Europe coupled with the restricted amount of sources renders such periodic generalisations reductionist at best. In relation to the above sketch of recent research into the renaissance, there is a good case for dispensing entirely with the general use of the term.¹⁴⁵ However, this might be to go too far as we need a conceptual apparatus, in spite of the post-modernist claims to the contrary. If the conceptual apparatus is properly defined it can still function as a valuable heuristic device.¹⁴⁶

A related set of problems have to do with the anachronistic and sometimes tautological attempts at understanding the twelfth-century notion of ‘individualism’, ‘rationality’, and ‘secularisation’ based on a transhistorical comparison with the modern terms. The heuristic value of such terms is obvious. However, the appropriate unit of analysis for studying renaissance society should neither be the individual nor the group, but rather the social relationship that links individuals to each other and to other groups.¹⁴⁷ Adding to these two criticisms, a third criticism deals with the inherent evolutionary idealism of the categories used to characterise the twelfth-century renaissance. This criticism has been concerned with the question of power; Haskins’ modernism has been criticised for neglecting to deal with the ‘disciplinary and forcing’ aspects of the long twelfth century, and also for failing to reflect upon the all-embracing effect of what has been called a proto-statist manifestation of power.¹⁴⁸ From a similar perspective, the modernist-idealistic approach of Haskins can legitimately be accused of excluding the contribution of women both in the production and patronage of religious literature and art.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ G.W. Trompf, ‘The concept of the Carolingian renaissance’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34 (1973), 3-26.

¹⁴⁴ Southern claims that the term ‘renaissance’ has no clearly defined meaning, and characterises the semantics of the term to be ‘sublime and meaningless’, see Richard W. Southern, ‘Medieval humanism’, in: *Medieval humanism and other studies*, R.W. Southern, 29. Hollister, ‘Introduction’, ix maintains that although the term ‘twelfth-century renaissance’ is a useful term, it should be used with caution. See also Christopher Brooke, *The twelfth century renaissance* (London, 1969).

¹⁴⁵ See C. Stephen Jaeger, ‘Pessimism in the twelfth-century ‘renaissance’’, *Speculum*, 78 (2003), 1183: ‘Renaissance’ was in the past century a useful term. It served the purpose of calling attention to the energy and productivity of the twelfth century...but it is time to scrap it. It is now more trouble than it is worth; it obscures more than it illuminates.’

¹⁴⁶ R.N. Swanson, *The twelfth-century renaissance* (Manchester, 1999), 1-7 discusses the question of the definition and finds that although the ‘great Renaissance has itself fragmented’, it is impossible not to search for a definition: ‘The unitary phenomenon may need to be replaced by a series of more closely defined movements which more accurately reflect the way in which understanding of the twelfth-century has changed since 1927.’

¹⁴⁷ Ronald F.E. Weissman, ‘Reconstructing renaissance sociology: the ‘Chicago School’ and the study of renaissance society’, in: *Persons in groups. Social behavior as identity formation in medieval and renaissance Europe*, ed. R.C. Trexler (New York, 1985), 40-52.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas N. Bisson, ‘Introduction’, in: *Cultures of Power*, ed. Bisson (Philadelphia, 1995), 2-7.

¹⁴⁹ For a short discussion, see Colish, ‘Haskins’s renaissance seventy years later’, 11.

Fortunately, recent research into the twelfth-century renaissance has become increasingly aware of at least some of the methodological problems inherent in a comparative framework which has the Italian renaissance as its polemical counterpart. As such, the prejudice inherent in the label dark ages has often erected a misunderstood polemical front between the protagonists of the two camps. Partly as a consequence of the linguistic turn and the concomitant focus on ‘alterity’ also within renaissance studies, Burckhardt’s paradigm has been replaced by a more plural notion of the heritage of the renaissance.¹⁵⁰ Burckhardt’s sense of individualism is still a dominating theme, but the approach has altered, now focusing more on cultural factors.¹⁵¹ Amongst medievalists, direct comparisons between the twelfth-century renaissance and its Italian counterpart are now few and far between. In this respect, the Italian renaissance has been replaced by the Carolingian renaissance as a point of comparison.¹⁵² In relation to the renaissance debate, Randolph Starn has reminded us of the fact that the old battles of pre-eminence are out of fashion, and suggests the time is ripe for the liberation from old conventions of periodisation.¹⁵³ To name only two, Peter Burke¹⁵⁴ and Paul Oskar Kristeller¹⁵⁵ have for long shown a willingness to take the practical consequence of such an advice.

In conclusion, the methodological discussions focusing on periodisation and categorisation are not only intertwined. They are also linked to the search for origins, and thereby attached to one of the main concerns of Haskins’ renaissance. Scepticism towards periodisation is, in turn, linked to an awareness of origins that often transcends the narrow and inflexible lines of demarcation frequently used in periodisations. Furthermore, a discursive network of power neither knows nor respects any externally imposed demarcation lines, for example, periodisation. Finally, the search for modalities of power has often taken the form of genealogical approaches to the cultural origin of the given modality.

Concluding remarks: Suggestions for further research

Before summing up this sketch of directions of recent research into the twelfth-century renaissance in terms of suggestions for further research, there is one vital side to this research that has not yet been mentioned: the increasing interdisciplinary orientation of recent investigations. Resulting partly from the acknowledgement of a set of common methodological problems, and partly as a consequence of the felt need to supplement the traditional source-critical approach with theoretical frameworks borrowed from sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and communication-studies, the orientation has contributed to knowledge of the necessity of

¹⁵⁰ See the papers from the *American Historical Review Forum* ‘The persistence of the renaissance’ 103 (1998), which underline the extent to which renaissance studies — or early modern studies as a less value-ridden term — have been enriched by the new focus on ‘alterity’. Whereas the discipline still clings to a notion of the ‘modernity’ of the renaissance, the notion is more plural and is less tautological and anachronistic.

¹⁵¹ See for instance, John Martin, ‘Inventing sincerity, refashioning prudence: the discovery of the individual in renaissance Europe’, *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 1309–42.

¹⁵² See for instance, *Carolingian culture: emulation and innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994).

¹⁵³ Randolph Starn, ‘Who’s afraid of the renaissance’, in: *The past and future of medieval studies*, ed. J.H. Van Engen (Notre Dame, 1994), 132: ‘For surely one of the most compelling reasons for the relatively peaceful relations between medievalists and renaissanceists is a more or less acknowledged fear that none of us matter very much these days.’

¹⁵⁴ Peter Burke, *The Italian renaissance. Culture and society in Italy* (Cambridge, 1987).

¹⁵⁵ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance thought and its sources* (New York, 1979).

a 'contextualised understanding of a plurality of value — as well as systems of meaning'.¹⁵⁶ One example of an interdisciplinary approach to the twelfth century has combined history on the one hand with architecture and art history on the other in an effort to establish the link between theory and practice.¹⁵⁷

The above sketch has shown that innovations primarily have surfaced in terms of methodological elaboration, in spite of certain thematic innovations. This being said, these new methodological departures are probably less radical than they might appear, since some of the allegedly new insights of the 'linguistic turn' were hardly new to medievalists. For instance, the knowledge of linguistic particularities and discursive patterns has had, and still has a prominent position within medieval cultural studies.¹⁵⁸ The so-called 'new medievalism' is perhaps not so new after all.¹⁵⁹ In short, the explicit thematisation of questions pertaining to 'periodisation' and 'categorisation' are the real departures from the discussion preceding the 1977 conference.

The following three suggestions for further research are partly based on the above sketch, but also conditioned on a general need for investigating 'the social function of literary theory and interpretation at various cultural moments'.¹⁶⁰ First, there is a need for systematic comparison between the cultural blooms of the Carolingian¹⁶¹ and Ottonian periods and the twelfth-century renaissance. From a methodological point of view, this suggestion implies a partial acknowledgement of the artificiality of historical periodisation, but for heuristic reasons, it stops short of discarding all use of periodisation.

Second, an effort to come to terms with the 'dark period of origin' of the eleventh century could look to Jacques Le Goff's now old, but still valuable outline of the emergence of a new type of 'free intellectuals' from the urban centres from about 1100; intellectuals characterised by a relative independence from the secular and the sacerdotal hierarchies, whose later personification is Abelard.¹⁶² These intellectuals are important not only as forerunners for the learned men of the twelfth century, but also because they served as mediators between the early and the high middle ages. The relationship between the characteristic traits of the twelfth-century renaissance as emerging in recent research could then be properly contextualised, providing for a fuller understanding of these traits.

¹⁵⁶ Marcia L. Colish: 'Intellectual history', in: *The past and future of medieval studies*, ed. Van Engen, 190-8, claims that recent approaches to medieval intellectual history reflects an interdisciplinary trend.

¹⁵⁷ Charles M. Radding and William W. Clark, *Medieval architecture, medieval learning: builders and masters in the age of Romanesque and Gothic* (New Haven, 1992).

¹⁵⁸ John H. Van Engen, 'Agenda paper: the future of medieval studies', in: *The past and future of medieval studies*, ed. Van Engen, 4-5.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen G. Nichols, 'The new medievalism: tradition and discontinuity in medieval culture', in: *The new medievalism*, ed. M.S. Brownlee, K. Brownlee and S.G. Nichols (Baltimore, 1991), 8: 'new medievalism tries to contextualize the concept of modernity as a process of cultural change, and thus to profit from the decline of modernism's hegemony both as the dominant period and the arbiter of methodological orthodoxy.'

¹⁶⁰ This point is formulated by Irvine, *Making of textual culture*, 15-6: 'What is most needed now is a series of investigations into the social function of literary theory and interpretation at various cultural moments, that is, the function of literary texts in historical periods defined not by simple chronology and nationality but by shared cultural practices, methodologies, and texts held in common across national and linguistic boundaries.'

¹⁶¹ See Richard E. Sullivan, 'The Carolingian age: reflections on its place in the history of the middle ages', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 304: 'There are compelling reasons to accept a periodisation paradigm which enfolds the Carolingian age into a longer period extending from late antiquity to the tenth century...'

¹⁶² Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen age* (Paris, 1957).

Third, the thematic innovations of the last two decades — concern with the communicative framework, the ‘origin’ in the Investiture Contest, and the focus on the non-Latin sides to the Latin renaissance — are each promising. Nevertheless, the advantages of conceptualising the relationship between these new departures should be stressed. For, as John Gilchrist suggested over a decade ago, the possible relationship between the reform movement, the legal renaissance of the twelfth century and the emergence of ‘textual communities’ in Stock’s sense of the term is one promising place to start.¹⁶³ Hence, an awareness of the communicative framework of the period can contextualise the specific aspects of the twelfth-century renaissance. In addition, such awareness enables a more comprehensive understanding of the non-Latin sides to the Latin renaissance. For instance, knowledge of the particular interrelationship between Latin and the vernacular in terms of the written, aural and oral communication can contribute to a more comprehensive delineation of the dynamics between these ‘two cultures’. In the last instance, such a communicative awareness also prepares for an increased understanding of the peripheral parts of Europe and particularly the extent to which the periphery — Scandinavia and eastern Europe — adapted and modified the contents of the twelfth-century renaissance.

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¹⁶³ John Gilchrist, ‘Introduction’, in: J. Gilchrist, *Canon Law in the Age of Reform, 11th – 12th centuries* (Hampshire, 1993), xi-xvi.