



Edited by Micol Long, Tjamke Snijders, and Steven Vanderputten

# Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages

## Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Transfer in Religious Communities

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# Knowledge Communities

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*Edited by*

*Micol Long, Tjamke Snijders, and Steven Vanderputten*

Amsterdam University Press

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# 1 Introduction

*Micol Long and Steven Vanderputten*

## Abstract

While medieval learning has long been the object of scholarly attention, 'horizontal learning' – that is, knowledge transmitted and acquired in a context of informal interactions, to which traditional categories such as 'teachers' and 'disciples' do not necessarily apply – remains little studied. To fill this gap, this volume builds on ideas formulated by Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger to approach learning as a situated phenomenon that can never be decontextualized from the social and even physical environment in which it took place. The contributions collected here will exemplify various means of learning, considering the interplay between literate and non-literate modes as well as the problems posed by the necessity of using written sources as attestations of non-literate forms of learning.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, knowledge, community, historiography, teaching, learning

Medieval learning – understood here as both the acquisition of knowledge and the content of this acquired knowledge – has long been the object of scholarly attention, even though an ever-growing bibliography shows that recent years have witnessed a surge of interest.<sup>1</sup> Approaches have of course evolved over time: a major shift in focus can be observed from traditional approaches, which were strongly centred on educational techniques and institutions, to a gradual acknowledgement of the individual agency of masters, who relied

1 Ferzoco and Muessig, *Medieval Monastic Education*; Società internazionale di studi francescani, *Studio e «studia»*; Vaughn and Rubenstein, *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe*; Riché and Verger, *Des nains sur des épaules de géants*; Anheim and Piron, 'Le travail intellectuel au Moyen Âge'; Mews and Crossley, *Communities of Learning*; Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation*; Steckel, Gaul, and Grünbart, *Networks of Learning*.

on a range of informal methods and approaches to transmit knowledge and skills.<sup>2</sup> Still, the majority of these studies share a top-down perspective on the learning processes, where the transmission of knowledge is considered a one-directional transfer from a master to one or several disciples. And yet there is evidence that not everything medieval men and women learned during their lives was transmitted through hierarchical and vertical teaching: many skills and a great deal of knowledge – from cooking to singing, from adopting behavioural patterns to acquiring certain mindsets – were transmitted and acquired in a context of intense ‘horizontal’ interactions, to which traditional categories such as ‘teachers’ and ‘disciples’ do not necessarily apply.<sup>3</sup> This kind of horizontal learning has received little scholarly attention so far, and this volume aims to provide a stepping stone towards filling this gap. In doing so, it refers to recent sociological and anthropological theories, according to which learning can be approached as a social process that changes the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of all of those who participate in it.<sup>4</sup> Building on ideas formulated by Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger,<sup>5</sup> learning is approached here as a situated phenomenon that can never be decontextualized from the social and even physical environment in which it took place.

This volume uses two different but interrelated angles to contribute to our understanding of the contextual situatedness of medieval learning.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, newcomers in a medieval community can be viewed as being gradually transformed into full members through continuous interaction with the other members, from whom they learned not only factual knowledge or specific skills, but also the behavioural patterns and mindset expected of them. In this sense, horizontal learning can be considered a process of socialization, during which members of a community co-constructed knowledge by interacting with and influencing each other, creating a shared repertoire of practices, knowledge,

2 For example Paré, Brunet, and Tremblay, *La renaissance du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*; Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation*; Riché, *Éducation et culture*, to be compared with Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie*; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, Filoramo, *Maestro e discepolo*; Münster-Swendsen, ‘The Model of Scholastic Mastery’, 318-356; Steckel, ‘Charisma and Expertise’, 641-680.

3 Leclercq, ‘La communauté formatrice’. More recently, see Long, ‘High Medieval Monasteries as Communities of Practice’, 42-59.

4 See Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*.

5 Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*.

6 Among the studies which acknowledge the importance of the context of medieval learning, see Drijvers and MacDonald, *Centres of Learning*; Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*; Mews and Crossley, *Communities of Learning*; Steckel, Gaul, and Grünbart, *Networks of Learning*; Lutter, ‘Geistliche Gemeinschaften’, 145-160 and the 2013-2017 research network COST Action IS1301 ‘New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Strategies and Processes of Religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, led by Sabrina Corbellini.

and beliefs. On the other hand, if instead of focusing on the community level we look at the individual level, we can observe the exchanges of knowledge that took place between two people or within a small group. Although this could take place outside of a community too, and such exchanges can be analyzed in themselves, the exchanges acquire an even greater significance when we consider them as part of a sequence of interactions that make up the broader process of horizontal learning within a community.

By using this two-angled approach, this volume stands at the convergence of two historiographical tendencies, the first one focusing on the personal and often affective quality of interpersonal relationships between people engaged in learning exchanges,<sup>7</sup> and the second one analyzing non-literate ways of communicating and learning in medieval culture. With regard to the first current, relationships between masters and disciples received most of the attention, but the personal and affective dimension is important as well for understanding the interactions between co-learners. In fact, the important role played by affections and emotions in learning processes<sup>8</sup> confirms that learning in the Middle Ages was perceived as a highly individualized process of personal improvement, where the learner played an active role rather than being simply a passive recipient of a body of knowledge transmitted from above. At the same time, because it looks at the many forms of learning interactions, including non-literate ways of communicating, this volume also places itself within the wave of studies that have highlighted the plurality of ways in which learning took place, from behavioural and even physical imitation to the educational role of mural paintings and liturgy.<sup>9</sup> The contributions collected here will exemplify various means of learning, considering the interplay between literate and non-literate modes as well as the problems posed by the necessity of using written sources as attestations of non-literate forms of learning.

High medieval religious communities of the 'long twelfth century'<sup>10</sup> are particularly suitable and well-attested environments to study horizontal

7 See first of all Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*. Among other studies see Depreux, 'Des liens noués lors des années de formation', 303-314.

8 See Lutter, *Zwischen Hof und Kloster*, 49-75; Münster-Swendsen, 'The Use of Emotions', 161-181.

9 There is a vast bibliography on teaching by example in the Middle Ages, from Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo*, to the already mentioned works of C. Stephen Jaeger, Sita Steckel, and Mia Münster-Swendsen. With specific reference to the monastic environment see Cochelin, 'Beside the Book', 21-34; Boynton, 'Training for the Liturgy', 7-20; Gill, 'Monastic Murals and *lectio*', 55-71, and Bruun, 'Wandering Eyes, Muttering, and Frowns', 337-363.

10 Benson, Constable and Lanham, *Renaissance and Renewal*; Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*; Noble and Van Engen, *European Transformations*.

learning. The spread of literacy and the growing attention on the preservation of written documents that characterize this period<sup>11</sup> resulted in an abundance and variety of sources being preserved. These sources attest to a vivid interest in the theme of learning, or at least an urge to record written descriptions of learning processes and reflections on learning, as also shown by the appearance of the first treatises on monastic formation.<sup>12</sup> The growing diversity of forms of religious life<sup>13</sup> prompted interest in the distinctive nature of religious communal identities and how they were transmitted, and therefore to the processes of socialization and learning.

In addition, many scholars have remarked that the period in question was characterized by a renewed attention to the self,<sup>14</sup> although examples of self-expression, self-representation, and introspection can be found in the Early Middle Ages as well.<sup>15</sup> The fact that reflection on the self was often linked to reflection on the relationship between the self and others (especially in the context of friendship and love) and on the role of the individual within the group often created the right conditions for recording horizontal knowledge exchanges. It may even be possible that this renewed attention to the self, together with what has been described by Richard Southern as ‘medieval humanism’ of the twelfth century (with its relative optimism about the position of man in the universe and about mankind’s potential to progress spiritually through a personal path of self-analysis and commitment to self-improvement),<sup>16</sup> encouraged the development of models of learning where the learner played an active role and where the learning processes could be reciprocal. However, until the presence and spread of horizontal learning in the Early and Late Middle Ages has been studied, no conclusion on the peculiar character of horizontal learning in the High Middle Ages can be drawn.

11 Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*.

12 Leclercq, ‘Textes sur la vocation et la formation’, 169-194; Riché, ‘Les traités pour la formation’, 371-377.

13 Bligny, ‘Un aspect de la vie religieuse’, 279-283; Constable, ‘Cluny – Cîteaux – La Chartreuse’, 93-114.

14 Chenu, *L’éveil de la conscience*; Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*; Benton, ‘Consciousness of Self’, 263-95, although more recent studies have offered necessary corrections to the formulation of the question of the existence of a notion of ‘individual’ in the Middle Ages: Walker Bynum, ‘Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?’, 82-109; Aertsen and Speer, *Individuum und Individualität*; Bedos-Rezak and Iogna-Prat, *L’individu au Moyen Âge*, and Jean-Claude Schmitt even called the ‘discovery of the individual’ a historiographical fiction (Schmitt, “La découverte de l’individu”, 241-262).

15 Rosenwein, ‘Y avait-il un “moi”’, 35-52.

16 Southern, ‘Medieval Humanism’, 33-37.

The arrangement of the essays in this volume will help to bring out the shared themes, such as the interplay between horizontal and vertical forms of teaching and learning (Giraud, Kinsella, Jaeger), the glimpses of oral and informal learning that can be inferred from written texts (Diehl, Saurette, D'Acunto), the role played by the physical environment (Saurette, Kinsella) and by dynamics of gender (Hellemans, Jaeger) in learning exchanges, and the educational effect of participating in shared activities within the community, from liturgy to storytelling (Şenocak, Saurette). The two opening chapters set the stage for the subsequent essays by providing an overview of two key elements of the theoretical framework: namely, the notion of community and the place of horizontal learning in monastic culture. Tjamke Snijders's 'Communal Learning and Communal Identities in Medieval Studies: Consensus, Conflict, and the Community of Practice' traces the *status quaestionis* of the use of the notion of community in medieval research and beyond, and it concludes by setting forth the model of the 'community of practice', which appears particularly useful to study horizontal learning. Micol Long's '*Condiscipuli Sumus*: The Roots of Horizontal Learning in Monastic Culture' offers some methodological remarks on how the presence of horizontal learning can be traced in monastic sources, and concludes with a reflection on the extent to which horizontal learning can be associated with the monastic world in comparison with the world of canons who practiced communal living.

In the following essay, '*Ut Fiat Aequalitas*: Spiritual Training of the Inner Man in the Twelfth-Century Cloister', Cédric Giraud presents three examples of twelfth-century spiritual literature offering insights into how a cloistered monk or canon was supposed to learn how to live with himself, with his neighbour, and lastly with a particular neighbour, that is, a spiritual friend. Subsequently, Jay Diehl, in 'Truth as Teaching: Lies, Deceit, and the Ethics of Learning in Twelfth-Century Monastic Culture', analyzes two twelfth-century manuscripts as evidence of the links between discourses about teaching and discourses concerning deceit and truth-telling in eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic culture. He argues that the manuscript intended to situate truth-telling not only as the result of good pedagogy but also as a form of teaching and learning in itself. Marc Saurette's 'Making Space for Learning in the Miracle Stories of Peter the Venerable' looks at the use of a particular kind of storytelling to establish the physical space of the monastery as a site of narrative remembrance, with the ultimate goal of inculcating monastic *disciplina*. The attention to the use of the physical environment as a learning tool

is shared by Karl Patrick Kinsella in his 'Teaching through Architecture: Honorius Augustodunensis and the Medieval Church', which analyzes Honorius Augustodunensis's (d. 1140) description of the medieval church and its typological qualities in his *Gemma animae*. This work attests to an important development in twelfth-century pedagogy, one that sought to incorporate aspects of the tangible world to anchor abstract concepts or imperceptible events and sought to grant an active role to the educated learners. Horizontal and vertical forms of teaching may even coexist in the same text, as illustrated by C. Stephen Jaeger's 'Men and Women in the Life of the Schools: In the Classroom of Herman of Reichenau'. While the exceptional opening section of Herman's didactic poem makes use of bantering and even insults to set the tone of the relationship between the teacher and his (female) students, who are granted a very active role, the rest of the poem constitutes a vertical transmission of knowledge. Gender differences clearly affect the dynamics of teaching and learning in this case, as in the famous letters attributed to Heloise, analyzed by Babette Hellemans with an anthropological approach in her 'Heloise's Echo. The Anthropology of a Twelfth-Century Horizontal Knowledge Landscape'. Conflicts linked to the transmission of knowledge and authority are also hidden behind the lines of the chronicles of Saint Gall, according to Nicolangelo D'Acunto's reading. His 'Forms of Transmission of Knowledge at Saint Gall (Ninth to Eleventh Century)' looks at the important role played by informal collaborations between members of aristocratic circles within the monastery, which managed the informal training of selected members for leadership roles. Informal training is also at the centre of Neslihan Şenocak's 'Horizontal Learning in Medieval Italian Canonries', which shows how communal living facilitated horizontal learning among canons: those beginning their clerical career acquired the various skills required by their role by participating in the liturgy and in chapter meetings. Lastly, Sita Steckel pulls all the contributions together in her 'Concluding Observations', where she reflects on the potential of the horizontal learning approach, connects it to extant research paradigms, and sets out some further questions prompted by this juxtaposition.

The primary purpose of this collection is to function as an incentive for further enquiries into various dimensions and aspects of horizontal learning. Many themes that are touched upon in this volume deserve to be studied in more detail, such as the interplay between horizontal and vertical learning and the (imagined or actual) risks of horizontal learning. The editors hope that the notion of horizontal learning will prove useful to broaden and nuance our understanding of how learning took place in

the Middle Ages, calling attention to the need to take into account not only master/disciple interactions, but also the learning exchanges that took place between peers, as well as the potential for reciprocity inherent to any intellectual interaction. Furthermore, the view of high medieval religious communities as the product of a continuous process of education and integration of new members through various forms of vertical as well as horizontal learning may offer a contribution to both the field of medieval religious history and the ongoing debate on the use of the notion of community in medieval studies and beyond.

### About the authors

**Steven Vanderputten** is a full professor in the History of the Early and High Middle Ages at Ghent University's Department of History. His research deals primarily with the development and culture of religious groups in Western Europe between c. 800 and 1200. It covers a wide range of subjects, including memory and collective identities, conflict management, rituals, leadership, institutional development, gender, and discourses and realities of ecclesiastical reform. His work has been widely published in international peer-reviewed journals and collective volumes; his key monographs are *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders* (Cornell University Press, 2013); *Reform, Conflict and the Shaping of Corporate Identities: Collected Studies on Benedictine Monasticism, 1050-1150* (LIT Verlag, 2013); *Imagining Religious leadership in the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform* (Cornell University Press, 2013), and *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identity of Female Monasticism, 800-1050* (Cornell University Press, 2018). In addition, he has co-authored an edition of the *Acta Synodi Atrebatensis* (Brepols, 2014), and is the editor of published and forthcoming volumes with Brepols, Leuven University Press, and Brill. Vanderputten's fellowships include Clare Hall (Cambridge University, 2003), IAS Princeton (2005), FOVOG (Eichstätt, 2008), NIAS (Wassenaar, 2009-2010), Flemish Academic Center (Brussels, 2011-2012), and IAS Bloomington (2012). In April 2012, Germany's Humboldt Foundation awarded him the prestigious Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award; and in October 2013, the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts proclaimed him Laureate in Humanities. He is also the vice-chair of Ghent University's Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies.

**Micol Long** is a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher of the Research Foundation-Flanders (FWO) at Ghent University, where she joined the Department of Medieval History in 2014 to work on 'Learning as shared practice in monastic communities of the High Middle Ages'. In 2013 she had obtained her PhD in history at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa (Italy), with a dissertation on epistolary autography in the High Middle Ages, which was published in 2014. She spent research stays in Munich (Monumenta Germaniae Historica), Paris (École Nationale des Chartes), Rome (Accademia dei Lincei), and Odense (Centre for Medieval Literature). From October 2018 she is working on a new research project about intra-religious mobility in the twelfth century.

## 2 Communal Learning and Communal Identities in Medieval Studies

Consensus, Conflict, and the Community of Practice

*Tjamke Snijders*

### Abstract

This contribution sketches a conceptual history of the ideational component of community in the field of medieval studies. It shows that medieval scholars have usually proceeded from a 'strong' definition of communities, emphasized geographical boundaries, posited the importance of consensus, and focused on a common denominator that could be used to characterize the community. The traditional approach to community can be contrasted with the concept of a 'Community of Practice', which defines a community as a practice-based social group whose identity is based on shared performances of a repertoire that is in constant flux. An implementation of this approach can provide medievalists with the tools to re-interpret medieval communal identities as multiform and caught up in a continual process of renegotiation; and what this means for the way we conceptualize communal learning.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, knowledge, community, historiography

Our understanding of horizontal learning within medieval communities largely depends upon the way we define our terms. First, we need to clarify what it meant to 'learn horizontally' within a medieval community, and the chapters in this volume address this issue from a variety of approaches. Less obviously, but no less crucially, we also need to clarify what it meant to be part of a 'community' in which learning was taking place.

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How we, as scholars, delineate ‘community’ directly influences how we understand communal learning. If we define a community as a close-knit social group that is bound to a specific place, we can readily imagine farm boys learning the skills of rural life from their peers. If, however, we define community as a pure construct, an imagined ‘us’ versus ‘them’ that could cut across boundaries as well as generations, horizontal learning might take a very different shape.

Unfortunately, it is far from easy to propose a suitable definition for the term *community*. Scholars have used this term ‘with an abandon reminiscent of poetic license’,<sup>1</sup> which has turned it into something ‘as indefinable – as well as indispensable – as the term “culture”’.<sup>2</sup> Medieval scholars first used the word *community* to describe small villages, such as Le Roy-Ladurie’s Montaignou. Not long after, the idea of ‘community’ started to broaden. It came to encompass much wider geographical areas; and also started to include social groups such as Christians, peasants, and women; and even covered such abstract notions as ‘textual communities’ and ‘imagined communities’.<sup>3</sup> By 1955, 94 discrete definitions of ‘community’ had already been proposed.<sup>4</sup>

This study gives a selective – but, I hope, relevant – overview of the definitions of community that are germane to the perspective of medieval learning. The first section shows that the term *community* has traditionally been equated with a significant level of uniformity among the members of a social group, which engenders a conception of horizontal learning as a form of socialization.<sup>5</sup> The second section discusses a conflict-based definition of community and considers horizontal learning as a tool for identity politics. The final section delves into the model of the ‘Community of Practice’ and proposes a role for horizontal learning that is central to the formation of the community itself.

1 Wirth, ‘The Scope and Problems of the Community’, 165.

2 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 57.

3 Examples are Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaignou*; Bonney, *Lordship and the Urban Community*; Messier, ‘The Christian Community of Tunis’, 295-309; Dewindt, ‘Redefining the Peasant Community’, 163-207; Lochrie, ‘Between Women’, 70-88; Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

4 Hillery, Jr., ‘Definitions of Community’, 111-123.

5 This is not particular for the English language – very similar remarks can be made about the French *communauté*, the Italian *comunità* (all three terms derive from the Latin ‘*communitas*’), the German *Gemeinschaft*, or the Dutch *gemeenschap*. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, 22.

## Part I – Community based on Uniformity

### Strong Communities

In discussing the definition of medieval communities, it is important to distinguish between *relational* and *ideational* approaches to the subject.<sup>6</sup> Relationalists investigate the observable connections between members of a social group. A relationalist could, for example, investigate to what extent the medieval nobility can be understood as a delineable social group in a late medieval urban setting by studying its marriage networks.<sup>7</sup> Such scholars often employ a prosopographical method to inquire into their subjects' social backgrounds, economic status, political ideologies, and relationships.

Ideationalists, in contrast, study the tools that were crucial to form a collective identity: the objects, texts, speech acts, and practices that enabled a group of people to experience itself as one.<sup>8</sup> This research perspective proceeds from the assumption that the experience of homogeneity is a *sine qua non* for any community. As John Dewey put it, 'Men live in a community in virtue of the things they have in common', adding that 'communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common'.<sup>9</sup>

This idea of homogeneous communities implicitly leans on a robust intellectual tradition that can be traced at least as far back as Rousseau (1712-1778). He had considered differences in beliefs and values to be intolerable threats to group cohesion and, therefore, to nation-states. He famously argued that all persons in a society must give up their individual desires and aspirations as they, in a sense, sign the social contract: 'Chacun de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la suprême direction de la volonté générale; et nous recevons en corps chaque membre comme partie indivisible du tout'.<sup>10</sup> Although Rousseau conceded that individual minds and desires would never cease to exist, he argued that they must be regulated in such a way that the wishes of the one do not hamper the wishes of the many. In order to do so, the community must be able to focus on one common symbol that can serve to unite it, such as the person of a ruler. For Rousseau, then, a community could only be formed through 'consensual agreement, a monistic set of opinions and sentiments concerning

6 Moody and White, 'Structural Cohesion and Embeddedness', 104.

7 For example Buylaert, 'La "noblesse urbaine"', 247-75.

8 Examples of such tools are clothing, language, national anthems, heroes, nostalgia, myths, collecting, media: Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', 124.

9 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 5.

10 Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, book 1, chap. 6; Froese, 'Beyond Liberalism', 587.

the public good, coupled with the conviction that there is but one correct way of perceiving it and of pursuing it'.<sup>11</sup> The assumption at the heart of this working definition is that social groups need a significant amount of internal consensus to achieve functional efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) partially endorsed Rousseau's ideas. He agreed with the notion that a community must share an aspect of commonality, but he focused on the role of language. He argued that one's maternal language determines the manner in which one thinks, as you can only think what you can express linguistically (*Denkungsart*): language determines thought. Herder maintained that the truths of one language community are not necessarily the same as those of communities that speak another language.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in his eyes, a common language together with established cultural traditions builds a 'nation' of people with a shared identity. The net result is a sense of 'distinctive self' that is shared throughout the nation as 'one national character' or 'a collective soul'.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to Rousseau, Herder left room for dissent within this collective. He realized that even humans who share a language and a collective soul are still profoundly individual. Instead of emphasizing the necessity of consensus within a community, Herder underlined the idea of voluntary cooperation (*Zusammenwirken*) as the basis for citizenship for the members of an essentially pluralist *Volk*.<sup>15</sup>

Continental nineteenth- and early twentieth-century medievalists took up these thoughts and viewed them primarily through the lens of their own nation-states. The German Leopold von Ranke (1845-1847) argued for the existence of a medieval German nation in his *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*. The Belgian Henri Pirenne (1899-1932) studied the history of the *civilisation belge* from the Roman era until the start of World War I, even though the Belgian state had only been founded in 1830.<sup>16</sup>

In the United Kingdom, where the need to legitimize the borders of the modern state was not felt as acutely, historians set out in search for communities of much smaller scale. They were looking for shared characteristics

11 Barnard, 'National Culture and Political Legitimacy', 247.

12 Horowitz, 'Consensus, Conflict and Cooperation', 178.

13 See for example Morton, *Herder and the Poetics of Thought*.

14 Schmidt, 'Cultural Nationalism in Herder', 407-417; Barnard, 'National Culture', 242.

15 Barnard, 'National Culture', 247; see for example Herder, *Briefe*, section 10, 121. The difference between consensus and cooperation for communities is investigated in Horowitz, 'Consensus, Conflict and Cooperation'.

16 Bahners, 'National Unification and Narrative Unity', 66-67; Tollebeek, 'At the Crossroads of Nationalism', 187-215.

that could have determined the identity of a social group, focusing primarily on peasants' relationships towards the common land.<sup>17</sup> In 1887, the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies argued that the place-bound character of life in rural villages created feelings of togetherness and mutual bonds between its members (the *Gemeinschaft*).<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Paul Vinogradoff maintained in 1892 that medieval English villages were primitive communities, where monolithic masses of peasants lived in a harmonious world of collective solidarity and were primarily concerned with subsistence.<sup>19</sup> These rural utopias were frequently contrasted with the individualism of modern society, the *Gesellschaft*, which is transregional, much more abstract, and much more selfish. According to Tönnies, one stays a member of a *Gesellschaft* not out of instinctive solidarity but because it can further one's personal aims.<sup>20</sup>

Emile Durkheim (1893) embraced this instrumentalist notion of modern society. He argued that while members of primitive communities shared beliefs, representations, ideals, and feelings because they were all very much alike, the members of more complex societies that practice the division of labour do not stick together because they are inherently similar; they do so because they depend upon each other for survival, like different organs in one body. For Durkheim, their shared consensus is a necessary precondition to creating the social cohesion and solidarity that is required for seamless cooperation. Even though the members of a social group are inherently diverse, it is understood that this diversity is an obstacle that needs to be overcome by the group if it is to be successful.<sup>21</sup>

To what extent were medieval communities truly 'primitive', homogeneous, and very different from the more complex societies of modern

17 For example Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*; Von Raiser, *Die Wappen*; Hupp, *Die Wappen und Siegel*.

18 For reasons of clarity I will use the German *Gemeinschaft* when referring to Tönnies notion of a grouping based on mutual bonds and feelings of togetherness, and use 'community' in a more neutral sense.

19 Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, 397-409; Aparisi Romero and Royo Pérez, 'Fractures in the Community', 21.

20 Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Note that Tönnies did not see the *Gemeinschaft* as superior to the *Gesellschaft*, and that he emphasized that the two types overlapped in practice.

21 Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, esp. 109-110 (book 3, chap. 1: 'La division du travail anémique'). This idea was further developed by Bourdieu (1970), who asserted that 'social identity lies in difference, and difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat', thus contrasting the homogeneous identity of one social group against that of another. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 476; see the discussion of this idea in Blok, 'The Narcissism of Minor Differences', 33-56.

times? In 1897, Maitland proposed that while English villages were indeed primitive at the outset, outside pressure quickly turned them into complex groups of individuals.<sup>22</sup> More recently, scholars have argued that the primitive community never existed, even on the windy hills of the English countryside. Medieval societies ‘appear much more like the sixteenth century, where people and money flowed through the countryside, and where the individual was not born, married or buried amongst his kin.’<sup>23</sup> As a result, the romantic notion of a primitive village community has been largely replaced by the idea of a village that was complex and characterized by heterogeneity as well as by social and geographical mobility.

Even though scholars have abandoned the idea that medieval communities were uniform and altruistic, the underlying notion that space was central to a community’s identity has remained current. Yet, whereas Tönnies essentially understood ‘space’ as ‘place’, Lefebvre famously argued that space is not a static geographical entity but is produced by people. Space is shaped by peoples’ daily activities, by the way space is represented on maps and in laws, and by peoples’ experiences of specific spaces.<sup>24</sup> This definition has been utilized in many studies of the development of Western European identities, usually from the point of view of the interrelatedness between sacrality and city in the High Middle Ages, or through the lens of urban capitalism in later centuries.<sup>25</sup> These studies all share the belief that the common identity of a specific social group is tightly entangled with its relationship to one particular space.

Ideationalists thus understand communities as systems of social conventions based on shared symbols (such as a ruler or a flag), a common language, or a specific space. These systems are ‘strong’ in the sense that scholars can conceivably isolate and codify them.<sup>26</sup>

22 Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*. Scholars such as Helen Cam have argued that the primitive community continued to exist in fifteenth century England because it was not a ‘voluntary act of association’ but a historical reality that was fundamentally determined by the boundaries of the shire (Cam, *Liberties and Communities*, esp. 245-247). Outside pressures, such as agrarian capitalism and lordly elites, have been studied by Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*; Tawney (1912), Hilton (1949, 1973), Brenner (1970s); see Aparisi and Royo, ‘Fractures in the Community’, 21-23; and Curtis, ‘Review’.

23 MacFarlane, ‘The Origins of English Individualism’, 261; see also *Beyond Lords and Peasants*.

24 Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*.

25 See, among others, *Medieval Practices of Space*; Howell, Arnade, and Simons, ‘Fertile Spaces’, 515-48; *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300-1300*, 275-94; Müller, ‘Presenting Identity in the Cloister’, 167-87; *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*.

26 Kent, ‘On the Very Idea of a Discourse Community’, 426.

## The Language Perspective

While the debates over place and space as constitutive factors of communal identity continued, other scholars started to reconsider the importance of language. Rousseau's idea that communities needed a significant amount of internal consensus now were combined with Herder's argument that language is the most important communal element in any group.<sup>27</sup>

Leonard Bloomfield was the first to define a community explicitly through acts of speaking. He noted that 'an act of speech is an utterance' and that 'within certain communities successive utterances are alike or partly alike'. He understood these likenesses in a purely vocal sense. For him, the phrases 'the book is interesting' and 'put the book away' are partly alike because they share the words 'the book'; and the phrase 'I'm hungry' as spoken by a needy stranger is the same as the 'I'm hungry' that is uttered by a well-fed child who wants to delay bedtime. Bloomfield called any community that shares a repertoire of similar utterances a *speech community*.<sup>28</sup>

Seven years later, Otto Brinkmann passed from utterances to narratives and showed how communities can be shaped through passing on relevant stories. In *Das Erzählen in einer Dorfgemeinschaft* (1933), Brinkmann investigated the tales that were traditionally told in his native village of Oberbeck (Westphalia) when the villagers assembled in a mood of sociability (*zwangloser Geselligkeit*). He attempted to capture the form of these tales by hiding a stenographer in a side room, who was told to make phonetic notes of everything that was said. Brinkmann characterized Oberbeck as an *Erzählgemeinschaft*, or *narrative community*, because the entire village was actively involved in the storytelling.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of language-based communities has remained prominent in the work of linguistic anthropologists, who concentrate on the social interaction between same-language speakers and the results of linguistic diversity within such communities. Medievalists have never really embraced this particular approach to community formation, presumably because of the difficulty of studying oral interactions from written, pictorial, and material sources. If medievalists use the concepts of speech communities or narrative communities at all, it is usually in a study of the interrelationships between texts and oral interactions. Andrew Butcher, for instance, reframed the

27 The degree to which modern research into the Middle Ages still rests upon nineteenth-century assumptions is remarked upon in Bloch and Nichols, 'Introduction', 1-22.

28 Bloomfield, 'A Set of Postulates', 154-155.

29 Brinkmann, *Das Erzählen*.

speech community as a 'speech/text community', a characterization that 'represent[s] the discursive interaction of speech and text within a single cultural entity'.<sup>30</sup>

The 1960s were a watershed period in the study of community. In 1959, Erik Erikson kick-started debates about the nature of personal identity by defining it as self-sameness over time.<sup>31</sup> This definition has remained at the basis of most theories of identity formation, although modern scholars generally see identities as less stable, not as a 'property' but as a collection of 'projects and practices'.<sup>32</sup>

Then, in 1962, Thomas Kuhn fundamentally changed the study of group identities with *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.<sup>33</sup> Somewhat similar to Herder, Kuhn argued that members of a community necessarily share a basic consensus about some of the essential elements of their existence (Kuhn famously called this basic consensus a 'paradigm'). For Kuhn, members of two different communities are virtually unable to communicate fruitfully with one another, because there is no meta-language that one could use to translate statements from one paradigm to another.<sup>34</sup>

Kuhn's influential thesis led scholars in the humanities to explore the possibilities (and epistemological pitfalls) of analyzing a community's paradigm. Most scholars attempted to examine each community's distinct matrix of theories of knowledge and religious convictions 'from within', without trying to fit their object of study into an evolutionary framework of 'primitive' and more 'developed' communities. One of the most influential scholars in this respect was Clifford Geertz, who introduced the concept of *thick description* in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). It involves the collection of rich and detailed examples of the meaning systems within a community, which allows the socially constructed layers of meaning to be disentangled. The scholar can then read and interpret the community's cultural practices as if they were a (complex) text.<sup>35</sup>

30 Butcher, 'The Functions of Script', 162.

31 Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*.

32 Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', 122.

33 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

34 This idea was not entirely new; see, for example, the 'Community of Inquiry' by Peirce and Dewey, which is broadly defined as any group of individuals who are involved in the process of empirical or conceptual inquiry into some kind of problem, emphasizing that knowledge is embedded within a social context (see Peirce, 'The Fixation of Belief', 1-15; and Dewey, *Democracy and Education*).

35 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, esp. 3-30 ('Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture'), and 412-453 ('Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight'); Geertz, 'Anti Anti-Relativism', 263-278.

Literary scholars objected to the implication that it is ever easy to read and interpret a text. Interpreting a text is difficult because the meaning of a text is not objectively present in the text itself but is created by a community. 'It is because words are heard as already embedded in a context that they have a meaning', as Stanley Fish put it: the reader or readers who interacted with a text and with each other were thereby providing the text with meaning.<sup>36</sup>

A student of mine recently demonstrated this knowledge when, with an air of giving away a trade secret, she confided that she could go into any classroom, no matter what the subject of the course, and win approval for running one of a number of well-defined interpretive routines: she could view the assigned text as an instance of the tension between nature and culture; she could look in the text for evidence of large mythological oppositions; she could argue that the true subject of the text was its own composition, or that in the guise of fashioning a narrative the speaker was fragmenting and displacing his own anxieties and fears. She could not, however, [...] argue that the text was a prophetic message inspired by the ghost of her Aunt Tilly.<sup>37</sup>

In short, some interpretations were supported by this student's academic community, whereas others were (at least for the moment) rejected. In time, the scholarly consensus over the meaning of a text might shift. This observation led Fish to the idea of an *interpretive community* (1976): a present-day, academic community that occupies itself with the interpretation of a particular text, such as *Hamlet* or the *Canterbury Tales*, and shares a basic consensus about the possible meanings of that text.

One of the most exciting consequences of the work by Kuhn, Geertz, and Fish is that it undermined the old belief that communities must have clear geographical boundaries or share an organizational principle. Historians had become used to studying the characteristics of urban communities, village communities, monastic communities, county communities, agricultural communities, or Jewish communities in clearly defined geographical areas.<sup>38</sup> Yet Kuhn, Geertz, and Fish all envisaged communities as groups of people with frequent social interactions who share a matrix of social conventions

36 Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?*, 309.

37 Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?*, 343.

38 Some examples are Weakland, 'Obedience to the Abbot', 309-16; Ault, 'The Village Church', 197-215; Blum, 'The European Village as Community', 157-78; Bennet, 'A County Community', 24-44.

and worldviews that can be isolated, studied, and possibly even compared to other communities' conventions and worldviews. Their work prompted historians to define a community in terms of texts and ideologies instead of geographical boundaries.

Outside the field of medieval history, historians applied the idea that communities did not need geographical boundaries to the question of nationalism. Benedict Anderson coined the concept of an *imagined community* (1983) that is not based on everyday, face-to-face interaction between its members but on an individual's perception that he or she is part of the community.<sup>39</sup>

Among medievalists, narrative texts were considered the most promising inroad to study communities that were defined by texts and ideologies. Chronicles in particular combined information about communal bonds, social relationships, and ideological convictions. As religious authors produced so many chronicles, medievalists started to focus on religious communities. Caroline Walker Bynum compared twelfth-century Cistercian ideas about friendship and community to the ideas of Benedictine monks; other scholars scrutinized how Aelred of Rievaulx, Augustine, Anselm, and other authorities envisioned their respective communities; and various related lines of enquiry were opened up.<sup>40</sup>

In 1983, in his much-cited book *The Implications of Literacy*, Brian Stock discussed the idea that texts and community are closely interrelated. This book presented the concept of a *textual community*, which essentially transplanted Fish's interpretive community to the Middle Ages. Stock defined the textual community as a group of people whose social activities are centred on a text. He did not clearly define what exactly he meant by 'text' – a 'deliberate opaqueness' that may well have been a primary reason why the notion of textual community found great success among historians.<sup>41</sup> According to Stock, a community could be gathered around 'a text' as well as 'texts', and these texts did not need to have written form. Basically, a text could be anything, 'for, like meaning in language, the element a society fixes upon is a conventional arrangement among the members'.<sup>42</sup> The text could be a story, a physical manuscript, a ritual, or something else entirely. This broad definition of 'text' implies that all physical or mental objects could

39 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

40 For example Dumont, 'Seeking God in Community', 289-317; Evans, 'Mens Devota', 105-15; Brockwell, 'Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community', 91-109; Dulles, 'The Spiritual Community of Man', 125-153; Bynum, 'The Cistercian Conception of Community', 273-286.

41 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 146.

42 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 146.

form the core of a textual community, as long as the community members shared a certain interpretation as to the meaning of this 'text'.<sup>43</sup>

Stock underlined that it was not self-evident that a community came to share an interpretation of a 'text'. Especially when the 'text' was a collection of written words, most members could not have read and discussed their text like the students in an interpretive community, because the community's members were often semi-literate. Stock, therefore, proposed that the meaning of a medieval 'text' was enunciated by a literate interpreter, whose teachings were accepted by the community members and led to shared goals.<sup>44</sup> This definition of textual communities quickly became a central concept to historians.<sup>45</sup> Because of his emphasis on communality, Stock is not usually interpreted as leaving much room for dissent among community members. As Leidulf Melve put it, 'The characteristic trait of [the textual community] is the extent to which *the* interpretation of a text provides for the social identity and cohesion of *the entire community*' [my italics].<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, Fish's idea of an interpretative community was pushed in another direction by researchers in composition studies, who occupy themselves with the question of how children and students learn to write. Their learning practices obviously happen in communities that resemble interpretative communities, and composition scholars wondered where they could situate the social boundaries between various groups of students and their idiosyncratic writing practices. Martin Nystrand answered this question by introducing the concept of *discourse community* (1982). As originally used, the discourse community was defined as a set of collective norms that influences writing practices.<sup>47</sup> The definition was soon extended to include

43 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 146: "Texts, I add, are both physical and mental. The "text" is what a community takes it to be'.

44 Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 522: 'Groups of people whose social activities are centred around texts, or, more precisely, around a literate interpreter of them. The text in question need not be written down nor the majority of auditors actually literate. The interpreter may relate it verbally [...] It may be lengthy [...] but more normally it is short enough that its essentials can be easily understood and remembered [...] Moreover, the group's members must associate voluntarily; their interaction must take place around an agreed meaning for the text. Above all, they must make the hermeneutic leap from what the text says to what they think it means; the common understanding provides the foundation for changing thought and behavior'. Stock notes that the text should have a charismatic quality and be understood as canonical, so that the authority is ascribed to the text and not to the interpreter (Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 308-309).

45 For a short analysis of Stock's importance to medieval history see Briggs, 'Literacy, Reading, and Writing in the Medieval West', 404-406; Melve, "'The Revolt of the Medievalists'", 244.

46 Melve, "'The Revolt of the Medievalists'", 244.

47 Nystrand, *What Writers Know*.

language because groups of people tend to share a specific discourse as well as a worldview. Patricia Bizzell tentatively defined a discourse community as

a group of people who share certain language-using practices. These practices can be seen as conventionalized in two ways. Stylistic conventions regulate social interactions both within the group and in its dealings with outsiders; to this extent 'discourse community' borrows from the sociolinguistic concept of 'speech community'. Also, canonical knowledge regulates the world views of group members, how they interpret experience; to this extent 'discourse community' borrows from the literary-critical concept of 'interpretative community'.<sup>48</sup>

The discourse community is close to Stock's textual community in that it centres on a collection of texts and text-related subjects. Community members read and discuss that collection, but also produce new texts. To write a new text, a community member must first determine the text's position within the group's interpretative conventions. In other words, a writer can only produce texts that fit the customs of the community in which the writer is functioning.

Membership in a discourse community is taught, just like the membership of an interpretative community and – presumably – that of a textual community. It requires knowledge of the register, concepts, and expectations of a group – knowledge that can be acquired through training. Lack of training, or disagreement with the discourse that centres on the community's texts, essentially excludes the individual from the discourse community.

The idea of the discourse community proved popular and was developed further in many publications, but medievalists only hesitatingly adopted the concept. Robert N. Swanson hypothesized in 1995 that Christendom might be portrayed as a series of discourse communities, 'sharing perceptions, aspirations, and vocabulary, and operating independently at a variety of levels; but all cohering in the umbrella discourse community of "orthodoxy"',<sup>49</sup> and Peter Meredith echoed this definition as he argued that a discourse community might have existed in fifteenth-century Norfolk.<sup>50</sup> However, possibly because this adaptation of the discourse community is hard to distinguish from Stock's better-known textual community, it never gained much popularity among medievalists.

48 Bizzell, *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*, 222.

49 Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe*, 9, 92.

50 Meredith, 'Carved and Spoken Words', 369-398.

## The Community Explosion

As the twentieth century came to an end, the maturing theories on the nature of communities stirred the enthusiasm of scholars in widely divergent domains. While early modernists reflected on the social constitution of communities in general, medievalists continued the search for relatively small-scale communities that exemplified a particular form of knowledge or identity.<sup>51</sup>

One of the most influential new approaches was the concept of a *political community*. A number of dissertations from the early 1980s used the concept, and Susan Reynolds used it to study medieval social groups in their relationship to law and politics.<sup>52</sup> She was not primarily interested in geographically delimited communities, or even in cultural or ideational communities; she believed that the key to medieval communities could be found in their associations. She focused on social groups that performed certain collective activities that were determined and controlled by shared values and norms, while the relationships between community members were 'characteristically reciprocal, many-sided, and direct'.<sup>53</sup> Unsurprisingly, the idea of political communities quickly became linked to the formation of theories about the growth of the early modern state.<sup>54</sup>

A second new approach to medieval communities started with Barbara Rosenwein's worries about medieval emotions and the subsequent publication of her book on *emotional communities* in the Early Middle Ages (2006).<sup>55</sup> An emotional community, according to Rosenwein, 'is a group in which people have a common stake, interest, values, and goals'.<sup>56</sup> As a result, they

are largely the same as social communities – families, neighbourhoods, syndicates, academic institutions, monasteries, factories, platoons, princely courts. But the researcher looking at them seeks above all to

51 Steckel, 'Wissensgeschichten', 21. One example of a new community that builds on earlier theories is the replacement of the discourse community with a more general *knowledge community*, which suggested that a community did not just share a discourse, but an entire paradigm. It should be noted that most work on knowledge communities is strictly a-historical (see McGrath, 'Knowledge Management in Monastic Communities', 214).

52 Rowney, *The Staffordshire Political Community*; Cherry, *The Crown and the Political Community in Devonshire*; Keefe, *Feudal Assessments and the Political Community*.

53 Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 2.

54 Most obviously in Reynolds, 'The Idea of the Nation as a Political Community', 54-66.

55 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*. Some of her earlier thoughts on the subject include Id., 'Worrying about Emotions in History', 921-45.

56 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 24.

uncover systems of feeling, to establish what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them (for it is about such things that people express emotions); the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.<sup>57</sup>

An interesting aspect of the emotional community is that the element that brings the community together is not identical to the emotions that are being studied. The emotional community may have come together for various reasons – because its members were born into it, could afford a house there, practised a specific profession, were interested in particular texts, and so on. Yet the historian does not focus on that communal element but instead studies the emotional practices that presumably developed together with the community. In essence, Rosenwein's emotional community is a more or less random social group that developed communal emotions.

A third approach focuses on forms of knowledge and practices of learning within social groups. Melve discussed *intellectual communities* (2007) as social groups that consist of members with similar backgrounds that share some form of knowledge.<sup>58</sup> Constant Mews and John Crossley took a leaf out of Rosenwein's book by defining *communities of learning* (2011) as social groups in which people share a common interest (such as religious or political convictions, education, or the importance that they attached to 'some discipline and to some set of texts'), but that they study to uncover systems of learning.<sup>59</sup> Emily Thornbury studies the *poetic community* (2014) as a social group of 'discerning readers and critics' with a shared aesthetic, whose members judge the poems they read and thereby influence its authors.<sup>60</sup>

## Overview

This dizzying list of communities – which, of course, is far from exhaustive – highlights three features that scholars keep coming back to. First of all, they give great importance to geographical boundaries and space, either because the community's character is directly determined by the space it inhabits (e.g., the boundaries of the primitive village determine

57 Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods', 11.

58 Melve, 'Inventing the Public Sphere', 72. See also Sullivan, 'The Bond of Aristotelian Language', 213-228.

59 Mews and Crossley, 'Introduction', 1-2; Mews, 'Communities of Learning', 109-135.

60 Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*.

the boundaries of its *Gemeinschaft*) or, conversely, because the community is explicitly defined through its 'transspatial' character (e.g., a community that is defined as a shared interpretation or attitude). Work on this subject has evolved, as most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians focused on the presumed opposition between 'primitive' communities and the 'placeless' societies of modern times; whereas more recent work thematizes the complex relationships between identity and space.

Second, all definitions of community posit the importance of consensus between its members.<sup>61</sup> The most striking example is probably Stock's textual community, whose members share one single interpretation of a 'text' that was prescribed to them by a literate interpreter. Similarly, a discourse community revolves around a set of collective norms that its members share,<sup>62</sup> the knowledge community shares a paradigm, an emotional community shares 'a common stake, interest, values, and goals', and so on. Some researchers explicitly state that dissent within a social group is a problem that should be overcome in order to construct and maintain a sense of community; many others simply ignore the question of dissent within the community.

Last but not least, there is always one common denominator that can be used to characterize the community. There is either a fundamental agreement about the basic working of society (Rousseau, Kuhn, Geertz, the political community); a shared language or linguistic environment (Herder, the speech community, the narrative community, the interpretative community, the textual community, the discourse community); shared emotional reactions to life's challenges (the emotional community); or the shared self-perception of being a community member (imagined community). All these perspectives proceed from a strong definition of 'community' as a consensual and stable phenomenon with characteristics that are so crisp and clear that they can be highlighted and described as the community's essence.

As a background for research into horizontal learning, this strong definition of community implies a relatively stable social group with few

61 With the exception of Mews and Crossley, 'Introduction', who state that 'In all of these communities of learning, discussion and even dissent play a vital role. Even in an avowed community, there does not have to be unanimity of view' (Mews and Crossley, 'Introduction', 1). Note that Mews and Crossley do at the same time presuppose that the community members share a discipline, a set of texts, and characteristics in terms of e.g., religion, education, or political commitment; and that Mews does argue that communities were keen to develop their own intellectual synthesis (Mews, 'Communities of Learning', 111).

62 The fundamental homogeneity that this implies has been strongly criticized, for example by Kent, 'On the Very Idea', 425-445; Trimbur, 'Consensus and Difference', 602-616.

internal conflicts over issues that are truly important to the group as a whole. Horizontal learning in this kind of community would essentially come down to the process of socializing newcomers into a settled social group. This process would vary little from year to year, or from decade to decade, because the social group itself never changed much, and its norms and values endured. As a result, the learning content in these groups would be surprisingly stable.

## Part II – A Multiplicity of Communities

### A Challenge to Homogeneity

The strong definition of community has been the focus of much criticism. First of all, it has frequently been remarked that it would be a gross simplification to characterize any individual as part of one community only. All medieval men and women belonged to complex networks of multiple communities that overlapped, cooperated, and competed with one another. Barbara Rosenwein, for example, envisions medieval society as consisting of ‘a large circle within which are smaller circles, none entirely concentric but rather distributed unevenly within the given space’, in which the large circle represents an overarching community, whereas the smaller circles represent subordinate communities.<sup>63</sup> She hypothesizes that medieval society consisted of multiple large circles that intersect with one another. Susan Reynolds reached a similar conclusion and noted that

One of the most striking characteristics of the collective activities which I discuss, moreover, seems to me to be that they seldom took place within the small, stable, all-embracing, and mutually exclusive groups which appear to form the ideal type of community. People seem to have been capable of acting collectively in all sorts of different and overlapping groups at once, largely relying in all of them on affective, voluntary co-operation.<sup>64</sup>

Medievalists have therefore started to reconsider the question of multiplicity in relation to community formation. To what extent were communities ‘nested’ (which is to say that they contained one another or overlapped),

63 Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 24.

64 Reynolds, *Kingdom and Communities*, 2-3.

and how did this influence medieval identity formation? To what extent did communities influence one another? What happened to communal identities when the paradigms of various communities contradicted one another?

Furthermore, the idea that a community must be consensual and relatively homogeneous has been questioned. The consensual model threatens, on the one hand, to reduce the individual to 'a sort of automaton, passively obeying the interiorized collective will', and on the other to reify a community's social conventions.<sup>65</sup> Can a social group only be called a 'community' when its social conventions, emotions, organizational modes, and beliefs were so strong and coherent that they can be isolated and codified? Were medieval communities not inherently pluralist, and very conscious of differences in age, status, social capital, and wealth?

The answer, according to Peter Burke, is clear. The community 'has to be freed from the intellectual package in which it forms part of the consensual, Durkheimian model of society' because we cannot assume that communities were homogeneous.<sup>66</sup> Walter Pohl has added his voice to Burke's by noting that communities exist not because they manage to overcome dissent, as Durkheim suggested, but because they channel conflict and privilege some types of conflict over others.<sup>67</sup> Pohl noted that medievalists set too much store by sources that construct the image of a homogeneous community, and they have long treated the resulting image as if it were a pseudo-subject of history that has agency of its own: 'the *Franci* waged war, and the *ecclesia* acted on earth in the name of God. It is not clear to everyone that these are abstractions'.<sup>68</sup>

Many medievalists who turned away from the 'consensual model of society' have started to look at its opposite, the '*conflictual model* of society', which is historically associated with Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber, and Karl Marx.<sup>69</sup> This model sees society as fragmented into groups and individuals who compete strategically and purposefully for social and economic resources.<sup>70</sup>

65 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, ix.

66 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 60.

67 Pohl, 'The Construction of Communities', 6.

68 Pohl, 'The Construction of Communities', 9.

69 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 27. For an overview of consensus theory (or 'functionalism') vs. conflict theory see Horowitz, 'Consensus, Conflict and Cooperation', 177-88. Some recent conflict-based approaches to communal identity are *Conflict in Medieval Europe*; Patzold, 'Monastische Konflikte', 275-91; Hutchison, 'Partisan Identity', 250-274.

70 For a more exhaustive introduction to the field of conflict studies, refer to Brown and Górecki, 'What Conflict Means', 1-35; and Brown and Górecki, 'Where Conflict Leads', 265-285.

One of the most notable adherents of this model is Thomas Bisson. He has studied the opposition between 'public' and 'private' power within the framework of the old debate over the transformation of 'feudal' society around the year 1000. Bisson shows that the power that was held by a king or a count – 'public' power that could express itself in norms and laws – was essentially a form of consensus and homogeneity in medieval society. However, Bisson argues that this homogenizing power crumbled around the year 1000 so that people were henceforth compelled to fend for themselves, which led to ubiquitous conflicts between individuals and small social groups.<sup>71</sup> Somewhat similar to the nineteenth-century historians who contrasted the consensual 'primitive' communities to its modern individualist counterparts, Bisson studied how and when the essentially consensual community of the Carolingians was replaced by its conflictual opposite.

Frederic Cheyette, Stephen White, and Patrick Geary spearheaded an alternative approach to conflict studies by investigating practices of disputing. They saw conflict not as the result of absent public authority but as a tool to construct and manipulate social order.<sup>72</sup> These scholars argued that conflicts between people naturally engendered antagonism between individuals and groups, but that conflicts could also be a source of cohesion because they demarcated the boundaries between social groups: 'individuals and groups, for whom neutrality was impossible, related to each other as *amici* – that is, those who are bound by a *pax* or friendship – or else as *inimici* – that is, those who face each other in a potential or actual state of war'.<sup>73</sup> Even more important, new social groups were born when individuals or parties started a search for new alliances.<sup>74</sup>

In this view, conflicts did not detract from public authority. The laws and norms of counts and kings were latently present throughout the Middle Ages but were only important when people actually invoked them in the course of their disputes.<sup>75</sup> As Warren Brown and Piotr Górecki argue, people used overarching concepts of 'public' authority when the situation was such that these concepts could be of advantage to them in their negotiations. For example, Charlemagne found that it was in his interest 'to project an image of power based on the norms and ideology of public authority'. His subjects

71 Brown and Górecki, 'What Conflict Means', 10-14, 32-33; Bisson, 'The "Feudal Revolution"', 6-42; Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*.

72 Brown and Górecki, 'What Conflict Means', 8-9.

73 Geary, 'Living with Conflicts in Stateless France', 144.

74 Geary, 'A Typology', 138-140.

75 Brown and Górecki, 'What Conflict Means', 6

would sometimes come into conflict with people who based their image of power on different norms, and they would try to resolve the conflict by adopting Charlemagne's norms.<sup>76</sup>

In essence, it is fair to say that conflict studies have reacted to the consensual model of society not by studying conflict in the heart of a community or by questioning the community's fundamental homogeneity but by abandoning the community as the basis of analysis and replacing it by disputes at the level of individuals and small subgroups within the community. When conflict historians do study communities, they usually present the community as internally consensual – either because its members shared an instrumental focus on a common interest (such as the opposition to *inimici*) or because powerful groups were able to impose their discourse on subordinate groups and thereby achieve 'consensus'.<sup>77</sup>

A different way of questioning the homogeneity of a social group is to study its memories. Medievalists have asked whether communities necessarily possessed 'collective' memories, in which there is no place for dissent. The founding father of these 'memory studies', Maurice Halbwachs, indeed described the shared memory of a group of people in 1925 and 1950 as its *collective memory*. As a student of Durkheim, Halbwachs emphasized the shared aspects of collective memory formation, arguing that individuals can only remember coherently and persistently within the context of a community.<sup>78</sup> Rephrased in Kuhnian terms: an individual's memories are irrevocably determined by the paradigm within which the memories are formed and recalled, as the memories are formed by the community's language and its social standards of plausibility.<sup>79</sup> This notion became so popular that 'whether associated with Halbwachs or not, the assumption that social groupings of all types formed their identities around a shared interpretation of their common history figures among the core assumptions of current scholarly practice and of medieval scholarship, in particular'.<sup>80</sup>

76 Brown and Górecki, 'Where Conflict Leads', 273, 279-280.

77 Sears, *A Good Book*, 22; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*; Geary, 'A Typology', 136-137; Patzold, "'Einheit" versus "Fraktionierung"', 375-90.

78 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, esp. 38. Some scholars have emphasized that Halbwachs' collective memory can be a marker of social differentiation (see Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', 111). For Halbwachs' influence on medievalists see Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 10-11. For a more exhaustive listing of names and works in the field of memory studies, refer to Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', 105-140; and Cubitt, *History and Memory*.

79 Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory', 185.

80 Warner, 'Reading Ottonian History', 104 n. 99.

Nevertheless, scholars started to challenge this notion of fundamental collectivity from the 1970s onwards. Jan Assmann proposed to subdivide Halbwachs's collective memory into two subspecies. On the one hand was a traditional, long-lasting *kulturelle Gedächtnis* consisting of historical narratives and ancient cultural traditions that are often repeated and can sometimes have normative purposes. On the other hand, Assmann distinguished the relatively chaotic *kommunikative Gedächtnis*, consisting of the memories of day-to-day events within a specific community. These memories either die together with the person who remembers them or may be passed on to next generations for a maximum of about 80 to 100 years.<sup>81</sup>

Michel Foucault took a somewhat different approach. Instead of subdividing Halbwachs's collective memory into long-term and short-term memories, he suggested that we should oppose collective memory to the *counter-memories* within the same social group: the memories that are battling for dominance with the collective memory or are being repressed by it.<sup>82</sup> His cautious suggestion was taken up by researchers of popular memory, who have adopted Foucault's counter-memories to discuss the existence of various conflicting memories that strive for supremacy within subgroups of a single community.<sup>83</sup> Popular memory in particular came to be understood as a continuous process of contestation and resistance.<sup>84</sup>

Peter Burke (1989) added a layer of complexity when he pointed out that many divergent memories and interpretations could exist within a community, making it useful to analyze the different *memory communities* within society.<sup>85</sup> Burke's idea led James Fentress and Chris Wickham in 1992 to coin the concept of social memory.<sup>86</sup> Their basic argument was that particular social groups communicated about their individual memories and thereby negotiated a shared social memory that has particular importance for the constitution of that social group. Fentress and Wickham studied the

81 Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. Apart from 'cultural memory' and 'communicative memory', he also distinguishes 'mimetic memory' (the transmission of practical knowledge) and 'material memory' (memory as contained in objects).

82 Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', 160.

83 Haemers, 'Social Memory and Rebellion in Fifteenth-Century Ghent', 443-463.

84 Especially in Marxist approaches such as *Making Histories*.

85 Burke, 'History as Social Memory', 107: 'to analyse conflicts [...] it might be useful to think in terms of different "memory communities" within a given society. It is important to ask the question, who wants whom to remember what, and why?'

86 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*. Their research differs from older research interests by addressing internal dissent within a community, but also by their less strict delineation of the concept of 'community'.

social memories of ‘national groups’, ‘women’, ‘peasants’, and ‘the working class’.<sup>87</sup> Piotr Górecki showed that it was equally valid from a methodological point of view to work the other way around: he started with a specific kind of memory (the memories of legal transactions) that was shared by people who thereby came to constitute a community of legal memory.<sup>88</sup>

The last important intervention in the memory debate was Wulf Kansteiner’s conceptualization of collective memories as fundamentally distinct from individual memories.<sup>89</sup> He noted that collective memory tends to be treated as if it was an individual (‘autobiographic’) memory on a larger scale – which can be conveniently remembered, altered, or forgotten – instead of ‘shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective’. Collective memories, according to Kansteiner, ‘are based in a society and its inventory of signs and symbols’ such as manuscripts, images, and scenes, fragments of literary works, jokes, buildings, and discourse. To study how these things formed collective memories, one must not only investigate the things themselves but their reception as well – a call that has been well heeded by anthropologists and historians but not particularly so by medievalists.<sup>90</sup>

These more complex views of how medieval communities functioned change how horizontal learning might have worked. Most importantly, it situates learning within a social environment that was inherently unstable. If communities can overlap, be nested, contain subgroups that cherish counter-memories, and be generally prone to internal conflicts, it is likely that the membership of each community was in constant flux. Opposing social groups held contradictory opinions and memories: court versus rebels, Catholic versus heretic, one city versus another, men versus women, adults versus children ...<sup>91</sup> Every individual shaped his or her mix of communal identities. A young Catholic woman could keep identifying as catholic and as a woman for life, but at the same time grow older (moving from the ‘child’ community into that of adults), get married and have kids (and join the community of married mothers), move from one town to another and become part of a new local community, and so on.

87 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, x-xi.

88 Górecki, ‘Communities of Legal Memory’, 127-154.

89 Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, 180, 185-190; Cubitt, *History and Memory* emphasizes the essential interdependency of individual and social memory.

90 Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory’, 188, 192.

91 For example, Braekevelt, Buylaert, Dumolyn, and Haemers, ‘The Politics of Factional Conflict’, 13-31.

Horizontal learning in this context is comparable to the horizontal learning practices in strictly homogeneous communities, in that it must have been a way to socialize new members into a social group. Farm boys became skilled in farm life by observing their fellows. New mothers taught each other how to breastfeed, raise children, and function as a young mother in society. Townspeople strengthened their social group by happily gossiping away as they pointed each other to the best vendors.<sup>92</sup> Partisans on the side of the House of Lancaster in the Wars of the Roses shared stories about the supposed misdeeds of the Yorkists.

However, in this scenario, people were members of many social groups. Each person had a unique combination of memberships that set him apart from others and gave him a unique perspective on the world. Because group members each brought their perspectives, the group did not necessarily reach and maintain consensus over the conventions and memories that were central to the community. Their conventions and memories were in constant flux, and heated arguments could cause subgroups to split off.

Even in this unstable context, horizontal learning could be used to impart a social consensus to a newcomer. However, it is vital to note that, from the perspective of conflict studies, this consensus was tenuous and often mixed up with the identity politics of a specific and often fragile social group. Horizontal learning could, therefore, be used as a tool in a continuous identity battle between communities.

## Part III – Communities of Practice

### New Agendas

Even though conflict studies and memory studies reacted against the old notion of homogeneous societies, in practice they kept emphasizing the consensual aspects of the (smaller) social groups they study. Largely missing from the discussion is a weaker concept of community, which interprets communal identity as multiform and does not posit a necessary causal relationship between community formation and ideological consensus. The study of medieval communities needs to let go of the idea that ideational communities are necessarily built around a common interest or ideology that unites its members, and they must consider the possibility of a community that is based on practices.

<sup>92</sup> An accessible introduction to the role of gossiping in community construction can be found in Harari, *Sapiens*, chap. 2 ('The Tree of Knowledge').

In a way, practices have long been present in the study of communal identities. When Brinkmann hid a stenographer in a side room so that he could record the exact way in which his fellow-villagers told stories, he was recording practices. When Reynolds defined a community as 'a social group that performed a specified range of collective activities, which in turn endowed the participants with routine roles, and perhaps with a sense of group identity', she was defining a community in terms of its practices.<sup>93</sup> These definitions see a community's practices as an identifiable repertoire of shared actions, which increased the homogeneity of the community members who participated in them.

What makes practices an interesting inroad into the study of medieval communities, however, is the possibility that different community members could share practices without sharing a consensus. Even if they did not agree on a particular ideology or discourse, their individual goals may have aligned for a certain time in which they would work, speak, or play together. From such a point of view, a community is defined not as a stable system of social conventions that can be easily codified but as a process of constant renegotiation and change.

An interesting concept in this respect was introduced in 1991 by the social anthropologist Jean Lave and the Artificial Intelligence specialist Étienne Wenger. They studied how present-day corporations and Internet communities function and they concluded that they could be seen as *communities of practice* (CoP). Lave and Wenger defined this as a group of people who converge around an interest, a series of problems, or a specific subject – 'things that matter to people'.<sup>94</sup> Such a core interest can be the need to procure a basic necessity of life such as food or shelter, but it can also centre on an interest in a particular cultural phenomenon, religion, or text or even can be the need to perpetuate the existence of the community.<sup>95</sup> The people who share this interest usually meet face to face to discuss it, but they do not have to be co-located.<sup>96</sup> They can form 'virtual communities of

93 See Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 2-5 and *passim*; this definition is quoted from Górecki, 'Communities of Legal Memory', 127.

94 Wenger, 'Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System', 3; Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*. Like Stock did when he coined the textual community, Lave and Wenger left the concept of community of practice 'largely as an intuitive notion', leading to a flexible use of the concept. Fuller, 'Critiquing Theories of Learning', 20.

95 For the centrality of this wish of an institution to perpetuate itself see Melville, 'Institutionen als geschichtswissenschaftliches Thema', 1-24.

96 See Kietzmann, Plangger Kirk, Eaton, Pitt, Berthon, and Heilgenberg, 'Mobility at Work', 282-297.

practice' when they communicate online – or, from a medieval perspective, when they exchange books and written texts on the subject of their shared interest.

The members of a CoP learn from one another through a process of sharing information and experiences with the group. In so doing, they establish norms and build collaborative relationships (*mutual engagement*). This mutual engagement makes sure that the community members meet on regular occasions, discuss options, exchange information and opinions, work together, and influence each other's thinking. These exchanges create a shared understanding of what binds the group members together (*joint enterprise*), though this understanding is never stable: the community members continually renegotiate it. In other words, the enterprise is not joint because everyone agrees with one another but because everyone is continually involved in the process of negotiating the question of what makes their community successful and liveable at any given moment.<sup>97</sup> As the members of a community negotiate and pursue an enterprise, they create resources to negotiate meaning. These resources are their *repertoire*, which is defined as 'the practices, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions and concepts that the community has created or appropriated in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice'.<sup>98</sup>

Lave and Wenger emphasized that these shared practices do not necessarily imply homogeneity, consensus, and coherence. On the contrary, the members of a CoP usually have many differences concerning age, gender, education, and specific interests, and create further variations in the process of working together. 'They specialize, gain a reputation, make trouble, and distinguish themselves, as much as they develop shared ways of doing things'.<sup>99</sup> Each member thus gains a unique identity within the community that is in dialogue with other members' identities – but does not fuse with it. 'Crucially, therefore, homogeneity is neither a requirement for, nor the result of, the development of a community of practice', concludes Wenger.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, the community must know a minimum level of coherence in order to function. This coherence requires work. The practice of any community, therefore, includes the work of *community maintenance*, which is the conscious effort to increase the community members' sense of belonging

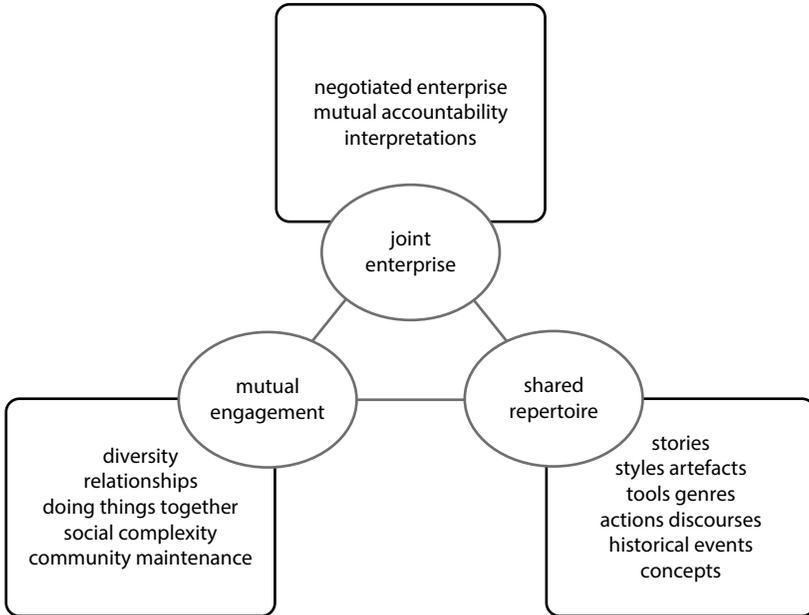
97 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 78.

98 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 80.

99 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 75.

100 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 75.

**Figure 1** Dimensions of practice as the property of a community (slightly simplified version of Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 73, fig. 2.1)



to the community. Community maintenance can take many forms, such as circulating stories about the community’s worth and legitimacy.<sup>101</sup>

From the point of view of a medievalist, a high medieval monastery is the perfect embodiment of a community of practice. Monasteries could house dozens of monks, *conversi*, novices, and women. Though they often had diverse backgrounds, educational levels, ages, and riches, they shared their fundamental Christianity and their wish or need to live out their days within the compound of a monastery.<sup>102</sup> To achieve that, they needed to safeguard the existence of their monastery. This required legitimacy: sufficient public standing to attract the novices, donations, and patrons that would keep the monastery running. There was no one clear way to achieve this. Some communities reformed and emphasized their newfound

101 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 74. Interestingly, this work of ‘community maintenance’ is described as relatively invisible in modern companies, whereas it is undoubtedly one of the most visible outputs of medieval institutions.

102 See for example Schreiner, ‘Mönchsein in der Adelsgesellschaft’, 557-620; Von Heusinger and Kehnel, eds., *Generations in the Cloister. An example of a woman in a men’s abbey can be found in ‘Gisleberti carmen de incendio S. Amandi Elnonensis’*, 416.

austerity; others chose to cling to old customs; yet others joined the order of Cluny, propagated the might of their patron saint, or focused on the economic exploitation of their possessions. Lave and Wenger would call the monks' shared (though never stable) understanding of the best way to maintain their monastery's legitimacy their *joint enterprise*.

In this sense, the ongoing discussion over the question of what makes a monastery legitimate defined the monastic community. Meanwhile, the monks formed relationships and rules as they worked together to ensure the proper execution of the liturgy as well as the optimal economic, religious, and political management of the institution (their *mutual engagement*). While they were managing their monastery, the monks developed a number of stories and manuscripts, went to chapter meetings, underwent penitential rituals, made architectural decisions, set up rules about their clothes, speech, food, guests, and processions, developed discourses, and so forth (their *shared repertoire*); and they engaged in *community maintenance* through the production of historiographical and hagiographical texts. Even though the CoP was initially meant to describe (a part of) a present-day company, the high medieval monastery thus fits its mould surprisingly well.

Many other medieval institutions and communities can with equal ease be interpreted within the framework of the CoP, such as guilds, the court, families and clans, or textual communities. Guild members, for example, established norms and relationships between masters and apprentices as they worked together to exchange knowledge and optimize production (mutual engagement), frequently met in their halls to discuss the best ways to maintain or increase the guild's competitive position within the urban setting and to protect its members (joint enterprise), and developed production methods, rules, laws, and customs while doing so (shared repertoire).

Medieval families kept redefining the relationships between family members and their 'associates' while they were managing their business or trying to win optimal marriage partners (mutual engagement), struggled to maintain or enhance their position in society (joint enterprise), and developed their family rituals and repertoires in the process.

Even textual communities could be interpreted within the framework of CoP theory: they emerged because of a joint interest in a 'text' or collection of texts and shared information about and interpretations of that 'text' (mutual engagement). This joint interest created a shared understanding of their existence as a community (joint enterprise) that subtly changed every time a new member entered the community or whenever there was a shift in the interpretation of the 'text(s)' that brought them together. While they were ruminating over the 'text(s)' at the heart of their community, they

created a repertoire of concepts, discourses, and stories that they used to analyze, understand, and contextualize their central ‘text(s)’.

### Horizontal Learning in a Medieval Community of Practice

The CoP profoundly changes the definition of a medieval community and, because of that, the role that horizontal learning had to play within communities.

First of all, the CoP does not focus on one particular element of consensus that it regards as the focal point of the entire community. In the past, attempts to define – for example – a monastic community through a single text or manuscript have all too often led to oversimplifications. Many studies have focused exclusively on texts that were produced as a form of ‘community maintenance’, which were taken at face value as a reflection of ‘the’ identity of ‘the’ community. Yet CoP theory indicates that as the community is inherently heterogeneous, such texts and manuscripts may have been conscious attempts to forge among the community a coherence that it lacked.

Even more important, the message of the studied texts and manuscripts may have been far more ambiguous than has often been thought. For example, I have examined an eleventh-century manuscript that was consciously speaking to various sub-communities within the monastery at the same time and even gave them contradictory messages about their shared patron saint.<sup>103</sup> This manuscript was thus not a simple tool to create a collective identity but a heterogeneous discussion item in a complex process of negotiation over the monastery’s joint enterprise.

Second, the CoP approach allows investigating the ‘soft’, subtle, and protean forms of knowledge that together form the community’s repertoire. It underlines that the members of a monastic community based their communal identity not solely on ‘texts’ but also on liturgical performances, the alternation of speaking, keeping silent, and using specific sign language, memories, teaching and fasting, working and praying. Even more importantly, it approaches these ‘soft’ forms of knowledge as items that do not stand on their own but function as part of a repertoire.

Third, older theories of community formation tend to reify the community and overestimate its overall stability. In contrast, the CoP is defined as inherently flexible and unstable, if only because people constantly move in and out of the community.<sup>104</sup> As a result, CoP theory emphasizes the need

103 Snijders, ‘Textual Diversity and Textual Community’, 897-930.

104 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 98.

to study how social groups developed over time. In a monastery, recruits entered through the noviciate, old and sick monks died, and various monks left their monastery to find shelter in competing institutions, either because they fled their old house or because their talents were such that they were requested to assist some house in need.<sup>105</sup> CoP theory thus has the advantage of encouraging an explicitly diachronic approach when studying communities and the development of communal identities.

Fourth, in this flexible context, members could participate in the community according to their status and capabilities. They usually ascended from a peripheral status vis à vis the group – like a novice in a monastery – to complete participation in its practices, although in most communities it was entirely possible to remain a peripheral participant for life. New members did not have to agree with and become fluent in some codification of a collective memory and identity, but they did have to engage in the process of becoming and remaining a member of the community at their level of expertise. Not everyone had to perform actions at the same level of practice to be valuable members of the community.

Lastly, the members of a community were all rooted in specific biographies.<sup>106</sup> Their individuality could lead to struggles within the community to control aspects of practice, as well as attempts to regulate entry and exit.<sup>107</sup> Monks clashed over attempted reforms, rewrote manuscripts and stories, and wrestled with newcomers.<sup>108</sup> Instead of presuming that a community is inherently consensus-based, CoP theory thus places the community between stability and conflict, which increases our understanding of the dynamics of medieval social groups.

In a monastic context, horizontal learning can be understood as the process of gaining increased familiarity with the performances, rituals, and conventions that together formed the community's repertoire. However, it did not stop there, for the learners also made active contributions to their subject material. A novice who learned to write, for example, would eventually show his mastery by producing a new manuscript – say, a copy of some exciting new tropes to liven up the liturgical services. That new

105 Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, 98; for travelling monks see, for example, Vanommeslaeghe, 'Wandering Abbots'; Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion', 47-75; Turcan-Verkerk, 'Entre Verdun et Lobbes', 157-203; or Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*.

106 Hughes, Jewson, and Unwin, 'Conclusion', 172; see also Yakhlef, 'The Three Facets of Knowledge', 39-46, who argues that members of a Community of Practice share a repertoire and methods but not necessarily many personal convictions.

107 See Hughes, Jewson, and Unwin, 'Conclusion', 173.

108 Schreiner, 'Mönchsein in der Adelsgesellschaft', 572, 574.

manuscript subtly changed the community's liturgical repertoire, and the other monks would have had to learn the tropes if they wanted to perform them in the liturgy. Perhaps the tropes even changed the community members' understanding of their joint enterprise: the exasperated monks may have decided that they would henceforth ban the singing of these overly musical and exuberant tropes and instead pride themselves on the austerity of their community.<sup>109</sup>

In short, horizontal learning within dynamic communities was much more than an efficient way to become up-to-date with the community's conventions and memories, as a necessary prelude to becoming a full community member. Instead, the practice of learning was in and of itself a way to change the community's repertoire, to become involved in the community's internal discussions, and thereby to become a full member of the community.

#### **Part IV – Conclusion**

The definition of 'community' thus fundamentally determines how we think about horizontal learning. If the community is defined as a relatively stable social group, with few internal conflicts over issues that are truly important to the group as a whole, horizontal learning comes down to the process of socializing newcomers into a settled social group – think of farm boys who learn from their peers how to sow, harvest, and flirt in the appropriate manner.

If communities are seen as entities that were in constant flux, and in which consensus was a form of power to be fought over, horizontal learning was a tool in the identity battles between social groups. It introduced newcomers to the views that set 'us' apart from 'them' in political factions, religious groups, and so on.

If, finally, communities are defined as the result of continuous interactions between people who all strive for the continued existence of their community, horizontal learning can be understood as a form of interaction that took place on all levels of the community and created the repertoire, joint enterprise, and mutual engagement of that community. From this point of view, horizontal learning was much more than a way of socializing members into a social group; it was a primary way of constituting the community itself.

109 See similar examples in *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium VIII-XIII*, book 8; Haye, 'Die verlorene Bibliothek', 45.

## About the author

**Tjamke Snijders** works as a collection expert in book history at KU Leuven. In 2009 she had obtained her PhD at Ghent University, with a dissertation which dealt with the layout and the composition of hagiographical manuscripts between the tenth century and the end of the twelfth, which was published in 2015 as *Manuscript Communication: Visual and Textual Mechanics of Communication in Hagiographical Texts from the Southern Low Countries 900-1200* (Brepols). As a postdoctoral researcher of the Research Foundation-Flanders, she continued to use manuscripts as an inroad to study the cultural history of the high Middle Ages. She was Visiting Scholar at Columbia University (2011), the Belgian Historical Institute in Rome (2012), and the University of California, Berkeley (2015). In 2017 she co-edited a volume about the history of medieval Liège with Steven Vanderputten and Jay Diehl.

### 3 *Condiscipuli Sumus*

#### The Roots of Horizontal Learning in Monastic Culture

*Micol Long*

##### **Abstract**

This chapter addresses the place of horizontal learning in monastic culture. Firstly, it focuses on the relation between theoretical instances of horizontal learning and the evidence for horizontal learning practices in monastic everyday life. On the basis of this, it proposes a reflection on the extent to which horizontal learning can be associated with the monastic world in comparison to other contexts, first and foremost the world of secular clerics and canon regulars. While there can be no doubt that horizontal learning is not unique to the monastic world, an evaluation of the complex balance between horizontal learning and vertical learning must always consider that much depends on the individual author, his or her social and religious status, the kind of community, and the specific contents and contexts of learning.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, friendship, orality, teaching, learning

While the previous chapter focused on the dimension of the community and its importance for the development of a theory of horizontal learning, this chapter addresses horizontal learning under a different but complementary angle: as an exchange of knowledge that took place between peers, where the two key aspects are the equality of the parties involved and the reciprocity of the exchange.

Looking for attestations of such exchanges in medieval monastic culture is by no means an easy task. Texts that explicitly focus on monastic

formation almost invariably highlight the role of a master and stress the need for obedience, suggesting a vertical and one-way transmission of knowledge. Christina Lutter observed that, in such sources, the focus on unity as a primary issue leads to a lack of attention to interpersonal relations – and, one might add, to the variety of possible learning agents and the reciprocal nature of learning exchanges.<sup>1</sup> In general, the aim with which the sources were produced inevitably influences the way in which they represent learning: for example, chronicles and saints' lives often privilege the relationship between one master and one pupil (often destined to take his master's place) in order to represent a simplified and uninterrupted chain of transmission of knowledge and authority. The essays collected in this volume offer examples of how information about horizontal learning can be identified in, or inferred from, different kinds of medieval sources, ranging from chronicles, statutes, saint lives, collections of miracle stories, and spiritual treatises to compilations, letters, and liturgical works. In the present essay I simply put forth a few observations concerning the theoretical foundations of horizontal learning in monastic culture, and its relationship with the evidence for the practice of horizontal learning in everyday monastic life, with particular attention to eleventh- and twelfth-century sources. On the basis of this, I conclude with a reflection on the extent to which horizontal learning can be associated with the monastic world compared to other medieval religious communities.

A possible starting point to track the existence of horizontal learning in monastic culture is offered by the notion of co-discipleship, which is attested in the work of several high medieval monastic authors, often in connection with the notion of learning, as we will see. The word *condiscipulus* appears in the Gospel of John, but just in passing and without the theological implications that we find in some high medieval authors.<sup>2</sup> The famous Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux wrote around 1130 to the regular canon Thomas, provost of Beverley, telling him to accept him as a fellow-disciple (*condiscipulus*) rather than as teacher (*magister*):<sup>3</sup> they should share a *magister* in Christ ('*unus sit ambobus magister Christus*'). In this respect Bernard probably influenced his secretary Nicholas, in whose letters we find

1 Lutter, 'Social Groups, Personal Relations', 52.

2 Iohannes 11:16: 'Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples' ('*dixit ergo Thomas, qui dicitur Didymus, ad condiscipulos*'). For this and all other reference to the *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, I use *The Vulgate Bible* edited by Angela M. Kinney.

3 '*Accipe condiscipulum, quem magistrum eligis*', Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 107*, ed. Gastaldelli, 524.

the same idea of co-discipleship,<sup>4</sup> and may have influenced the Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx as well. In his *De spiritali amicitia*, Aelred portrayed a dialogue with a pupil of his, during which he declared that he could not teach the young man, only converse with him ('non quidem te doceam sed tecum potius conferam').<sup>5</sup> This offers another example of an abbot who claimed to refuse the role of teacher and instead put himself on an equal level with one of his monks for the purpose of an intellectual exchange.

Statements of this kind are not unique to Cistercian authors, since we can find similar ones in the work of representatives of other religious orders: the Carthusian Stephen of Chalmet wrote to the novices of the priory of Saint Sulpice that he counselled them not as a veteran would counsel young recruits but, rather, as a soldier who still struggled in war and merely wanted to offer some words of exhortation and encouragement.<sup>6</sup> The monastic reformer Peter Damian told a hermit (who had asked him for a rule for hermitic life) that, since he was not superior to others in conduct and he still had much to learn, it would be wrong for him to presume to teach others. He therefore complied with the request only out of fraternal or brotherly love ('a fraterna caritate').<sup>7</sup> Karl Kinsella, in his contribution to this volume, offers yet another example of this tendency: Honorius Augustodunensis introduced one of his works by saying that he had been asked by his *condiscipuli* to explain some little question<sup>8</sup>. While presenting one's work as the product of someone else's request is a widespread topos, the use of the term *condiscipuli* in this context may indeed suggest, as Karl Kinsella argues, that with respect to that kind of learning Honorius saw 'the relationship between him and his peers along horizontal lines'. More in general, it should be considered that the notion of co-discipleship can be traced back to Augustine of Hippo,

4 Nicholas of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 38, 152: 'Herebas lateri meo, placebas cordi meo, meus et frater et filius et, si dignum ducis recordari, discipulus, potius autem condiscipulus, sub illo Magistro cuius schola in terris est et cathedra in celis'.

5 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 9, 291.

6 Stephen of Chalmet, *Epistola ad novicios Sancti Sulpicii*, 212: 'Non ego tanquam emeritae militiae veteranus, tyrones instruo, sed quasi milites adhuc ad nova bella rudis, quae ad meam aequae sicut ad vestram vel confirmationem vel exhortationem valeant, profero'. See Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 119, for an English translation and analysis.

7 Peter Damian, *Epistola* 50, 144: 'Nos autem, qui in huius professionis via neminem vivendo praecedimus, caeteros loquendo praeire velut indices sive duces itineris temerarium iudicamus. Praeposterum quippe est, si lingua tamquam magisterii super alios arripiat ferulam, cuius adhuc vita flagellis obnoxiam exhibet clientelam. Sed qui calcato propriae voluntatis arbitrio oboedire Deo per omnia decrevistis, dignum profecto est, tuis quoque petitionibus a fraterna caritate non segniter oboediri'.

8 Kinsella, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', p. 145 (in this volume).

who explicitly linked it to the idea that God is the only true teacher, whose all-encompassing 'school' coincides with life on Earth.<sup>9</sup>

The way in which high medieval authors used the notion of co-discipleship must of course be understood in the context of the wider trend of refusing the honours received and instead claiming for oneself a condition of peer (for example, as brother or co-servant)<sup>10</sup> or even of inferior to the one who had bestowed the praise. The implicit (or, sometimes, explicit) idea behind this was that only God deserved to be honoured,<sup>11</sup> but for the purpose of this essay it is interesting to observe that this rhetoric of humility could affect the way relationships, and therefore the social dynamics of knowledge exchanges, were represented in written sources.

Letters offer a particularly clear example of this, since they often discuss relationships and reflect on how they affected the people involved. For example, some letters written by eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic leaders attest the trend of representing one of their subordinates as their peer, or even their superior, because of his or her merits, playing with the idea of a subversion of the established hierarchy. Anselm of Canterbury referred to a former pupil of his, Maurice, as his master for his merits, his brother in faith, and his son for the solicitude he inspired him;<sup>12</sup> and Hildegard of Bingen called her dearest friend, the nun Richardis, both her mother and her daughter.<sup>13</sup> I believe that these are more than simple rhetorical virtuosités: in both cases, the underlying idea is that an exceptionally good monk or nun offered a valuable contribution to the life of the community and could even be beneficial to the abbot or abbess personally. This is explicitly theorized by Bernard of Clairvaux, who,

9 See for example Augustine of Hippo, *Epistola* 44, 239: 'unum enim magistrum, apud quem condiscipuli sumus, per eius apostolum dociles audire debemus praecipientem' ('for we must, docile, listen to our one master, before whom we are fellow-pupils, when he teaches') and his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 126, 1859: 'sub illo uno magistro in hac schola vobis cum condiscipuli sumus' ('we are fellow-disciples with you under that one master in this school').

10 For example, Anselm of Canterbury often represented himself as *conservus*, see his *Epistola* 98, ed. Kohlenberger and Rochais, 228, and his *Epistola* 156, ed. Biffi and Marabelli, 124.

11 See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 72, ed. Gastaldelli, 330: 'As, according to the words of our Lord, we are all brothers having one father in heaven, it is not improper for me to turn off from myself with the shield of truth the high names of lord and father with which you think to honor and not burden me, and more appropriately call myself brother and fellow-servant as we share the same Father and the same condition' ('iuxta verbum Domini, unus sit pater noster in caelis, nos autem omnes fratres simus, non immerito domini patrisque celsa nomina, quibus me honorandum, sed non honerandum, scuto a me veritatis repuli, congruentius pro his fratrem me nominans et conservus', trans. Scott James, *The Letters*, 106).

12 Anselm of Canterbury, *Epistola* 32, ed. Kohlenberger and Rochais, 112: 'De meo meritis domino, fide fratre, sollicitudine filio Mauritio'.

13 Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistola* 13, 30: 'filia mea Richardi, quam et filiam et matrem meam nomino'.

in a letter addressed to Rainald, abbot of Foigny, stated that sometimes a monk could be so spiritually healthy that he helped his abbot more than he was helped by him.<sup>14</sup> In such a case – Bernard told Rainald – the abbot should consider himself not as the monk's father but, rather, as his equal (*non patrem sed parem*), not as his abbot but as his fellow (*comitem, non abatem*). This text makes clear that the idea of an overthrow of the established hierarchical roles in the monastery (for the limited purpose of teaching and learning) is linked to the perception of spiritual maturity as something independent from age and even hierarchical rank. Moreover, it implies that each member of the monastic community, including the abbot, was supposed to continuously strive to progress and that the help of one's fellow-monks was crucial to this end.

The fact that each monk was expected to contribute to the life of the community is also shown by many letters of recommendation written to ask that the letter-bearer may be welcomed into a religious community or household. Such texts usually refer to the personal qualities of the man in question, to show that he could make himself useful.<sup>15</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, while sending a man to a community of regular canons, listed his merits and stated that he was going to be a comfort for the members of that community.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in a letter addressed to an unknown Benedictine abbot, he stated that he was sending him two young monks who – he believed – would be of some use to him.<sup>17</sup> The abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny, in a letter to Pope Innocent II, asked him to bless the decision of the abbot Natalis (Noël) of Rebais to retire to Cluny, and referred to how Natalis could be useful to Cluny<sup>18</sup>.

Of course, monks could offer and receive help in different fields, as Byrhtferth of Ramsey explicitly stated while painting an idealized picture of the future abbot Germanus in his *Life of Saint Oswald*:

[he] adopted aspects of good conduct from individual monks; that is to say, in the abbot he found wisdom; in the dean, goodness; in the prior

14 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 73, ed. Gastaldelli, 332: 'Si quis vero ita sanus est ut magis iuuet te quam iuuetur a te, huius te non patrem, sed parem, comitem, non abbatem agnoscas'.

15 Letters of recommendation of this type for women are, to my knowledge, extremely rare.

16 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 408, ed. Gastaldelli, 552: 'Commendamus ergo vobis eum, utpote nobis bene cognitum, et honeste morigeratum, et in litteris eruditum, postremo tamquam Dei servum, quem per Dei gratiam credo vobis futurum fidum solatium' ('I therefore commend him to you as one well known to all of us here, excellently behaved, and highly cultured; in fine, as a servant of God whom I believe will be by God's grace, a great comfort to you', trans. Scott James, *The Letters*, 507).

17 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 442, ed. Gastaldelli, 602: 'non inutiles vobis confidimus'.

18 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 92, 234: 'Cluniacensi tamen quae familiarius vestra est non inutilis esse poterit'.

he saw patience; in the librarian, an awareness of future events; in the cellarer, firm faith; in the precentor, certain hope; in the master of the school, perfect charity; in the professed monks, emulation of God; in the novices, love of God; and in the other monks inexpressible gifts.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that monks were supposed to help each other can be seen in many representations of interpersonal relationships, especially in connection with monastic conceptions of love and friendship,<sup>20</sup> since friends were supposed to help each other along the path of spiritual progress, acting as guardians of each other's soul.<sup>21</sup> It can be argued that according to the *Regula Benedicti* (the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, hereafter the Rule), such notions lay at the very core of the ideal of coenobitic life, especially in comparison with hermitic life: the monks were supposed to be like a well-disciplined army, where everyone helped and protected his neighbour and, at the same time, was helped and protected by him. In contrast, hermits were presented as people who, after a long probation in a monastery where they had been trained to fight against the devil through the help of their brothers, reached a condition where they no longer need to be helped by others.<sup>22</sup> In the twelfth century, the abbot Peter the Venerable cited this passage of the Rule in a letter to a hermit, declaring that a monk laboured at the same time for himself and for

19 Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi, pars tertia*, chap. 7, 66-67: 'partes bonitatis sumpsit in singulis fratribus: verbi gratia, in patre monasterii sapientiam repperit, in decano bonitatem invenit, in preposito patientiam vidit, in armario cognitionem futurarum rerum, in cellerario fidem firmam, in cantore spem certam, in magistro scale karitatem perfectam, in senioribus zelum Dei, in iunioribus amorem ipsius, in ceteris fratribus cetera inedificabilia dona'. I am very grateful to Katy Cubitt for bringing this passage to my attention.

20 It is often very difficult to distinguish between the expression of feelings of love or of friendship in high medieval religious contexts (see Bériou, 'L'avènement des maîtres de la Parole', 561). Love played a crucial role in processes of teaching and learning, see Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 59-81.

21 For an introduction to the conceptions of monastic friendship, see Vasteenberghe, 'Amitié', coll. 500-529; McGuire, 'The Cistercians and the Transformation of Monastic Friendship', 1-63; McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*; Fiske, 'Paradisus Homo Amicus', 436-459; Haseldine, 'Monastic Friendship', 349-394; and D'Acunto, 'Amicitia Monastica'.

22 *Regula Benedicti*, chap. 1, 4, ed. Venarde, 16-17: 'The second kind [of monks] are anachorites, that is, hermits, those no longer fresh in the fervor of monastic life but long tested in a monastery, who have learned, by now schooled with the help of many, to fight against the Devil. Well trained among a band of brothers for single combat in the desert, by now confident even without another's encouragement, they are ready, with God's help, to fight the vices of body and mind with hand and arm alone' ('deinde secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est heremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerum contra diabolum multorum solacio iam docti pugnare. Et bene extracti fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam eremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt'). I lean on Bruce L. Venarde's translation but I adapt freely.

his fellow-monks ('laborant ibi singuli, et salutis suae insidiantes perimere, et coadiutores modis omnibus dispensare').<sup>23</sup> The notion of reciprocal help appears to be linked with the idea of equality, in particular in connection with military metaphors: it was often implied that reaching salvation was a matter of teamwork between equals. One important keyword in this sense is *invicem*, which can be translated, depending on the context, as either 'by turns' or 'reciprocally': monks were expected to obey each other, serve each other, and compete with each other in honour ('oboedire invicem, servire invicem, honore invicem praevenire').<sup>24</sup> This was supposed to mirror what the New Testament stated about the life of the very first Christian communities.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, we can find attestations of the idea that, by helping a brother, a monk could actually learn and progress himself; in this sense, learning had an important reciprocal dimension. The Rule stated that when the abbot helped others, through his warnings, to correct themselves, he emerged himself freed from his own faults ('cum de monitionibus suis emendationem aliis subministrat, ipse efficitur a vitiis emendatus').<sup>26</sup> The Cistercian abbot Adam of Perseigne applied this idea directly to monastic education and, in his letter-treatise on the subject, he argued that friendly conversations between a master and his disciple were mutually beneficial: they helped the master in his task of correcting the disciple, the disciple in bearing the correction with more patience, and both in understanding the sacred texts.<sup>27</sup>

23 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 20*, 31.

24 *Regula Benedicti*, chap. 71 (title): 'They Should Be Obedient to One Another' ('Ut oboedientes sibi sint invicem'), cap. 35, 1: 'The brothers should serve each other in turn' ('fratres sibi invicem serviant'), cap. 72, 4: 'Monks should practice this zeal with the most ardent love, that is "let them outdo each other in demonstrating honor" ('hunc ergo zelum ferventissimo amore exerceant monachi, id est ut "honore invicem praeveniant"'), with reference to Rm. 12, 10 (also quoted in the Rule, 63, 17), in ed. Venarde 224-225, 126-127, and 226-227 respectively.

25 Io. 13:34: 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another' ('mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem'), Eph. 4:2: 'with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity' ('cum omni humilitate et mansuetudine, cum patientia, subportantes invicem in caritate'); Eph. 4:32: 'And be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another' ('estote autem invicem benigni, misericordes, donantes inuicem'); Ga. 5:13: 'serve one another' ('servite invicem'); Eph. 5: 21: 'being subject to one another in the fear of Christ' ('subiecti invicem in timore Christi'); and Ja. 5:16: 'Confess therefore your sins to one another, and pray for one another' ('confitemini ergo alterutrum peccata vestra, et orate pro invicem').

26 *Regula Benedicti* 2, 40, ed. Venarde, 26-27.

27 Adam of Perseigne, *Epistola 5*, 118: 'nascitur etiam ex amica frequenti et honesta colloquutione commendabilis queque familiaritas, per qua magister efficitur ad corripiendum audacior, correptus ad disciplinam patientior, uterque ad intelligentiam Scripturarum eruditior'.

While the themes of co-discipleship and of reciprocal and mutual help between members of a monastic community are undoubtedly present in monastic sources, it could be objected that such declarations are purely theoretical and have little or nothing to do with daily life in medieval monasteries. The relationship between the theory and practice of learning is a delicate issue, of course, but it must be considered that distinguishing between the two is more difficult than it may seem at first glance. On the one hand, theoretical reflections were preserved (and written down in the first place) because they were believed to be of actual use in monastic life, while on the other hand, monastic practices are only attested to us by highly formalized written sources. Friendship letters are a good example of this, since one of the reasons why they could be circulated among a wide audience and preserved for posterity was because they offered positive (or, sometimes, negative) models of relationships and interactions, from which the readers were supposed to learn. For example, Peter the Venerable's letter collection contains many references to friendship relationships inside and outside the monastery, and the fact that such texts were included in the collection realized under his supervision suggests that the mistrust against friendship in the monastery, which had long characterized monastic culture,<sup>28</sup> had for the most part been overcome. Peter even played with the idea of a subversion of monastic hierarchy in a letter to his secretary and friend Peter of Poitiers, where he stated that, as abbot, he had authority over Peter and could command him to obey his wish but that, because of their friendship, he chose to respect his friend's desires (and not to order him to abandon his eremitic retreat). The privilege of friendship thus allowed Peter of Poitiers to put his wishes before those of this abbot, and this represented a violation of the established order, as Peter the Venerable jokingly reminded his friend ('tu ergo ordinem pervertisti')<sup>29</sup>. But the fact that this disruption was put on display in a letter intended for a wide audience suggests that the abbot of Cluny did not consider it as a real threat to the discipline of his monastery. On the contrary, he may have been proposing a model of monastic friendship founded on the idea that moral and spiritual likeness were much more important than age, or social or hierarchical rank, by describing his friend and secretary as 'michi vel moribus meis consimilem vel conformem'<sup>30</sup> and by pointing out his moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities.

28 McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, p. xlii.

29 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 58, 184.

30 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 58, 181.

In comparison with the theoretical statements concerning the monks' duty to help each other, the descriptions of friendly relationships offer us some insights into actual practices of men and women helping each other – and, therefore, of horizontal learning. Peter the Venerable refers in his letters to his many friendly conversations with Peter of Poitiers (as well as with other people) and even lists the edifying themes that were addressed during these meetings.<sup>31</sup> By doing so, I believe that he was proposing such friendly *colloquia* as a useful tool for spiritual progress within the monastery. Many more examples of high medieval representations of friendly interactions as mutually beneficial could be given; a particularly interesting one for the purpose of the present article can be found in a letter by Bernard of Clairvaux, who told a friend that he wished to either profit from him or benefit him ('aut proficere ex te cupimus aut prodesse tibi').<sup>32</sup> Considering that *proficio* is perhaps the verb that most closely expressed the monastic conception of learning, the use of this expression is highly telling, since it clearly shows that interpersonal interactions were considered an important means of fostering personal improvement.

Friendship is of course attested in a wide variety of sources, and not solely by letters. To offer just one example, the sources that attest the life of Romuald of Ravenna (951-1027) grant remarkable attention to the friendly relationships that developed within Romuald's inner circle.<sup>33</sup> Both Peter Damian's *Life* and Bruno of Querfurt's *Life of the Five Brothers* illustrate how friendship provided mentorship and companionship for men who aspired to a new and stricter form of religious life: Romuald, the hermit Marinus, the abbot Guarinus of Saint Michael of Cuxa, the former doge of Venice Peter Orseolo, John Gradenigo, Bruno of Querfurt (usually called by his monastic name, Boniface), and Benedict of Benevento. Interactions and conversations between them are represented as an important means of spiritual direction.<sup>34</sup> Of course, such descriptions serve the purpose of

31 For example, 'the blindness of the human heart and its hardness, the snares of various sins, the many traps of demons, the abyss of the judgment of God' ('de cordis humani caecitate atque duritia, de diversis peccatorum laqueis, de variis demonum insidiis, de abyssio iudiciorum dei'), in Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 58*, 181, English translation in McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 260).

32 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 107*, ed. Gastaldelli, 500.

33 Tabacco, *Spiritualità e cultura*, 170.

34 To give just a few examples: 'Benedict became accustomed to that sacred community [that of Peter Orseolo, John Gradenigo, and Guarinus of Saint Michael of Cuxa] and – in order to not wonder about following his own whims – thought, not foolishly, of living in a cell. In truth the mature John while instructing him in the ways of salvation, upholding humility ascribed the advice about life and the heavenly words that he himself gave to the discernment and perfection

painting a chain of transmission of spiritual charisma, but it cannot be denied that the informal collaboration of a few exceptional individuals was often an important factor for the creation and successful development of new religious groups.

Even if friendship is a popular theme in twelfth-century monastic sources, many of its theoretical basis can be traced back to many centuries earlier: an influential text for monasticism, John Cassian's *Collationes*, described a particularly important friendship of the author's youth, explaining that the conversations that he had with his friend were useful to both of them to advance in their moral training and in the understanding of the Scriptures. For example, thoughts that one developed on one's own could be revealed as dangerous through shared reasoning; therefore, Cassian and his friend relied on each other's judgement as an important protection against the snares of the devil.<sup>35</sup> Cassian also offered his own definition of friendship,

of master Romuald' ('Huius sacro collegio sepius iungi Benedictus iste consuevit et, ne in suo arbitrio erraret, vivere in cella non stulte cogitavit. Senex vero Iohannes humilitatem custodiens, dum salutem doceret, vite consilia et caelestia verba, quae sibi dabat, de discretione et perfectione magistri Romaldi descendere fatebatur', in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 717-718); 'he [Romuald] aimed to visit his associate John (whom he had not seen for a long time) in person and revive the interaction with him' ('ut long tempore non visum Iohannem collegam presentia visitaret et colloquio animaret,' in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 718) and 'everytime they [Benedict and John] saw each other with their chaste bodies, everytime they met to talk – since because of the sincere affection of their souls they were always together – [...]' ('quociens se castis corporibus videre, quociens ad loquendum convenere, qui sinceris affectibus animorum semper simul fuere, [...]', in Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, 729).

35 John Cassian, *Collationes*, 16, chap. 10, 448-450: 'Memini namque, cum me adhuc adhaerere consorti aetas iunior hortaretur, huiusmodi nobis intellegentiam vel in moralibus disciplinis vel in scripturis sacris frequenter insertam, ut nihil ea verius nihilque rationabilius crederemus. Sed cum in unum convenientes sententias nostras promere coepissemus, quaedam communi examinatione discussa primum ab altero falsa ac noxia notabantur, mox deinde ut perniciosas communi pronuntiata iudicio damnabantur: quae in tantum prius infusa a diabolo velut luce fulgebant, ut facile potuissent generare discordiam, nisi praeceptum seniorum veluti divinum quoddam oraculum custoditum ab omni nos contentione revocasset, quo ab illis legali quadam sanctione praescriptum est, ut neuter nostrum plus iudicio suo quam fratris crederet, si numquam vellet diaboli calliditate deludi' ('For I remember, that when my youthful age suggested to me to cling to a partner, thoughts of this sort often mingled with our moral training and the Holy Scriptures, so that we fancied that nothing could be truer or more reasonable: but when we came together and began to produce our ideas, in the general discussion which was held, some things were first noted by the others as false and dangerous, and then presently were condemned and pronounced by common consent to be injurious; though before they had seemed to shine as if with a light infused by the devil, so that they would easily have caused discord, had not the charge of the Elders, observed like some divine oracle, restrained us from all strife, that charge; namely, whereby it was ordered by them almost with the force of a law, that neither of us should trust to his own judgments more than his brother's, if he wanted never to be deceived by the

explaining that, while it was possible to show charity towards everyone, there existed a particular kind of affection that could only be shown to a limited number of people connected with each other by the equality (*parilitas*) of good customs and virtues.<sup>36</sup> Once again the notion of equality is crucial to the conception of friendship, and Cassian's definition may have represented a source of influence for the development of monastic notions of friendship, where the theme of spiritual and moral equality is often important.<sup>37</sup>

Next to sources discussing friendship relationships, other kind of texts can be used to try and reconstruct monastic practices of horizontal and shared learning, especially if one tries to read between the lines, to discern things that are not explicitly described and yet are implied. For example, various sources inform us on the special roles that monks and nuns could be called to perform in their communities, such as cellarer, porter, gardener, and so on. Each of these roles required the acquisition of specific skills, and the little evidence that we have, together with the scarcity of information concerning this kind of training in normative sources, suggests that the acquisition of practical skills in the monastery often took place in an informal and shared way, 'by doing' and by imitating others and thanks to their help (for example, their corrections) rather than through formal teaching.

Peter the Venerable recalled in one of his letters that when his mother, Raingard, who was a nun at Marcigny, was chosen as *celleraria* (the person responsible for the provisions and food of the monastery), she had to learn the art of cooking, in which (presumably, because she was a noblewoman) she was inexperienced.<sup>38</sup> We are not told who taught Raingard to cook, but it was probably the previous *celleraria* (if she was still alive and at the monastery) or her fellow-nuns, or both. If Raingard learned from her fellow-nuns, this would make for a clear case of horizontal learning, and even if the previous *celleraria* was involved, Raingard's interaction with her would probably have been on equal terms, considering Raingard's age, social rank, and the spiritual gifts that she possessed, according to her son's portrait.

craft of the devil', Engl. transl. in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Schaff, Wace, 453).

36 John Cassian, *Collationes*, 16, chap. 14, 454: 'Illam igitur caritatem, quae dicitur ἀγάπη, possibile est omnibus exhiberi. [...] Διάθεσις autem, id est adfectio, paucis admodum et his qui vel parilitate morum vel virtutum societate conexi exhibetur' ('It is possible then for all to show that love which is called ἀγάπη [...]. But διάθεσις, i.e. affection is shown to but a few and those who are united to us by kindred dispositions or by a tie of goodness', in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Schaff, Wace, 454).

37 See McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 77-82.

38 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 53, 165: 'inexperta coquinae disciplinam addiscere cogebatur'.

Walafrid Strabo's famous poem about his vegetable garden begins with an explicit reference to the fact that he was not taught by anyone how to cultivate the garden, nor did he learn it by reading books; rather, he claims to have learned everything through experience.<sup>39</sup> Even if Walafrid declares that he learned everything on his own, one may wonder if he did not benefit from at least some help of his fellow-monks – and in any case, other gardeners in his position certainly did. In fact, while we possess little information concerning the role of the person or persons responsible for the care of the monastic *hortus*,<sup>40</sup> and even less on their training, we can put forth some hypotheses based on the similarity with other practical tasks of monastic life. We know that monks were supposed to take turns in the kitchen,<sup>41</sup> which means that they would all acquire some skills there, and we know that, according to the Rule, if the porter of the monastery needed help, he was given a younger monk as an assistant.<sup>42</sup> The specific reference to the helper's young age may be linked to the fact that he was supposed to help the older porter (who, according to the Rule, had to be a wise older monk, *senes sapiens*) with the tasks that required physical strength, but it is also possible that the 'assistant porter', having learned the duties connected with the office, was expected, one day, to replace the previous porter.

The training of medieval monks as scribes has received much more attention: it has been pointed out that manuscript production was often a collaborative work<sup>43</sup> and that, since writing was a craft, 'as was true for other medieval crafts, it was taught and practiced in a group setting, with the scriptorium as its workshop space',<sup>44</sup> which leaves ample opportunity for reciprocal help between peers. In addition, writing represented a valuable craft that could be the subject of knowledge exchanges between monasteries: monks could learn new skills from scribes who belonged to other monasteries and teach them, in turn, what they knew.<sup>45</sup>

39 Walafrid Strabo, *Hortolus*, 335-350: 'hæc non sola mihi patefecit opinio famæ vulgaris, quæsitâ libris nec lectio priscis, sed labor et studium, quibus otia logna dierum Postposui, expertum rebus docuere probatis'.

40 See Meyvaert, *The Medieval Monastic Garden*, 23-53.

41 *Regula Benedicti* 35, 1, ed. Vendarde, 126-127: 'Fratres sibi invicem serviant et nullus excusetur a coquinae officio'.

42 *Regula Benedicti* 66, 5, ed. Venarde, 214-215: 'Qui portarius si indiget solacio, iuniorem fratrem accipiat'.

43 Spilling, *La collaboration dans la production de l'écrit médiéval*.

44 Wiethaus, 'Collaborative Literacy', 36.

45 See McKitterick, 'Continuity and Innovation', 19, with reference to the paleographical evidence collected by Hoffmann on the mobility of scribes in the tenth century, Hoffmann, *Buchkunst*, 96.

Lastly, in an overview of the sources to which we can turn for information about the practices of horizontal learning in monastic environments, we should not forget the importance of looking at negative examples. The idea that monks who had broken the rules of the monastery should be isolated from the rest of the community derives not only from the wish to administer a punishment but also, crucially, from the need to prevent them from corrupting others.<sup>46</sup> In fact, if a monk talked or sent a message to the brother who had been excommunicated, he was to be equally punished,<sup>47</sup> and this was not due simply to the fact that the excommunicated monk had to sulk in isolation. Someone was actually sent to console him, but it had to be an experienced monk, one who could lead the brother onto the right path without risk of being led by him on the wrong one.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, monks were believed to influence each other through their social interactions. This can also be seen in the Rule's discussion of the case of foreign monks who visited the monastery: bad monks were not to be welcomed, lest they corrupt the community, whereas good monks were to be convinced to stay, so that they could teach others by their example.<sup>49</sup>

The few examples that have been mentioned so far should make clear that the theoretical roots of the notion of horizontal learning are not unique to the monastic world: humility is crucial to all of Christian spirituality, the notion of co-discipleship can be traced back to Augustine, and the idea of reciprocal help between peers has a neotestamentary foundation. Moreover, attestations of horizontal learning practices in the High Middle Ages can be found in non-monastic sources as well: for example, the representation of friendly exchanges, and especially of conversations, as mutually beneficial

46 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 23, 24, 25 in general, and chap. 28, 6-8 in particular (ed. Venarde, 110-111): 'But if he is not healed in this way, then the abbot must use the knife of amputation, as the apostle says, "Banish the evil one from your midst", and again "If a faithless man is leaving, let him leave", lest one diseased sheep infect the whole flock" ('Quod si nec isto modo sanatus fuerit, tunc iam utatur abbas ferro abscisionis, ut ait apostolus: "Auferte manum ex voibus" et iterum "Infidelis si discedit, discedat", ne una ovis morbida omnem gregem contagiet idem', with reference to 1 Cor. 5: 13 and 1 Cor. 7: 15 respectively).

47 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 26, 1, ed. Venarde, 104-105: 'Si quis frater praesumpserit sine iussionem abbatis fratri excommunicato quolibet modo se iungere aut loqui cum eo vel mandatum ei dirigere, similem sortiatur excommunicationis vindictam'.

48 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 27, 2, ed. Venarde, 106-107: 'Therefore, in every way like a wise physician, he [the abbot] must send in *senpectae*, that is, wise senior brothers, who should privately, as it were, comfort the weavering brother and urge him to the satisfaction of humility' ('Et ideo uti debet omni modo ut sapiens medicus: immittere quasi occultos consolatores Sympaectas, id est, seniores sapientes fratres, qui quasi secrete consolentur fratrem fluctuantem et provocent ad humilitatis').

49 *Regula Benedicti* chap. 61, 9, ed. Venarde, 196-197: 'eius exemplo alii erudiantur'.

for one's spiritual progress can be found in the correspondence of the twelfth-century members of the secular clergy such as John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois.<sup>50</sup> Lastly, shared and horizontal learning often answered practical needs in religious communities which strived to be as self-sufficient as possible – a characteristic which may apply to canonries as well.

We can therefore ask ourselves whether there exists a peculiarity of horizontal learning in the monastic world. The comparison between monks and canons who practiced communal living<sup>51</sup> appears particularly promising in this respect. In fact, while these two groups had a lot in common, the fact that the latter performed pastoral duties had repercussions not only on the practice of learning (priests needed to learn things that monks did not, and vice versa) but also on its theorization. Monks were supposed to be permanent learners, not teachers, whereas the concern for the edification of one's neighbour has long been considered typical of religious men who had care of souls.<sup>52</sup> Gaëlle Jeanmart, in her study about docility, concluded that early medieval Benedictine monastic legislation explicitly condemned the attention to the other, since the monk was only supposed to be focused on himself.<sup>53</sup> While this may seem to make horizontal learning impossible in monastic communities, the examples that have been mentioned show that things are more nuanced than they seem at first sight. The insistence on the fact that the monk was supposed to be a learner and not a teacher

50 For John of Salisbury, see, for example, *Epistola 95*, 146: 'Cum saepe, rarius tamen quam vellem, litteras vestras receperim, nullarum gratior fuit adventus quam illarum quae michi sub domesticae eruditionis auctoritate necessitatem virtutis indixerunt. Gaudeo namque quod de thesauro scientiae vestrae nunc tandem probitatis exemplum, quod vobis reservabatis, et michi communicatum est. Potero quidem hiis et similibus animari ad fortia et, Domino provehente, ad altiora conscendere'. For Peter of Blois, see, for example, *Epistola 14*: 'gratias ago gratiae vestrae quantas possum quia, quandiu conversatus sum inter vos, me fraterno coluistis affectu : nec minus mihi apud vos effecit gratia, quam apud alios diuturna nutriturae conditio, aut natura. Si quando equitabamus, eratis lucerna pedibus meis, eratis mihi pro vehiculo in via. Si autem nostris indulgebatur iumentis Sabbatum (homines enim in curia sabbatizare non vidi, unde et in ea parte melior est conditio iumentorum) taedium illud, quod frequenter afficit curiales, vestra mihi dulcissima colloquia furabantur: eratisque solatium et exsultatio mea in via, in camera, in capella' and *Epistola 150* 'diligio enim vos in Christi visceribus, et quidquid ad aedificationem vestram in ea scriptum est, non de odio curialium, sed de sincera charitate processit', respectively vol. 1, 43 and vol. 2, 82.

51 In the essay contained in this volume, Neslihan Şenocak has called attention to the fact that, at least in Italy, canons often practised communal living without necessarily following a Rule and belonging to an order of regular canons.

52 See especially Walker Bynum, 'The Spirituality of Regular Canons', 22-35 and Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo*, 1-8. where she also gives an overview of the scholarly literature on the subject.

53 Jeanmart, *Généalogie de la docilité*, 226.

actually led some authors to use the above-mentioned topos *non patrem sed parem* and the notion of co-discipleship.

It must also be considered that the distinction between monastic and canonical spirituality is not always straightforward. It can be very difficult to distinguish between monastic and canonical practices in the twelfth century, especially in newer communities.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, each author was influenced by his or her unique career path: for example, the Cistercian abbot Adam of Perseigne was first a regular canon, then a black monk, and only lastly a Cistercian, and indeed his thought seems to contain elements traditionally associated with the spirituality of regular canons next to monastic elements.<sup>55</sup> Lastly, ideas circulated widely beyond institutional boundaries: the *De institutione novitiorum* of Hugh of Saint Victor, written to illustrate the formation of regular canons, enjoyed great success in monastic as well as mendicant communities,<sup>56</sup> and the *De claustro animae* composed by the canon Hugh of Fouillois may have addressed with intentional vagueness all the 'claustrales', both monks and canons.<sup>57</sup>

In general, it must be observed that, for any kind of religious community, a variety of factors influenced the extent to which horizontal learning could be present. One such factor was undoubtedly the age of the recruits: while communities that welcomed children were more likely to develop models of teaching and learning in which pupils had an essentially passive role,<sup>58</sup> groups that only accepted adult converts, such as canons but also Cistercians, seem to have given a more active role to the pupils.<sup>59</sup> This is easily understandable, since the 'pupils' could be learned men, capable of offering a valuable contribution to the processes of co-construction of knowledge. Newer communities might also have been more open to horizontal learning because their educational practices had not yet been formalized and institutionalized, leaving more room for informal and shared ways of teaching and learning.

Social and religious ranks also influenced horizontal learning processes in a decisive way: at a top level, among the elites, there seems to have been more room for peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges – for example, during

54 Grégoire, *La vocazione sacerdotale*, 38-48 ; Walker Bynum, 'The Spirituality of Regular Canons', 36-46 ; Leclercq, 'La spiritualité des chanoines', 117-135.

55 As I have argued in Long, 'Entre spiritualité monastique et canoniale', 247-270.

56 Goy, *Die Überlieferung der Werke Hugos von St. Viktor*, 367, who proved that most manuscripts attesting the *De institutione* were produced in monasteries, and Zinn, 'Vestigia victorina', 405-431.

57 Leclercq, 'La spiritualité des chanoines', 129-133.

58 Cochelin, 'Beside the Book', 21-34.

59 See Leclercq, 'La communauté formatrice', 3-21 and Neslihan Şenocak's essay in this volume.

friendly meetings between an abbot and his friends. This impression may be the result of the fact that interactions between the members of the elites are recorded in writing more often than those which took place between ordinary monks or canons, but all in all it seems likely that the members of the elites enjoyed more freedom to congregate with their friends. In this sense, horizontal learning was hardly egalitarian, and it may actually reveal profound inequalities within the community; however, as we have seen, it could also cut across established hierarchies, when an abbot placed himself, even for a brief moment, on an equal footing with one of his monks, to learn from him. The interplay between horizontal learning and social and religious hierarchy deserves detailed study, which will allow scholars to determine whether and to what extent horizontal learning and its notions of spiritual and intellectual equality were perceived to be a threat to the order of the monastery. The examples mentioned above suggest that, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many medieval authors accepted the idea that the benefits of friendship could outweigh its risks if the people involved managed to cultivate a peculiar kind of 'spiritual' (pure, disinterested) friendship, which was different from utilitarian friendship. In other words, friendship was acceptable for a moral elite, which often coincided with the social elite that held positions of pre-eminence in the monasteries.

Lastly, teaching and learning practices were also influenced by the type of knowledge that was to be transmitted or developed. Grammatical training probably called for a more formal and vertical type of teaching, whereas other skills – such as cooking or managing a vegetable garden, as we have seen – were often learned in a more informal and shared way. Participation in group activities and imitation of one's peers was certainly crucial to allow the monks to develop practical skills, from manuscript production to singing. Moreover, the fact that medieval education always had an important moral and behavioural dimension meant that individuals acquired behavioural patterns and mindsets thanks to other people's examples: the master, who taught at the same time by word by example;<sup>60</sup> but also one's co-learners who, as we have seen, could help each other to progress spiritually and morally, through reciprocal advice and correction and by offering each other patterns of good behaviour.

In conclusion, horizontal learning cannot be considered characteristic of a specific kind of religious order: rather, it could be present in any type

60 See Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, and Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, Münster-Swendsen, 'Medieval "Virtuosity"', 43-64 and Steckel, 'Charisma and Expertise', 641-680.

of community, in different forms and circumstances, and always in combination with more vertical kinds of teaching. In the case of the monastic world, we can observe, both in theory and in practice, a coexistence of two opposite tendencies in teaching and learning: one toward authority and obedience; and one toward co-discipleship, reciprocity, and mutual help. This coexistence can be traced back to the multiple sources of inspiration for monastic culture: as it has been observed by Salvatore Pricoco, while the *Regula Quattuor Patrum*, according to the Egyptian model, called for a monocratic and 'vertical' power structure in the monastery, Basilian and Augustinian communities attributed a greater value to 'horizontal' relationships between brothers.<sup>61</sup> The essays in this volume offer examples of the coexistence, in high medieval monastic communities, of horizontal and vertical forms of teaching and learning and their interplay, which makes the dynamics of learning unique to each environment.

### About the author

**Micol Long** is a Senior Postdoctoral Researcher of the Research Foundation-Flanders (FWO) at Ghent University, where she joined the Department of Medieval History in 2014 to work on 'Learning as shared practice in monastic communities of the High Middle Ages'. In 2013 she had obtained her PhD in history at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa (Italy), with a dissertation on epistolary autography in the High Middle Ages, which was published in 2014. She spent research stays in Munich (Monumenta Germaniae Historica), Paris (École Nationale des Chartes), Rome (Accademia dei Lincei), and Odense (Centre for Medieval Literature). From October 2018 she is working on a new research project about intra-religious mobility in the twelfth century.

61 Pricoco, 'Introduzione', xxiii.



## 4 *Ut Fiat Aequalitas*

### Spiritual Training of the Inner Man in the Twelfth-Century Cloister

*Cédric Giraud*

#### **Abstract**

While for the period before the thirteenth century the sources concerning the formation of interior spirituality insist on the importance of verticality and hierarchy, there were also pedagogical modalities that depended upon contact between equals or indeed with one's self. With reference to these, the twelfth century seems to occupy a special place, because of the appearance of a corpus of spiritual texts that become points of reference for the training of novices. This essay presents the work of three authors (Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh of Saint Victor, Aelred of Rievaulx) from the following points of view: how do these spiritual texts teach the cloistered monk or canon how to live with himself, with his neighbour, and lastly with a particular neighbour, namely a spiritual friend.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, friendship, spirituality, teaching, learning

To embrace the subject of horizontality in the formation of interiority in medieval cloistered communities is to choose Robert Frost's 'road not taken'. For the period before the thirteenth century we have model descriptions of spiritual experiences rather than precise reports, and in these normative texts, the part that bears on learning attends to the hierarchy of merits and to the theme of spiritual birth. The texts insist on the importance of verticality and hierarchy because the spiritual education of monks is based on exemplary morals and the superiority of certain figures of authority, mainly the abbot and the master of the novices. The matrix is the Gospel and the *Rule of Saint*

*Benedict*, which create the vertical model *par excellence* of 'father-son' in the religious engagement. As Honorius Augustodunensis sums it up in his *De vita claustrali*, life in the cloister is comparable to ten realities, one of which he calls a 'school for children where the little ones in Christ are taught by the Master through the Rule'.<sup>1</sup> Among the Cistercians, the importance of the vertical model in the formation of the monks is illustrated by the description of the master of the novices, such as the one given by Adam of Perseigne in his letter *De institutione novitiorum* for the monk Osmond at Mortemer. Among the six ways used to prepare a novice, the fourth provides the following description:

In the fourth place, we put the religious comportment of the master, which must be extended to the novice like a mirror, because when an example of good behaviour is proposed near to him, he is encouraged to imitate it more efficiently. On the mountain, Moses was shown a model on which he should construct the tabernacle, because the life of superiors ought to be so elevated that it fashions by its example the behaviour of inferiors.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise in the famous letter of William of Saint Thierry, intended for the edification of the Carthusian novices, where the neighbour is logically rarely present in this semi-hermetical context, William says: 'If you run after health, be sure not to dare to do anything, great or small, to yourself without the advice of a physician'.<sup>3</sup>

This diagram, although frequent and an essential backdrop in the spiritual education of the monks and regular canons, does not exhaust all the modalities of transmission during the twelfth century. In addition to the vertical formation there existed other pedagogical modalities that depended upon

1 Honorius Augustodunensis, *De vita claustrali*, col. 1248A: 'Quinto est schola infantium, in qua parvuli in Christo a Magistro regula ad virtutes informantur'.

2 Adam of Perseigne, *De institutione novitiorum*, col. 585B: 'Quarto loco ponitur religiosa magistri conversatio, quae quasi in speculum est adhibenda novitio, quia, dum ei exemplum honestatis e vicino proponitur, ad imitationis studium efficacius provocatur. In monte quippe Moysi est exemplar ostensum cuius instar debuit componere tabernaculum, quia tam sublimis debet esse vita praesidentium ut ad exemplum ipsius formetur conversatio subditorum'. Nonetheless, as a reader of the Victorine authors, especially Hugh, and a former regular canon himself, Adam shows some interest for 'horizontal learning' and sees external behavior as a way of edifying other members of the religious community: on this point, see the recent contribution by Micol Long, 'Entre spiritualité monastique et canoniale', 247-260, and her chapter in the present volume.

3 William of Saint Thierry, *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*, ed. Déchanet, 223: 'Si ad sanitatem festinas, vide ut nil vel modicum de temetipso agere praesumas, medico inconsulto'. On the success of the text, Honemann, *Die Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*.

contact between equals or indeed with one's self. And here chronology is important. The twelfth century seems to me to occupy a special place because, in the wake of the reforming monastic movement, a topic appears that is stressed more and more in the education of the novices; viz., that of the interior life.<sup>4</sup> I would like to address this precise moment, calling into play the texts that attest to the institution of a 'horizontal learning' pattern. In the twelfth century a corpus of spiritual texts appears that becomes a point of reference thereafter and that emerge as the best and most essential texts for training novices. In this sense, the appearance of these works seems to me to be a distinct historic phenomenon that deserves special attention. In order to prove how new spiritual writings mould interiority according to the 'horizontal learning pattern' I present this new context and the texts of three important authors from the following points of view: how do these spiritual texts teach the cloistered monk or canon how to live 1) with himself, 2) with his neighbor, and lastly 3) with a particular neighbor, namely a spiritual friend.

### Spirituality and the Formation of Interiority in the Twelfth Century: A New Context

The first notable point concerns a sociological reality, which also applies to literary history. Starting at the end of the eleventh century, the rise of monastic reform precipitates a redaction of tracts devoted to the interior life and the education of monks.<sup>5</sup> For the historian, it is a question of understanding how spiritual works exercised an action and giving them meaning across European history. Obviously there is no automatic relationship between a text and a mode of comportment.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless spiritual texts, which reside in a dynamic of conversion, exercise an action in time and space. In this sense, the High and Late Middle Ages, which disseminated throughout society the different exercises of the spiritual life (reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation), transformed spirituality into a social practice.<sup>7</sup> Twelfth-century spiritual authors push to the limits the intuitions

4 Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 257-295; Giraud, *Spiritualité et histoire*.

5 Giraud, *Spiritualité et histoire*, 38-96. The spiritual treatises took many forms, among which letters are one of the most important; see in this volume the contribution of Babette Hellemans about the genre of letter collections and the case of Heloise.

6 Stock, 'Lecture, intériorité', 103-112, and Stock, *Ethics through Literature*. See also Pranger, 'On Devotional Historiography', 523-536.

7 Corbellini, *Cultures of religious reading*.

of Augustine concerning the disquiet of the human heart and of the *Deus interior intimo meo*.<sup>8</sup> And to a further degree, they transpose the experience of the individual Augustine onto a collective and social plane, making the spiritual reading practised in a cloister or in the world a way of cultivating an interior life. In the history of that transposition, the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries hold a central place because they witness three main turning points. With Anselm of Canterbury, in the late eleventh century, a new relationship with the self is invented. This 'Anselmian revolution' engenders during the twelfth century the increasingly refined formalization of spiritual exercises that give body to this new relationship with the self.<sup>9</sup> Reading helps one find a truth, which meditation will interiorize, before contemplation offers it to the inner senses. Then, in the course of the thirteenth and subsequent centuries, the more perceptive clergy, especially Bonaventura, confirm a new phenomenon. The dominion of interior life, having found its autonomy, possesses henceforth a separate literary repertory that is not reserved for monks but in fact touches a new range of contemplative souls, both clerical and lay.<sup>10</sup> This medieval invention of spirituality as a literary genre in the late eleventh century – formalized into a spiritual technique in the twelfth century and then extended to everyman in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries – is at the heart of our interpretation.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in this context, the status of literary culture and of textuality itself changes. In the medieval cloister, the codex is not just a material vector of content, but also an element in a widely shared symbolic system. A metaphor of the world and of nature, the book within the biblical and Augustinian tradition also represented the different types of interior life: *liber conscientiae* (book of the conscience), *liber cordis* (book of the heart), *liber experientiae* (book of the experience). The image of the book thus serves to describe and mould the conscience, the heart, and interior experience, each of which can be written, deciphered and corrected like a *codex*. Henceforth medieval readers had to be provided with reading material to meditate, and spiritual authors composed Latin model texts that form the prime matter of our study.

In this framework I treat three virtually contemporary authors who wrote about training novices and who seem to me to be the most representative of the phenomenon that I wish to describe. They are the pseudo-Bernard

8 See Stock, *Augustine the Reader*.

9 On the 'Anselmian Revolution', see Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 42-47, and Cottier, *Anima mea*.

10 On the question of the literary genres in the Middle Ages, see, *inter alia*, Jauss, 'Littérature médiévale', 37-76.

11 See also Constable, 'The Popularity', 5-28 and Constable, 'Twelfth-Century Spirituality', 27-60.

of Clairvaux, a monk who wrote his *Meditationes* between 1160 and 1190; the Victorine canon Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141) and his *De institutione novitiorum*; and last, the Cistercian monk Aelred of Rievaulx, author of a *De spiritali amicitia*, written when he was a mature man, and the last two chapters of which were composed between 1164 and 1167. Each of these three works was quite successful and has been preserved in dozens of manuscripts, along with many adaptations and revivals.<sup>12</sup>

### Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux or How to Learn to Live with One's Self

The most obvious case is that of the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, for whom we have nearly 700 manuscripts spanning the Middle Ages. We know that all three texts were explicitly used for the private reading of the novices. This reality of solitary reading manifests the first modality in the formation of interiority: namely, one's rapport with one's self. To become a good monk implies living intelligently with one's self and improving this self-instruction through *lectio divina*. The flourishing of spiritual texts in the twelfth century and their wide diffusion broadened the traditional repertory of readings for the cloister by introducing, alongside Scripture, the lives of saints and patristic texts, new writings concerning spirituality. In the new context of the cloister in the twelfth century, spiritual reading makes interiority the starting point and the destination in the process of training and transformation of the novice. What I am saying of reading also applies to other cloistral exercises, such as meditation, prayer, and contemplation, all of which are ancient spiritual practices but whose articulation is now rethought.<sup>13</sup> For our three authors, the spiritual life is the object of a codified teaching that organizes traditional cloister practices into a unified whole. Creating and cultivating an interior space, these exercises give interiority a pedagogical mantle. Once one has gone beyond inculcating novices with the respect for customs, a rule, and the practice of virtues, the goal becomes to help him reach a union with God by means of an interior pathway.

12 To find a list of manuscripts, see the database FAMA (*Fama Auctorum Medii Aevi*) recently developed in Paris by the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and the École nationale des chartes: <http://fama.irht.cnrs.fr> (accessed April 4, 2017).

13 On the question of spiritual exercises, see Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*, esp. the chapter 'Exercices spirituels antiques et "philosophie chrétienne"', 75-98; Foucault, 'Les techniques de soi', in *Technologies of the Self*, 785 and, more broadly, *L'herméneutique du sujet*.

This work of the subject upon himself is a form of Christian stoicism that the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux emphasizes.<sup>14</sup> The work requires that the novice exclude from his own thoughts all that is not himself and God. The novice is asked to make his own self his subject of study and to examine his conscience daily. This return of the subject unto himself concerns not only the spirit but also the flesh, which, according to our texts, dissimulates the truth of appearances. For example, the novice should represent his body just as it will be in the grave, once it has been eaten by worms ... And if that is not enough, the monk is asked by the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux to visit the community's cemetery in order to obtain a better idea of this reality: 'I hurry toward those who have already left this world through bodily death. When I look at their graves, I find only ashes and vermin, stench and horror'.<sup>15</sup> This process of interior self-education is thus not just a solitary journey; it also implies creating a vertical relationship with the members of the community, even if they are dead.

14 On this form of stoicism, see Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même*. On the *Meditationes*, see Raciti, 'L'auteur du *De spiritu et anima*', 385-401; Bultot, 'Les *Meditationes* pseudo-bernardines', 256-292 and Id., 'Encore les *Méditations*', 425-427; Bertola, 'Il socratismo cristiano', 252-264, here 256-263; Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même*, 279-284; Elfassi, 'Trois aspects inattendus', 109-152, 148; Giraud, *Spiritualité et histoire des textes*, 155-170.

15 Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Meditationes*, coll. 487C-D: 'Ad illos vero festino qui morte corporis hinc exierunt. Cum eorum sepulcra respicio, non invenio in eis nisi cinerem et vermem, fetorem et horrorem. Quod ego sum, ipsi fuerunt et quod ipsi sunt, ego ero. Quid sum ego? Homo de humore liquido.' This passage is to be compared with the *Speculum monachorum* often attributed in the Middle Ages to Bernard of Clairvaux, col. 1178A: 'Taedio affectus componat se meditando supra petram in qua lavantur mortui et cogitet apud se quomodo tractantur ibi sepeliendi, nunc in tergum, nunc in faciem versentur, quomodo nutet caput, cadant brachia, rigeant crura, tibiae jaceant, quomodo induantur et consuuntur, quomodo deferantur humandi, quomodo exponantur in tumulo, quomodo pulvere contegantur, quomodo vorentur a vermibus et quasi saccus putrefactus consumantur. Summaque est philosophia, meditatio mortis assidua' and with the *De quadripertito exercitio cellae* written at the end of the twelfth century by the Carthusian Adam Scot, coll. 834A-B: 'Non autem necesse habet multum labore in praevidendo hoc meditatio tua, quia quid super hoc debeat sentire, ipse quoque te certum reddit corporalis aspectus. Nam vade modo et cujus volueris mortui sepulcrum aperi et inspicere. (...) Certe apparebit cadaver horribilis fetens, putredine scatens, vermibus scaturiens,' and coll. 840D-841A: 'Videbis aperte quia quasi saccus quidem foris nitidus apparet, sed intus omni spurcicia et immunditia et corruptione intolerabili fetet. Nunc mentis tuae conspectibus talis per omnia appareat vivens qualis erit mortua in sepulcro jacens et vermibus scaturiens.' On the *contemptus mundi*, see Tuozzi, *La conoscenza di sé*, 130-142, esp. 140: 'Che cosa può diventare allora per una tale mentalità il concetto della conoscenza di sé? Niente di teologico o di moralmente e psicologicamente sottile. Per conoscenza di sé si intende essenzialmente orrore della miseria umana, esame di coscienza e invito alla confessione' and Giraud, 'Le *De vanitate mundi*', 67-92.

The practice of spiritual exercises also creates communication between the monks, if they are separated by some distance.<sup>16</sup> In our exemplary literature, the novice is never designated as an individual but always as a person participating in the divine image. In the language of the present book, this ontological dimension makes all spiritual exercises horizontal, even the most vertical ones, *a priori*. Thus prayer not only puts the subject into a vertical relationship with God; it is also a way of binding members of the religious community horizontally and of rendering present those who are absent, by creating a spiritual community.<sup>17</sup> The best expression of this process is furnished by pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, who describes the communal role of personal prayer:

Since I have known you, I love you in Christ and I make mention of you in the place where all evil thoughts merit a punishment and all good thoughts a reward. Every time that I, who am a sinner yet a preacher, stand before the altar of God, your memory is with me. Do the same for me if you love me and make me participate in your prayers. I desire to be present with you in memory at the moment when you proclaim your fervent prayers for yourself and for those dear to you. Do not be surprised if I say 'present', because if you love me and because you love me like the image of God, I am as present to you as you are to yourself. In substance, I am all that you are, because any rational soul is the image of God. Thus he who searches in himself the image of God is as much searching for his neighbour as for himself, and he who finds the image of God in searching, recognizes it in every man. For the soul, to see is to understand. Thus if you see, you see me, who is nothing other than you. And if you love God, you love me as an image of God and, I also, in loving God, love you. And while we look for unity and reach out for it, we are always present one in the other, and also in God, in that we love each other.<sup>18</sup>

16 Hence the use of the epistolary genre as a way to connect monks together and create a spiritual community between them, no matter how distant they are. On this aspect, see also in this volume the contribution of Babette Hellemans.

17 On prayer in the twelfth century, see e.g., Bériou, Berlioz, Longère, *Prier au Moyen Âge*; Henriot, *La parole et la prière*; Lauwers, 'La prière comme fonction sociale', 209-227.

18 Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Meditationes*, coll. 495A-C: 'Ego enim ex quo cognovi te, in Christo diligo te et illuc mentionem tui defero ubi et illicita cogitatio supplicium et honesta promeretur praemium. Ad altare namque Dei cum peccator sto, sed sacerdos, tui me comitatur memoria. Tu vero mihi vicem reddes, si me amaveris et orationum tuarum participem feceris. Tu vero mihi vicem reddes, si me amaveris et orationum tuarum participem feceris. Ibi recordatione tecum esse praesens desidero, ubi pro te et tuis familiaribus devotas preces coram Deo fundis. Nec mireris si dixi "praesens", quoniam si me amas et ideo amas quia imago Dei sum, ita tibi

For the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, reading, meditation, and prayer constitute different modes for perfecting the subject by proposing a formation of the self for the self. The neighbour is not totally absent in this process but is considered mostly through the figure of one who is absent, or the dead.

## Hugh of Saint Victor or How to Learn to Live with Others

Unlike the work of pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, the passages in Hugh of Saint Victor's *De institutione novitiorum* that concern horizontal learning have a strong communal flavour.<sup>19</sup> Canonical life at the abbey of Saint Victor sought to reconcile harmoniously the needs of the individual with the necessities of collective life.<sup>20</sup> The *De institutione novitiorum* is the practical complement to the *Didascalicon* on the art of reading.<sup>21</sup> It describes the different stages that will lead the novice to happiness – in other words, allow him to attain spiritual perfection, which is the object of his life in the religious community.

To arrive at the perfection of the novice, Hugh distinguishes two stages: the first is acquiring the knowledge; and the second the practice of the discipline.<sup>22</sup> 'Knowledge' is understood here as the formation of the moral conscience.<sup>23</sup> As with the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, spiritual training

praesens sum ut tu ipsi tibi. Quidquid enim tu es substantialiter, hoc ego sum. Imago enim Dei est omnis anima rationalis. Proinde qui in se imaginem Dei quaerit, tam proximum quam se quaerit et qui illam in se quaerendo invenerit, in omni homine eam cognoscit. Visio enim animae intellectus est. Si ergo te vides, me vides, qui nichil aliud sum quam tu. Et si Deum diligis, me imaginem Dei diligis et ego Deum diligendo, diligo te. Et ita dum unum quaerimus et ad unum tendimus, semper invicem praesentes sumus, sed in Deo in quo nos diligimus.'

19 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione novitiorum*. On this literature, see Riché, 'Les traités pour la formation', 371-377 and Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, esp. 267-269: 'Appendix: Monastic and Canonical Treatises of Practical Spiritual Advice.' Although Caroline Walker Bynum has rightly pointed out the differences between canonical and monastic spirituality and ideals, we still believe that regular spirituality can be studied as a whole ensemble of values.

20 On religious life and spirituality at Saint Victor, see mostly the studies of Jean Châtillon reprinted in *Le mouvement canonial au Moyen Âge* and also Stammberger, 'Via ad ipsum sunt scientia', 91-126 and Id., 'Tod und Sterben Toten', 127-177.

21 On the *Didascalicon*, see recently Poirrel, 'Tene fontem et totum habes', 293-328.

22 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 18, 7-11: 'Si igitur Deum queritis, immo quia queritis, veram profecto ac perpetuam beatitudinem habere desideratis. Ad beatitudinem nemo venire potest, nisi per virtutem et virtus non alio modo veraciter apprehenditur, nisi disciplina virtutis non negligenter custodiatur'.

23 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 22, 62-67: 'Primum igitur scire debetis quod hanc scientiam, que ad utilitatem recte et honeste vivendi pertinent, multis modis hominem colligere

is also a horizontal self-to-self exercise, what Pierre Courcelle suggested calling a 'Christian Socratic method' – in short, a Christianization of the Socratic principle of 'know yourself'. With Hugh, this training is not only a religious discipline but also, in a wider sense, a social practice that involves reason. For the novice to behave properly, he should know how to act in a rational manner with everyone. This ethic of communal life is based on the distinction between a social role and natural virtue or, in the words of Blaise Pascal, between 'established and natural magnanimity'.<sup>24</sup>

The monastic world, as has often been written in this book, is structured by hierarchies based on ranks and functions. In the monastic world, social positions are relative, and consequently horizontality is not a value in itself. One must obey his superiors, maintain peace among his equals, and help inferiors without giving an absolute position to each member of the community.<sup>25</sup> With equals one must try to give them a superior place, and with inferiors Hugh tells us that one must 'love the communal life and equality' (*societatem atque equalitatem amare*). The hierarchy between the three social types is thus constantly subverted, because the crucial spiritual value that moderates the life of the novice is humility, the self-abasement that always makes way for others, even those who are inferior to one's self.

Things are different when it comes to merit. Certainly the tripartite model is the same, because man, from the moral point of view, possesses, as in any social domain, superiors, equals, and inferiors. But in this spiritual context, which ignores the social hierarchy, horizontality becomes a value in and of itself. Hugh tells the novice not to become too attached to superiors in emulating their virtue, lest he risk presuming to appear as their equal. Collaboration with them is thus ruled out.<sup>26</sup> The same distance is to be

et comparare sibi oportet: partim ratione, partim doctrina, partim exemplo, partim meditatione sanctorum Scripturarum, partim assidua inspectione operum ac morum suorum'.

24 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 28, 154-161: 'Discretio personarum, quantum pertinet ad dilectionem, secundum meritum, quantum vero ad venerationem, secundum etatem et officium habenda est. Meliores diligere, superiores honorare debemus, quia par contumacia est sive in eo qui propter inferiorem gradum in homine virtutem despicit, sive in eo qui propter vitam inferiorem gradum superiorem contemnit. Istis ergo honor, illis amor impendatur, sic tamen ut et honor istorum sit voluntarius et illorum amor venerandus'.

25 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 30, 181-186: 'Inferioribus semper beneficium et auxilium impendere, numquam improperare, sine contumelia corripere, sine superbia gubernare, sine crudelitate corripere, cum pietate fovere; venerationem non exigere, societatem atque equalitatem amare, majoribus per timorem subdi, equalibus per caritatem obsequi, minoribus per humilitatem coequari'.

26 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 32, 206-215: 'Proinde in his talis habenda est discretio ut superioribus quidem in omni loco et in omni opera vel sermone exhibere studeamus reverentiam et quicquid egerint aut ubicumque fuerint, non presumamus impudenter eis nos quasi coequando

observed with inferiors, for fear of being led into evil.<sup>27</sup> By distancing inferior men in the moral sense, the novice also proves his innocence at a moment in his training when he is considered to be spiritually fragile.<sup>28</sup> The daily life of the novice should take place mostly with equals, from the spiritual point of view.<sup>29</sup> But that equality is not a stagnation. The horizontality is made dynamic by the emulation of virtue, and thus by imitation. The equals are thus caught up in a sort of spiral that engenders a progression. But Hugh, as a keen psychologist of communal life, knows that the hierarchy is slippery everywhere, and he advises against spiritual competition that tends to oppose monks or canons in the practice of good works.<sup>30</sup>

Horizontality is even mentioned when Hugh raises the question of the use of speech by the novice. Addressing a group of men still in full training, Hugh distinguishes between two types of conversation: the conversation used for instructing the novice; and the conversation by which one novice instructs another.<sup>31</sup> In the first case, vertical communication exercises all its rights, and the novice should seek out the conversation of the wise. But in the second case, when the novice tries to propagate good through speech, horizontality is preferred. The novice thus should avoid the two extremes, which are conversation with the wise or with sinners, because for Hugh, the first amounts to instructing

ingerere. Sic namque debemus in ejusmodi virtutis exemplum quod imitemur quodammodo taciti et quasi de longe considerare, ut tamen consortium cooperandi nunquam presumamus expetere, quatinus, dum eis ubique cedimus, facile ex nostra modestia clareat quam humilia de nobis et quam sublimia de illis sentiamus'.

27 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 32, 215-221: 'Negligentes vero et maxime eos quorum opera vel studia reprehensione digna apparent, tali nos cautela declinare oportet, ut et fugiamus quod faciunt et tamen judicare non presumamus quod sunt. Cogitemus in ejusmodi nobis neque dari exemplum neque permitti iudicium, quia hoc in eis fortassis ignorantia seu infirmitas excusat quod, si a nobis fieret, excusationem non haberet'.

28 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 32, 229-231: 'Et ideo, cum malorum consortium appetere nolimus, duplex nobis utilitatis fructus provenit, quia et culpam fugimus et innocentie nostre testimonium perhibemus'.

29 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 32-34, 231-235: 'Quotidiana igitur et frequens conversatio nostra cum mediis et equalibus nobis esse debet, ita ut inter eos etiam quoscumque in bono opere ferventiores cernimus, eorum societatem atque familiaritatem avidius appetamus'.

30 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 34, 242-248: 'Et quia inter pares nonnumquam perverse quedam virtutis emulatio esse solet, ut videlicet sibi invicem de successu virtutum invidiant, et ob hoc in exercendo bono opera tantum ne inferiores videantur alterutrum sese prevenire contendunt, tanto nos discretionis moderamine, continere necesse est, ut operam nostram, sicut dictum est, neque ingeramus nolentibus, neque petentibus subtrahamus, quia in utroque livoris suspicio esse potest'.

31 For a comparison with the Cluniac context, see in this volume the chapter of Marc Saurette.

the wise, which is pride, while the other seeks to correct the obstinate, which is stupidity.<sup>32</sup>

## Aelred of Rievaulx or How to Make of a Friend Another Self

With Aelred, we move on to a new level.<sup>33</sup> The problem is no longer how to act with the other members of the community but how to promote spiritual friendship as a form of interpersonal relationship within the community.<sup>34</sup> For Aelred, spiritual friendship represents a total life project that reconciles both ancient wisdom transmitted by the *De amicitia* of Cicero and the heritage of the Church Fathers.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, even if Aelred does not state it explicitly, the theory of spiritual friendship represents the most important contribution that a wise man can offer to his world, because it allows him to offer the best of pagan philosophy in aid of Christianity. Consequently, this text is, in the true sense of the word, an aristocratic text because it proposes the best path for an elite group that has chosen to withdraw from the world in order to practise the philosophical life, which is monastic. In the monastery, charity is given full rights because it is a requirement of divine law. But the monks ought to learn to practise another form of love, which is spiritual friendship and which is different from charity in that it concerns a small number of people and, as such, can create tensions within the community, like other informal forms of horizontal learning.<sup>36</sup> This distinction between the inclusive love of charity and the selective love of

32 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione*, 78, 919-927: 'Cum ergo propter nostram edificationem loquimur, cum illis loquamur quorum doctrina possimus ad virtutem instrui. Cum autem propter edificationem proximi loquimur, cum illis loquamur quos speramus per nostram exhortationem a pravitate sua posse emendari. Alioquin et sapientes velle docere superbia est, et obstinatos corripere insipientia. Quia et injuriosus promixto est qui meliori non exhibet reverentiam et injuriosus sibi est qui non emendat, sed provocat erga se insipientis vesaniam'.

33 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*. On Aelred's teaching on friendship, see recently e.g., Haseldine, 'Friendship, Equality', 192-214; Sommefeldt, 'Aelred of Rievaulx on Friendship', 227-244, esp. 231-238; Morales, *Dieu est amitié*, 17-45 (devotional approach).

34 The bibliography on spiritual friendship during the twelfth century is a *mare infinitum*, so I can only cite a very small selection of important and/or recent studies: Leclercq, *Monks and Love*; McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; McEvoy, 'The Theory of Friendship', 3-44, esp. 20-22; Verbaal, 'L'amitié et les lettres', 351-381, esp. 352-369; Haseldine, 'Monastic Friendship', 349-393; Sablotny, 'Abaelard und Heloisa', 73-99, esp. 92-99.

35 On the reception of Cicero, see the recent paper by Ward, 'What the Middle Ages Missed', 307-326 (Aelred is mentioned on p. 326); for the adaptation of classical ideas of friendship, see Ziolkowski, 'Twelfth-Century Understandings', 59-81.

36 See, for example, in this volume the contribution of Nicolangelo D'Acunto about Saint Gall.

friendship is not self-evident; it results from a dramatic human history, which life in the monastery tries to repair.

In the beginning, everything starts out well. Friendship is one of creation's cosmic principles of ordering. Each element summons its likeness, from the smallest grain of sand to all mankind. As Aelred says, 'nothing exists alone, for each is created and maintains itself by bonding with others of its species'.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, friendship presupposes the social life, because a solitary element (a leaf, an animal, or a man) cannot experience love alone; and at the same time, friendship reinforces the horizontal social order by communion or alliance, as Aelred would say.<sup>38</sup> It is especially true for human creation, since God placed Adam and Eve in a strict relationship of equality and even collaterality, Eve having been taken from the rib of Adam. In the world before the Fall, as Aelred says, 'there was nothing superior or inferior, and this is the essence of friendship'.<sup>39</sup> But the disorder introduced by sin caused friendship to lose its cosmic character, giving it an individual value.<sup>40</sup> Friendship is no longer a natural trait but becomes a personal choice. The human world thus becomes a theatre of competition par excellence, of inequality, and of violence; and, moreover, there is no reason to suppose that monasteries escape these tensions among monks or canons of different social origin. In this new context, the monastery is called on to become the ideal place of fulfillment of spiritual friendship, since this is a way to pacify and consolidate the monastic community.<sup>41</sup>

Given the conditions of the present world, the model of monastic friendship is thus not that of Adam and Eve – because it is impossible to recreate the strictly horizontal duo – but, rather, that of pre-lapsarian angelic friendship, which unites inequality within friendship, both vertically and horizontally. The social virtue inherited from Aristotle, the friendship of the

37 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 54, 298, 309-310: 'Cum nihil eorum solum sit, sed cum quadam sui generis societate et creetur et persistat'.

38 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 55, 298, 312-318: 'Certe cum in caeteris omnibus irrationabilia deprehendantur, in hac tantum parte ita humanum animum imitantur, ut pene ratione agi aestimentur. Ita se sequuntur, ita collidunt sibi, ita motibus simul et vocibus suum exprimunt et produnt affectum, tam avide et jucunde mutua societate fruuntur ut nihil magis quam ea quae amicitiae sunt curare videantur'.

39 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 57, 299, 332-334: 'nec esset in rebus humanis superior vel inferior, quod est amicitiae proprium'.

40 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 1, chap. 58, 299, 336-341: 'At post lapsum primi hominis, cum refrigescente caritate cupiditas subintrasset fecissetque bono communi private praeponi amicitiae caritatisque splendorem avaritia invidiaque corruptit; contentiones, aemulationes, odia, suspiciones corruptis hominum moribus invehens'.

41 See also Haseldine, 'Friendship and Rivalry', 390-414.

cloister, results from strictly individual strategies that make horizontality a positive value that depends on struggle. Horizontality in this context becomes a synonym for equality, and the monastery becomes the link where the social conditions are blurred. As Aelred says:

Returning to the original principle, these people should consider with care their equality received from nature, and not the little extras that human greed has added. This is why in friendship, which is nature's most precious gift, as much as grace, it is necessary that the greatest person lower himself and that the lowest rise up, that the rich be in need and the poor be enriched, that each share his condition with the other so that equality can be established.<sup>42</sup>

In this training for spiritual friendship, the Bible plays the role of a reservoir of *exempla* by showing how such friendships are possible and by furnishing scenarios for implementing such friendships in the cloister. Aelred develops the story of David and Jonathan at length and illustrates the possibility of a supernatural friendship that ignores social conditions.<sup>43</sup> He proposes, moreover, a contemporary counterpart to the biblical examples by developing the story of two personal friendships that he had within the monastic world.<sup>44</sup>

Spiritual friendship is thus not just an ideal. It should be put into practice in order to play its edifying role of correction. Once the friend becomes one with one's self, it is fitting to profit from the proximity that creates spiritual friendship in order to help the friend progress: 'Friends should empathize with one another, place themselves on the same level, see the faults of the other, just as one sees his own faults, and correct each other with humility and compassion'.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, horizontality and proximity that create friendship do not imply a leveling off, but, rather, imply a dynamic of spiritual progress. In practice, spiritual friendship is also based on a coded

42 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, chap. 90-91, 337, 682-689: 'Ad originis recurrentes principium, aequalitatem quam natura dedit, non circumpendunt quae mortalibus cupiditas praestitit, subtili examinatione considerare. Itaque in amicitia quae naturae simul et gratiae optimum donum est, sublimis descendat, humilis ascendat; dives egeat, pauper ditescat; et ita unusquisque alteri suam conditionem communicet ut fiat aequalitas'.

43 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, chap. 92-96, 337-339. See also chap. 97, 339, 747-748: 'Non enim amicitia recte colitur, a quibus aequalitas non servatur'.

44 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, chap. 119-127, 345-348.

45 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, chap. 107, 341, 847-849: 'Debet enim amicus amico compati, condescendere, vitium ejus suum putare, corripere humiliter, compatienter'.

communication of emotions that render fraternal correction psychologically acceptable: 'May they make their remonstrations with a sad expression, a distressed voice, and their words broken with tears, so that one can see and also feel that these reprimands come from love and not from rancour'.<sup>46</sup> Horizontal emotional communication must be expressive and transparent, inasmuch as it should reflect the intention of the friend. The text of Aelred in its theoretical and practical scope aims to become a veritable manual of knowing how to live together as friends in the monastery. His success, judged in numbers of manuscripts, proves, moreover, that he found his public.<sup>47</sup>

This journey through the works of three authors of the twelfth century has taken us into the world of religious subjectivity, from control of the self to the recognition of the friend as a second self. In the history of the Middle Ages, the twelfth century plays a crucial role in the growing awareness of interiority in monastic life and in the engendering of new behaviors. To show the importance of the phenomenon, one need only turn to the texts of spirituality, which are historical documents of the same value as the rules, customaries, and other normative texts. The latter regulate the exterior time in the life of the monk or canon, whereas the texts on spirituality mark the rhythms of the interior life. The monastic ideal, as defined by these texts, should align the spiritualized interiorities, which are extended toward God and are also coordinated among themselves. More broadly speaking, after the twelfth century, these texts informed several major changes in the medieval Church, notably the greater attention paid by clergy to the laity and their interior life, but also the creation by the laity of a more personal and direct relationship with God, within or on the margins of the ecclesial institution.

But is this horizontal knowledge, based on deciphering the self and the other, always infallible? Our texts, which are normative by definition, are obviously discreet about those who fail, even if there are certain signs. The pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux acknowledges that there are failures in the process of interior transformation. Reading sometimes serves as an escape from other exercises such as prayer or attending Mass. There is quite a gap between the knowledge of the law attained through meditation, and its application.<sup>48</sup> Prayer, which is good in theory, can lead to discouragement

46 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, chap. 107, 341-342, 849-852: 'Corripiat enim vultus tristior, sermo dejectior, intercipiant verba lacrimae, ut non solum videat, sed etiam sentiat correptionem ex amore et non ex rancore procedere'.

47 Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritali amicitia*, book 3, 281-285.

48 Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Meditationes*, col. 498B: 'Vae mihi qui ista dico et ista non facio, et si aliquando facio, non diu perservero. Ista habeo in memoria et non servo in via, habeo

because in practice it seems fruitless. As the pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux says, 'I pray every day, yet I see no fruit from my prayer, but I begin again and again. No one answers me, no one speaks to me, no one offers me help, and I seem to be working uselessly'.<sup>49</sup>

And if interior apprenticeship can be discouraging, what can be said about equals who are by definition fallible? To conclude, I quote a substitute remedy for horizontal learning, from an anonymous Italian treatise for religious training that is no later than the thirteenth century. The *Monachelus* says:

Examine with care the examples of good men whom you see in your monastery and, like a wise little bee, fly in spirit around the forest of your cloister. If you discover only dry trees in the forest of your brothers, in your community – may God forbid! – when you are in the church, raise your eyes to the walls and the paintings in the church, because if your brothers are silent when it comes to good works, the stones and paintings will proclaim loudly in their representations of the saints.<sup>50</sup>

Horizontal learning and its interpersonal dimension thus leaves room for the visual language of the object. For the author of the treatise, with whom we tend to agree, better a good painting than a bad brother!

## About the author

**Cédric Giraud** is 'maître de conférences habilité' at the University of Lorraine, and a junior member of the Institut Universitaire de France. He attended the École nationale des chartes and in 2006 completed a PhD

in sermonibus et non in moribus. Legem in corde et in ore tota die rumino et contraria legi ago. Lego de religione in ea et plus diligo lectionem quam orationem. Verumtamen nihil aliud me docet divina Scriptura, nisi religionem amare, unitatem servare, charitatem habere. Ego autem miser et miserabilis, citius curro ad lectionem quam ad orationem, libentius volo legere quam missas auscultare'.

49 Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Meditationes*, col. 496D: 'Sed dicitis: "ego quotidie oro et orationis meae nullum fructum video, sed sicut accedo ad illam sic et redeo. Nemo mihi respondet, nemo loquitur, nemo quidpiam donat, sed incassum laborasse videor".'

50 *Monachelus*, 398: 'Exempla vero bonorum quos in tuo monasterio perspexeris diligenter adtende et quasi apis prudentissima per silvam tui claustrum mente circumvola. Si autem nisi arbores autumnales in ipsa fratrum tuorum silva, id est congregatione, inveneris, quod Deus avertat, intra ecclesiam leva oculos tuos ad parietes et picturas ecclesie, quia si tui fratres tacebunt per bonorum operum exhibitionem, lapides et picture clamabunt per sanctorum representationem.'

in History at the Université Paris IV-Sorbonne. His first book, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école* received the Gobert Prize from the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. His studies revolve around the cultural history of the Middle Ages, medieval latin philology and the history of spirituality between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age.

## 5 Truth as Teaching

### Lying and the Ethics of Learning in Twelfth-Century Monastic Culture

*Jay Diehl*

#### Abstract

This paper investigates the links between teaching and discourses surrounding deceit and truth-telling in eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic culture. It focuses on two manuscripts produced in the twelfth century: Brussels, KBR MS 10807-11 from the abbey of Saint Laurent in Liège and Douai BMDV 267 from Saint Rictrude at Marchiennes in Arras. Taking these manuscripts as a point of departure, this chapter suggests that they situated the act of truth-telling not only as the result of good pedagogy, but as itself a form of pedagogy. I will analyze what was at stake in both deceitful and honest speech in monastic culture and investigate how and why such behaviour could operate as a form of pedagogy in religious communities.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, manuscripts, truth-telling, teaching, learning

#### Introduction

‘There is a great question about lying’, says Augustine at the beginning of his treatise *On Lying*, ‘... whether we may decide that sometimes lying is good, through a sort of honest, well-intended, or charitable lie.’<sup>1</sup> Here Augustine posed what he considered to be the fundamental question concerning

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 413: ‘Magna quaestio est de mendacio [...] aut arbitremur aliquando esse mentiendum honesto quodam et officioso ac misericordis mendacio.’

lying: whether it could ever be ethically justified.<sup>2</sup> Twelfth-century monks, reading the text some 800 years later, would have been confronted with this question at its outset. There is, however, very little indication that they found it the most compelling part of the treatise. Most monastic sources of the High Middle Ages that touch on the subject of lying and truth-telling simply take it for granted that lying was a vice that ought to be avoided. Still, they clearly found something about the text itself interesting, as demonstrated by the numerous manuscript copies that can be found scattered throughout Benedictine communities in northern Europe. This study takes as its point of departure two of those copies, both produced in the southern Low Countries in the twelfth century. The first, Brussels, KBR (formerly: Royal Library of Belgium) MS 10807-11 (hereafter KBR 10807-11) is from the community of Saint Laurent in the city of Liège and was produced around the year 1100. The second, Douai, Bibliothèque Marceline Desbordes-Valmore MS 267 (hereafter BMDV 267) is from the community of Saint Rictrude at Marchiennes in the diocese of Arras and was probably copied sometime between 1150 and 1160.

The goal of this study is to use the texts contained in these manuscripts and the histories of the manuscripts themselves as vehicles for unpacking the role of lying and truth-telling in monastic culture and to explore its significance for the history of monastic learning, particularly with respect to ethics. The first section briefly examines the two Augustinian texts that served as touchstones for medieval discussions of lying. Turning to the twelfth century, I suggest that, in monastic culture, Augustine's ideas became a key part of a discourse that situated all speech acts as inherently pedagogical, transforming a monastery into a community of individuals who constantly 'taught' and 'learned' ethical behaviour from each other through the very act of speaking truthfully (or failing to do so). Such learning was largely independent of the actual information imparted by a truthful statement, depending instead on the virtue and discipline manifest in the statement itself.

In the second section I return to the manuscripts and investigate a basic question: in a culture in which ethical behaviours such as truth-telling were fundamentally embodied and experiential forms of cultural practice, what was at stake in consigning knowledge of them to written texts? By examining the circumstances at Saint Laurent and Marchiennes, I will suggest that conflicts at both monasteries led to a sort of 'crisis of trust' that rendered members of these communities unable to serve as models

2 For a sweeping history of this question in the western intellectual tradition, see Denery, *The Devil Wins*.

for ethical behaviour, prompting them to produce manuscripts containing texts that were intended to operate as surrogate ‘teachers’ of ethics when the communities themselves could not. The central argument of this study is thus that these manuscripts sit on the cusp of two different modes of learning, one based on embodied exemplars and one based on written texts. From this argument, I hope to offer some observations about the interaction between different forms of learning in monastic culture and the role played by communal conflict in shaping monastic learning in the twelfth century.

### The Augustinian Legacy: *On Lying* and *Against Lying*

Although different in many respects, the two manuscripts at the heart of this paper share some basic similarities. Both are relatively small books for their scriptoria. KBR 10807-11 from Saint Laurent measures only 244x159mm, making it among the very smallest manuscripts produced there in the early twelfth century. BMDV 267 is a larger book at 310x220mm, but still smaller than the standard patristic manuscript produced at Marchiennes. Both books contain a compendium of several different texts that pertain, in one way or another, to ethics and the virtuous life. KBR 10807-11 contains a genuinely idiosyncratic collection of texts: works of Chromatius on the eight beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount; a collection of *sententiae* of Augustine and Jerome; a sermon of Augustine on the dangers of drunkenness; and excerpts from Augustine’s two works on the subject of lying, *On Lying* and *Against Lying*.<sup>3</sup> BMDV 267 is a somewhat more predictable book, containing a medley of Augustinian texts, including *On Christian Teaching*; the sermon *On Pastors*; the first book of *On Lying*; the sermon *On Avarice and Luxury*; two anti-heretical works; and his exhortatory letter to Darius Comes.<sup>4</sup> Although their collections of texts differ, both manuscripts present to their readers a compact handbook of basic Christian ethics, with the problem of lying singled out as the particular vice to which the most space was dedicated.

The two texts on lying found in the manuscripts, Augustine’s *On Lying* and his *Against Lying*, are dense works that cumulatively formed perhaps the primary framework within which twelfth-century discussions of the ethics

3 Described in Van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, 2: 52-53.

4 See Dehaisnes, *Catalogue général des manuscrits*, vol. 5: Douai, 140.

of lying took place.<sup>5</sup> Delving into Augustine's ideas about lying offers some initial insights as to why it may have been a particularly urgent problem for a Benedictine community and what was at stake in constructing a manuscript around that issue. *On Lying* is the earlier and, by Augustine's own admission, the more difficult and obscure of the two texts.<sup>6</sup> Its composition was prompted by Augustine's reading of Jerome's commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, in which Jerome suggested that Paul purposefully included a lie in the text for the purpose of instructing his readers.<sup>7</sup> In *On Lying*, Augustine set out to refute the existence of lies in scripture and, more generally, to investigate the 'great question about lying', that is, whether it is sometimes permissible to tell a lie, one that is in some sense 'honest' and 'charitable'.<sup>8</sup> Augustine emphatically denies that there is any such thing as a useful or justifiable lie. However, the details of his argument reveal important features of the cultural practice of lying and truth-telling in Augustine's day and amongst his intellectual and spiritual heirs. He opens his investigation by trying to define a lie, which, Augustine hastens to note, is not at all the same thing as stating something untrue: 'For not everyone who says something false lies, if he believes or considers his statement to be true'. On the contrary, according to Augustine, 'whoever states something that he holds in his mind as belief or opinion, even though it might be false, does not lie. This he owes to the faith of his statement, such that he produces through it that which he holds in his mind ...'.<sup>9</sup> Making a false statement is, to be sure, a fault in Augustine's mind. However, the fault is not a lie but,

5 On these works, see Griffiths, *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity*; Denery, *The Devil Wins*, 106-119; and the trio of articles by Feehan: 'Augustine on Lying and Deception,' 'Augustine's Own Examples of Lying,' and 'The Morality of Lying in St. Augustine.' On the reception of Augustine's ideas, see Colish, 'Rethinking Lying in the Twelfth Century' and Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying.' Both Colish and Hermanowicz rightly note that Augustine treats the problem of lying in several of his other works, often with great flexibility. I focus on *On Lying* and *Against Lying* because they are the texts found in the manuscripts of Saint Laurent and Marchiennes.

6 In his *Retractions*, Augustine refers to this work as obscure and difficult, so much so that he ordered it to be taken out of circulation after he wrote his later work on the same subject.

7 Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 699. Augustine's *Letter 28* to Jerome addresses this issue.

8 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 413.

9 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 414-415: 'Non enim omnis, qui falsum dicit, mentitur, si credit aut opinatur verum esse quod dicit...Quisquis autem hoc enuntiat quod vel creditum animo vel opinatum tenet, etiamsi falsum sit, non mentitur. Hoc enim debet enuntiationis suae fidei, ut illud per eam proferat, quod animo tenet, et sic habet, ut profert.' Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 704 notes that the primary concern of *De mendacio* is the 'ontology' of lying, that is, in understanding of what a lie consists.

rather, the rash error of accounting something ‘unknown’ to be ‘known’. A liar, by contrast, is one:

who has one thing in his mind and states something else in words or by signs of any kind. Whence it is that the heart of one who lies is said to be double, that is, there is a double-thought: one of that thing which he knows or believes to be true and does not bring forth; the other that he brings forth in its place, knowing or thinking it to be false. Thus it may be that he can state something false and not lie, if he thinks it to be as he says although it is not so; and he may state something true while lying, if he thinks it to be false and speaks it as it were true ...<sup>10</sup>

In the final reckoning, a lie is the product of the intent to deceive, not the truthfulness of a statement.<sup>11</sup> As Augustine sums up: ‘Therefore, from the sense of his own mind, not from the truth or falsity of the things themselves, is he to be judged to lie or not to lie’.<sup>12</sup> The key point here, obvious as it may be, is that lying is not an epistemological issue for Augustine; it is completely divorced from the objective truth-value of any given statement. Rather, lying is an ethical issue, bound more to moral norms than to truth.

Augustine does hedge somewhat on this basic definition, asking whether it might be possible to lie in the absence of any will to deceive. The convoluted scenario that Augustine concocts to test this theory involves the case of a person speaking something false, knowing it to be false, and yet also knowing that his listener will not believe him. In such a case, Augustine wonders, is it not the case that someone is lying ‘with the purpose of not deceiving, if lying is to state something other than you know or think it to be’.<sup>13</sup> The contrary case also troubles Augustine: whether it might be possible to lie while stating something that you believe to be true? In this case, Augustine envisions someone speaking something that is both true and believed by

10 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 415: ‘Quapropter ille mentitur, qui aliud habet in animo et aliud verbis vel quibuslibet significationibus enuntiat. Unde etiam duplex cor dicitur esse mentientis, id est duplex cogitatio: una rei eius, quam veram esse vel scit vel putat et non profert; altera eius rei, quam pro ista profert sciens falsam esse vel putans. Ex quo fit, ut possit falsum dicere non mentiens, si putat ita esse, ut dicit, quamvis non ita sit; et ut possit verum dicere mentiens, si putat falsum esse et pro vero enuntiat’

11 Hermanowicz, ‘Augustine on Lying,’ 708-09. Colish, ‘The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification,’ 22-35 traces the growing role of intentionality as the defining feature of a lie.

12 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 415: ‘Ex animi enim sui sententia, non ex rerum ipsarum veritate vel falsitate mentiens aut non mentiens iudicandus est’.

13 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 416: ‘Hic enim studio non fallendi mentietur, si mendacium est enuntiare aliquid aliter quam scis esse vel putas.’

them to be true, all the while knowing that his listener will again not believe them. In this case, one might ‘speak truth so as to deceive, for he knows or reasons that what is said will be thought false, just because it is spoken by him’.<sup>14</sup> Whereas the first scenario involves knowingly stating a falsehood so as not to deceive, this case involves knowingly stating the truth so as to deceive. Which of these two are lies?

This is no small problem for Augustine, as it seems to frustrate his goal of arriving at a clear definition of a lie. He devotes a great deal of space to debating the matter before finally, one senses, in frustration, declaring that the best option is just to avoid stating things either knowing them to be false or intending to deceive: ‘All rashness and all lying will be avoided when we state, as needs be, something we know to be true and worthy of belief and we wish to convince someone of what we state’.<sup>15</sup> To wrap up his labyrinthine definition of a lie, Augustine finally notes that, even if we utter something false believing it to be true, but with no other aim than to make someone believe our statement, still it is not a lie, ‘for none of these definitions needs to be feared when the mind is well conscious of itself to be saying that which it knows or thinks or believes to be true ...’.<sup>16</sup> Despite his winding attempts at defining a lie, Augustine finally reveals what he believes to be the essential problem with lying and why it requires careful definition. It has nothing to do with the spreading of false information and everything to do with the danger posed by sinful or immoral behaviour to individual reform and salvation, which necessitates acting in good conscience more than ensuring the accuracy of one’s knowledge. When a lie is uttered, the victim is not the one who believes the lie. It is the liar himself who suffers the self-induced consequences of wrongful behaviour. Augustine’s philosophizing on the nature of lies is at least partially pastoral, in that his goal is to help people avoid sin.<sup>17</sup>

Augustine builds his argument that no lie is justifiable on two conceptual cornerstones. First, that a lie is primarily the product of intention, the

14 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 416: ‘Qui enim verum ideo loquitur, quia sentit sibi non credi, ideo utique verum dicit, ut fallat; scit enim vel existimat propterea falsum putari posse quod dicitur, quoniam ab ipso dicitur’.

15 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 418-19: ‘Aberit igitur omnis temeritas atque omne mendacium, cum et id, quod verum credendumque cognovimus, cum opus est, enuntiamus et id volumus persuadere, quod enuntiamus’.

16 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 419: ‘Nulla enim definitionum illarum timenda est, cum bene sibi conscius est animus hoc se enuntiare, quod verum esse aut novit aut opinatur aut credit.’.

17 It is worth recalling that the Marchiennes copy of *De mendacio* was bound to a copy of Augustine’s sermon *De pastoribus*, a point developed in more detail below.

willful desire to deceive, making it a problem of ethical behaviour. Second, that the main ethical concern with lying is not the dangers posed by the dissemination of false information but, rather, the inherent wrongness of the act itself and the danger it poses to virtuous living. Accordingly, he argues for the need to understand what constitutes lying so as to avoid it. Augustine develops this argument by considering a multitude of cases, many of them drawn from the Bible, in which it would seem useful to lie, ultimately rejecting all such cases as examples of behaviour to be condemned rather than imitated (or as allegory, in some cases).<sup>18</sup> Telling a lie to save a life is not justified: 'since eternal life is lost by lying, a lie must never be said on behalf of a temporal life'.<sup>19</sup> Nor is it safe to lie to preserve bodily purity, as 'there is no purity of body save that which depends on purity of mind; if the latter is broken, the former falls by necessity'.<sup>20</sup> No good can be achieved through sinful behaviour.

In seeking to help people avoid lies, in a passage that became perhaps the most famous and widely cited section of the text, Augustine also provides a typology of eight types, so that they may be recognized and avoided. Among them we find the 'capital lie ... done in the doctrine of religion'; the lie that hurts some man unjustly, 'such that it profits no one and hurts someone'; the lie done only for 'lust of lying and deceiving'; the lie done 'with desire of pleasing by agreeable small talk'; and the lie 'which hurts no one and does good in preserving someone from corporeal defilement'.<sup>21</sup> None of these, no matter how banal or apparently beneficial, justifies sinful behaviour.

This insistence that no good can ever come from lying is connected to another recurrent theme of the text, one that has not received much commentary: the link between lying and teaching. Based on Augustine's arguments, one apparently common justification for lying was that it could be useful in teaching.<sup>22</sup> For instance, one might think it justifiable to lie to students so as to convince them of the dangers of lust, thus preventing potential sin through deceit. This will not do for Augustine. For one, deceit as part of a pedagogical strategy comes with all the usual problems of lying, that is, that it is not worth spiritual corruption to preserve bodily integrity.

18 Denery, *The Devil Wins*, 116-119.

19 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 426: 'Cum igitur mentiendo vita aeterna amittatur, numquam pro cuiusquam temporali vita mentiendum est'.

20 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 427: 'Potest nullam esse pudicitiam corporis, nisi ab integritate animi pendeat: qua disrupta cadat necesse est'.

21 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 444-45.

22 Such was Jerome's argument for why Paul had deliberately lied in his letter to the Galatians. Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 699.

However, it also comes with other dangers, ones particular to the use of lies to teach, which Augustine explains in a dense and important passage. According to Augustine, someone who lies for the purpose of teaching does not realize that:

the authority of the doctrine is cut off and perishes entirely if those whom we are trying to lead to that doctrine are persuaded by our lie that it is sometimes right to lie. Since the doctrine of salvation consists partly of things to be believed and partly of things to be understood, and that it is not possible to reach those things that are to be understood unless first believing those things that are to be believed, how is it possible to believe someone who thinks it is sometimes right to lie, lest perhaps he is lying while teaching us what to believe? For how can it be known whether he has some cause, as he thinks, for a dutiful lie, reckoning that by a false story a man might be frightened away from lust and, in this way, deem himself to be advising spiritual things through lying? This kind of lie, having been admitted and approved, subverts the teaching of faith entirely ... And thus all doctrine of truth is lost, ceding its place to most licentious falsehood, if a lie, no matter how dutiful, opens the door for falsehood.<sup>23</sup>

The problem here, as Augustine sees it, is twofold. First, if a teacher uses lies to impart a lesson, and the lie is eventually discovered, the students will henceforth be unsure when the teacher is telling the truth and when he is lying, thus subverting the possibility of understanding truth. In other words, well-meant lies by teachers run the risk of undoing the bonds of trust that are necessary for good learning. Second, if a teacher uses a well-meant lie to teach the danger of, for instance, lust, the student will still learn that lying can be good for spiritual purposes and thus come to believe that lying can be beneficial in the right circumstances. From this starting point, lying would be authorized as a general practice, exacerbating the subversion of

23 Augustine of Hippo, *De mendacio*, 429-30: '[non intellegit] deinde ipsius doctrinae auctoritatem intercipi et penitus interrire, si eis, quos ad illam perducere conamur, mendacio nostro persuademus aliquando esse mentiendum. Cum enim doctrina salutaris partim credendis, partim intellegendis rebus constet nec ad ea, quae intellegenda sunt, perveniri possit, nisi prius credenda credantur, quomodo credendum est ei, qui putat aliquando esse mentiendum, ne forte et tunc mentiatur, cum praecipit ut credamus? Unde enim sciri potest, utrum et tunc habeat aliquam causam, sicut ipse putat, officiosi mendacii, existimans falsa narratione hominem territum posse a libidine cohiberi atque hoc modo etiam ad spiritalia se consulere mentiendo arbitretur? Quo genere admissio atque adprobato omnis omnino fidei disciplina subvertitur... atque ita omnis doctrina veritatis aufertur, cedens licentiosissimae falsitati, se mendacio velut officioso alicunde penetrandi aperitur locus'.

truth. For Augustine, lying is intrinsically bad pedagogy, not because it necessarily teaches untrue things but because the act itself models sinful behaviour for the student, suggesting to them that lying is permissible. The link between lying and failed pedagogy is rooted in the fact that students learn not only from the knowledge imparted by the teachers but also from their teacher's conduct and personal ethical code.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that lying or truth-telling has an inherent pedagogic value is one that is latent throughout Augustine's other work on lying. *Against Lying*, written some fifteen years after *On Lying*, addresses a related but ultimately more targeted question: whether it might be permissible for orthodox Christians to pretend to be heretics so as to infiltrate a sect and win its adherents back to orthodoxy.<sup>25</sup> Or, in more general terms, was it acceptable to lie to turn heretics away from their errors? Augustine answers this question fairly succinctly in the text's opening, stating that the only reason to track down heretics is to teach them the truth or, at least, convict them by the truth, erasing their lies and increasing God's truth. In this case, Augustine asks, 'how therefore am I able to rightly persecute lies by a lie?'<sup>26</sup> The answer, of course, is that you cannot do so. The cause of orthodoxy can hardly be advanced through sin, nor can the truth be defended through lies.

The problem of using lies to teach the truth structures much of the following discussion. For example, Augustine notes that 'when we seize liars by lying, we teach worse lies'.<sup>27</sup> For one thing, if an orthodox lies so as to gain the truth of a heretic and win them back to orthodoxy, they must eventually admit they were lying and then attempt to teach the truth. In that case, Augustine notes, 'who knows for certain whether ... [heretics] would wish to hear teaching from one whom they have experienced lying?'<sup>28</sup> Clearly echoing the sentiments of *On Lying*, this statement suggests that lying makes good teaching impossible because it eliminates trust between

24 The idea of teachers serving as models for conduct is now recognized as central to medieval cultures of learning. See variously Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*; Münster-Swendsen, 'The Model of Scholastic Mastery'; and Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*.

25 The text was written specifically with Priscillianists in mind and composed at the behest of Consentinus, who sent Augustine a query about the value of lying for winning heretics to orthodoxy.

26 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 470: 'Quomodo igitur mendacio mendacia recte potero persequi?'

27 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 475: 'Immo vero cum mendaces mentiendo capimus, mendacia peiora doceamus!'

28 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 476: 'Quid autem hora superventura pariat, utrum inde postea liberentur vera dicentibus nobis, qui decepti sunt fallentibus nobis, et utrum audire velint docentem, quem sic experti sunt mentientem, quis noverit certum?'

parties. While much of the text does focus on the danger that lying poses to the orthodox, Augustine never loses sight of the fact that this danger is linked to the fact that lying itself will teach heretics that it is acceptable for them to lie, advancing the cause of heresy rather than combating it. As he states, 'for through this lie we will become perverted, and [the heretics] will be only half-corrected, because they think it right to lie on behalf of the truth, which we do not correct in them because we learn and teach the same thing and decree it to be proper'.<sup>29</sup> No matter how many heretical errors orthodox Christians might correct through lies, lying ultimately fails to advance orthodoxy in that the act itself teaches the heretic to lie.

As with *On Lying*, Augustine also devotes considerable space in *Against Lying* to refuting the idea that Scripture provides any precedent or justification for lying (a position he accuses heretics of adopting). Explaining away some biblical examples of lying as figurative allegory and others as examples of poor behaviour to be emended, he concludes that any apparent instances of lying in the Bible, 'are either not lies, but are only thought to be so while they are not understood; or, if they are lies, are not to be imitated because they cannot be just'.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, however, Augustine returns explicitly to the problem of teaching in the final passage of the text, leaving his readers with the statement that, 'either lies must be avoided by action or confessed through penance; however, they are not to be increased through teaching when they unhappily abound in our living'.<sup>31</sup> Teaching, as it turns out, not only fails to justify lies but also is perhaps the most dangerous milieu for them. Augustine's conclusion reveals that in many ways, *Against Lying* is fundamentally an exploration of the link between lying and teaching, arguing against the pedagogic value of lying.

29 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 478: 'Per hoc namque mendacium et nos erimus ex ea parte perversi et ipsi semicorrecti, quandoquidem istuc, quod putant esse pro veritate mentiendum, non in eis corrigimus, quia idem nos didicimus et docemus et fieri oportere praecipimus, ut ad eos emendandos pervenire possimus'. Colish, 'The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification,' 35 notes that the *Contra mendacium* does, to a certain extent, contain a greater emphasis on objective truth as a part of lying than does *De mendacio* in its argument that Catholics who lie are, in fact, worse than heretics who lie, since their lies are both intended to deceive *and* are objectively untrue.

30 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 512: 'Quapropter quando nobis de scripturis sanctis mentiendi proponuntur exempla, aut mendacia non sunt, sed putantur esse, dum non intelleguntur, aut, si mendacia sunt, imitanda non sunt, quia iusta esse non possunt'.

31 Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 526-27: 'Aut ergo cavenda mendacia recte agendo aut confitenda sunt paenitendo; non autem, cum abundant infeliciter vivendo, augenda aut et docendo'.

Heirs to the Augustinian tradition of thought on lying received a conceptual framework built around several fundamental themes. First and foremost was the idea that lying and truth-telling were ethical problems, whose chief danger was not the dissemination of false information but spiritual corruption. Second, there was no such thing as a good lie, no matter how trivial or beneficial it might seem. Third, any and all scriptural examples of lying were either figurative or intended to show forms of behaviour requiring correction. Finally, there was the connection between lying and teaching. Not only were lies not permissible in the interests of teaching but also they represented intrinsically bad pedagogy. On one hand, they disrupted the atmosphere of trust necessary for teaching the truth. On the other hand, the very act of lying itself represented the teaching of unethical behaviour, as students would learn from their teacher that lying was permissible and, in certain situations, even desirable. Sitting at the confluence of ethical behaviour, scriptural precedent, and teaching by example, the practice of lying and truth-telling was embedded in precisely the sort of issues that became central to medieval monastic culture.

### Speaking, Lying, and Truth-telling in Twelfth-century Monastic Culture

Twelfth-century thinkers were much influenced by Augustine's views on lying. As Marcia Colish has demonstrated, urban schoolmasters and scholastic theologians frequently debated Augustine's assertion that there was no such thing as a beneficial lie.<sup>32</sup> Because Augustine's argument concerned sin, his ideas were eventually transmitted via scholastic thinkers into clerical texts on pastoral care in the thirteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Scholastic theologians, however, were not the only heirs to the Augustinian tradition of thought on lying. Although monastic thinkers seem never to have engaged with Augustine's ideas on lying as explicitly as did schoolmasters seeking *quaestiones* for disputation, monastic communities were nonetheless important recipients of Augustine's ideas, as indicated by the surviving manuscripts from Saint Laurent, Marchiennes, and many other communities.<sup>34</sup>

32 Colish, 'Rethinking Lying,' esp. 165-73. Colish, 'The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification and the Problem of Lies,' treats both Augustine and Anselm as heirs to a Stoic tradition of linguistic thought.

33 Colish, 'Rethinking Lying,' 169-171. See also Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 717-727 and Denery, *The Devil Wins*, 119-135, both of which emphasize the flexible ways in which scholastic thinkers interacted with Augustine's ideas.

34 To date, I haven't come across any treatises by monastic authors that deal specifically with the subject of lying, nor even extended sections of any works dealing with the subject.

Within monastic culture, ideas about lying and truth-telling were received not just as interesting and difficult questions on sin and ethics to be resolved but also as questions fundamental to daily life. From the earliest days of Christian monasticism, speech was treated as a key component of the disciplinary regime of the monk, an idea that became an integral part of monastic spirituality in the High Middle Ages. In the Latin tradition, the Rule of Benedict was the wellspring and primary conduit through which the idea of disciplined speech was transmitted. The sixth chapter of the Rule states that, given that there are times when even 'good speech' should be left unsaid out of esteem for silence, evil speech is all the more to be shunned, so as to avoid punishment for sin.<sup>35</sup> Silence, then, was the gold standard for speech acts in monastic culture, such that even advanced monks should only seldom be given permission to speak, even if their words were good and constructive.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, this chapter ends by stating that 'speaking and teaching are fitting tasks for the master; it is appropriate that the disciple be silent and listen.'<sup>37</sup> Echoing somewhat Augustine's thoughts on lying, Benedict's Rule suggests an inherent connection between speech and teaching. Speech itself, as a form of practice, was appropriate for teachers not necessarily because the content of their speech was laden with better knowledge but because they had achieved the level of self-mastery necessary for good speech. Speaking defined teachers, and teachers were the ones who spoke, while silence was for learning.

It is difficult to overstate the influence of this idea within monastic texts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It can be found, albeit in diverse forms, within devotional literature, hagiography, and quasi-normative sources such as customaries. Scott Bruce's investigation of silence and sign language in the Cluniac customaries of Bernard and Ulrich, among the most influential such documents, reveals that speech was forbidden at nearly all times and places, and particularly during the canonical hours. Indeed, Ulrich outlined only two brief periods during which conversation was allowed, and then only with supervision (a sign again of the link between speech acts and pedagogy). This rigidity was part of a general and nearly unprecedented Cluniac regard for silence, which grew out of the conviction that it both avoided sinful speech and was itself a positive spiritual practice.<sup>38</sup>

35 *Regula Benedicti* ed. de Vogüé and Jean Neufville, 470.

36 See generally Gehl, '*Competens Silentium*'.

37 *Regula Benedicti*, ed. de Vogüé and Jean Neufville, 470-71: 'Nam loqui et docere magistrum concedet, tacere et audire discipulum convenit'.

38 Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 13-53, esp. 26-28.

Ulrich's customary surely reflected the ideals more than the lived reality of monasticism, Cluniac or otherwise. Nonetheless, regulated, supervised, and disciplined speech was central to his vision of monastic spirituality.

The same ideals can be found within devotional literature. The English Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx was one of the more eloquent spokespersons for disciplined speech. His *Pastoral Prayer*, in which he asks for the strength and tools to govern the monks of Rievaulx, requests that God, 'place true and right and good sounding speech in my mouth [...] built on faith, hope, and love [...] in patience and obedience'.<sup>39</sup> Speech also plays a vital role in a passage found in Aelred's lament for his dead brother Simon found at the end of Book One of the *Mirror of Charity*: 'the authority of our order barred us from speaking, but his appearance spoke to me, his walk spoke to me, his very silence spoke to me'.<sup>40</sup> So powerful is the idea of disciplined speech in this passage that it is a core component of monastic life and also serves as a metaphor for the entirety of Simon's disciplined self. This passage also illuminates another feature of the monastic culture of speech that is less evident in the customaries: its performative dimension. Simon's discipline and, in particular, his silence were on display for Aelred. The *Mirror of Charity* makes it clear that Simon's demonstration of proper monastic ethics served as an inspiration for Aelred's own life. As Aelred wrote, 'I remember that often, when my eyes began to wander hither and thither and, having glimpsed him only briefly and being flooded with such shame, I would restrain all that fickleness and, gathering myself, begin to occupy myself in something useful'.<sup>41</sup> Aelred's relationship with Simon reveals something fundamental about ethical behaviour in monastic culture: it not only benefitted the one enacting it but also served as a model for others who were attempting to maintain the rigors of monastic discipline. To act in accordance with monastic ethics was to teach those ethics. To speak well was to teach good speech, an observation that draws us back to the problem of lying in monastic culture.

39 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Oratio pastoralis*, 761: 'Da verum sermonem et rectum et bene sonantem in os meum, quo aedificentur in fide, spe, et caritate [...] in patientia et obedientia.'

40 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis*, 60: 'Simul quidem loqui Ordinis nostri prohibebat auctoritas, sed loquebatur mihi aspectus eius, loquebatur mihi incessus eius, loquebatur mihi ipsum silentium eius.'

41 Aelred of Rievaulx, *Speculum caritatis*: 'Memini me saepe, cum oculis huc illucque discurrerem, ad unam eius aspectum tanto pudore perfusum, ut subito intra memetipsum receptus, manu gravitatis omnem illam compescere levitatem, ac me ad me colligens inciperem mecum aliquid utile acitare.'

Lying, to be sure, was never as worrisome as certain other sins in twelfth-century monastic culture. Consider a bit of evidence from the monastery of Saint Laurent itself. In the early twelfth century, contemporaneous to the production of KBR 10807-11, scribes at Saint Laurent added a list of vices and virtues to the front of a manuscript containing Jerome's commentary on Daniel and Bede's commentary on the canonical epistles.<sup>42</sup> Several of the listed vices and virtues were written in majuscule script, making them stand out on the list and giving them a heightened sense of importance. Among those so singled out were 'Envy/Charity' (*Invidia/Caritas*), 'Anger/Patience' (*Ira/Patientia*), 'Violence/Peace' (*Rixa/Pax*), 'Avarice/Generosity' (*Avaritia/Largitas*), 'Gluttony/Abstinence' (*Ingluvis/Abstinentia*), and 'Luxury/Chastity' (*Luxuria/Castitas*). Here perhaps is a convenient snapshot of the most dangerous vices and the most desirable virtues for the community at Saint Laurent. It would hardly be surprising if this list was reflective of the broader ethical priority of twelfth-century monastic communities. Certainly abstinence, chastity, and charity are well known, even obvious priorities for monastic communities, and Lester Little has demonstrated that anger and patience were important virtues around which monastic identity was constructed.<sup>43</sup> The issue of truth-telling and lying does appear on the list in KBR 10260-63 in the form of the binary 'Falsehood/Truth' (*Fallatia/Veritas*). But it was not given the same emphasis in the manuscript as other vices and virtues.

Nonetheless, the issue of lying and truth-telling occupied a place of particular urgency in the ethical landscape of monastic culture. This urgency stemmed from the fact that the problem of lying was integrated into the broader problem of disciplined speech, which set it apart from other affective sins of intention such as envy. On its own, lying may never have been considered as dangerous as gluttony or anger in monastic life. However, when joined to the broader problem of speech and silence, it became an aspect of one of the basic pillars of monastic discipline. And it was within the context of disciplined speech that many monastic writers discussed the dangers of lying. For instance, Hugh of Saint Victor devoted a chapter of his *On the Instruction of Novices* to the issue of speaking ('*Quomodo loquendum sit*'). In many ways, it mirrors the discussions of speech found in Benedict's Rule and monastic customaries. But Hugh also addresses the particular danger of false speech and lying in his discussions, citing Scripture: 'Harsh and quarrelsome words should be removed entirely from disciplined speech

42 Brussels, KBR MS 10260-63, f. 1r.

43 Little, 'Anger in Monastic Curses'.

(*sermonibus disciplinatis*), as is proven by that passage that says, “the lips of a fool are mingled with strife and his mouth provokes quarrels” (Prov. 18:6). It also emphasizes that mendacious words must be avoided: ‘A false witness will not go unpunished and he who speaks lies will not escape’ (Prov. 19:9).<sup>44</sup> For Hugh of Saint Victor, the problem of lying was inseparable from the broader issue of regulated speech, and it was this connection that shaped the ethical imperative against lying.

Among the many twelfth-century monastic writers who discuss lying in the context of disciplined speech, Peter of Celle may be the pre-eminent example. In one of his sermons for Passion Sunday, Peter uses one of the medical metaphors dear to twelfth-century monastic writers by comparing the various monastic virtues to the ingredients for a curative drink. ‘Consider’, he says, ‘the regiment of this potion: silence, abstinence, chastity, humility, charity, obedience, a calm mind, removal of immoderate jesting, and tranquility. All these pertain to the observance of this drink and it does not confer health without them; he who receives it according to some other recipe is not purged by it, but killed’.<sup>45</sup> It is a list of virtues that is clearly reminiscent of that found in the manuscript described above. He then describes the various vices that are prevented by the cultivation of each virtue, beginning with silence: ‘Silence prevents lying, foolish talk, buffoonery, and all idle chatter’.<sup>46</sup> Like Hugh of Saint Victor, Peter of Celle treats lying as a subspecies of bad speech acts and considers it within the broader rubric of the kind of speech appropriate to the monastic life. Interestingly, Peter seems to give both silence and lying more priority than the other sources considered here. The former is the first virtue in Peter’s recipe for monastic life, while the latter is the first vice that is avoided through silence. Furthermore, and somewhat remarkably, his framework implicitly suggests that the antithesis of lying is not truth-telling but *silence*. Peter makes a similar point in his famous *School of the Cloister*, where the chapter on silence notes that it prevents idle words, deceptive words, and

44 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De institutione novitiorum*, 90: ‘Verbum autem asperum et rixosum a omnino sermonibus disciplinatis secludendum esse per eundem probatum cum dicitur: “Labia stulti immiscent se rixi et os eius iurgiat provocat”. De verbo etiam mendoso quantum sit cavendum idem ipse insinuat dicens: “Testis falsus non erit impunitus, et qui mendacia loquitur non effugiet”’.

45 Peter of Celle, *Sermo 30: De passione Domini II*, 730: ‘Vide ergo diaetam potionis hujus: silentium, abstinentia, castitas, humilitas, charitas, obedientia, quies mentis, remotio immoderatae jocolationis, tranquillitas, pertinent ad observantiam hujus potionis, nec sine his salubriter sumitur, quia non ea purgatur, qui alia lege accipit illam, sed interficitur’.

46 Peter of Celle, *Sermo 30: De passione Domini II*, 730: ‘Silentio excluduntur mendacia, stulti- loquia, scurrilitates et omne verbum otiosum’.

dishonest words, as well as schismatic and heretical murmurings.<sup>47</sup> This re-imagined binary – lying/silence in place of lying/truth-telling – signals the extent to which the problem of lying had been absorbed into the monastic culture of disciplined speech.

Monastic culture thus served as a point of convergence for two traditions, one having to do with the ethics of lying itself and one that situated all speech acts as part of a disciplinary regime intended to avoid sin. Importantly, both emphasized that there was a link between speech and pedagogy that transcended the simple information conveyed by speaking and emerged from the ways in which good speech served as an exemplar of proper conduct. Each tradition implicitly recognized that speech occupied a special place within the field of ethical behaviour, one that stemmed from the fact that speaking is by nature both public and performative.<sup>48</sup> Whereas sins of intention such as greed or lust were grievous faults, they might well be confined to the interiorized self of the sinner, never visible to anyone else. Sins of speaking, including lies, were on display for others to witness. Bernard of Clairvaux seems to have had this point in mind in the vignette of the boastful monk found in *The Steps of Humility and Pride*. Much of the portrait focuses on how the monk will never stop talking. When discussing literature, 'he brings forth old things and new. Opinions fly forth, puffed up words resound. He jumps in before the question, he does not answer those who are questioning. He asks, he solves, and he completes the unfinished sentences of others'.<sup>49</sup> The boastful monk is one who cannot stop himself from talking (and, notably, Bernard sees silence as the cure for boasting). Note, however, that the entire scenario requires an audience. The boastful monk is 'hungry and thirsty for listeners, with whom he bandies about his vanities, to whom he pours out all that he thinks ...'.<sup>50</sup> His goal is 'not to edify anyone, but to show off his knowledge. He is able to edify, but he does not intend to do so. He cares not to teach you, nor to be taught what he does not know by you, but only to know that it is known what he knows'.<sup>51</sup>

47 Peter of Celle, *Tractatus de disciplina claustrali*, 101-102.

48 Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 709, notes that Augustine's *De mendacio* suggests that lying required interaction between people via some kind of visible or discernable signs.

49 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, 3: 48: 'Inventa autem occasione loquendi, si de litteris sermo exoritur, vetera proferuntur et nova; volant sententiae, verba resonant ampullosa. Praeuenit interrogantem, non quaerenti respondet. Ipse quaerit, ipse solvit, et verba colloquutoris imperfecta praecedat'.

50 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*, 48: 'Esurit et sitit auditores, quibus suas iactitet vanitates, quibus omne quod sentit effundat'.

51 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*: 'Non ut quempiam aedificet, sed ut scientiam iactet. Aedificare potest, sed non aedificare intendit. Non curat te docere vel a te doceri ipse quod nescit, sed ut scire sciatur quod scit'.

To speak badly, there must be someone to listen to you. As a result, a lie – or any form of bad speech – does a sort of double-damage peculiar to sins that require an audience. A lie is a sin in and of itself on the part of the liar, but it also represents a failure to model proper behavioural norms.

But the opposite is true as well. If the public nature of lying made it particularly dangerous, so too did it make truth-telling all the more valuable. The value accorded to truth-telling was the lasting legacy of the ways in which the Augustinian ethical framework for lying and the monastic culture of disciplined speech intermingled with each other. Their combination transformed truth-telling into a cultural practice that was simultaneously ethical, spiritual, and pedagogical. Speaking truthfully was an ethical act in and of itself, part of properly disciplined monastic speech. But it was also a pedagogical act that taught ethical behaviour to the rest of the community. In a rather different context, we catch an echo of this ideal once again in Bernard of Clairvaux, this time in his *On Consideration*. Discussing the problem of litigious suits and disputes brought by advocates and other secular officials, Bernard unleashes his scorn on those who ‘have taught their tongue to utter lies; they are skilled in opposing justice, learned on behalf of falsehood. They are wise so that they might do evil, eloquent so as to assault the truth. These are the sorts of people who instruct those by whom they should be instructed ... Nothing makes truth so easily apparent as a brief and simple narrative’.<sup>52</sup> Bernard here suggests that those who speak the simple truth should be accorded the status of teachers, but not on account of their eloquence, training, or erudition. Indeed, if anything, they are *less* learned than those who lie, transforming their sophistic education into a tool for deception. Rather, they are teachers because they speak truthfully. If Augustine had suggested that teaching required one to avoid lies and speak the truth so as to avoid teaching bad ethical behaviour, twelfth-century monastic writers pushed this idea a little further such that truth-telling itself became positive pedagogy. Every instance of truth-telling both reproduced a culture of ethical speech and also laid the groundwork for it to be reproduced by others, making every monk who participated in the monastic culture of speech not only a student of ethics but potentially also a teacher of it. And every lie was not only a breach of ethics but also a failed ‘teachable moment’.

52 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, 3: 408: ‘Hi sunt qui docuerunt linguas suas loqui mendacium, disertis adversus iustitiam, eruditi pro falsitate. Sapientes sunt ut faciant malum, eloquentes ut impugnent verum. Hi sunt qui instruunt a quibus fuerant instruendi...Nihil ita abscque labore manifestam facit veritatem, ut brevis et pura narratio’.

This approach to learning ethics was embodied, performative, and generally hierarchical, as greater mastery of discipline transformed one into a suitable exemplar for others. It is learning enacted through the very speech acts of every member of a monastic community, based not (only) on absorbing the content of speech but on internalizing and ultimately re-enacting its disciplinary value. Yet this particular culture of ethical pedagogy, the existence of which has been noted by numerous scholars, reveals an apparent paradox: if a culture of truth-telling was supposed to be enacted and 'taught' through the speech of the members of a monastic community, why did they need books like KBR 10807-11 or BMDV 267? Why have written texts teaching the ethics of lying when you have living individuals as models? The easy, and perhaps most intuitive, answer is to suggest that the two teaching methods do not really have anything to do with each other at all; they represent two different forms of cultural practice – one perhaps more intellectual, the other more experiential – and need not be read within the same context. But another possibility exists as well, one that links the production of such manuscripts to the culture of pedagogical speech. It emerges if we look at the circumstances in which KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 were produced.

### Written Ethics in a Performative Culture

However different Saint Laurent around 1100 and Marchiennes in the 1160s might have been, there are enough similarities in the circumstances in which KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 were copied to warrant comparison, beginning with the story of Saint Laurent and the production of KBR 10807-11. Founded largely through episcopal initiative (with the aid of the monastic reformer Richard of Saint Vanne), the community at Saint Laurent was closely allied with the bishop of Liège for most of its history.<sup>53</sup> Henry of Verdun, bishop from 1075 to 1091, was a particularly strong supporter of the community but also an interventionist one. Two years after becoming bishop, he deposed the then abbot of Saint Laurent, Wolbodo, whom later sources accuse of pride, profligacy, and a secular lifestyle.<sup>54</sup> Wolbodo's replacement, Berengar, was recruited from the abbey of Saint Hubert in the Ardennes, a community with close ties to Saint Laurent.<sup>55</sup> For the remainder of Henry's episcopacy,

53 Anselm of Liège, *Gesta episcoporum*, 209-210. Vercauteren, 'Note sur les origines,' 19-22.

54 *Cantatorium*, 86-89.

55 *Cantatorium*, 98.

both communities and the bishop enjoyed good relations. In 1091, however, Bishop Henry died, and Emperor Henry IV chose Otbert, a former provost of the church of Liège who had been exiled by Henry of Verdun, as the next bishop. Otbert immediately sought to ensure the loyalty of all the major monastic communities of the diocese, deposing abbots and replacing them where necessary. Berengar was among his targets, deposed in 1092 and replaced with the previously deposed abbot Wolbodo.<sup>56</sup>

Like Wolbodo, Berengar did not take his deposition lightly and formulated a long-term strategy to return to Saint Laurent. He was sheltered first at his former community at Saint Hubert and then at the priory of Evergnicourt in Reims. At least some of the monastic community of Saint Laurent accompanied Berengar into exile rather than profess obedience to the 'pseudo-abbot' Wolbodo and Bishop Otbert.<sup>57</sup> For some three years this group remained in exile, working to gain the support of ecclesiastical and secular rulers. Sources also suggest that support for Wolbodo at Saint Laurent grew cold, leading additional members of the community to join Berengar in exile in Reims.<sup>58</sup> Pressured by the secular nobility of Liège, Otbert finally relented in 1095 and invited Berengar to return.<sup>59</sup> Despite the fact that Otbert was excommunicate at the time, Berengar agreed to reconcile with Otbert, received his abbacy back from the bishop, and the exiled monks returned to the abbey of Saint Laurent.<sup>60</sup>

KBR 10807-11 was thus produced at one of the most challenging moments in the community's history and, along with some of the numerous other manuscripts produced during the same period, may well have been copied in response to these events.<sup>61</sup> In the aftermath of these, the community was likely fractious and factionalized. While it is possible that all of the monks of Saint Laurent eventually joined Berengar in exile, some of them would have spent only months there, while others had spent three years away from Liège. Among the people now living together were the group of monks who had originally refused obedience to Wolbodo and Otbert and had gone into exile from the start; some unknown number who had joined them; and perhaps some who had never gone into exile at all. Berengar

56 *Cantatorium*, 155-56, 175-77.

57 *Cantatorium*, 157-64.

58 *Chronicon Sancti Laurentii*, 278.

59 *Cantatorium*, 195-97.

60 *Cantatorium*, 198.

61 Snijders and Vanderputten, 'From Scandal to Monastic Penance'. My forthcoming article 'Origen's Story: Heresy, Book Production, and Monastic Reform at Saint Laurent de Liège' examines two other important manuscripts from Saint Laurent in this context.

too, as Tjamke Snijders and Steven Vanderputten have suggested, was in a difficult position, having refused at first to treat with Otbert but ultimately having relented and reconciled with him. Such an act may well have been viewed as hypocrisy (and it is worth noting that Augustine held that hypocrisy was a form of lying, a lie of 'deeds' rather than 'words').<sup>62</sup> For a period of three years, the members of the monastic community at Saint Laurent had pursued a variety of strategies and agendas in response to Otbert's deposition of Berengar, and it may not be a stretch to suggest that after the reintegration of the community, individuals would have viewed those who had pursued different paths with suspicion and had a difficult time trusting them. At the very least, the bonds of trust that would normally, or at least ideally, tie a community together would have been badly frayed.

The situation at Marchiennes in the 1160s was different, to be sure, but no less complicated. The community of Saint Rictrude at Marchiennes, founded in the seventh century as either a female community or a mixed community, was reformed into a male Benedictine community under the aegis of Gerard of Cambrai and Leduin of Saint Vaast in 1024.<sup>63</sup> It flourished until the problematic abbacy of Fulcard (1103-1115), who, according to surviving sources, nearly brought the community to ruin.<sup>64</sup> The community then came under the eye of the fiery reformer Alvisus, abbot of Anchin, who targeted the abbey as part of his broader strategy of Benedictine reform and network-building in the southern Low Countries.<sup>65</sup> In 1116, Marchiennes was reoccupied by the prior of Anchin and pupil of Alvisus, Amand de Castello, who reinvigorated the religious life there.<sup>66</sup> But he also tied Marchiennes tightly to Anchin, placing it in an effectively subservient position to the currently more prosperous and influential abbey, setting the stage for an eventual conflict between Marchiennes and Anchin, the latter backed by Alvisus, who was elected bishop of Arras in 1131.<sup>67</sup>

62 Snijders and Vanderputten, 'From Scandal to Monastic Penance'. *Cantatorium*, 198. For Augustine's understanding of hypocrisy as lying, see Colish, 'Rethinking Lying,' 159 and Hermanowicz, 'Augustine on Lying,' 711-714.

63 See Ugé, *Creating the Monastic Past*, 95-141; Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*, 287-316; Vanderputten and Meijns, 'Realities of Reformist Leadership'; Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*, 135-42; *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, 460.

64 See Vanderputten, 'Fulcard's Pigsty' for analysis and bibliography of Fulcard's abbacy.

65 The most recent scholarly analysis of these events is Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' esp. 126-131, for the situation at Marchiennes.

66 Gualbert of Marchiennes, *Patrocinium*, 152-53. Andreas of Marchiennes, *Miracula Sanctae Rictrudis*, 99-101.

67 Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' 126; Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*, 317-331.

This conflict, however, was a long time coming. The abbacy of Amand de Castello passed in relative peace, as did that of his successor Lietbert (1136-1141), another monk of Anchin. Nonetheless, as Marchiennes recovered its material security and prestige, the community at large strove to liberate itself from Anchin's shadow. These efforts placed the abbots of Marchiennes, who were close allies of Bishop Alvisus, in a difficult position. Lietbert resigned the abbacy in 1141, perhaps to avoid a looming showdown with the bishop.<sup>68</sup> But far from preventing such conflict, Lietbert's resignation effectively sparked it. The monks at Marchiennes elected a certain Odo as their next abbot, against the wishes of Alvisus, who insisted that Lietbert be reinstated.<sup>69</sup> Seeking an authoritative backing for their own duly elected abbot, the monks of Marchiennes sent a delegation to the pope, who responded with a letter affirming the right of the community at Marchiennes to elect its own abbot, condemning Alvisus, and ordering him to appear at a papal court.<sup>70</sup> The delegation, of course, took time to travel to and from Rome, and Alvisus in the meantime had tried to placate the community at Marchiennes by offering three candidates for abbot from whom to choose, thus allowing the monks some agency while retaining control over the election. The community selected one of them, Hugh, and the dispute might well have ended there with a compromise candidate. However, when the delegation from Marchiennes returned from Rome with the pope's letter in hand, Hugh promptly resigned the abbacy and left the community in limbo once again.<sup>71</sup>

It was not until 1142 that something akin to a resolution was achieved. At the council of Lagny, Alvisus repented of his interference in the affairs of Marchiennes and allowed the community's original choice for abbot, Odo, to reassume his position. The pope issued a pardon to Alvisus, leading to a reconciliation between bishop and both Benedictine communities, all of whom remained closely linked.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, the fallout from these events seems to have lasted for years. Odo resigned as abbot of Marchiennes after only one year. His successor, Ingran, lasted somewhat longer, but he also resigned under suspicious circumstances in 1148. It was only under his successor, Hugh II (1148-1158), that true stability seems to have returned

68 Andreas of Marchiennes, *Miracula Sanctae Rictrudis*, 110; Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' 127.

69 Andreas of Marchiennes, *Miracula Sanctae Rictrudis*, 110.

70 Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' 127-28.

71 Andreas, *Miracula Sanctae Rictrudis*, 110.

72 Andreas, *Miracula Sanctae Rictrudis*, 111; Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' 129-30.

to the community at Marchiennes.<sup>73</sup> It is likely that BMDV 267, along with many other manuscripts, was produced during the abbacy of Hugh II.<sup>74</sup>

The troubles faced by Marchiennes and Saint Laurent differed in many particulars, most notably the lack of a fully realized communal schism in the case of the latter. Still, there were important similarities as well. Both involved attempts by monastic communities to liberate themselves from episcopal meddling. Both involved disputes over the abbacy of the community and an extended period of confusion and uncertainty as to whether a particular individual was, in fact, the legitimate abbot. And both conflicts, once settled, were followed by an intensive period of manuscript production, very possibly part of broader strategies of recuperation and reconciliation. The case of Marchiennes may have lacked the drama of exile, but it nonetheless represented another example of corporate trauma that would have challenged the coherence of the community. And lacking coherence, mutual trust would also have been in short supply. If the crises at both Saint Laurent in 1092 and Marchiennes in 1141 seem, in many ways, typical of the sorts of political conflicts that twelfth-century Benedictine communities often faced, it is worth noting that such events could engender intra-communal 'crises of trust' that impacted the daily social and cultural life of a monastery.

Such situations would have had particularly important ramifications for the culture of ethical and disciplinary speech acts that were supposed to characterize monastic society. A failure of communal trust would have meant that members of the community would have had, at best, a limited ability to function as exemplars for each other's ethical behaviour, particularly when it came to truth-telling. Suspicion, doubt, conflict, and schism were the Achilles' heels of the pedagogic culture of truth-telling. Recall, for instance, that Peter of Celle grouped schismatic and heretical 'murmurings' among the evil speech acts that could be avoided by silence.<sup>75</sup> In a community beset by internal conflict, however, any speech might easily be construed as problematic, schismatic, or fallacious by one group or another. In such a situation, any exemplar for teaching ethical speech had to be externalized; it could not be a person (or, at least, not a person who was a member of the community). I would suggest that KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 were those exemplars, written texts, depersonalized and external to the world of embodied behaviour. In

73 *Vita Hugonis Marchianensis*, 348.

74 See Černý, 'Les manuscrits,' 58-60.

75 Peter of Celle, *Tractatus de disciplina claustrali*, 101-102.

the ideal form of monastic life, such texts might have been seen as sterile simulacra, preserved but lifeless representations of vivified models of ethical behaviour. But in a community where no person could be trusted to model such behaviour, it served as a surrogate, a standard by which the community could measure itself. Its usefulness lay in the very fact that it was depersonalized.

Demonstrating a clear link between the copying of KBR 10807 and BMDV 267 and the conflicts that preceded their production is a difficult and speculative business. It is worth noting at the outset that both books were produced as part of substantial programs of manuscript production that took place at both monasteries after these conflicts; intuitively, it makes sense to think of these programs as responses to the conflicts.<sup>76</sup> However, there are more concrete reasons to interpret both manuscripts as attempts to deal with the aftermath of communal conflict and trauma. Consider first the case of Saint Laurent. KBR 10807-11 was, in fact, one of a number of manuscripts containing texts on ethics, vices, and virtues produced around this time. In addition to the list of vices and virtues added to the front of KBR 10260-63 mentioned above, scribes at Saint Laurent also copied two Carolingian texts on the vices and virtues, one by Ambrose Autpertus and one by the figure usually identified as 'Albinus Eremita' or Albinus of Gorze, both preceded in their respective manuscripts by Isidore's penitential *Synonyma*.<sup>77</sup> One of the manuscripts also contained a copy of Julianus Pomerius' *On the Active and Contemplative Life*, the third book of which discusses the principal virtues and vices.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, they copied Isidore's *Sentences*, sometimes referred to as *On the Highest Good*, but given the title *On Virtues* in this manuscript.<sup>79</sup> The scriptorium also produced a compendium that combined doctrinal texts of Alcuin with a variety of short excerpted works on penance, the beatitudes, and key virtues of Christian life.<sup>80</sup> Scribes at Saint Laurent were engaged in a concerted effort to produce

76 On the wave of production at Marchiennes, see Černý, 'Les manuscrits,' 58-67 and Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*, 320-340. At Saint Laurent, based on my research, there are around twenty-five surviving manuscripts from the period c. 1100-1120.

77 Brussels, KBR MS 9361-67, fols. 90v-96v and 9875-80, fols. 82r-156v. For the latter manuscript, see Van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique*, 2:309. The former manuscript is not in Van den Gheyn's catalogue, but Vanderputten and Snijders, 'From Scandal to Monastic Penance' offers a description of its contents.

78 Brussels KBR MS 9875-80, fols. 1v-64r, initially mis-attributed in the manuscript to Isidore, and then corrected to the more common mis-attribution of Prosper of Aquitaine.

79 Brussels, KBR MS 9918-19.

80 Brussels, KBR MS 9669-81. See Van den Gheyn, *Catalogue des manuscrits*, 2: 305-06. This is a dense and complicated manuscript deserving of further examination.

texts on ethics at the turn of the twelfth century, and KBR 10807-11 was a key piece of this broader program.<sup>81</sup> Such a clear, programmatic focus suggests that these manuscripts were produced with a particular goal in mind or in response to a particular set of circumstances; the exile and schism of the community would seem to be the most obvious candidate.

The textual features of *On Lying* and *Against Lying* in KBR 10807-11 also indicate that the manuscript may have been self-consciously designed to serve as a surrogate for interpersonal modes of teaching ethics. As mentioned earlier, KBR 10807-11 does not contain the entirety of either *On Lying* or *Against Lying* but only excerpted sections of both texts. *On Lying* is, as it turns out, quite extensively excerpted. The only portion of the text present in KBR 10807-11 is Augustine's typology of the eight types of lie, ultimately comprising only a handful of lines in the manuscript.<sup>82</sup> The excerpt from *Against Lying* is much more extensive, amounting to just over half the text, mostly from the second half. Several chapters that echo the basic argument of *On Lying* – that there is no such thing as a useful lie, as no good can come from sin – are prioritized. These are followed by an extensive array of chapters giving scriptural citations, either ones that clearly demonstrate the evils of lying or ones that might *seem* to justify lying but do not if read properly.<sup>83</sup> The cumulative effects of these particular excerpts is the removal of all material that suggests that one of a teacher's responsibilities is to model proper ethical behaviour for his students, including all references to the links between pedagogy and lying and, in particular, all suggestions that lying itself teaches bad ethical behaviour. Instead, readers of the manuscript are presented simply with a typology of lies and a series of objective, textual *exempla* that either demonstrate the evils of lying or show behaviour to be avoided. If the very existence of KBR 10807-11 hints at a mode of teaching ethics that was 'depersonalized', the ways in which the text were excerpted seems designed to accomplish that process. The special care that was taken to de-emphasize the idea that lying or truth-telling was itself pedagogical raises the possibility that the manuscript itself was designed to be the pedagogue, stepping in for the members of the monastic community at a moment when it was difficult to unify around any particular living exemplar.

81 All of these manuscripts share considerable formal similarities in terms of size, layout, and decoration.

82 Fols. 39v-40r.

83 Primarily the material in Augustine of Hippo, *Contra mendacium*, 486-514.

The evidence from Marchiennes generally reinforces the picture that emerges from the case of Saint Laurent. There is also some oblique evidence that suggests that the problem of lying was embedded in the conflict over abbatial leadership and communal independence at Marchiennes. In the midst of this dispute (and others in which he was also involved), Alvisus solicited the support of Bernard of Clairvaux. The Cistercian abbot was already favourably inclined to Alvisus's reform efforts, given that they were largely inspired by the Cistercian model of monasticism.<sup>84</sup> He backed Alvisus in his battle with Marchiennes by sending a letter to the pope endorsing the actions of Alvisus and condemning the monks. Of the monastic community he wrote: 'The monks of Marchiennes have come to you with a spirit full of lies and falsehoods against the Lord and his anointed. They have made unjust claims against the bishop of Arras, whose life and conduct was hitherto of good repute in all places. Who are these, who bark like dogs, who call good evil, who place light in the shadows? Who are these who, contrary to the law, speak to the deaf and place obstacles in the way of the blind?'<sup>85</sup> There are two points worth noting in this letter. First, and most obviously, it demonstrates that, well before the copying of BMDV 267, the problem of lying had been explicitly woven into the dispute between Alvisus and the monks of Marchiennes. Second, and more generally, Bernard's accusation against the monks of Marchiennes (one that he recanted during the reconciliation process) reveals how readily the idea of lying could be weaponized in moments of conflict.

Furthermore, the Marchiennes copy of *On Lying* was clearly part of a programmatic effort to textualize moral guides similar to the one undertaken at Saint Laurent. Whereas scribes and scholars at Saint Laurent focused on collecting a variety of texts on the vices and virtues, the community at Marchiennes went all-in on Augustine. In the third quarter of the twelfth century, scribes at Marchiennes copied an enormous corpus of Augustine's works, including *On Lying*. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the copy of *On Lying* was not simply some side-product of a broader enthusiasm for Augustine but part of a targeted effort to use a body of Augustinian texts as a foundational guide to a religiously inflected ethical life. Consider the ten

84 Vanderputten, 'A Time of Great Confusion,' 112-113.

85 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistola 339*, par. 8, ed. Leclercq and Rochais, 279-80: 'Marcianenses monachi venerunt ad vos in spiritu mendacii et spiritu erroris, adversus Dominum et adversus christum eius. Verbum iniquum constituerunt adversus Atrebatensem episcopum, cuius conversationis et vitae bonus odor fuit hactenus in omni loco. Qui sunt isti, qui ut canes mordent, qui dicunt bonum malum, qui ponunt lucem tenebras? Qui sunt isti, qui contra legem maledicunt surdo et coram caeco ponunt offencilum'.

surviving manuscripts containing works of Augustine that probably date from this period.<sup>86</sup> Seven of these manuscripts contain single, complete copies of Augustine's major theological works such as *The City of God* and *On the Trinity* or substantively complete copies of his sermons or letters.<sup>87</sup> These seven manuscripts are also generally uniform in size and layout, about 330mm tall and 250mm wide (with two standouts that are much larger). Overall, they present a format typical of high-quality patristic books produced by twelfth-century monastic communities.

The remaining three manuscripts, however, are of an altogether different character.<sup>88</sup> They are considerably smaller than the other Augustinian books, averaging about 290mm in height and about 190mm in width. Instead of containing complete copies of a single long text by Augustine, all three of them contain a medley of shorter works, generally on didactic, pastoral, or ethical topics. They were very likely produced in concert and represent a coherent and complementary trilogy of books. One of them (Douai BMDV 270) is a sort of primer on the value of asceticism, combining Augustine's *On Virginity*; his *On Seeing God*; an excerpt from *The City of God* on the spiritual body; his *Disputation Against Fortunatus*, a work against Manichaean dualism; and his *On Good Marriage* and *On Holy Widowhood*, both works that dealt with Jovinian's attacks on asceticism.<sup>89</sup> The second book (Douai BMDV 265) contains a trio of texts that are simultaneously doctrinal and pastoral, outlining key Catholic beliefs but also detailing how those beliefs ought to operate in daily life: *On Free Will*, *On True Religion*, and *On True Faith*.<sup>90</sup> The third book, which contains *On Lying*, may be the most interesting of the three. In addition to *On Lying* it contains a second work on ethics, the sermons *On Avarice and Luxury*, two anti-heretical texts, and Augustine's exhortatory letter to Darius Comes.<sup>91</sup> It also contains two works that deal with pedagogy. The first is *On Christian Teaching*, a standard work on modes of teaching tied to Christian belief. The second, found immediately before the copies of *On Lying* and *On Avarice and Luxury*, is Augustine's sermon *On Pastors*, a work focusing on Ezekiel 34 that weaves together observations about pastoral care with insights about teaching. One of the major themes of this sermon is the necessity for 'shepherds' to live an upright life so as to set a good example for their followers, who often imitate their pastor in

86 Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*, 324.

87 Douai BMDV MSS 250, 258, 281, 271, 275, 251, and 277.

88 Douai BMDV MSS 265, 267, and 270.

89 Dehaisnes, *Catalogue général des manuscrits*, vol. 6. Douai, 142-43.

90 Dehaisnes, *Catalogue général des manuscrits*, vol. 6. Douai 139.

91 Dehaisnes, *Catalogue général des manuscrits*, vol. 6. Douai 140.

both his good and bad ways.<sup>92</sup> This concern for the example set by good conduct probably explains the connection of *On Pastors* to both *On Lying* and *On Avarice and Luxury*. In fact, if one read *On Christian Teaching*, *On Pastors*, and *On Lying* together, they would coalesce into a textual guide for constructing precisely the sort of culture of ethical pedagogy outlined above, one that blurs the line between acting ethically and teaching ethics. Such a guide would be most useful precisely when that culture had broken down.

Cumulatively, the evidence from Saint Laurent and Marchiennes indicates that both communities experienced a traumatic conflict that would have likely divided the community or, at the very least, severely impacted its coherence. The scriptoria of both communities became highly active in the aftermath of these conflicts. Ethical texts, in one form or another, represented a key strand of textual production in the post-conflict programs of manuscript production. The copies of the Augustinian texts on lying were key parts of a concerted effort to textualize ethical pedagogy at both communities, efforts that probably responded to problems posed by communal conflict and schism. I suggest that ethical texts were attractive at these moments, not only because ethics was a topic of special importance, but also because of the difficulties such conflicts would have posed to modes of learning ethics based on performance, embodiment, and imitation. When there was insufficient concord or trust in the rectitude of the community, learning ethics by experiencing the behaviour of the community directly would have been difficult. The fact that *trust* was central to this problem perhaps explains why the problem of lying, not normally high on the list of monastic vices, was of particular urgency in these circumstances. The written texts about lying found in KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 operated as surrogate teachers of ethics in the wake of the breakdown of a culture that depended on living exemplars.

## Conclusions

KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 sit at the intersection of two simultaneously ethical and pedagogical cultures: one rooted in the communal performance of speech acts in which all members of the community were both student and teacher; and one based on written texts. Understanding the circumstances that prompted the production of these two manuscripts helps illuminate the interplay between these two modes of learning.

92 Augustine, *Sermo 46: De pastoribus*, 529-570, esp. 535-38.

On one hand, they clearly represent something of a transition from a culture of learning based on living models, in which some individuals were clear authorities, to one based on disembodied texts, which flattened out the ethical hierarchy of the community.<sup>93</sup> But several other factors suggest that the situation was not as simple as texts simply supplanting living individuals as instruments of learning. First, the value of the texts contained in KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 was not that they were written or textual but that they were *impersonal*; their lessons were not dependent on any given person's mastery of ethical behaviour, but instead made all learners subject to the text and so placed them on equal footing. Second, the fact that the interplay between different modes of learning at Saint Laurent and Marchiennes did not involve a shift from embodied to textual ones so much as a shift from interpersonal to impersonal ones suggests that there was nothing natural or even desirable about transforming the teaching of ethical norms into a textual practice. It happened only when the performative, embodied culture of ethics that had defined these communities broke down.

Functionally then, the written texts were designed to do the pedagogic work that no member of the community was able to do. We might even say that the texts had been imbued with a particular form of educational agency by living individuals who no longer possessed it. Replacing living authoritative exemplars with written texts was a choice foisted upon the communities by a particular set of circumstances, not a goal in and of itself. The goal was to create surrogate textual models that could, insofar as it was possible, fulfill the functions previously accomplished by the members of the communities themselves and thus perpetuate a culture of ethical learning. The development of a form of pedagogy based on texts was designed not to supplant an inferior system of learning with a completely new one but, rather, to supplement or perhaps even repair a broken one. As a result, thinking of the process as a transition between two opposing forms of intellectual culture offers an overly stark and rigid picture of a dynamic and fluid situation. The production of KBR 10807-11 and BMDV 267 represented a real transformation in which ethics entered into a sphere of learning that was scholastic, intellectual, and literate. However, it is likely that the communities of Saint Laurent and Marchiennes had their eyes on the recuperation as much as the supercession of an embodied approach to learning ethics.

93 Jaeger, *Envy of Angels* and further, Jaeger, 'Charismatic Body, Charismatic Text'.

## About the author

**Jay Diehl** is associate professor at Long Island University. He received his PhD in medieval European history from New York University, and has been Visiting Foreign Researcher at Ghent University and Mellon Fellow and Visiting Professor at the Medieval Institute of Notre Dame University. His research focuses on monastic intellectual culture, manuscript studies, and church reform in northern Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, particularly in the diocese of Liège. He is especially interested in the history of the written word, scriptural exegesis, hagiography, and the liturgy. His current book project is the first complete study of the manuscripts of Saint Laurent in Liège. It examines the ways in which the intersection of writing and community shaped the transformation of monastic learning in the twelfth century. In 2017 he co-edited a volume about the history of medieval Liège with Steven Vanderputten and Tjamke Snijders.



## 6 Making Space for Learning in the Miracle Stories of Peter the Venerable

*Marc Saurette*

### Abstract

This chapter explores how the monastery served as a site of narrative remembrance intended to inculcate monastic *disciplina* by examining twelfth-century hagiographic texts produced at Cluny. Peter the Venerable's *De miraculis* and Ralph of Sully's *Vita Petri Venerabilis* give evidence of the nominally silent monks trading stories amongst one another, and they both highlight the chapter as a privileged location for sharing useful stories. In his retelling of a divine and demonic visitation witnessed by abbot Hugh of Semur, Peter the Venerable adds a new focus on distinct Cluniac places (chapter, dormitory, and refectory), identified as sites of virtue. Doing so allows him both to advocate for new definitions of Cluniac monasticism and also to imbue key claustral spaces with these innovative ideas.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, orality, architecture

### Introduction

Just as a door opens or closes depending on necessity, thus should the door of your mouth be open to usefulness or closed to foolishness and empty words. It should be opened to the brethren for their edification and closed to the distraction of those voicing spiteful words or grumbling. It should be opened to the encouragement of visiting monks and closed to the talkativeness of the meddlesome. In brief, only useful things should be said and heard, and if they cannot be, the hermit should not break his silence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 20, 40-41: '[U]t sicut ostium necessitate tantum aperitur et clauditur, sic oris tui ostium utilitati aperiat, nugacitati vel vanitati clauditur. Aperiat

With these words of spiritual encouragement, Peter the Venerable (abbot of Cluny, r. 1122-1156) advises the Cluniac hermit Gilbert that speech control is a key ascetic practice. Words between monks could educate and edify but could also distract brothers from their spiritual goals or, worse, lead to dissension. Peter builds a spatial metaphor, based on Psalm 140, that depicts the mouth as a door to be guarded carefully – swung open to permit positive communication and kept barred against useless talk. Hermits who lacked the physical walls of a cloister, Peter suggests, must imagine their bodies as an enclosure and its parts analogous to the different precincts of the monastery.<sup>2</sup> This use of imagined space to teach monastic practices, I argue, is a common pedagogical technique of Peter the Venerable and his monks.<sup>3</sup>

Though directed to a Cluniac recluse, Peter's advice expresses his thinking about the speech suitable to all of his monks. He expected his monks to foster what Scott Bruce calls a 'celestial silence' in imitation of angels.<sup>4</sup> Except for certain periods when conversation was permitted, a monk's lips were intended to utter only the memorized words of fixed texts in song, chant,

fratribus ad aedificationem, claudatur ad obloquentium vel murmurantium detractorem. Aperiatur ad exhortationem supervenientium religiosorum, claudatur ad verborum curiosorum. Et ut breviter dicam, aut audiatur aliquid utile aut dicatur, vel si ista non fuerint, silentii censura a solitario non rumpatur'. I have modified Scott Bruce's translation in *Silence and Sign*, 48. Subsequent translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

2 Peter repeats this idea throughout the *De miraculis*, perhaps most famously in his description of Matthew of Albano: 'He did not abandon, under the pretext of any [pastoral] cares, anything of the offices, of the chants, [nor] of the full Cluniac psalmody. He maintained the observances of the cloister in his palace and, while exposed to the world, he held himself apart from secular vanities – as if in an inviolable enclosure – on account of a commitment to religion made inborn through long and constant practice. He confined himself within himself [...] more solitary than collegial'. Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 2, chap. 14, lines 10-16, 124: 'Nichil de officis, nichil de cantibus, nichil de proluxa Cluniacensi psalmodia, quarumlibet curarum pretextu reliquit. Servabat in palatio instituta claustrum, et mundo expositus, firmo et longo usu, velut innato religionis proposito, a secularium vanitatibus, se quasi septo firmissimo secernebat. Cohibebat se intra se [...] magis solus quam cum aliis'. Hereafter, this text will be cited by book and chapter number, followed by line and page reference (e.g., book 2, chap. 14, lines 10-16, 124).

3 The metaphor of a door to express the idea that the mouth/lips must be guarded like a door has a long literary and religious tradition, drawing on the biblical texts Micah 7:5 and Psalms 140:3. For close reading of the biblical text and parsing of the Hebrew, see Booij, 'Psalm 141', 97-106. The image is used in many early monastic writings, such as the *Homilies* of Valerius (a fifth-century monk of Lérins); see homily no. 5 *De oris insolentia*, coll. 706-709. In chapter eight of the *Rule of the Master (Regula Magistri)*, monks are told, when readying themselves for the great silence of the night, to chant the verse, 'Place, O Lord, a guard on my mouth and a door around my lips' (Ps. 140:3). A final example, in common circulation in Peter's time, was the injunction towards silence/contenance in Gregory the Great's *Moralium libri*, chap. 17.

4 Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 14. The first sections of my essay are indebted to the conceptualizing of speech and silence provided by Bruce's work.

prayer, and oral reading. Most speech at Cluny was thus intended to be recollective, not inventive. At set times, however – during chapter meetings or periods designated for unstructured activities in the cloister – monks could freely speak their thoughts so long as they engaged in the kind of ‘useful’ speech described above. These times, I suggest, form a key part of a monk’s development and learning.

The first part of this chapter explores what Cluniac monks would talk about when they had the chance. Normative texts from Peter the Venerable’s abbacy suggest that Cluniac monks were unrepentant gossips or grumblers and that their conversations tended to distract from their spiritual goals. Letters and narratives written by and about Peter the Venerable, however, show monks to be members of a vibrant network, exchanging stories with uplifting and edifying messages. The second part of this essay examines a single chapter from Peter the Venerable’s *Book on Miracles* as an example of the Cluniac trade in miracle stories. This retelling of a vision of the Christ child highlights the importance of locating miraculous and hagiographic narratives in the claustral spaces of Cluny as sites of memory. Just as Peter uses a spatial metaphor to clarify monastic practices in his advice to Gilbert, this story uses images of claustral space to commemorate key teachings about Cluniac life.

## Locating Speech

In Peter the Venerable’s time, the monastery of Cluny housed a community of 300 to 400 monks – not counting pilgrims or visitors on official business.<sup>5</sup> Even the intimate claustral spaces intended for the Cluniac brothers teemed with a bustling throng of lay servants going about their work.<sup>6</sup> As Peter himself acknowledges, ‘the regular intrusion of administrative matters and the multitude of visitors’ at Cluny made silence difficult to maintain.<sup>7</sup> To address this concern, he sought to minimize lay presence in the claustral

5 This is a number cited by Peter’s statute no. 55; *Statuta Petris Venerabilis abbatis Cluniacensis IX* (n46/7), 85; hereafter cited *Statuta*.

6 Peter reiterates stricter enforcement of the cloister as monastic space in his statute no. 23: ‘On the enclosure of the claustral buildings’ (*Statuta*, 60). For the twelfth-century servants at Cluny see Constable, *Famuli and Conversi*, 384. More recently Isabelle Cochelin provides an exhaustive account of lay entry into the eleventh-century cloister of Cluny, in her ‘Regardes monastiques sur la double clôture de Cluny’ (forthcoming in 2019) – an advance copy of which she kindly provided me while preparing this paper.

7 *Statuta*, no. 19, 58: ‘frequentiam negotiorum et multitudinem supervenientum’.

precinct and to reduce the times and places in which speech was permissible to monks, as Scott Bruce has shown.<sup>8</sup> By the middle of Peter's abbacy, speaking freely was not permitted at any time in the churches and chapels, refectories, and dormitories of Cluny and any of its dependencies – even if speech had been permitted there previously. In the cloister, conversation was forbidden 'from Vespers until the third hour (*terce*) of the next day'.<sup>9</sup> While this injunction suggests that speech was permitted for as much as seven hours a day in the cloister, in practice there were traditionally only two periods allowed for speaking about 'useful things' at Cluny. Ulrich's late eleventh-century customary explains that there were two periods a day allowing conversation: following the prayers after the chapter meeting (just before *terce*); and after *sext* (around noon).<sup>10</sup> As an indication of the Cluniac anxiety about these opportunities for speaking openly, Ulrich cautioned that conversations should be kept brief during these periods. Peter would eventually reduce the two times to one.<sup>11</sup> During Lent, moreover, Peter required that an unbroken silence be maintained in the cloister.<sup>12</sup> He conceived of Cluny itself as subject to greater restraint than its dependencies, and his statutes extended the zone of silence to include the infirmary complex, the cemetery, and the cemetery cloister as well as most of the workrooms.

Exceptions to the rule of silence give an indication of what constituted places and opportunities for 'useful' speech at Cluny. Peter's statutes explicitly allow some limited interactions with people inside or outside the monastery when necessary for the practical support of the monastic community. The abbot, claustral prior, and hosteller, for example, were expected to welcome guests and to converse with them. The monks managing the construction zone of the *maior ecclesia* (Cluny III) and associated worksites were likewise exempted from injunctions for silence so that they could speak with tradespeople and labourers without restriction.<sup>13</sup> Within the claustral precinct, each workroom had a single master who alone was designated to verbally instruct and manage his workers.

Another kind of licit speech was didactic or disciplinary speech. In the cells of the novices and the attached cloister, the novices and their master were allowed to speak 'where and when they are accustomed to speak' for

8 Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 148-150.

9 *Statuta*, no. 42, 75: 'ab hora vespertina usque ad horam tertiam alterius diei'.

10 Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 26-27, citing Ulrich's *Customary* 1.12.

11 *Statuta*, no. 21, 59.

12 *Statuta*, no. 20, 59.

13 *Statuta*, no. 19, 57-58.

pedagogical purposes.<sup>14</sup> Abbots, priors, and the sub-priors (called the 'guardians of order' by Peter) could interrogate and compel spoken answers from monks they encountered at any time in their rounds as long as it was to ensure the maintenance of good order.<sup>15</sup> Exceptions were also made *ad hoc* to senior monks of proven discipline to provide corrective speech to delinquents and novices, but most disciplinary action was intended to take place in chapter.

During chapter, monks spoke out about their own and others' transgressions, as well as faced the correction of the community. The time of chapter, as Isabelle Cochelin shows, was also a venue for public announcements and community decision-making. Abbots were chosen there, novices were accepted, the unwell announced their departure to the infirmary, and books, such as the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, spiritual treatises, and outside correspondence, were read out loud.<sup>16</sup> Before the twelfth century, oblates had gathered in the cloister and the chapter room to memorize liturgical texts, learn how to read and sing, and imitate the *habitus* of older monks.<sup>17</sup> Thus teaching children would have taken place at the very centre of the monastery and their lessons would have resounded in the monks' ears. By Peter's day, however, the reception of oblates had been curtailed and elementary instruction was sequestered into a separate novice complex south of the refectory.<sup>18</sup> But the chapter still retained its didactic role as a sort of classroom and newsroom for regular monks.

During chapter, Cluniac monks sometimes listened to sermons from visitors or senior monks and then discussed them. Peter writes to the bishop of Thérouanne, for example, to recommend that he should come lecture his monks about their supposed pride. Though Peter's tone is acerbic and facetious, he nonetheless highlights that chapter would be the time and place for such an activity.<sup>19</sup> Even a late-in-life convert to Cluny such as Peter Abelard taught in chapter. In a consolatory letter to Heloise (c. 1142), Abbot Peter eulogizes Abelard's teaching as follows:

14 *Statuta*, no. 19, 57-58: 'qui ubi et quando loqui solent loquentur'.

15 *Statuta*, no. 19, p. 58: *subprioribus ordinis custodibus*. For more on these figures, see Scott Bruce, 'Lurking with Spiritual Intent', 75-89.

16 Cochelin, 'Discussions au chapitre', 337-361.

17 See Isabelle Cochelin and Susan Boynton's contributions to *Medieval Monastic Education*, chap. 2 and 3, 7-34.

18 *Statuta*, no. 36, 70-71. New recruits (no less than twenty in age in accordance with Peter's statute 36) were strictly segregated into the noviciate space for at least a month (an increase in time from as little as a night in former practice) and thereafter spent most of their time there in communal study and private reading until they were seen as able to join the community of monks.

19 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 102, 262-64. The letter as a whole has the tone of 'If you're talking trash behind our backs, at least have the courage to say it to our faces'.

He was continuously reading, often at prayer and always silent, except when a friendly conversation with his fellow monks [*fratrum familiaris collatio*] or a public speech [*publicus sermo*] to them in chapter about holy matters compelled him to speak. [...] His mind, his tongue, his actions were always cultivating, teaching and saying holy, philosophical and learned things.<sup>20</sup>

For someone so concerned with the dangers posed by speech, it seems a bit surprising that Peter the Venerable praises the teaching of someone who only entered Cluny after being condemned for heretical thinking and being sentenced to perpetual silence at the Council of Sens (1141).<sup>21</sup> While this was a punishment Peter the Venerable successfully petitioned Pope Innocent II to revoke, it seems telling about the diversity of speakers who might address the chapter at Cluny.

The chapter also seems to be a place for news to be disseminated and stories told. In Peter the Venerable's *Book on Miracles*, we see the public proclamation of Matthew of Albano's decision to enter the monastery to take place there.<sup>22</sup> In his *Life of Peter*, Ralph of Sully describes an emotional funeral oration Abbot Peter gave to the monks of Cluny, after having already done so in the chapter of Rueil:

there in chapter this brother [i.e., Peter] repeated the speech about the dead brother filled with compunction, tears and devotion. [...] Again he grieved, again tears flowed from the paternal eyes and he urged his audience to a similar display.<sup>23</sup>

20 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola* 115, 307: 'Lectio erat ei continua, oratio frequens, silentium iuge, nisi cum aut fratrum familiaris collatio, aut ad ipsos in conventu de divinis publicus sermo eum loqui urgebant. Mens eius, lingua eius, opus eius, semper divina, semper philosophica semper eruditoria meditabatur, docebat, fatebatur'. I am modifying Scott's translation (*Silence and Sign Language*, p. 51) to translate 'in conventu' as 'in chapter'; Cochelin has convincingly argued that that *conventum* and *capitulum* were often synonymous terms (see 'Discussions au chapitre', paragraph 16-19).

21 Mews, 'The Council of Sens': 374-45.

22 See Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 2, chap. 7, where Matthew of Albano's conversion to the monastic life at Saint Martin des Champs is recounted joyfully by the prior Theobaldus to a spontaneous gathering of the brothers in chapter. In the *De miraculis*, book 2, chap. 9, when Matthew of Albano's relationship with his subordinates is described, Prior Matthew would also engage in direct lecture, gathering his monks in the chapter room, and then, after a long speech, admonishing them to improve their lives.

23 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 22C: 'Venimus Cluniacum, et ibi Frater in capitulo iterum de fratre mortuo incipit sermonem plenum compunctione, plenum lacrymis, plenum devotione. [...] Iterum luctus, iterum lacrymae a paternis oculis fluunt et audientes ad consimilia invitant'.

This passage highlights the chapter as an intimate space for the monks to express their emotions and speak without being observed by outsiders. It also makes clear that stories told in the chapter were expected to teach models for behaviour. In the chapter and in the noviciate, therefore, more opportunities to engage in didactic learning were possible than the statutes might suggest. When the discussions started during the chapter meeting moved outside into the cloister and the time for free conversation began, however, Peter was worried about what might happen.

### Silencing Dangerous Speech

Open conversation was worrisome to Peter the Venerable, who may have witnessed or perhaps even just feared the possibility that his monks might damage their reputation or, worse, might disrupt the harmony of the monastery with a few infelicitous words. 'By filling the whole day with trifling words', Peter condemns, monks 'may be seen as no different from lay people', indicating that idle words could distract monks from their spiritual focus but also had the potential to damage the monks' public image.<sup>24</sup> More dangerous than unproductive or idle conversation (*nulla prorsus eius utilitas*) were the 'harmful' words (*perniciosum*) that might be spoken.<sup>25</sup> Peter condemns the monks who spend their time gossiping, grumbling, and sowing dissension.<sup>26</sup> Idle conversation should be condemned, Peter remarks, because it opens the door to discord:

'idleness', called 'the enemy of the soul' by Father Benedict, resides in so many of us – especially those who are called *conversi* – such that in the cloister or outside the cloister, apart from reading a little and writing only rarely, either they sleep, leaning against the walls of the cloister [...] and so 'from the rising of the sun until its setting' or rather, almost from the

24 *Statuta*, no. 42, 75-76: 'integra die nugacibus verbis, aut rebus vacantes, in nullo a saecularibus differre videntur'.

25 *Statuta*, no. 21, 70-71.

26 Peter also worried about letting servants into the infirmary out of concern they would pass on gossip. See *Statuta*, no. 24, 61: 'When gossiping to lay persons in the manner of lay people, they reveal the secrets of the monastic regimen, or the regular discipline, which either they saw or they heard from someone, while standing around in their regular duties' ('Praeter hoc etiam illud in causa fuit, quod secreta monastici ordinis, aut disciplinas regulares, quas utpote in regularibus officinis assidue commanentes, vel videbant, vel ab aliis audiebant, more saecularibus divulgantes detergebant').

middle of the night at which times one may [do so] with impunity, they fill almost the whole day with vain, hateful words and (what is worse!) even more often with slanderous speech.<sup>27</sup>

Idleness, Peter worries, leads monks to murmur and to attack fellow monks. He was worried not just about the potential spiritual dangers to the monk himself but also about the possible damage to communal harmony.<sup>28</sup> This last point needs some context to understand what Peter may have feared or knew could happen.

In the early days of Peter's abbacy, silence was a political virtue at Cluny. The statutes we have been discussing above were likely first proposed in 1132 during the aftermath of Cluny's abbatial schism (c. 1125-1126) and the papal schism (1130s), which saw the *ecclesia cluniacensis* riven by factions. These divisions made Peter sensitive to the potential for divisive speech among his monks. Peter of Poitiers's description of the two schisms in his *Panegyric on Abbot Peter* and Peter the Venerable's subsequent defence of this work (the *Apology for Peter of Poitiers*) highlight deceitful speech as the root of monastic disorder. The *Panegyric* represents the resolution of the abbatial schism (ending with the imprisonment of Peter's rival Pontius) as a successfully muzzling of his opponents:

Now, excellent father [Peter], after you returned the victor from the city  
[of Rome]

The perfidious tongues of the Pontians are silenced.

The impudent mouths of these dogs quell their rabid barking.<sup>29</sup>

27 *Statuta*, no. 39, 74: 'Causa instituta huius fuit, quia otiositas iuxta patrem Benedictum inimica animae, in tantum magnam partem nostrorum, eorum maxime qui conversi dicuntur, occupaverat, ut in claustris vel extra claustra, praeter paucos legentes, et raros scribentes, aut adhaerentes claustris parietibus dormitarent, aut ab ipso, ut sic dicam, ortu solis, usque ad eius occasum, immo fere mediam noctem, quibus impune licebat, totam paene diem vanis, otiosis, et quod peius est, plerumque detractoris verbis consumerent'. Constable highlights that in Peter's time, *conversi* had come to mean something akin to the Cistercian lay brothers, i.e., monks that entered the monastery later in life, may have been illiterate, and had less involvement in Cluny's liturgical life; see Constable, 'Famuli and Conversi'.

28 Other forms of divisive or disruptive speech are specified in statute no. 69, which began the practice of posting guards in the dormitory, since monks' things would go missing, leading to 'a multitude of quarrels' (*multitudinem illic convenientium multorum querelae*).

29 Peter of Poitiers, *Panegyricum Petri Venerabilis*, 13-54, lines 250-252: 'Iam, Pater egregie, quia victor ab urbe redisti, / Pontionitarum perfida lingua silet. / Ora proterva canum rabidos posuere latratus'.

Peter of Poitiers's poem is filled with like images of corrupt and harmful speech. Pontius is described as a 'slippery magician' who 'distorted sober hearts', 'played tricks', and 'vomited out black poison' in his speech.<sup>30</sup> Like a false prophet, Pontius used his deceptive oratory (false news!) to win over the hearts of his followers whom he then convinced to undertake nefarious acts, such as desecrating the cloister of Cluny itself. This invective serves to praise, by juxtaposition, the brilliant truthfulness of Peter's unparalleled oratory and writings. Licit and illicit speech are thus key criteria in the *Panegyric* for describing why Peter the Venerable was the proper and a praiseworthy leader of the *ecclesia cluniacensis*.

When Peter of Poitiers's panegyric of his abbot received criticism after circulating, Peter the Venerable wrote a lengthy *Apologia* (mid-1130s) of his monk's right to compose such praises about him. Citing a pseudonymous or lost work of Cicero, Peter the Venerable justifies his hyperbolic praise in usefulness (*utilitas*). The poem's purpose was licit, he argues, since it worked toward the construction of a stable political order. A much-praised and thus well-loved leader, he concludes, fears no collapse of his republic.<sup>31</sup> Since praise and political

30 Peter of Poitiers, *Panegyricum Petri Venerabilis*, 368, 354, 323.

31 Peter elaborates this idea at length in his *Apologia*; Franz Dolveck entitles this work the *Carmen Apologeticum* in his edition, *Pierre le Vénérable: Poèmes*, p. 251-285; here p. 271, lines 223-234:

Cicero knew these things and left his writings for us,  
 In which the Latin language has great trust,  
 Whose poverty his tongue enriches thusly with great wealth,  
 Such that now there is no eloquence more rich.  
 'The commonwealth', he said, 'stands together with an upstanding leader  
 And it also falls with his fall'.  
 It is correct, therefore, to remove sources of disorder  
 And to draw faithful men to our upstanding leader,  
 So that, since the stomach of the mind is fed with heavy praise,  
 The glory of the prince wards off hunger.  
 And thus it happens that the republic fears no collapse,  
 When it perpetually renews the men of the prince.

Noverat haec Cicero, nobis quoque scripta reliquit,  
 Cui multam debet lingua Latina fidem.  
 Cuius pauperiem sic ditat divite lingua,  
 Vt iam sit nullum ditius eloquium.  
 'Publica res', inquit, 'proprio stat principe stante,  
 Cuius et in casu labitur ipsa simul'.  
 Convenit iccirco causas remouere ruinae  
 Et stanti vires addere continuas.  
 Vt, stomacho mentis impensa laude refecto  
 Principis esuriam gloria submoveat.

stability of the Cluniac republic were Peter of Poitiers's intent, Abbot Peter continues, his words had true merit even if they were, as hyperbole, somewhat untruthful.<sup>32</sup> The most passionate sections in Peter the Venerable's *Apologia* are his attacks directed against the critics whom Peter heard criticizing his monk and thus denying the praises of himself. Their transgression is saying and repeating such treacherous words, so they are told to be silent:

Hold your tongue, you shades of Tartarus,  
Who – deranged – might speak such wicked words.<sup>33</sup>

Paralleling his advice to Gilbert, Peter's command for them to be silent makes use of a spatial metaphor:

Clamp shut the maw, seal the passageway of your unspeakable voice,  
And let the throat swell so that it cannot make illicit sounds.  
Fear to be heard or to speak, O Unworthy Voice,  
Fade out, I counsel, and restrain yourself by keeping silent.  
So that such a racket does not pollute human ears,  
You yourself must refrain from taking breath in public.<sup>34</sup>

And later Peter again cites the idea of the mouth as a door, which needs to be barred against harmful speech:

Ahh! Retract these base things which you – so base – vomited out,  
And do not let them flow; bar your throat with a strong beam.<sup>35</sup>

Sicque fit ut nullum timeat respublica casum,  
Cum semper vires principis ipsa novat.

32 One of the key themes of the *Panegyric* (as reconstructed from Peter the Venerable's *Apologia*) is falseness; rhythms and rhymes were incorrect (false) and by overly exaggerating his abbot's qualities (untruthful), Peter of Poitiers was lying. The *Apologia* attributes this interpretation of the *Panegyric* as a result of literary ignorance, since the critics were not aware, Peter the Venerable accuses them, of the literary tool of hyperbole. A little falseness, Peter the Venerable argues, is fine when it serves a good purpose, in contrast to what Augustine might argue (see Jay Diehl's contribution to this volume for more on this topic). This instrumental conception of language does seem to contradict what he generally argues against his opponents.

33 Peter of Poitiers, *Apologia*, 256, lines 13-14: 'Manes tartarei talem compescite linguam / Quae demens potuit verba nefanda loqui'.

34 Peter of Poitiers, *Apologia*, 257, lines 17-22: 'Infandae vocis fauces arctate meatus, / Et tumeat guttur, ne sonet illicita. / Audiri timeas, o vox indigna, sonare, / Consulo, deficias, teque silendo premas. / Humanas strepitus ne talis polluat aures, / Communes usus spiritus ipse nega'.

35 Peter of Poitiers, *Apologia*, 261, lines 103-4: 'Ha revoca sordes, quas sordibus evomuisti / Neve fluant, forti guttura claude sera'.

These quotations are just a small sample of the images that Peter the Venerable composes depicting critics as a demonic ‘Other’ needing to be removed from the body politic. As these passages demonstrate, Peter does not stint in his use of invective to condemn harmful speech. Though addressing an anonymous critic, Peter the Venerable’s defence of Peter of Poitiers likely was intended as a general *apologia* of his abbacy to a wider Cluniac audience – telling them to stop attacking him and his. This early use of invective in Peter’s writings serves as a template for similar use in his later treatises against the heretical Petrobrusians, Jews, and Saracens, who are all commanded to be silent and to stop spreading their lies.<sup>36</sup> Peter, we understand, is no fan of free speech.

### Praiseworthy Conversation

Peter the Venerable’s letters, treatises, and statutes provide very little explicit description of what kinds of ‘useful speech’ should be open to monks. His concerns about negative speech hint at what might, in juxtaposition, be understood to be licit or fruitful. When we see that Peter is worried that idle speech opens the door to dissent, we would expect to see useful speech as leading to monastic harmony or establishing a greater sense of community. These types of speech are precisely what we see in the praise of extraordinary monks and abbots. The hagiographic genre, with its emphasis on edifying spiritual biography, tends to be the best source for explicit descriptions of ‘useful speech’ dating to Peter’s abbacy.

Some 20 years after his death, we see Peter the Venerable commemorated in his *Vita* as a paragon of productive speech and writing.<sup>37</sup> The author, Ralph of Sully, a future abbot of Cluny himself, chiefly highlights how Peter the Venerable was a magisterial teacher (and author) who offered his wisdom and erudite learning to an awestruck audience. Alluding to the Benedictine ideal of the abbot as one who teaches by word and example, Ralph describes how Peter sought to create a spirit of brotherhood through his sermons – preaching with great emotion and impact (*affectu et effectu*) – but teaching even more by his acts (*praedicando magis actu docebat*).<sup>38</sup> Ralph describes his abbot, however, also as continuously seeking to learn:

36 For more on Peter’s use of invective against heretics, Jews, and Muslims, see Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion*, 347–49.

37 The *vita* dates to the abbacy of Stephen I of Boulougne (1163–1173) to whom it is dedicated; Ralph would be chosen as the next abbot of Cluny in 1173. Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 15B.

38 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 19B.

Abbot Peter surrounded himself with learned men, from whom he, by constantly asking questions, desired to learn, even though everyone thought him already extraordinary in his wisdom. He was not pompous, nor did he present himself as imperious, but instead, as if a little boy, he preferred to learn by ceaselessly scrutinizing divine matters.<sup>39</sup>

In this brief moment, Abbot Peter is not a stern father or awe-inspiring preacher but a fellow brother humbled by the world of learning. He is erudite, yes, but still someone who continues to learn in collaboration with his brothers.<sup>40</sup>

As is typical for abbatial *vitae*, Peter's curiosity is used to mark him as exceptional, but other examples help us understand this sort of productive conversation. Peter's own *Book on Miracles* describes how wise monks would speak to benefit others. A brother Benedict, for example:

remained perpetually silent unless a serious and precise reason compelled him to speak. His words were brief, removed from trifles, jokes and any words lacking utility. If ever there was a speech about spiritual things, he was never without sighs, never without tears.<sup>41</sup>

Silence here is underlined as the key virtue, but Peter concedes that Benedict's speech was permissible since he maintained a proper brevity and an appropriate emotional disposition – eschewing levity and embracing sadness. A similar description is made of another Cluniac, Gerard, whose mouth 'so strongly emanated the flavour of divine matters, which he had drunk from boyhood, that to attentive observers almost every of his words and deeds smelled only of a heavenly fragrance'.<sup>42</sup> This vague description

39 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 19D: 'Habebat circa se doctores, a quibus discere quaerendo semper cupiebat, cum ipse mirabilis in scientia ab omnibus haberetur. Non elevabatur, nec se magnum faciebat: sed quasi puer parvulus divina scrutando, votis omnibus assidue discere praeoptabat'.

40 The term *philosophia* was often used to mean the monastic life, such as by Cassiodorus, as it was intended to be a life devoted to the search for wisdom. Jean Leclercq and Caroline Walker Bynum have long emphasized that this idea was widely accepted in twelfth-century monasticism. See Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, and Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo*.

41 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 20, 60: 'Silebat perpetuo, nisi cum eum certa et gravis causa loqui cogebat. Verba eius brevissima, a nugis, iocis, atque omni prorsus ociositate aliena. Si quando vero de spiritualibus sermo erat, numquam is sine suspiriis, numquam sine lacrimis fiebat'.

42 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 8, 25: 'Divinarum rerum saporem, quam a puero imbiberat sic tenaciter conservabat, ut cuius pene universa verba vel facta diligenter considerantibus, nil aliud quam celestem fragrantiam redolerent'.

again seems to highlight that his speech successfully transmitted a feeling of holiness. But when Peter describes his speech, it is highly praised for being recollective, not conversational; Peter goes on to say that Gerard's mouth would never forget a single psalm as he recited the liturgy nor ever leave it unfinished. Peter thus largely considers Benedict and Gerard as vessels for fixed texts – a description that would have left a Cluniac reader of this story without a clear indication of what the holiest monks should talk about. The lengthy description of Gerard, however, ends with a clue of what Cluniac monks might fruitfully discuss. Peter testifies to the veracity of the miracles worked or seen by Gerard, saying: 'Having heard these things from this brother, I cannot doubt the vision, especially when I find that everyone who recounts both of these visions agree in all the details. For the prior of this brother had heard everything about Gerard – he later confirmed the earlier testimony completely'.<sup>43</sup> Peter reveals a chain of narrative transmission and thus suggests what monks were likely talking about all the time: edifying stories.

Almost every story of Peter's miracle collection and Ralph's *Life of Peter* identify a source, excepting those viewed by the authors' themselves.<sup>44</sup> In the opening story of the *Book on Miracles*, for example, Peter tells us that a peasant who had seen a miraculous vision of Christ told his parish priest about it, who in turn told the bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, who ultimately told Peter.<sup>45</sup> That Peter carefully notes the name of his sources and evaluates the authority of this witness (or witnesses) suggests that Cluniac monks were used to hearing similar stories and judging their credibility. Offering a source for miracle stories is key to Peter's attempt to establish their authenticity, but has the secondary effect of showing us that Peter and other Cluniac monks loved to commerce in story-telling. Ralph's *Life of Peter* is much the same, though he is more apt to cite common knowledge than Peter. Ralph recounts, for instance, how Peter the Venerable gave his very best coat (*pelliciam suam peroptimam*) to a poor woman at the gates of Cluny – something that

43 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 8, 34: 'His a fratre illo auditis, ultra de visione dubitare non potui, quando sic in omnibus concordet utriusque revelationis relatores inveni. Nam quicquid ille prior de fratre illo altero a Gerardo audierat, hoc totum ultimus suo ipsius testimonio confirmabat'.

44 There is a marked difference between the earlier shorter version (c. 1134/5) of the *De miraculis* and its later additions (c. 1142) in this respect. The earlier redaction is very careful to record witnesses, while the long version depends largely on Peter's direct knowledge. The addition of the *Life of Matthew of Albano*, which fills book 2, chap. 3-23 (long version) does not cite any witnesses other than Peter himself and the praise of Cluny and linked miracle stories (book 1, 12-20) likewise lack witnesses – perhaps because they were all common knowledge at Cluny.

45 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book. 1, chap. 1, 7-8.

became quite the talk of Cluny: 'Although he [Peter] had wished this to be done secretly, the much talked about deed was evident to all marvelling at the charity of the man'.<sup>46</sup> Ralph, who was likely a monk at Cluny at this time, acknowledges that such stories were open secrets among the monks. In another story in the *Life of Peter*, Ralph recounts the story of Jordan, a monk of Saint Foy, who was witness to a secret exorcism performed by Abbot Peter. He kept quiet for years until hearing about Peter's death, which released him from his vow of silence. Ralph's description of Jordan breaking his silence is revealing: 'when [Peter's] death was confirmed, in the chapter room of Saint Foy, the monk Jordan publicly revealed the miracle that had occurred and he affirmed that it had certainly happened in many other places'.<sup>47</sup> This passage suggests that many such stories about Peter were likely hidden under oaths of secrecy. This effectively allows Jordan (and/or the narrator Ralph) to use this one story to stand in for many unspoken ones. The intimation of the existence of other hidden stories almost seems to give license to others to reveal and record further stories about Peter the Venerable. Thus a story becomes an occasion for more stories.

### Miracle Stories and *Utilitas*

The hagiographic writings discussed above indicate that Peter and his monks saw the commemoration of virtuous acts as a 'useful' endeavour. Ralph of Sully singles out the *Book on Miracles* in particular as one of Peter's most important works in this respect, noting, 'Anyone who has read the book that he compiled about various revelations and visions, understands how great is its usefulness and purity'.<sup>48</sup> Though concise, Ralph of Sully's assessment of Peter's miracle collection acknowledges the considerable value evident to its readers and suggests that Cluniac monks yearned for, sought out, and read the collection of miracle stories. Peter himself presents the *Book on*

46 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 25B: 'Quod cunctis charitatem viri mirantibus licet occulte fieri voluerit, celebre factum apparuit'.

47 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 28A: 'Ipse audita autem morte ipsius, Jordanus monachus miraculum, ut factum fuerat, in capitulo Sanctae Fidis publice revelavit, et multis aliis hoc factum fuisse pro certo affirmavit'.

48 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 21B: 'Librum quem de diversis revelationibus sive visionibus edidit, quantae puritatis fuerit vel utilitatis, qui legit intelligat'. Ralph, writing during the abbacy of Stephen I of Boulogne (r. 1161-73), bases this judgement on firsthand knowledge of the *De miraculis* – a usage evident since he reworks stories from the *De miraculis* in his own *Vita Petri Venerabilis*.

*Miracles* as an attempt to codify the ‘useful’ stories he had heard but would be forgotten if not written down:

The grace of miracles occupies an eminent position among the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit due to its inherently great utility, with the result that chiefly through it the world is freed from the shadows of unfaithfulness, it is given the eternal light of truth, and also in the hearts of many of the faithful to whom at some time the vision [of a miracle] was granted, faith is increased, hope blossoms and charity is strengthened. I often find myself growing indignant that, when hidden by unfruitful silence, miraculous things vanish (which occur in many places and in our times, though less commonly now than previously) because none puts his mind to writing down what, if made manifest, would benefit the readers.<sup>49</sup>

Peter here contrasts ‘unfruitful silence’ with the action of telling of stories that allow miracles to convert readers to a better life. Written collections of these stories could also continue to have this power long after the author has died, since texts retained the transformative power of miracles. Though Peter imagines his enterprise to be textual, what he says could equally apply to the oral communication of these stories. The medium is not the issue; rather, the content of the stories makes them licit vehicles for mutual edification.

Mirroring Peter’s justification for the *Book on Miracles* cited above, Ralph sees the purpose of his *Life of Peter* as uplifting Cluniac monks:

Not with presumption but with love, I – the least of all men – will attempt to describe his life which I learned from religious men or I myself saw, leaving aside many more things for my betters [to write about] so that God is honoured, that our infirmity is strengthened by his example, that the Church is elevated in accordance with the grace of its sons, and finally that God is glorified everlasting in his saints, especially those in the Cluniac Church.<sup>50</sup>

49 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, *prologus*, lines 1-11, 3: ‘Cum inter Spiritus Sancti karismata, gratia miraculorum non parvam obtineat dignitatem, utpote que tantam in se continet utilitatem, ut maxime per illam et mundus ab infidelitatis tenebris liberatus, et eterno lumine veritatis donatus sit, et adhuc in multorum fidelium cordibus, quibus aliquando hoc videre datur, per eam fides augeatur, spes crescat, karitas confirmetur, indignari sepe soleo, cur ea que nostris temporibus plerisque in locis miracula, licet rarius quam priscis temporibus proveniunt, cum non sit qui ad illa scribenda animum applicet, que prodesse legentibus manifesta poterant, infructuoso silentio tecta dispareant’.

50 Ralph of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, col. 15: ‘Quapropter ego minimus omnium hominum, non tam praesumptione quam amore, de illius vita scribere aggrediar, quod virorum religiosorum

Part of the function of miracle stories and hagiography is public relations, Ralph admits. They provide a means to show that the Cluniac church remains honourable and favoured by God to outsiders. But their primary purpose is to teach better conduct to Cluniac monks.

## Cluny's Miraculous Space

I suggest that Peter intended his lengthy *Book of Miracles* to address a Cluniac audience based on the miracle collection's content. It focuses on the community of regular Cluniac monks as miracle workers and monastic models. It is filled with original and, as Peter underlines to the audience, the most 'up-to-date' stories about monks, priests, demons, and ghostly spectres.<sup>51</sup> Visions of the dead mix together with miracles engendered by the Eucharist, the nefarious machinations of demons, and hagiographic narrative.<sup>52</sup> Peter's specific selection of miracles, however, is telling. The witnesses of visions, the novices tested by temptation, divinely punished sinners, and infirm monks healed through confession are almost all Cluniac. Those saintly individuals excelling in the practice of spiritual exercises are almost without exception Cluniac monks, and the models of spirituality are pertinent only to the monastic world.<sup>53</sup> The stories also reaffirm traditional Cluniac themes such as the efficacy of intercessory prayers and the sacrality of ecclesial space. Cluny itself is repeatedly praised for being a celestial citadel and earthly refuge, for its unparalleled *opus dei*, as well as for its unsullied purity.<sup>54</sup> The dominating presence of Cluniac themes and figures buttresses the evidence of a manuscript diffusion pointing to a Cluniac audience (or at least a readership of Benedictine monks within the orbit of the *ecclesia cluniacensis*).<sup>55</sup>

relatione didici, aut ipse vidi: majoribus majora relinquens, ut et inde Deus honoretur, et illius exemplo nostra infirmitas roboretur, et Ecclesia de filiorum gratia sublimetur, denique Deus in sanctis suis semper glorificetur, maxime in Cluniacensi Ecclesia'.

51 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, *prologus*, line 16, 3 and book 2, *prologus*, lines 1-3, 93.

52 The task of summing up this text is made difficult given that Peter largely reworked the text ten years after his first redaction, see Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, 57\*-86\* for the historical and manuscript evidence.

53 The end of the third redaction (long version, book 2, 27-29) also contains praise of the Carthusians, with whom Cluny was joined in a prayer confraternity; see Peter the Venerable, *Epistolae*, ep. 24, 48, 132, 170, 186, and 187 where Peter's relationship with the Carthusians is also discussed.

54 See, for example, the well-known praise of Cluny in book 2, chap. 9, 34-37.

55 See Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, pp. 35\*-56\*.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Cluniac monasteries are the primary sites of miracles recorded in Peter's *Book on Miracles*, with specific places highlighted as central to the narratives. Solitary monks sleeping in the workshops without permission or new arrivals in the novices' cells, for example, seem to receive the most fearful demonic visitors. Monks in the cemetery encounter the undead. Frustrated demons have a disgusting impulse to leave the monastery through the latrines. Other spaces are recorded not as sites of miracles but as sites of storytelling and remembrance. As we have noted above, the chapter room, for example, is often where news is communicated and didactic stories recounted.

In order to explain the didactic function of these stories, I wish to look in detail at one representative example. Chapter Fifteen of Book One (in Bouthillier's edition) was written during the middle of Peter's abbacy (c. 1142) in the second of three redactions of this text. The claustal buildings act as the hero of the story, in which a Cluniac monk watches a demon try and fail to penetrate the heart of the abbey of Cluny. The moral of the tale is clear – Cluny is a celestial citadel impervious to the devil's attacks. Peter the Venerable's vision-story is worth a detailed look because it teaches what and why the demon cannot penetrate. Peter links Cluny's protection to what regularly happens within the buildings, not necessarily to the place itself.

This story is an almost-complete reimagining – at almost twice the length – of a story in Gilo of Toucy's posthumous *Life of Abbot Hugh*, written more than 20 years earlier (c. 1120).<sup>56</sup> The similarities and differences in storytelling are quite revealing about the two authors' intentions and about how the stories functioned to edify their audience. Both versions are frame stories, and both Peter and Gilo set the scene in a similar fashion: all the monks of Cluny are gathered together in the chapter room on Christmas Eve in the year 1108 CE. An aging Abbot Hugh enters and tearfully recounts a story about a miraculous vision of the Christ-child on another, earlier, Christmas Eve.<sup>57</sup> As a story likely well known at Cluny, Peter and Gilo both emphasize that Hugh did not name the witness, but *everyone* knew it was Hugh himself.

What Hugh is said to have seen and what it is said to mean differ significantly between the two accounts, the first praising Cluny's liturgical

56 Gilo of Toucy, *Vita Hugonis Abbatis*, 45-109; here book 2, chap. 6, 96-97.

57 Isabelle Cochelin notes that on Christmas Eve everyone at Cluny waits in the chapter room for when the time of the birth of Jesus has officially arrived. At this point they all fall to the floor in prayer. See Cochelin, 'Discussions au chapitre', paragraph 13.

splendour and the second praising the inner devotion of its monks. A subtle difference, perhaps, but one with important ramifications for how Cluniac space is represented and for what Cluniac monks are expected to learn.

In Gilo's earlier version of this story, the Christ-child, the Virgin Mother, and an angelic host are gathered in the Church of the Mother of Mercy at Cluny (the claustral chapel). Gilo cites Jesus's speech directly; more accurately, Gilo cites Hugh citing Jesus. Jesus praises the solemnity of his own feast day in a pastiche of ideas drawn from the hymns and liturgical readings particular to the Cluniac celebration of Christmas Eve. He finishes this speech with a declaration that his birth overturned the power of the devil, who, once invoked, becomes visible to Jesus (but not Hugh). The devil is immediately banished. With the devil cast out, Jesus invisibly celebrates his feast day alongside the monks of Cluny. Gilo's moral is clear – the special liturgical veneration of Christ's nativity grants Cluny itself special protection.

In Peter's retelling, the focus shifts away from the liturgy, but the opening demonstrates some similarities:

It is the custom of this monastery to undertake the Nativity of Our Saviour with a singular affection more devoutly than other solemnities, and to celebrate it through the harmonies of our songs, the prolixity of our readings, and by the lighting of many additional candles as well as – far surpassing these others in importance – with a special devotion and with a great outpouring of tears.<sup>58</sup>

These first lines parallel Gilo's account, highlighting and expanding on the pre-eminence of the Cluniac liturgy.<sup>59</sup> Both Gilo and Peter underscore the necessity of tears as the proper emotional disposition in celebrating Christmas. Peter argues, however, that it is far more important that the monks experience the feast day at an interior and emotional level than that they sing beautifully, light candles, and perform a lengthy liturgy. In essence, he redefines Gilo's praise of the Cluniac liturgy into an argument

58 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 15, 50: 'Mos eiusdem est monasterii, nativitatem Salvatoris ceteris sollempnitatibus quodam singulari affectu devotius agere, et cantuum melodiis, lectionum prolixitatibus, cereorum multiplicium accensionibus, et quod longe prestantius est speciali devotione, multaque lacrimarum profusione, cum angelicis spiritibus alacriter sollempnizare'.

59 In his statutes, Peter also emphasizes the singular status of Christmas, designating the best wine be served for celebrating communion (*Statuta*, no. 73) and mandating all monks, without exception, celebrate mass together (*Statuta*, no. 72). This latter statute indicates that Christmas was viewed as a key feast for gathering the Cluniac community together.

for internalizing the liturgical experience. After this subtle redefinition of Gilo's opening, Peter highlights further the importance of interior feeling. As the monks readied themselves for Christmas:

the brothers in their accustomed manner prepared themselves and everything necessary and, by ornamenting the church and decorating all the places of the monastery in a similarly suitable fashion, they strove to appear festive both inwardly and outwardly.<sup>60</sup>

Again Peter's account highlights the importance of the *interior monk* and links outward appearance to interior preparation. Both place and person need to be made suitable – and not just the churches and chapels at Cluny but also the rest of the monastery. I think Peter means to paint a vignette in the reader's mind of a festive household ready for Christmas morning – a sort of medieval Norman Rockwell word-picture. I also suspect that Peter intends an element of emotional longing to be provoked in a Cluniac reader, just as these days a Christmas wreath or a Christmas carol playing in November can spur anticipation of the coming celebrations.

With the Christmas stage set, Peter expands Gilo's depiction of the Christ-child vision. Unlike Gilo's account where the devil appears and is immediately banished without even being seen by the witness, Peter's account presents the devil as the starring character in a sort of horrific comedy, described as a disgusting and filthy little fellow, whining that Jesus won't let him do anything. In Peter's story, Jesus grants the demon the freedom to attack Cluniac monks: "Go ahead, you scoundrel!" said the Son of the Virgin, "Try what you might, so that you stop complaining you are predetermined by my power".<sup>61</sup> These words deny the essence of Gilo's contention that Jesus specially protects Cluniac space, perhaps reflecting a revised Cluniac attitude. Peter instead notes that the demon admits that he knows he has no chance to penetrate ecclesial space but that he hopes

60 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 15, 50: 'Qua temporis revolutione redeunte, fratres more solito se suaque omnia preparaverunt, et ecclesias ornando, alique monasterii loca aptius componendo, intus et extra festivi apparere sategebant'. In imitation of the papal liturgy in Rome, the celebration of Christmas at Cluny was celebrated by a triple mass – the night, dawn and day masses – which at Cluny, like in Rome, began in the claustral chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary and progressed to one dedicated to Saint Peter. The liturgy of Christmas day re-constructed Cluny in a metaphorical fashion, by reproducing the liturgy simultaneously taking place at Rome in the ecclesia and buildings of Cluny.

61 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 15, 51; 'Vade, ait Filius virginis, furcifer, et ne te mea potentia preiudicatum lamenteris, tempta quod poteris'.

to darken other parts of the monastery. He rushes off to the chapter room but cannot get in, because the entrance was too narrow for someone so swollen with pride, and its lintel blocked him when he tries to enter with 'prideful uprightness' (*superbum erectum*) rather than with the proper 'humble slouch' (*humilem inclinatum*).<sup>62</sup> The demon then runs along the east gallery of the cloister to make his way upstairs to the dormitories, but his great size again prevents him from entering. He rushes to the refectory, knowing that he might have a chance to enter since monks would be distracted from their spiritual mission when feeding their body. But again the demon is prevented from entering, due to 'the many barriers created by the reading of the divine words, the many palisades raised by the devotions of the listeners, and the door-bars set by the charity of those serving one another'.<sup>63</sup> We see that Peter depicts the acts and feelings experienced within the refectory as physical barriers to evil – a making concrete of the intangible. The story finishes with the demon failing to enter any part (*officinis*) of the monastery; he then flees, completely baffled by his defeat.

While the devil might have been surprised to fail, Peter assures us that a Cluniac reader should not be. But it is worth being a bit sceptical about his retelling. All areas of the monastery were protected against evil, Peter seems to claim, by the historical weight of good conduct within. Since the devil attacks at night, the refectory, for example, would be empty, and thus it could not be the actions of monks in the refectory at the time that prevented the demon from entering. Peter seems to suggest, instead, that the refectory has been quasi-sanctified by the residue of so many readings, so many intent listeners, and so many acts of friendly charity. The idea of the monks' communal action is what ultimately protects the refectory. A monastery united in good conduct, Peter thus tells us, is what keeps Cluny strong. Moreover, intangibles such as charity, which are invisible to the exterior, are conceptualized spatially and as part of the built environment, with cloister and community conflated. Monks are explicitly told that visible and physical parts of the monastery should be understood as having an invisible and spiritual dimension, endowed by their actions with additional qualities such as protection against the devil.

62 Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chap. 15, 51.

63 The metaphor is of a barred door (beams/bars repeated three times). The passage reads in full (*De miraculis*, book 1, chap 15, 51): 'Ibi etiam tot obices divinatorum ex lectione verborum, tot trabes ex devotionibus auditorum, tot repagula offendit ex karitate sibi invicem servientium, ut nullo modo ultra procedere prevalens, retro cogetur redire'.

The connection drawn from the space of the monastery to the practices of Cluniac monks, as well as to their inner thoughts and feelings, highlights the centrality of monastic space in Peter's version of the story. The monastery is not just a battlefield on which the monk's spiritual warfare is fought but is itself one of their weapons to be used against the devil.

### Cluny's Didactic Space

I wish to spend a few final words exploring how stories like this one exchange messages about space and spirituality. Narrative's ability to collapse time is key to understanding the purpose of Peter's retelling of Hugh's vision-story. By presenting the vision as a frame story, by highlighting the context of its original storytelling, and by constructing the story as offering – alternately – Hugh's and Jesus's own words, both authors urge Cluniac readers to imagine themselves in the past – listening to Hugh in the chapter room on Christmas Eve or overhearing Jesus in the claustral church of Saint Mary's on an earlier Christmas Eve. The opening lines from Peter's version cited above set up the Christmas celebrations as part of an unending tradition of Christian/Cluniac liturgical celebration. 'It is the custom of this monastery' he says, making it a present that applies both to the time of his writing and to the time it would be read by a monk in the future.

While the monk is imaginatively time-travelling, what remains stable for him is location. Whether imagining themselves as a monk listening to Hugh in the chapter room, being Hugh in the church of Saint Mary, or being a reader sitting in the northern gallery of the cloister, Cluniac monks of Peter's time (and later) would still be able to look around the cloister and see all the places mentioned – still largely unchanged from Hugh's time.<sup>64</sup> But after reading this story, they would theoretically see them in a new light, since Peter asks his audience to imagine aspects of the physical environment as monuments to a tradition of virtue. The refectory is not defined by its purpose – a place where you eat – but by its spiritual utility. The chapter room is not just where you talk about monastic business but is a place you cannot enter with 'prideful uprightness'; thus you learn humility. The definition remains largely metaphorical, but the invisible spiritual dimension is made perceptible (the story may also be a hint about a key

64 For a reconstruction of the abbey of Cluny in Peter the Venerable's time, see fig. 6 and 7 (Groupe I, Planches VI and VII) in Conant, *Cluny. Les Églises et la Maison*, not paginated. Conant's model is questioned by Anne Baud. See her 'L'abbaye de Cluny', 387-399.

architectural detail about the chapter room – a narrow entry doorway with a low lintel). According to Peter's story, the doorway should remind monks to hold humility in their bodies and in their hearts. A few cracks of a monk's head against the lintel would be enough to remind them to bow their head, but they would still need context to remind them to bow their head *with humility*. We can conclude that for Peter, space is mute unless you know the stories to make them speak.

This chapter has focussed largely on a single story from Peter the Venerable's *Book on Miracles*, but similar definitions of space are common throughout. The story reflects a usage typical of monks in daily life when conversation was permitted; a kind of informal learning that would be often transmitted but was only occasionally written down. Hugh's vision had an unimpeachable witness – a recently canonized abbot of Cluny – and Peter's reworking of that vision helped his monks look on their environment with new eyes and new discipline.

## Conclusion

By interrogating what constitutes useful speech and undertaking a close reading of a single miracle story, I have sought to demonstrate that we can see the medium of narrative story-telling as key for monks to communicate edifying speech to one another. Peter the Venerable's retelling of the Hugh vision story and the literary antecedent in Gilo's *Life of Hugh* both note that their written accounts are intended to preserve in text what an abbot of Cluny had told in person. The bulk of the *Book on Miracles*, with its emphasis on establishing a chain of transmission, indicates that not just abbots but also Cluniac monks were constantly sharing stories with each other. The changing content of Hugh's vision-story also reveals what sorts of ideas may have been communicated between Cluniac monks. While Gilo's account highlights liturgical purity, Peter's retelling suggests his particular interest in emphasizing Cluny's need to be a strong unified community, perhaps linked to his interest in promoting Cluniac harmony in the aftermath of abbatial and papal schism. The source of Cluny's miraculous protection from the devil is the everyday practices of the Cluniac brothers. It is not the unattainable perfection of Christ or a saintly abbot who is to be imitated. Rather, agency is placed directly on the community of normal monks to uphold Cluny's lofty spiritual position. A final idea, which deserves further exploration elsewhere, is the affective component of Peter's narrative.

As a good rhetorician, Peter understood that appealing to emotions such as love, sadness, humility, fear, or disgust can be more effective in emphasizing a point than logic. Emotions are more than just a textual strategy, however. They are also the content of his message. In this and his other stories, Peter communicates the proper emotional disposition of monks: be fearful and be tearful, love and trust your fellow monk, or else you will fall prey to ravaging demons.

## Appendix A: Regulations Concerning Speech and Silence

### I. Peter the Venerable, *Statuta*

#### 19. *Concerning silence in the monastery*

It is instituted that in the infirmary of Cluny, which is divided into five areas under one roof, silence must be maintained differently in each, so that the one area where the brothers die, which is in the middle of the building, and in that part which is above it, silence or conversation happens in the customary fashion. In the three other parts, the silence of the cloister must be maintained. It is the same in the cells of novices and in the attached novice's cloister, or the workshops – excepting novices or their master, who speak where and when they are accustomed to speak and excepting also any visiting bishops and abbots, or the major prior and the sub-priors (the custodians of order), who themselves are able to speak in the area of the aforesaid cells of the novices only in the presence of a second custodian. Let ceaseless silence be maintained in every workplace, excepting a single master for each workroom and excepting those working on the new church and their work sites. Let claustral silence be maintained, moreover, in the cemetery and the cloister of the cemetery, in all the sacristies and on that path which leads to the older elevated rooms, which are next to the major church and in adjacent places, excepting the abbots and priors for whom in these particular places it is suitable to speak in the traditional manner.

The reason of this institute was chiefly the necessary usefulness [*utilitas*] of silence for every religious, who cannot be called nor be a monk without it observed in a suitable manner. The admiration of silence is so great in the Holy Scriptures that, among the countless praises of it, the outstanding prophet Isaiah himself said, 'Silence is a reverence of justice'. But since the silence of the Cluniacs has been truly degenerated for some time on account of the frequency of secular affairs and the multitude of visitors, it seems necessary that this period of silence, as is laid out above, be instituted.

20. *Concerning silence during Lent*

It is instituted that during the time of Lent, continual silence be maintained for all of Lent, adding three extra days of silence, which are the third and fifth ferial days, and the Sabbath, on which days speech used to happen in the cloister according to former custom.

The reason for this institute was the reverence for such sacred days, since it did not seem sufficiently religious that the virtue of silence was publicly adulterated by unnecessary speech on those days of the highest abstinence and every virtue.

21. *Concerning conversations in the cloister*

It is instituted that, the second of the periods for speaking about useful things in the cloister is removed every day, year round.

The reason for this institute was the utter lack of its usefulness [*utilitas*] or necessity; it was not only the increased leisure but also the greater danger for the monks when another hour of the day was freed from useful and necessary endeavours. For speech lacking usefulness, or rather, harmful speech filled the space of that time, which now salubrious taciturnity takes for itself to fill with readings and divine songs.

22. *Concerning silence during the meal*

It is instituted that silence is maintained everywhere and by everyone at the table as if in a regular refectory. But if anyone comes from outside the refectory for someone eating regularly, let him get up and when he receives him, he shall speak to him standing as much as it is necessary, but after he sits down again, let him be silent as before.

The reason for this institute was the apostle ordering this rule even for the laity, that each person, 'eat his bread in silence' and Saint Benedict commanding and saying to monks, 'Let theirs be the greatest silence' at the table, and the monks of ancient and modern times, who, wherever they eat, must not reduce at all the rigour of silence. And it is not respectable for Cluniacs to seem less religious, through whose efforts the monastic way of life (having dwindled for many years) flourished again in Gaul, Germany, England, Spain, Italy, and almost all of Europe, whose inveterate tepidness was newly inflamed by divine command and with the assistance of His grace.

23. *Concerning the enclosure of claustral precinct*

It is instituted that no cleric or lay person may enter into the cloister or the rest of claustral precinct unless in order to do something or for looking

around the buildings, as respectable guests are accustomed to do, or for healing the sick lying in the infirmary.

The reason for this institute was the frequent comings and goings of the clergy, the laity, and especially the servants, for any reason, to such an extent that it turned the cloister almost into a public thoroughfare and, in coming and going, they now seem almost to be no different from the monks.

#### 24. *Concerning servants in the infirmary*

It is instituted that none of the lay attendants, as used to happen, may look after the sick or anyone eating in the infirmary, but only monks or bearded *conversi*.

The reason for this institute was the greater respectability of monks cohabitating with the lay brothers [*conversi*] than with lay servants and that the lay brothers should spend their time serving the brothers, not so that they have the opportunity to steal what was left over from the table of those eating in the infirmary, just as servants formerly would pilfer from the brothers openly and furtively for their wife or children or for any members of his family living in the town. It was also for this additional reason – that gossiping to lay people in the manner of a lay person, these servants disclosed the secret things of the monastic order or the regular disciplines, which either they saw or they heard from someone, while standing around in their regular duties.

#### 39. *Concerning manual labour*

It is instituted that manual work – so holy and ancient – ought to be restored in some small fashion whether to be done in the cloisters themselves or in another place where they are respectably removed from the sight of secular affairs. On all days but feast days (when it is not suitable for them to work), brothers must always undertake useful work wherever they are.

The reason of this institute was, that ‘idleness’, called by Father Benedict ‘the enemy of the soul’, [*RB*, 48] resides in so many of our monks, especially those who are called *conversi*, with the result that in the cloisters or outside the cloisters, apart from reading a little and writing only rarely, either they sleep, leaning against the walls of the cloister, or on account of their [idleness] they fill almost their whole day with vain, hateful words and often (which is worse!) with slanderous speech, – as I could say thusly, ‘from the rising of the sun until its setting’ [Ps. 49:11] or more precisely from the middle of the night when one may do so with impunity.

#### 42. *Concerning silence in small monasteries*

It is instituted that in houses where there are not able to be twelve brothers, complete silence must be always maintained in the refectory and dormitory, at the very least, as well as in the cloister from the hours of Vespers until the third hour [*tertiam*] of the next day. It is long established that silence ought to be maintained by everyone at all times and everywhere in every church.

The reason for this institute was that if brothers in such places either were unable to maintain the entirety of our customary practices [*ordo*] or they did not wish to, then at least they should retain some semblance, some vestige, or particulars of them, lest by filling the whole day with trifling words and acts, they be seen as no different from seculars.

### Appendix B. Two Accounts of Abbot Hugh's Vision of Jesus in the Marian Chapel

#### I. Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis*, book 1, chapter 15 (c. 1142)

*The story the Blessed Hugh narrated in chapter at Christmas Vigil.*

It is the custom of this monastery to undertake the Nativity of Our Saviour with a singular affection and more devoutly than other solemnities, and to celebrate it together with the spirits of angels through the harmonies of our songs, the prolixity of the readings, by the lighting of many additional candles and – far surpassing all others in importance – with a special devotion and with a great outpouring of tears. After the change of seasons, the brothers in their accustomed manner prepared themselves and everything necessary and, by ornamenting the church and decorating all the places of the monastery in a similarly suitable fashion, they strived to appear festive both inwardly and outwardly. The blessed and venerable father Hugh was then still alive, though close both to corporal death and also to the eternal life after death. With the celebrations about to begin, he entered the chapter where the brothers had already gathered and said these words to all:

You know, brothers, that Jesus, our benign saviour, has chosen to be among us for the celebration of his nativity and your liberation, and he awaits with great joy the worship of your devotion. But also you know that our wicked enemy, jealous of your happiness, labours as much as he can to overshadow our splendour with dark clouds and to diminish, even if only a bit, the glory of so great a feast! For a certain brother, he continued (and by this he certainly meant himself to be understood as this brother), saw on this night the eternal virgin, the Mother of Mercy herself, holding

against her softest breast the son whom she bore this very night, and next to them was gathered a crowd of holy angels bathed in a brilliant light. The God-child rejoiced and exulted with great joy and showed the happiness of heart with the gestures of his glorious body and the clapping of his hands. And turning to his mother, he said to her, 'Do you see, my mother, that the coming night, shall be brightened by the joys of my birth, by which both the oracles of the prophets and the praises of the angels will be fulfilled and everyone in heaven and on earth will rejoice together due to my birth from you. Where now is the treachery of the damned enemy? Where is his power, which dominated this world before this singular joy?'

With his name evoked and emerging from his hiding place, an impudent figure – disgracefully filthy – presented himself at a distance, and begged with great wails and lamentation that he be admitted. This he said, sworn as a vow, that in his manner, he would be strong enough to darken in some way even the joys of [Cluny's] great brightness, which he envied. And he said, 'Even if I will not be received into the ecclesial space, I might be admitted into another place of the remaining precincts (*reliquarum officinarum loco*). 'Go ahead, you scoundrel!' said the Son of the Virgin, 'Try what you might, so that you stop complaining you are predetermined by my power'. And he [the devil] made for the archway of the chapter room and when he tried to go in, he was unable to enter. For in fact, in that place he found himself so swollen and the entrance of the chapter room so narrow that he was not in any way able to go inside. Truly inflated by the ancient curse of Pride, he was not able to pass through the humble entrance, since the entrance does not accept this prideful erectness, but only a humble bent-over posture. Then he turned his steps towards the dormitory of the brothers, confident that he would be able to disturb the brothers with his usual phantasms and tried to enter. But again he retreated – repelled due to his great size. And then he took himself towards the refectory – filled with the hope of injuring the brothers and expecting that even the small attention paid to the body there might lead to a large inattention of the mind. There also, he attacked the many wooden barriers created by the reading of the divine words, the many wooden palisades raised by the devotions of the listeners, and the door-bars set by the charity of those serving one another, with the result that he was unable to advance a step, and was forced to retreat anew. Repelled likewise by all the precincts [*officinis*] of the monastery, this pestilential one fled in retreat, before the sight of the most pious Redeemer and the glorious Virgin Mother, filled with such shame as was suitable.

These words, preached to the brothers by this saintly man, revealed the wickedness of the evil spirits raging against this place and the indulgence

of the Lord protecting it. Our dangerous wicked enemies, although they lay snares generally for everyone, pursue even more so those newly converted to the monastic life. They – so envious – certainly do suffer from the progress of veterans, but they keenly feel, as if a recent open wound, the aforesaid monastic conversion of new recruits.

II. Gilo of Toucy, *Vita Hugonis Abbatis*, chapter 6 (ed. Cowdrey, 96) (c. 1120)

It was the turn of the second last year before the death of Saint Hugh and the movement of the sun had just introduced the day of the birth of our Lord. As was customary, the father was preceded by the brothers into the chapter room and he declared them to be the stronger since, with a stumbling gait, he was unable to stand upright for long. The father, in tears, exhorted the tearful audience to fulfil, with God as their shepherd, their good work with undivided passion, knowing that the greater glory of eternal reward would follow this great labour. In addition to other matters, he stirred up the emotions of those listening by speaking about a certain vision, but he kept silent about the name of the person relating this vision, whom we believe to be none other than himself [Hugh] who related it. Hugh recounted:

A brother saw the mother of Mercy in her oratory – the most blessed Mother of God carrying the divine infant in her illustrious lap, who, joyfully applauding with his earthly hands, said, 'Behold, this night, which is entirely dedicated to me, reveres my birth and foretells the coming glory of Heaven, the peace for all humanity and that forgiveness will come to the prophets. This night wages war for my glory. This night flashes with the brightness of great lightning. Where now is the wickedness of the wicked enemy, which had been accustomed to rejoice before I, the sun of Justice, arose? I arose from you, O renowned mother, divine in my lineage and royal in my dignity'.

When Jesus, who held the aforesaid [devil] in his power, had said these things, Hugh commented, he seemed to see the devil sitting nearby, who corrupts thusly! 'Be ashamed, tempter, and flee! My praises (*praeconia*) with which this beloved house reverberates, bar you as dishonorable'. Chided by these words, that confounded one withdrew far away.

And then the boy, along with his pious mother and surrounded by the angelic army celebrated the illustrious solemnity with you, my beloved brothers. Run towards the path of the Saviour with mouth and soul rejoicing!

This father – on the cusp of his departure – offered these words as a toast (*propinavit*), pouring them a drink intoxicating their hearts with sobriety, and not long after this his [eternal] rest was foreseen, which a vision proved, seen by a lay workman (*laboriosa seculi*) in the region.

## About the author

**Marc Saurette** is an associate professor of Medieval History at Carleton University. His research interests revolve around the lives and literary production of the monks of Cluny, ranging from the tenth-century of Odo of Cluny to the twelfth-century of the abbot Peter the Venerable and of one of his monks, Richard of Poitiers. Through the writing of these monks, he studies the processes of institutionalization and the cultural implications of the literary and scholarly community of Cluny. His researches include Peter the Venerable's notion of friendship, the modern tradition of Richard of Poitier's *Chronica*, and medieval ideas of customs and customary. He is working on the first complete study, critical edition, and translation of the works of Richard of Poitiers and undertook the editing, translating, and commenting on the opera omnia of Peter of Poitiers.



# 7 Teaching through Architecture

Honorius Augustodunensis and the Medieval Church

*Karl Patrick Kinsella*

## Abstract

The paper explores Honorius Augustodunensis's description of the medieval church and its typological qualities in the *Gemma animae*. Where the text overlaps with his exemplary sermons there is an indication that the church building was used as part of a horizontal learning context. Honorius's 'love of viewpoints' and material culture informs the nature of an important development in twelfth-century pedagogies, one that seeks to incorporate aspects of the tangible world to anchor abstract concepts or imperceptible events. Honorius's *Gemma animae* provides a fascinating insight into the development of these kinaesthetic teaching methods that were directed at fellow monks and canons, and mark the text and his sermons as important examples of horizontal learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, architecture, teaching, learning

Horizontal learning presupposes that knowledge exists within a community whose members are willing to teach each other; it enters the community and then disseminates through it without strict adherence to a hierarchical social structure. Beginning with that premise, this chapter illuminates the processes and means through which horizontal learning was applied to architecture within the twelfth-century monastery. More specifically, it will examine the phenomenon of horizontal learning in Honorius Augustodunensis's (d. c. 1140) liturgical commentary called the *Gemma animae*, contrasting it with two of his sermon collections: the *Speculum ecclesiae* and the *Sacramentarium*. In each of these works, Honorius drew attention

to the church's structural framework (e.g., columns, windows, pavements, etc.) and created a set of potential meanings for many parts to help students learn history through the liturgy. In the case of the *Gemma animae*, the flexibility of the architectural symbolism implies that Honorius did not intend to create an uncompromising, rigid system but one that responded to the educational and liturgical context of the reader and student. In contrast to this, the sermons are didactic and strict when the preacher assigned meaning to the building. In essence, Honorius used religious architecture to encourage monks and canons to reflect on their inner life; in this way, the building becomes a partner in the learning process, it is dynamic, flexible, and mutable like any good learning partner should be.

This chapter contrasts the differing contexts of Honorius's writings, texts that use similar content but are framed in very different ways. Sermons have, necessarily, a vertically oriented pedagogical structure, but the *Gemma animae* is much more flexible in its ability to respond to the internal life of the monastic student. The *Gemma animae's* representation of architecture aligns well with contemporary ideas of architecture's affective power in monastic praxis. In this present volume, Marc Saurette highlights a specific example of didactic architecture at Cluny; Honorius's work offers another way to read the didactic potential of the built environment, one that flourished within relatively popular works. In this context, architecture is intended to stimulate both mnemonic powers and the generation of knowledge. Whereas Honorius's sermons are directed at a certain audience, the *Gemma animae* requires much more work by the reader, and this chapter investigates the consequences of that situation.

Honorius was one of the most commonly copied authors of the twelfth century. His concern for teaching methods make him important to any study of pedagogical strategies during the period.<sup>1</sup> His first work, the *Elucidarium*, appears in 336 manuscripts and was translated into vernacular languages soon after completion, demonstrating a distinct popularity amongst his peers.<sup>2</sup> Its widespread dissemination offers a significant snapshot of pedagogical practices at the beginning of the twelfth century. His many

1 V.I.J. Flint divides Honorius's work up into several genres, including 'didactic and exegetical works'; however, many of the works assigned to different genres can be described as didactic because their aim is to teach their readers about specific branches of knowledge. See Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 144-149.

2 The list of manuscripts and fragments containing the *Elucidarium* can be found in Gottschall, *Das 'Elucidarium'*, 297-306. Flint added to the number of manuscripts in Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 162. For a discussion of the early manuscripts see Flint, 'The Original Text', 91-94.

innovations, and perhaps even his popularity, derive from the effective and imaginative way he took advantage of the students' environment, such as the architectural descriptions in the *Gemma animae*. By considering horizontal learning in light of Honorius's work, we see that monastic architecture was a vital tool for learning. This sort of materialistic emphasis demonstrates a distinct development in the way in which texts were encountered, thus reflecting on the learning practices of Honorius's readers.

Despite his obvious importance to twelfth-century intellectual culture, Honorius's identity remains shrouded in mystery. While this chapter does not address that issue in detail, it is important to contextualize what we know of Honorius's aims and, hence, the relationship between his works.

Much scholarship has concentrated on uncovering Honorius's biography, but, despite such sustained focus, many aspects of his life remain unclear.<sup>3</sup> The difficulty derives from Honorius's own reticence in revealing his real name, choosing to hide it out of fear of his opponents.<sup>4</sup> V.I.J. Flint argued that Honorius's real name was Heinricus, based on evidence from contemporary manuscripts and a bequest given by a German religious of that name, which contained a relatively large number of Honorius's works.<sup>5</sup> Honorius was most likely born in Germany or northern Italy during the final quarter of the eleventh century, where he was educated and became a canon regular.<sup>6</sup> At the end of the eleventh century he travelled to Canterbury. It is possible that Honorius went there in the household of Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), with whom he had a close intellectual relationship. Honorius did not remain in Canterbury but most likely travelled to the midlands and northern England, where he wrote his first commentary on the Song of Songs, possibly during the years that

3 Much modern scholarship erroneously refers to Honorius as 'Honorius of Autun'. Honorius's link to Autun was prevalent in the nineteenth century, but in 1906 Joseph Endres convincingly demonstrated that there is little evidence that Honorius was from Autun or had any significant link to it; see Endres, *Honorius Augustodunensis*.

4 Honorius's resistance to giving his name appears in the *Elucidarium*, see Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarium*, 359.

5 Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 162.

6 The outline of Honorius's life given in the body of the text is largely taken from Flint's final work on Honorius and represents the most extended discussion of the subject, Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 95-128. It is worth noting that there is significant disagreement with Flint's biography. See Matthews Sanford, 'Honorius, Presbyter and Scholasticus', 397-425 for an earlier synthesis. For arguments that seek to place Honorius in twelfth-century France see Garrigues, 'Qui était Honorius Augustodunensis?', 20-49 and Garrigues, 'Quelques recherches', 338-45. For arguments regarding Honorius's possible Irish origins see, Reynolds, 'Further Evidence for the Irish Origin of Honorius', 1-7. This argument is repeated in Southern, *Saint Anselm*, but not in Southern's later work on Anselm.

Anselm was in exile.<sup>7</sup> After Anselm died, Honorius became cloistered in Saint James's Abbey in Regensburg, where he wrote most of his works. He may have died there or in Lambach in Austria, to where he moved at the end of his life.<sup>8</sup>

Honorius authored approximately 30 works in his lifetime, listing many of them in the conclusion to his final text, the *Lucidarium*.<sup>9</sup> While the details of Honorius's life are not yet known, the list in the *Lucidarium* may be chronological, giving us some insight into the links between his works.<sup>10</sup> The subjects range from allegories of the liberal arts to a polemical treatise on the rights of monks to preach. Such variety demonstrates the extraordinary range of sources that he had available to him, and, as we will see, his possible intentions for writing: to create encyclopaedic texts that emphasize breadth of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Monks and canons alike commonly copied his work across Europe. Honorius authored monastic textbooks with the aim of supporting the rapid expansion of monastic foundations at the beginning of the twelfth century. Some of the prologues to Honorius's better-known works support this view.

Eva Matthews Sanford called for caution when examining the prologues to Honorius's works when investigating his life; however, they do tell us a little about Honorius's intentions.<sup>12</sup> Three of Honorius's earliest works give his reasons for writing and indicate the status he gives to readers as learners. Towards the end of the *Imago mundi*'s<sup>13</sup> prologue, for instance, he claims that he writes 'for the instruction of many things for those without a well-equipped library'.<sup>14</sup> Honorius's objective is to reinvigorate

7 Heslop, 'The English Origins', 792.

8 Flint, 'The Career of Honorius', 63-65.

9 The list is most likely incomplete. Flint includes a list of additional and doubtful works attributed to Honorius in the appendix to her final work about him. Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 177-180.

10 Flint, 'The Chronology of the Works', 215-42; Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*. 98.

11 Considering Honorius's output and obvious influence on his twelfth-century audience, the scholarship on him is surprisingly limited. The most recent bibliography is Kinsella and Smith, 'Honorius Augustodunensis'. Possibly the most important desideratum is a sustained analysis of Honorius's sources. For more information on Honorius's sources, D'Alverny, 'Le cosmos symbolique', 31-81; Bell, 'The Basic Source', 163-70.

12 Sanford, 'Presbyter', p. 401.

13 The *Imago mundi* was consistently changed and edited by Honorius up to 1137. Flint's edition of the text attempts to recreate Honorius's final revision, Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis: *Imago Mundi*', 7-153.

14 'Ad instructionem itaque multorum quibus deest copia librorum'. Flint, 'Imago Mundi', p. 49. This could also be rendered as 'for the instruction of many things, for those without a well-equipped library'.

the encyclopaedic genre, which fell out of fashion after the Carolingian period.<sup>15</sup> By doing so, Honorius hoped to plug the intellectual gaps in small and new foundations. The aims of the *Imago mundi* are clearly didactic: setting out the formation of the world and a history of its parts in short chapters with content that is unequivocal in tone. Honorius believed himself to be writing a text that communicated the truth of history and the properties of the cosmos, and he believed that his readers viewed him as a teacher.<sup>16</sup> This concern for the correct training and education for monks is perhaps related to English monastic reforms in the late eleventh century, where the education of the laity became the responsibility of local monks.<sup>17</sup> Either way, Honorius appears to identify himself, as do his readers, primarily as a teacher.

While Honorius's concern was to provide works for foundations with small libraries, he may see the relationship between him and his peers along horizontal lines. The opening of Honorius's 'most widely read work', the *Elucidarium*, situates the text as one begun alongside his fellow students.<sup>18</sup> He writes that 'I have often been asked by fellow students (*condiscipulis*) to explain certain little questions'.<sup>19</sup> Thus the *Elucidarium* can be viewed as Honorius's response to his fellow students' uncertainties about orthodox theology. This being the case, while the work is in the form of a dialogue between a master and his student, the prologue establishes that the relationship is between Honorius and his peers. By presenting the *Elucidarium* as a dialogue, Honorius made a specific pedagogical decision. One possible reason appears in the prologue to Honorius's scientific work, the *Clavis physicae*. Honorius wrote that his preference for the dialogue format is rooted in a desire to emulate the 'best philosophers' – including Socrates, Plato, Augustine, and Boethius – and, because the dialogue format is particularly effective at teaching and introducing a subject, it echoes previous works and lends an authorial voice to Honorius's efforts.<sup>20</sup> Thus

15 Excerpts from Honorius's *Elucidarium*, *Speculum ecclesiae*, and *Gemma animae* appear in encyclopaedic texts such as the twelfth-century *Hortus deliciarum*. Bischoff, 'Le Texte', 37-61. For Honorius's use of Carolingian texts see, d'Alverny, 'Le Cosmos', and Gersh, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', 162-173.

16 Flint, 'Imago Mundi', 48.

17 Flint, 'The Elucidarius of Honorius Augustodunensis and Reform', 183-189.

18 Novikoff, 'Anselm, Dialogue', 413.

19 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarium*, 359: 'Saepius rogato a condiscipulis quasdam quaestiunculas enodare'.

20 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Clavis physicae*, 3: 'Cuius stilum ideo verti in dialogum quia summis philosophis, Socrati scilicet et Platoni ac Tullio nec non nostro Augustino et Boetio, visum est id genus codendi quam maximum vim optinere introducendi'.

the dialogue format may not be as vertically oriented in its relationship with its readers as it first appears and may simply suggest Honorius's awareness of different possible pedagogical structures for his texts, as well as a desire to emulate the past. By putting words in the mouth of a master, Honorius created a rhetorical strategy that masks a perceived equivalence between author and reader.

We can draw two conclusions from this: first, that Honorius's intention when writing the *Imago mundi*, and other didactic works, was to provide books for small foundations; second, that he saw the dialogue format as an efficient teaching genre, but this does not mean he had a strictly vertical teaching arrangement in mind when writing, referring instead to his *condiscipuli*. Honorius has a flexible view of himself as educator and author, adapting the structure of his texts in response to his intended reader, and that is nowhere more apparent than in the *Gemma animae*.

The *Gemma animae* represents the development of an innovative and influential pedagogical strategy that presented material culture, and the fabric of the medieval church in particular, as a partner in the learning process. Honorius gives his 'fellow-students' the means to reassess their environment, making it an active element that supported constant learning through the liturgy. Honorius gives the different parts particular meanings; in fact, he gives different parts of the building many different potentialities that shift and change depending on one's position in the church, the point in the liturgy, or even the time of the year. Moreover, in the Augustinian tradition Honorius was not 'giving' meanings to the different parts of the building; instead he was simply making plain the inherent symbolic significance behind them.<sup>21</sup> In essence, he did not create the meanings, but through typological exegesis illustrated the church building's material link to Christian history. By presenting a loose array of meanings, the student must take responsibility to draw what he needs, using the church as a learning partner. The outcome of this approach identifies the church and its components as a series of invitations for the reader-monk to meditate on his place within the Church and its history. There is no strict hierarchical structure in this process, as there was in the *Imago mundi*; instead, there is an impetus for the learner to reflect on his environment by using a flexible symbolic system that acts as a catalyst to reflection and thought.

21 For a discussion on the significance of objects and history see G.E. Evans, 'Hugh of Saint Victor', 228.

The *Gemma animae* has been described as a liturgical commentary in four books.<sup>22</sup> The first book, containing 243 chapters, is concerned with the Mass and the church building. The second book, of 68 chapters, focuses on the canonical hours, examining the celebrations that take place during the day. The third book contains 164 chapters and provides a commentary on the liturgical year, beginning with Advent Sunday. The final book of 188 chapters considers festivals throughout the year, beginning with Septuagesima. Chapters can be relatively short, ranging from one sentence to a small paragraph in the *Patrologia Latina* edition. Its structure makes the work easy to consult and allows one to find information rapidly. The sources for much of the work remain unclear, but Flint argued that at least one important influence was only available in England and Normandy at the beginning of the twelfth century, thus placing the work near the beginning of Honorius's career and part of his English output.<sup>23</sup> The work appears third in the list of Honorius's works at the end of the *Lucidarium*, supporting the view that the list is chronological.

The description 'liturgical commentary' does not fully describe the contents of the *Gemma animae* and does not indicate its potential usefulness within a twelfth-century religious community. Honorius divides Book One into two sections: the first considers the Mass; the second the church in which it takes place. At the beginning of the first book, Honorius places emphasis on *seeing* the Mass and the church, not just reading about them.<sup>24</sup> He re-emphasizes visuality when introducing the second section, writing '[H]ere we briefly spoke about the mass, now we look at a few things in the church, in which it takes place'.<sup>25</sup> Honorius's use of the verb 'to see' in both instances suggests that he wants the reader to recall

22 There is no modern edition of the text. It appears in *Patrologia Latina*, edited by Jean-Paul Migne, vol. 172: 541-733; all subsequent references are to this edition.

23 The strong relationship between the *Gemma animae* and England is reinforced by a newly discovered twelfth-century English copy of the text in York (Minster Library, MS XVI.I.xi), which does not appear in Flint's manuscript list, Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 164-65. It possibly escaped notice because it appears under the title *Gemma ecclesiae* instead of its correct title. A late fifteenth-century note states that '*Gemma ecclesiae constans Capelle Hospitalis de Sh[ir]burn*'. Its possible presence in the north of England in the twelfth century supports Flint's thesis that Honorius collected sources for this work during his time at Worcester and possibly further north.

24 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 543A: 'In primis ergo De missa, per quam nobis vita redditur, et de Ecclesia, in quo agitur, et de ministris Ecclesiae, per quos celebratur, videamus'. 'In first place is the mass, through which life is returned to us, and then we see about the church, in which it takes place, and then the ministers, through whom it is celebrated'.

25 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 583D: 'Haec breviter de missa dixerimus, nunc pauca de ecclesia, in qua agitur, videamus'.

or to consider the architectural structures as physical edifices, not just as textual representations. The student ought to engage the imagination and memory when meditating on the allegorical content of the *Gemma animae*, stimulated when one can see the church during the Mass or daily offices.<sup>26</sup>

The second part of Book One extends from Chapter 122 to 243, at which point Book Two begins. In this architectural section, Honorius does not treat the church consistently; for example, toward the end of the section he addresses subjects with little relevance to the church building. Chapter 122, titled 'The Altar', immediately follows the introduction to the architectural section of Book One.<sup>27</sup> The chapter begins by identifying the first Christian altar in history, writing that 'Noah constructed the first altar to the Lord, next Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are read to have built one which are thought to be nothing other than piled up stones.'<sup>28</sup> The chapter continues by referencing the altar on which Cain and Abel sacrificed their offerings to the Lord, although there is no explicit reference to it in Scripture.<sup>29</sup> The short chapter switches from a typological commentary to an etymological explanation of the term, differentiating between the two synonyms *altare* and *aram*.<sup>30</sup>

The following chapter (no. 123) is titled 'On the Tabernacle of Moses' and at first glance appears to deviate strangely from Honorius's previous focus on the altar. The chapter begins with a summary of the events of Exodus 26 and the Lord's instructions to Moses regarding the appearance, shape, and size of the Tabernacle, as well as the liturgical vessels used by the priests. Honorius then makes a common typological link by comparing the Tabernacle to the Temple built by Solomon. The connection between this chapter and the previous one, on the altar, only becomes apparent at the end, where Honorius refers to the 'gold altar' that was made for the Temple. The final sentence completes the typological exegesis: 'it [the Temple]

26 Flint highlights Honorius's emphasis on sight when describing his 'love of viewpoints'. Flint, 'Heinricus of Augsburg', 151.

27 This chapter follows the chapter titles in the *Patrologia Latina* edition; however, the titles are not consistent in the twelfth-century manuscript copies.

28 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 583D: 'Noe primus altare Domino construxisse; deinde Abraham, Isaac et Jacob altaria aedificasse leguntur, quae non aliud quam lapides erecti intelliguntur'.

29 Cf. Genesis 4:1-18.

30 Honorius contends that *altare* derives from *alta* ('high'). The connection between the two appears in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. However, Honorius's root for *ara* is *area* ('flat') or *ardore* ('fire'). The latter appears in Isidore's entry for the term, but not the former. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 310.

prefigured the Church, and the Christian people formed the churches which were made according to its form [the Temple]:<sup>31</sup>

The first six chapters in the architectural section (nos. 122-127) consider the altar. We have already seen that the chapters on the altar and the Tabernacle of Moses are linked by their focus on the meaning of the altar. In the following chapter, 'On the Tabernacle of the People', Honorius focuses on the space in which the medieval altar is placed, typologically linking it with the 'Holy of Holies', the most holy space and innermost part of the Tabernacle. Honorius even argues that 'the Tabernacle was formed according to the shape of the world'; by doing so, he implies that the church building was also formed according to the same shape.<sup>32</sup> Chapter 125, which considers the Temple, offers a typological reading of the Temple in Jerusalem as the celestial Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Yet again Honorius focuses on the altar and its significance in the context of the church building, writing, 'the gold altar is Christ and the glory of the saints. All the chosen priests and cantors will be in this Temple'.<sup>34</sup> As should be clear, the altar now embodies a wide range of meanings that shift and change depending on the context, the altar holds potential meanings which are made explicit by Honorius, but are interpreted by the reader and viewer.

Chapters 126 and 127 further Honorius's commentary on the entire building, implying that he sees the altar standing in for the entire building, a metonymic symbol for the whole of Christianity. The chapter on the basilica (no. 127) stands at the end of this section on the altar and summarizes the typological content:

This house is the basilica; that is, it is named from royalty, because the king of kings is ministered to in it. *Basileus* is king, like the base of the people, it is called the column of the people, because it is supported with their control.<sup>35</sup> This house is a *κυριακή*, that is named from Sunday, because he, the lord of lords, is served in it. *Kyrius* is called lord. Here, the

31 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 584A-B: 'Quod quia utrumque Ecclesiam praefiguravit, secundum formam utriusque populus Christianus ecclesias formavit'.

32 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 584C: 'Tabernaculum secundum mundum erat formatum'.

33 The chapter appears as 215 in the PL edition, but this is an editing error.

34 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 585A: 'In quo altare aureum est Christus gloria sanctorum. In hoc templo omnes electi sacerdotes et cantatores erunt'.

35 Again, where we might expect Honorius to have used Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* we see only a partial link. The architectural metaphor, 'the base of the people', does not appear in Isidore's work, and may be Honorius's invention. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 201.

house calls to God, because the Lord is worshiped in it. Here is a house of prayer, because the faithful come together to pray in it. Here is called the hall of God, because the eternal royal companion is celebrated in it. Here is called an oratory, because it is the place of prayer for the faithful. Here, this Temple is called like a good roof, because the people have come together in it, as if under one roof.<sup>36</sup>

Honorius's 'love of viewpoints' is evident in this section. The continuous use of demonstrative pronouns gives a sense of immediacy and presence to the commentary. Having focused on the east end of the church up to this point, Honorius takes the point of view of the monastic reader standing at the east end of the church – implied by the previous focus on that location – summing up his commentary on the church building so far. While the structure of the *Gemma animae*'s architectural section is loose, it is not, I think, arbitrary. It begins in the holiest part of the church, the section that typologically reflects the holy of holies in the Israelite's Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem. By structuring the chapter in this manner, Honorius has assumed that his reader's experience will be in the east end.

This short description demonstrates Honorius's strategy in each chapter of the *Gemma animae*. In this and other chapters, he provides the subject in the rubric, then enumerates the object's link with other objects from the past, such as the altar of Noah and that used by Cain and Abel. A historical reading is sometimes supplemented by a literal analysis that disambiguates possibly confusing terms. This historical and literal exegesis is usually supported by a typological reading that seems to be Honorius's primary focus in many of the chapters. These forms of exegesis became formalized during the Middle Ages and can be seen especially in the works of Honorius's contemporary, Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141).<sup>37</sup> However, Honorius's approach in the *Gemma animae* offers a different catalyst to the primarily textual focus laid down by Saint Augustine and Hugh: namely, the material church.

36 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 585C-D: 'Haec domus est basilica, id est regalis nuncupatur, quia in ea Regi regum ministratur. Basileus namque rex, quasi basis laos, id est columna populi dicitur, quia ejus regimine fulcitur. Haec domus e[s]t κυριακή, id est Dominicalis appellatur, quia in ea Domino dominorum servitur. Kyrius quippe dominus dicitur. Haec quoque domus Dei vocatur, quia in ea Dominus adoratur. Haec domus orationis, quia in ea populus fidelium ad orationem congregatur. Haec etiam aula Dei nuncupatur, quia in ea convivium regis aeterni celebratur. Haec quoque dicitur oratorium, quia locus est orationis fidelium. Haec templum quasi amplum tectum vocatur, quia conventus populi in ea quasi sub unum tectum coadunatur'.

37 See for example, Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon*, 120-121.

By beginning with the altar and then, as we will see, focusing on the church's different parts, Honorius offers a structure for reading the text as well as putting it into practice. He requires the learner not just to read the text but 'to see' the church building and interpret it as a text for reflecting on history and the liturgy. Honorius reinforces this architectural structure by the sequence of the chapters. While each chapter has a loose but overall consistent structure, the relationship between those chapters can be unclear. However, if a student wished to use the church as a learning partner, the text must relate, somehow, to how that student used the church in the first place.

We have already noted that Honorius starts the architectural section of the *Gemma animae* at the altar; that is, the high altar situated in the east end of many Western European churches. The altar was the holiest place in the church and the focus of the liturgy.<sup>38</sup> The sequence of the subsequent chapters initially seems to move from east to west, from the holiest part of the church in the east, then expanding outwards to encompass other buildings such as the cemetery and cloister. The sequence is: 122 – *De altari*, 123 – *De tabernaculo Moysi*, 124 – *De tabernaculo populi*, 125 – *De Templo*, 126 – *De ecclesia habente septem vocabula*, 127 – *De basilica, caeterisque templo nominibus*, 128 – *De capellis*, 129 – *De situ ecclesiae*, 130 – *De fenestris ecclesiae*, 131 – *De columinis ecclesiae*, 132 – *De pictura*, 133 – *De corona in ecclesiae*, 134 – *De pavimento*, 135 – *De cruce*, 136 – *De propitiatorio*, 137 – *De palliis*, 138 – *De ostio*, 139 – *De choro*, 140 – *De concordia chori*, 141 – *De corona*, 142 – *De campanis*, 143 – *De turribus*, 144 – *De campanario*, 145 – *De statione*, 146 – *De mulieribus*, 147 – *De coemeterio*, 148 – *De claustro*, and 149 – *Quod claustrum sit paradisu*.<sup>39</sup> The particular objects upon which Honorius comments can be clearly located in the medieval church: for example, the altar, the choir, the towers, the cemetery, and the cloister, a clear indication that the sense of direction moves from inside the church to the buildings and structures adjacent to it.

The focus of the chapters following those on the altar seem much more arbitrary, but there is still some suggestion that Honorius intended the reader to remain in the east end, at least conceptually. Chapters 129, 130, and 131 are titled *De situ ecclesiae*, *De fenestris ecclesiae*, and *De columinis ecclesiae* respectively. The chapter on the site of the church begins by stating that the 'church is oriented toward the east'.<sup>40</sup> At the end of the chapter, Honorius emphasizes the importance of the east end, writing that it represents the

38 The altar was thought to represent the whole church, Braun, *Der Christliche altar*, 752.

39 Chapter 150 and the following concern the dedication of the church and are discussed below.

40 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 586A: 'Ideo autem ecclesiae ad Orientem vertuntur'.

early Church made up of Jewish members.<sup>41</sup> The following two chapters, concerning windows and columns, could refer to almost any part of the church; however, it may be meaningful that Honorius distinguishes them in the title as 'of the church'. Chapter 133, titled *De corona in ecclesia*, is similar and comments on the importance of the chandelier in the sanctuary. Chapter 141, *De corona*, refers to the same object and so must be in a different location. This follows a chapter that considers the choir and another that examines how the shape of the choir facilitates the singing of the daily offices. This sequence suggests that Chapter 141 refers to the chandelier in the choir or the nave.<sup>42</sup> It is feasible, then, that the addition of *ecclesiae* to the titles that concern the windows, columns, and chandeliers is primarily meant to refer to those at the east end of the medieval church.

The two chapters (nos. 139 and 140) devoted to the choir move the reader's attention westward from the altar. Honorius considers the different ways in which music was important for praising God, stating that Solomon was said to have instituted singers to sing around the altar accompanied by different instruments.<sup>43</sup> In Chapter 140 he then moves from a typological reading to a historical one that considers the twin-choir as part of wider reforms during Late Antiquity by the bishops Flavianus and Diodorus.<sup>44</sup> It is clear that Honorius's attention, in this case, is on the use to which the choir was put by the monks who sang in it. So much of the monk's daily life was centred in the choir that Honorius's commentary must have encouraged contemplation of its historical and typological significance. According to the *Gemma animae*, the choir represents nothing less than the cosmos itself, and through the singer's voices one can experience the harmony of the planets.<sup>45</sup> These ideas were inherently embedded in the fabric of Christianity and must have encouraged the monks to meditate on their role within Christian history.

41 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 586A: 'Sanctuarium est primitiae Ecclesiae de Iudaeis collectae'.

42 There are a number of examples of chandeliers in the choir or nave which are roughly contemporary with Honorius. For example, the 'wheel-shaped Hezilo chandelier' at Saint Mary's cathedral in Hildesheim from 1061. Giese, Lutz, and Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, 'Hildesheim: Center of Medieval Art', 5. Similar examples can be found at Aachen and a modern recreation at Buckfast Abbey, Smith, 'Mediaeval Chandeliers', 268.

43 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 587D.

44 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 588A. The source for this is Theodoret's *Historia ecclesiae*, which details the history of the Arian debate in the fifth century. Theodoret was a critic of Nestorius during the Nestorian controversy during the fifth century. He was a monk, although not ordained. See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica*.

45 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 587D: 'Harmoniam planetarum resonantium'.

The final part of the architectural section focuses on the west end of the church, at which point Honorius shifts attention to sites outside of the church building, providing chapters on the cemetery and the cloister. Honorius focused on the western towers and the bells within them. Supporting the idea that this section considers the west end and not a crossing tower, in Chapter 143 Honorius envisions two towers, presumably one to the south and another to the north.<sup>46</sup> Further on he discusses the significance of the bell's materials before finally ending in a discussion of the bells themselves, which are meant to refer to the preachers of the church. Again, the west end of the church is implied here, because Honorius follows with a reference to the cockerel that would have been placed at the top of a tower.<sup>47</sup>

The structure of the architectural section of the *Gemma animae* is clear. Honorius asks readers 'to see' the different parts of the church, but in doing so he encourages them to move in a particular direction – east to west. This sort of imaginative movement through a church is not unknown and implies that Honorius had a monastic reader in mind, one who was able to freely move through the church, bringing the meanings of the different parts to mind while progressing through it.<sup>48</sup> While the structure of the *Gemma animae* is relatively clear at this stage, it still does not fully explain what the text is for, nor does it account for the frequently contradictory meanings given for the different parts of the church.

One example of these divergent meanings has already been alluded to above. First, the altar, as the main focus of the liturgy, embodies a wide spectrum of meanings, many of which are concerned with Christ or Jerusalem. It can also have negative meanings. For example, in Chapter 79 of Book One, Honorius describes a moment when the priest comes toward the altar. As he does so, 'it is like David moving against the Philistine enemy'.<sup>49</sup> At this point, the meaning of the altar takes precedence over its status as the holiest part of the church when, in the liturgy, the altar signifies the enemy of David. Its new identity is surprising. The altar suddenly becomes

46 These two towers are meant to signify 'the two laws'. Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 588D.

47 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 589B: 'Non autem sine causa gallus super campanarium ponitur'. 'It is not without reason that the cockerel is placed at the top of the bell towers'. Underlining the importance of the cockerel placed atop the western end, there is one at this location in the twelfth-century architectural representation of Canterbury Cathedral in the Eadwine Psalter.

48 Ohly, 'Die Kathedrale Als Zeitenraum', 171-273.

49 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 568C: 'Quasi David adversus Philistaeum procedit'.

primarily a tool for learning and for reflecting on Christian history. It asks the viewer to see Christian history come alive within the church, casting the bishop as king of the Israelites. If one went searching for a definitive set of meanings for the church building and its parts, the *Gemma animae* would be a confusing and frustrating work.

Mary Carruthers and others have described the adoption of architectural representations within an imaginative framework.<sup>50</sup> According to this reconstruction of monastic meditative praxis, architecture provided the backdrop for mnemonic activity, where the monk constructed a building in his mind and used it to house signifiers of memories. The monk, by walking through the imaginary structure, could remember the content and order in which it appears. Crucially, this technique was not limited to mere recall of information but facilitated a meditative process on the subject's relationship with Christ. According to this view, architecture and architectural representations in the Middle Ages took part in non-verbal communication with the viewer. The *Gemma animae*, and the flexible symbolism it describes, echoes this practice. The shifting meaning of the church and its parts encourages flexibility of thought, which is rooted in the tangible materiality of the church and monastic experiences. The *Gemma animae* represents a means for the subject to reflect on his experiences and embed those experiences within stone and timber; as a result, there is no strict vertical teaching arrangement in the text: rather, it reflects the subjectivity of the reader and viewer.

Underlining the structure of the *Gemma animae* and its tangible relationship with the church building is its commentary on the liturgy for the dedication of the church. Instead of moving through the church from east to west, in this section, Honorius focused on a particular liturgical moment and applied the same literal, historical, allegorical and typological exegetical commentary to a self-contained celebration of the church building. There is no clear reason for shifting the focus to the dedication ceremony; however, some of the meanings invested in the architecture of the church contradict the meanings allotted to the same structures earlier in the *Gemma animae*. By doing so, Honorius gave the student an opportunity for a richer experience of the dedication ceremony, allowing him to use the church building to recall and imagine moments of history. The church is nothing less than a container for collective memory of the institutional church. In this final part, I contrast the nature of the dedication ceremony as it appears in the *Gemma animae* with Honorius's

50 Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 34-35.

sermons. By doing so, the non-hierarchical nature of the *Gemma animae* comes into focus, demonstrating that the work's contradictory meanings are purposeful and significant.

In the *Gemma animae*, Honorius established the switch in focus from the church building in general to a specific ceremony with the title of Chapter 150: *De dedicatione ecclesiae* ('On the Dedication of the Church'). This part of the commentary starts outside the church at the beginning of the ceremony, thus establishing a chronological structure for the section. The section contains approximately 22 chapters.<sup>51</sup> These are titled: 150 – *De dedicatione ecclesiae*, 151 – *De domo non consecrata*, 152 – *De portis*, 153 – *De alphabeto*, 154 – *De quatuor angulis ecclesiae*, 155 – *De dextro angulo*, 156 – *De illo, Deus in adiutorium*, 157 – *De sale et cinere*, 158 – *De vino et aqua*, 159 – *De templo*, 160 – *De altari et cruce*, 161 – *De ministris*, 162 – *De oleo et altari*, 163 – *De chrismate*, 164 – *De incenso*, 165 – *De vasis et ornamentis*, 166 – *De reliquiis sanctorum*, 167 – *De veste animarum*, 168 – *De die iudicii*, 169 – *De certo loco et sacrificio*, 170 – *De violata ecclesia*, and 171 – *De constructione ecclesiae*. In the dedication section, the chapter sequence is determined by the liturgy of the ceremony. Honorius begins in the atrium, where the bishop blesses the fountain.<sup>52</sup> He then moves on to the church itself, outlining the reasons for the dedication, commenting on each part and ending with a chapter on the construction of the church.

The content of each chapter is like those on the altar. Honorius provides a historical, allegorical, and literal commentary to draw out the significance of a certain object and its place in the ceremony. By doing so, however, Honorius seems to contradict earlier meanings he has assigned the objects, such as the altar. For example, in Chapter 160 Honorius discusses the significance of the 'altar and the cross'.<sup>53</sup> In the earlier section, the altar signified Christ, Goliath, and the Church; in Chapter 160, as part of the dedication ceremony, the altar 'portrays the early church in Jerusalem'.<sup>54</sup> This distinctly historical meaning is then supported by the allegorical actions taking place around the altar and within the context of the dedication. For example, 'water with hyssop is sprinkled on it, the bitter grass is thought to penetrate into the hard stone, and signifies the flesh of Christ grown bitter during the passion,

51 It is difficult to determine the relationship between chapters and Honorius's overall intention for the structure because there is no indication of where sections, such as that on the dedication, end.

52 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 590D: 'Episcopus fontem in atrio benedicit'.

53 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 593C-594A.

54 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 593C: 'Altare hic primitivam Ecclesiam in Hierusalem exprimit'.

through whom baptism is given'.<sup>55</sup> While this historical and allegorical approach is similar to the earlier sections, the meaning ascribed to the same object is variable, exactly as we have seen above in the earlier part of the *Gemma animae*.

Before moving on to a discussion of the dedication commentary in the sermon collections – the *Speculum ecclesiae* and the *Sacramentarium* – it is worth noting antecedents to this type of liturgical commentary to determine how Honorius's work is different and what this can tell us about his intentions. The ninth-century *Quid significant duodecim candalae* provides an extended commentary on the actions of the priest during the ceremony.<sup>56</sup> Flint seems to accept that Honorius was influenced by the text, which is sometimes attributed to the Amalarius of Metz (d. 850), although she does not specify which part of the *Gemma animae* took inspiration from the *Quid significant*.<sup>57</sup> Honorius is known to have favoured Carolingian texts and is credited with revitalizing the encyclopaedic genre at the beginning of the twelfth century, taking earlier examples, such as by Amalarius, as inspiration.<sup>58</sup> The key difference between the *Quid significant*, the *Gemma animae*, and both sermon collections is that whereas the Carolingian author prioritizes the past and historical value of the ceremony, Honorius's works begin with the present. He cites the actions taking place before the viewer's eyes and gives them an allegorical significance. For example, the *Quid significant* begins: 'One who, recalling ancient history, remembers with how much celebrity the Tabernacle of the testimony and the Temple constructed by Solomon, at the Lord's command, was dedicated, knows that the custom which the holy church holds in the solemn consecration of the house of the Lord is not of any [comparable] sort of dignity'.<sup>59</sup> Here the author begins with the past, by 'recalling ancient history'; hence for the listener or reader to grasp the significance of the building within the liturgy, knowledge of that past is needed before the dedication begins. Honorius instead begins with the church and describes it allegorically: 'In the dedication of the church there is a union between the church and Christ. The bishop who does the consecration is Christ, he who was joined to the Church'. Honorius

55 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 593D: 'Aqua cum hyssopo aspergitur, quae amara herba duritiam lapidum penetrare fertur, et signat Christi carnem in passione amaricatam, per quem baptismus datur'.

56 Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication*, 34. The English edition of the commentary may be found at pp. 171-193.

57 Following Repsher, I have shortened the title of the Carolingian work to *Quid significant*.

58 Flint, 'Works', 225.

59 Repsher, *Church Dedication*, 171.

immediately presents the bishop as Christ, that is, the person present during the ceremony.

The *Patrologia Latina* gives two sermon collections attributed to Honorius: the *Speculum ecclesiae*; and the *Sacramentarium*.<sup>60</sup> The *Speculum ecclesiae* is a collection of sermons for feast days and set occasions such as the dedication of the church.<sup>61</sup> Flint argues that the accessible nature of the sermons and Honorius's advice to make sermons short suggest that the collection was preached in the vernacular.<sup>62</sup> She describes the second sermon collection, the *Sacramentarium*, as 'a condensed version of some of the material contained in the *Gemma animae*'.<sup>63</sup> Like the *Imago mundi*, Honorius devised the work for those without a large library.<sup>64</sup> Both collections end with sermons for the dedication ceremony and convey the meaning behind some of the actions, objects, and moments of the ceremony. Both dedication sermons take material from the *Gemma animae*, but Honorius takes them from two separate parts of the liturgical commentary. By comparing both sermons on the dedication of the church, it is possible to clarify Honorius's intention in disseminating symbolic values to the various parts of the church.

First we will examine the sermon in the *Speculum ecclesiae*. Honorius first asks the congregation to consider the building: 'Dearly beloved, one ought to consider the construction of this building, of prayer, which today we honour with solemnity for the feast of dedication'.<sup>65</sup> He then moves on to consider particular parts of the building: '[T]he sanctuary in which the people stand, has that portion at the front of the building, it holds the active [life] in which the secular people are; the church [*ecclesia*] holds the contemplative life'.<sup>66</sup> The separation of the church in this way, between the active and contemplative life of its members, appears in Chapter 129 of the *Gemma animae*, where Honorius considers the site of the church.<sup>67</sup> The

60 There was, most likely, a third sermon collection titled *Refectio mentum*, but it is now lost. Flint, 'Works', 216.

61 There are at least two recensions of the *Speculum ecclesiae*, Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 137.

62 Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 137.

63 Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis', in *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 139.

64 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 737C: '[u]t quibus deest librorum copia'.

65 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 1103B: 'Dilectissimi, consideranda est constructio hujus domus, orationis, cujus hodie solemnia colimus festivae dedicationis'.

66 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 1103B: 'Sanctuarium habet in quo clerus anteriorem domum in qua consistit populus: ita et Ecclesia habet contemplativam vitam, in qua spirituales, habet et activam, in qua constituti sunt saeculares'.

67 In the *Gemma animae*, col. 586A, the commentary states that: 'Sanctuarium est primitiae Ecclesiae de Judaeis collectae; anterior domus, in activa vita Deo servientes'.

following parts of the sermon deal with the objects of the church building in the order that they appear in the architectural section of the *Gemma animae*. First Honorius discusses the significance of the altar: 'The altar is in the sanctuary, in which the relics of the saints are, here Christ is in the Church'.<sup>68</sup> The sermon then moves on to the windows, the pictures on the ceiling, and the cross on top of the altar.<sup>69</sup> This section of the sermon, devoted to the church building, ends with reference to the 'towers' and the bells in them:

This basilica is illuminated by the windows; that is, the doctors, through whom the heavenly light comes into the church. Here, in the church, are images on the ceiling; that is for the decoration of Sunday, they signify the life and example of the saints, who, in their piety, are imitated in the church. Here, having been set-up, the cross of Christ is worshiped, and Christ's passion is venerated by all Christians. That cross is a gate through which we follow, because we ought to follow in the footsteps of Christ if we wish to come to the heavenly Temple. Those towers are the church's preachers, and the bells are their sermons.<sup>70</sup>

This sequence of architectural objects follows the order of the *Gemma animae* chapters; namely, numbers 130, 132, 135, 143, and 144 respectively. The structure Honorius gave the *Gemma animae* is, at least partly, defined by the liturgy of the dedication. The arrangement of the chapters allows those hearing the sermon to follow the action and to reflect on the parts of the church without strictly defining the exact appearance of the building; that is, the process works with any building containing the objects mentioned.

The way the objects are presented in the above quote echoes Chapter 127 of the *Gemma animae*: a series of demonstrative pronouns indicating

68 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 1103B: 'In sanctuario est altare, in quo sunt reliquiae sanctorum, hoc est in Ecclesia Christus'.

69 In the dedication sermon, Honorius does not give the three reasons for the pictures' presence in the church and omits Gregory the Great's well-known rationale, that they act as 'literature for the illiterate'. For a discussion on Honorius's use of Gregory's idea see, Duggan, 'Was Art Really the "Book of the Illiterate"?', 71.

70 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 1104B-1105A: 'Fenestrae quibus haec basilica illustratur, sunt doctores per quos coeleste lumen in Ecclesiam ingreditur. Laquear picturae quoque haec Kirica, id est Dominicalis decoratio, significat vitam et exempla sanctorum quae quique pii in Ecclesia imitantur. [...] Crux Christi hic fixa adoratur, et Christi passio a cunctis Christianis veneratur. Quod crux portatur nos sequimur, quia Christi vestigia sequi debemus, si ad coeleste templum venire volumus. Turres sunt Ecclesiae praelati, campanae eorum praedicationes'.

the presence of a speaker possibly gesturing to the different parts of the church and indicating their respective significance. Indeed, the intent behind the *Speculum ecclesiae* reflects the sermon's affective purpose. As Flint points out, the sermon collection was most likely intended for a lay audience, one with a limited knowledge of Christian history's details.<sup>71</sup> In the *Speculum*, Honorius provided only a sparse and highly didactic approach to the architecture and the dedication ceremony, but one that 'ensured better comprehension and ideally able to instil a greater sense of devotion and reverence in the devout'.<sup>72</sup> Chapters 122-149 of the *Gemma animae* provide the structure for the sermon and much of the content, but that content is used within a vertical teaching relationship between the preacher and the churchgoers. The sermon on the dedication of the church in the *Sacramentarium* supports this reading, by taking its content from the dedication section of the *Gemma animae* and presenting it in a highly didactic manner.

The commentary on the dedication in the *Sacramentarium* begins similarly to the Carolingian text: 'When the church is dedicated, twelve candles are lit inside', and these symbolize the twelve apostles.<sup>73</sup> The ceremony starts outside, before moving into the interior, reflecting the structure of the dedication commentary as it appears in the *Gemma animae*. The sermon quickly moves through the content of the dedication chapter sequence in the *Gemma animae*. The sermon includes different details, however, suggesting that Honorius had different readerships in mind when writing the texts. For example, the *Sacramentarium* specifies that the lintel through which he enters the church signifies the mind of man at the beginning of the ceremony, 'which is filled with demons'.<sup>74</sup> The *Gemma animae* gives no significance to the lintel, only a description of what happens during the ceremony.<sup>75</sup> The meanings ascribed to the different parts of the church during the ceremony are definitive, and there is no room for alternative readings, thus working in a very different manner to the *Gemma animae*. The speaker gestures to the different parts of the building with no discussion from the listeners; it is a strictly hierarchical approach to teaching.

71 Carolyn Muessig has highlighted Honorius's willingness to modify the content of sermons depending on the intended audience, see Muessig, 'Audience and Preacher', 255-278.

72 Horie, *Perceptions of Ecclesia*, 59.

73 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 801D-802A: 'Cum ecclesia dedicatur, duodecim candelae sunt incensae interius'.

74 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 802A: 'Pluribus occupatam daemioniis'.

75 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, 891A: 'Pontifex super luminare [sic] ostii cum baculo ter percutit'. 'The bishop hits the lintel of the door three times with a staff'.

It is clear that Honorius took two different parts of the *Gemma animae* and structured his sermons around it in different ways, the *Speculum ecclesiae* being simpler than the content in the *Sacramentarium*. The latter provides much more detail about the actions of the liturgy while still giving the parts of the building a singular meaning. One possible reason for this difference may be due to the way in which the historical and allegorical content of the *Sacramentarium* was intended to be received. While the content of the commentary and the sermons is largely similar, the sequence of conflicting meanings in the former implies that it has a different function than the latter.

The *Gemma animae* and its symbolic contradictions encouraged an interaction between the reader or viewer and the fabric of the monastic church, an interaction that was very different to vertically-oriented pedagogical teaching strategies, as in the sermons. Parts of the building, such as the altar, were encoded with several meanings simultaneously and reflect a mode of monastic practice that encouraged a flexible symbolic system of architecture. While Honorius brings to light the inherent meaning within the structures, he does not expect the reader and viewer to interpret the building in a singular way. Instead, he presents a series of meaningful possibilities, providing catalyst for the reader to engage with architecture, giving a literal structure to medieval meditative praxis, one that responds to the particular buildings readers would have known so well. In contrast to this, the sermons provided a highly structured reading of the church fabric in a way that makes it difficult to reinterpret them in any other way. We are left with a symbolic system that has been completely predefined by the preacher and, ultimately, Honorius. This system is strictly vertical in the way it was communicated, allowing no interaction between the listener and the speaker.

Honorius's flexible approach to teaching, using the environment as a form of didactic materialism, was highly successful and influential. A number of works followed Honorius's approach; for example, the *Speculum ecclesiae mysteriorum*, formerly attributed to Hugh of Saint Victor, replicates some of the *Gemma animae*'s details.<sup>76</sup> Sicard of Cremona's (d. 1215) *Mitralis* also considers the same subjects as Honorius, but in much more detail.<sup>77</sup> William Durand's (d. 1296) *Rationale divinarum officiarum* remained popular until the sixteenth century and overshadowed the *Gemma animae*, which influenced

76 Migne attributes the text to Hugh based on readings from several manuscripts. However, recent scholarship has indicated that this is not possible by means of a later dating. See Harkins and Van Liere, *Interpretation of Scripture*, 482.

77 Sicardus of Cremona, *Mitralis*, see 791-94.

its content.<sup>78</sup> The popularity of works such as these are a testimony to Honorius's innovative use of religious material culture as a tool for teaching. According to this framework, the church is not a text to be read, like a book, but a dynamic and ever-shifting set of relationships between the past, present, and future, all set within the building. We can come to appreciate this diversity by contrasting Honorius's sermons with his 'liturgical commentary', the former providing a strict system of symbolic content for the viewer to understand, the latter a set of possible meanings offering an opportunity for reflection and insight by using an architectural backdrop. But the meaning is ultimately dependent on the unique relationship between the reader or viewer and architecture.

### About the author

**Karl Patrick Kinsella** is currently Shuffrey Junior Research Fellow in Architectural History at Lincoln College, University of Oxford. He completed his DPhil at Oxford before lecturing at the University of York's History of Art department for two years. In 2013 he received the Hawksmoor Medal for Architectural History from the Society for the Architectural Historians of Great Britain. He is currently researching the relationship between twelfth- and thirteenth-century liturgical commentaries and English architecture. He is also finishing a monograph on medieval architectural representation.

78 Joseph Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes*, 11.



# 8 Men and Women in the Life of the Schools

In the Classroom of Hermann of Reichenau

*C. Stephen Jaeger*

## Abstract

A didactic poem by Hermann of Reichenau offers one remarkable response to the dilemma posed by the education of women in monastic communities. Its exceptional opening section is a skilful, startlingly original, cautionary comedy-drama with a sharp edge against female-male erotic relations, aimed at setting the boundaries of the licit love between a male teacher and his female students. The discursive mode established between students and teacher is stringent, charming – and not without threat. It has a ‘horizontal’ nature: the learning happens by personal, social teacher/students interaction – in this case by thrust and parry, accusation and defence, slander and extreme insult, followed by threshing out the moral truth underlying the issues raised by ludicrous statements.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, rhetoric, love, friendship, gender, teaching, learning

Women in monastic communities who sought education faced a dilemma. So did their teachers. The dilemma was posed by the institutions and presuppositions of the religious life. The institutions favoured with near exclusivity the education of men by men. A strict separation of men and women was enjoined in Church law and realized in practice since Carolingian times. Greater or lesser adherence to that arrangement is dominant throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> The

1 See Griffiths and Hotchin, ‘Introduction’, 1-45.

community of Admont, Styria, Austria can stand as one case of strict separation among many. Founded as an exclusively male community in 1075, the house added a female community in the second decade of the twelfth century. The nuns were shut off from the monks by a wall with one window, through which the nuns received the preaching of monks, and by a door secured by three locks, their three keys in the possession of the abbess and two monks. It would be hard to conceive worse circumstances for receiving either preaching or instruction in the liberal arts. A fire in 1152 that destroyed much of the building nearly consumed the nuns because the two key-keeping monks could not be found. The door was broken down; the wind shifted; the nuns were saved. The relief at their rescue was somewhat mitigated by the anxiety consequent on the removal of the barriers between the men and the women.<sup>2</sup>

The presupposition that formed the second factor in the dilemma of men and women together was the threat, fear, and assumption of the dangers of amorous or sexual contact or both. A shared life and the simple pleasure of conversing together without strict barriers created potential for trouble – or, rather, was itself trouble. The experience of Robert of Arbrissel is a good illustration. He had to be sternly admonished, once by a bishop and once by an abbot, not to allow men and women to sleep alongside each other in the new foundation of Fontevrault. For Robert, the sleeping arrangement was a test to show angelic restraint. Abbot Geoffrey of Vendôme calls the practice ‘a new and fruitless form of martyrdom’. ‘It must stop’, the abbot commands: Robert may not speak privately with women and may not show himself ‘charming in speech or eager in his service’.<sup>3</sup> Cohabitation in any form could rouse suspicion. Recall that Peter Abelard as the founder of the order of the Paraclete was accused of lewd intentions in his interactions with the nuns years after his castration.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever barriers limited the common society of men and women religious in the life of learning, men taught women, and in communities where nuns valued and sought learning, close contact of men with women was unavoidable.<sup>5</sup> The common life of men and women in monasteries,

2 Following Alison Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 68-9.

3 Cited and discussed in Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 129-30.

4 Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, chap. 65, 102-105.

5 Admont differed from other communities by receiving in mid-century a *magistra* who had received from youth an education from Salzburg clerics. *Vita, ut videtur, cuiusdam magistræ monialium Admuntensium*, chap. 2, 362: ‘Ex illustrissimis Salzpurgensis ecclesiae ministris oriunda exstitit, ibique in superiori castro eiusdem urbis educata’. So she had men in her educational past outside of the frame of the monastic life. She was highly educated in the liberal arts, second to none, her biographer claims. She composed and taught composition in prose and

says Christina Lutter, 'is exactly where the danger for the spiritual virtue of virginity lies. It is therefore not surprising that the subject of how men and women could and should live together and at the same time be protected from one another was one of the "hot topics" of contemporary discussions'.<sup>6</sup> The topic of this chapter sits precisely in that crux.

In the century between 1050 and 1150, women's communities alongside men's grew at a rate that had not been seen previously in Christian coenobitic life.<sup>7</sup> The education of women grew with them. The inevitable barriers were overcome somehow. The history of that overcoming is still to be written. Its historical sources are opening to view after long obscurity.

Alison Beach's studies of nuns as scribes have made clear that nuns' learning has been badly underestimated. At Admont, women played a very active role not just in copying texts but also in producing commentary and in writing and delivering sermons. The nuns in Beach's studies pestered their *magistra* for instruction in poetry and prose so much that she often worked at night to keep up with the demand.<sup>8</sup>

The historical sources that might give us details and close focus on women's education from the tenth century to the twelfth are scant and random. But what happened beneath the horizon of historical scrutiny happened nonetheless. We must hope for enough chance glimpses at the processes to reconstruct what was an important trend in the intellectual life of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

In the German monastery of Lippoldsberg, in the mid-twelfth century, the provost Gunther built up the library and the intellectual climate of the house in close cooperation with the prioress, Margaret. This cooperation is commemorated in the dedicatory image of a Gospel book commissioned by Gunther. The illustration (Fig. 2) shows Gunther and a female figure, presumably Margaret, standing at the feet of the much larger figure of the monastery's patron, Saint George. Their right hands are joined. At each corner is a praying figure, three nuns and one cleric. Julie Hotchin's study, *Women's Reading and Monastic Reform*,<sup>9</sup> takes this image to represent the cooperation of provost and spiritual director as members of the community look on with gestures of thanks and prayers

verse, and was so in demand that she received calls to travel elsewhere to dispense her teaching. See commentary in Beach, *Women as Scribes*, pp. 69-70. Also Lutter, 'Christ's Educated Brides,' 197-201.

6 Lutter, 'Christ's Educated Brides,' 201.

7 Griffiths and Hotchin, 'Introduction'. Also Lutter, 'Brides,' 193-4.

8 Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 68-72.

9 Hotchin, 'Womens' Reading,' 139-174.

**Figure 2** Dedicatory image of the Gospel book commissioned by Gunther of Lippoldsberg (formerly Kassel, Landesbibliothek 2° Ms. Theol. 59, fol. 73v)



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directed to the monastery's patron, the central figure, dominating by his size. The context of the illumination points to the growth of the library and the cultivation of learning that had begun with Gunther's arrival at the monastery some twenty years prior to the commissioning of the book around 1160.

But the composition sends a distinct message that comments on the relationship of provost and prioress by evoking a marriage ceremony. Gunther's right hand offers an object to Margaret. It is not clear what it is: an orb? an apple? a Mass wafer?<sup>10</sup> Margaret receives the offering; in fact, her reach overshoots the object so that her hand seems to caress Gunther's wrist. The gesture is an instance of the *iunctio dextrarum*, firmly associated with the ceremony of marriage.<sup>11</sup> The patron is positioned as the presider in the wedding ceremony. The clear statement is that Saint George joins them in a spiritual marriage. This interpretation is firmed up by the scroll dependent from the patron's right wrist: 'I join you in true peace through the worship of God' ('Vos pietate Dei iunga(m) vere requiei'). The gesture of Gunther's left hand seems adversative to that primary context: raised, palm forward, it looks like a gesture of warding off, decidedly not suited to expressing love and friendship.<sup>12</sup> Possibly the message of the left hand checks that of the right. The relative position of the arms strengthens that reading, since Gunther's is fully extended, while Margaret's is slightly bent. With whatever intent, she is held literally at arm's length. But apart from a stated or implied comment on their relationship, the overarching context is teaching and reading as a shared intellectual activity of men and women.

Reading this joining of right hands as a gesture of spiritual friendship would be consistent with a fundamental feature of educational practice in the period: the master-student relationship is grounded in love and friendship. That relationship had been an element of aristocratic education since Antiquity, as fundamental to education as is shared intellectual curiosity now. Quintilian had written,

Pupils should love their teachers as they do their studies [...] This feeling of affection is a great aid to study, since students listen gladly, believe what they [beloved teachers] say, long to be like them [...] and seek to win their master's affection by the devotion with which they pursue their studies.<sup>13</sup>

10 The entry on this image in the Index of Christian Art identifies the object, mysteriously, as a roll. See the entry under Kassel Lib., Hessische Landesbibliothek, Theol. Fol. 59.

11 My thanks to Jeffrey Hamburger for this reference. Prominently studied for ancient Rome, the iconography of marriage called on this gesture into the seventeenth century. See Yang, 'Trusting Hands'.

12 The range of meaning of the gesture is wide. It is common in annunciation scenes, where the Virgin raises her hand in astonishment, or possibly self-protection, at the message of the angel. But it also occurs in the context of teaching, and once, though in a much later image, in the context of Friendship personified opposed, or warded off, by Hate. British Library Add. 28162.

13 Quintilian, *Orator's Education*, book 2, chap. 9, 323-325.

A letter of Adam of Perseigne (d. 1221) lists the six conditions for successful instruction of novices. The last two are ‘tender solicitude towards his novices’ and ‘friendly and frequent conversations with them’.<sup>14</sup> The education of Guibert of Nogent is a case where the medium of love overrides motives of pure learning, knowledge, skills, etc. His master lacked learning, intelligence, and common sense, but the love of his student was the basis of an education for which the recipient was exuberantly grateful.<sup>15</sup> Love alone, absent intellectual competence, resulted in a satisfactory education.

But in the case of monks or clerics teaching nuns, this element of education – the mutual love of teacher and student – further complicates the vexed question of how nuns and monks speak to each other and, more generally, how they govern their interactions. The incentive to teach and learn in the medium of love is considerable, but it pushes against the hedges on a shared intellectual life of men and women. Teaching and learning without love and friendship has to appear as sterile as in the modern world learning without shared intellectual passion. And yet, are not the language and gestures of love, passing between teacher and student, a temptation in themselves, if not quite at the same level as sharing the same bed?

A didactic poem by Hermann of Reichenau (d. 1054) opens to view one remarkable response to the dilemma. Hermann was one of the most learned men of the early eleventh century. He is best known for his writings on the astrolabe and on music, but he also wrote a poem of 1722 lines on the theme of *Contemptus mundi*, composed 1044-1046. The first third of the poem, 492 lines long, forms a prelude to the more conventional sermonizing of the second part, focused on sin and damnation.<sup>16</sup> Hermann planned a third part treating redemption, but the work remained unfinished. Given the two parts that remain, we can surmise that the poem, if completed, would run some 3000 lines. The work is little known and little studied. A recent dissertation by Hannah Williams, not yet published, may help revive interest.<sup>17</sup> Williams includes the full Latin text and an English translation. A German translation by Bernhard Hollick also has appeared recently (2016).<sup>18</sup> A passage in the brief biography of Hermann by his student Berthold of

14 Long, ‘Entre spiritualité monastique et canoniale,’ 255, citing Adam of Perseigne, *Epistola* 5, 118: ‘Nascitur etiam ex amica frequenti et honesta collocutione commendabilis queque familiaritas, per quam magister efficitur ad corripiendum audacior, correptus ad disciplinam patientior, uterque ad intelligentiam Scripturarum eruditior’.

15 Discussed in Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 64-65.

16 See Berschin’s comments, Berthold of Reichenau, *Vita Herimanni*, 24.

17 Williams, *Authority and Pedagogy*, and her article ‘Taming the Muse’.

18 Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni (De octo vitiis principalibus)*.

Reichenau conveys what the poem meant to its author. Berthold tells of a dream Hermann had on his deathbed. In this 'ecstatic vision' (*in extasi quadam raptus*) he saw himself feverishly reciting out loud, from memory ('the way we recite the Lord's Prayer') and rereading two works: Cicero's *Hortensius* and his own *De octo vitiis principalibus*. In his dream, the poem was complete.<sup>19</sup> The context gives a clear indication of the importance of this work for Hermann: it occupies his thoughts and dreams in the moments prior to his leave-taking from earthly life; it is mentioned in the same breath with the pagan work that had turned the young Augustine on the path to philosophy and to Scripture; he sees himself reciting both works as he might recite the Lord's Prayer.<sup>20</sup>

A close familiarity with eleventh-century poetry will turn up a number of remarkable, not to say amazing, works of poetry created in the period and, just as powerfully, will show how little attention modern scholars have paid to them. The opening section of Hermann's poem is one of the strangest works of original genius known to me from the Middle Ages. I will call it 'the prelude', but I stress that it is nearly one-third of the entire poem as received. Knowledge of poetics, rhetoric, topoi, all the apparatus of convention with which we approach medieval poems, will help on the margins but do not touch the heart of this strange poem. Two recent commentators give hardly any idea of its flavour.<sup>21</sup> It is to the credit of Hannah Williams that her dissertation and her article 'Taming the Muse' give clearer definition to the character of this introductory fantasy.<sup>22</sup> The prelude opens up a unique view of the tenor of student-teacher interaction at a monastic 'school', with implications for male-female pedagogic relations more broadly and also with implications for horizontal learning. We can think of the prelude as

19 The standard text of Berthold of Reichenau's *Chronicon* is *Die Chroniken Bertholds von Reichenau und Bernolds von St. Blasien 1054-1100*, edited by Ian Stuart Robinson. I quote from Berschin, *Hermann der Lahme*, who prints the entire section on Hermann (6-13), with a German translation. Hermann's dream as conveyed by Berthold is the point of departure for Williams's study, *Authority and Pedagogy*, 10-13.

20 Berthold of Reichenau, *Vita Herimanni*, 10.

21 Berschin, *Hermann der Lahme* and Bernhard Hollick in his edition mentioned above: Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni (De octo vitiis principalibus)*.

22 Williams, 'Taming the Muse', 130-143. Williams recognizes the wit and sardonicism of the prelude, but she interprets the striking intermingling of classical with Christian poetry in terms of poetics and poetic practice. She also wonders whether the nuns were the real recipients or just a fictional invention. The former seems to me the more likely. The clear intent of the prelude is the harmonizing of an intellectual community, that is, an unconventional form of horizontal learning. Seeing the nuns addressed as pure fiction in a work about poetry and morals directed to men makes the learning strictly vertical, a product of intellectual teaching.

the setting of an instructional scene, the classroom being prepared for the lesson, the students ‘tuned’ to the instruction. This ‘preluding’ is then followed by the sermonizing part, the lesson on the seven principle vices. The first dramatically shapes the relationship between teacher and student (horizontal); the second discourses on issues of morality (vertical).

The prelude is a dramatic dialogue – or, rather triologue – between Hermann, his muse Melpomene, muse of poetry, and the nuns to whom the poem is addressed. The situation is: Hermann summons his own private muse, whom he treats as a familiar and serving spirit, and sends her to an unnamed community of nuns to sing soothing songs to them. Melpomene appears, bringing songs, apologizing for her hoarse, unpractised voice. ‘What shall I sing?’ she asks. Hermann: ‘Darling one, you to whom my devotion is greatest, I really don’t know what those little ladies (*dominellae*) might want to hear. They often like frivolous things (*ludicra*); they do not prefer serious ones. Ask them yourself’.<sup>23</sup>

The muse then addresses the sisters: ‘Oh chaste, lovely company and beautiful gathering, Our little friend, little Hermann (*amiculus, Herimannulus*) sends me to you ... Shall I sing serious things? If not, then I’ll sing comic ones (*ludia* – stage appropriate)’.<sup>24</sup> The sisters’ answer lurches from cordiality to salacious insult:

You are a beautiful and charming lute player  
and certainly a worthy young woman to him,  
but alas! Unknown to us up till now.<sup>25</sup>  
Come! Tell us first of all, we beg you,  
what business he might have with you!  
For the attractiveness of your face is startling.  
Perhaps you are the partner of his bed  
stealthily snatching the dutiful embrace of a sweet kiss,  
things one dares do only in the silence of the night,

23 Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni Diverso Metro Conpositum*, lines 14-24: ‘[MUSA:] Dic modo, quae vis / Psallier ollis! / [HERIMANNUS:] Certe nescio, cara / et mi maxima cura, quid cantarier illae / affectent dominellae. / Novi, ludicra crebro, / malunt seria raro. / Ipsas tu magis ipsa / pergens consule, musa’. I lean on Williams’s translation but adapt freely.

24 Lines 26-39: ‘[MUSA:] Vos, o contio candida / Ac formosa catervula! / Noster misit amicus / Communis Herimannulus / Me promptam sibi psaltriam, / Quamvis pessime raucidam, / Vobis gliceris suis / Electisque sororculis / Quaedam carmina pangere, / Sed vos qualia dicite! / Nam vos quaeque libentius / Auditis, cano promptius: / Vultis, concino seria, / Sin, cantrix ero ludia’.

25 The line *nobis heu tamen hactenus ignota* is a confession that they have neglected classical poetry, as Williams argues in ‘The Taming of the Muse’.

harvesting joys denied to us.  
 Maybe this man whom we take to be purer in body than glass,  
 more chaste and loyal than the turtle-dove,  
 this perfidious man, exhausts his leisure hours  
 with you, oh young lady?<sup>26</sup>

Williams reads the lines as an accusation that Hermann is too preoccupied with secular poetry, answering the implied charge that the nuns have neglected the gifts of Melpomene,<sup>27</sup> but the narrative impact is certainly in the fanciful charge of lewd dealings, that Hermann is, to put it colloquially, in bed with the muse.

She responds indignantly to this provocation: 'I thought you knew who I was, especially the first among you, Engila. I and my eight sisters are the ancient muses, now converted to Christianity'. She continues:

By now we are recognized as worshipers of Christ, and  
 We love those who are chaste, cultivators of the mind,  
 And by teaching holy things we urge them to follow the right path.  
 And sometimes we can compose honourable jokes  
 If asked; but we perform lewd things  
 Only if our faithful friend asks it.  
 He would know the honest way to mask dubious stuff,  
 Not subjecting the most intimate parts of the mind to a lascivious word,  
 while  
 Christ the judge looks from heaven attentively on all things.<sup>28</sup>

While the subtext opposing the classical tradition (lewd) to Christian (pure and decent) is played through here, the muse now confronts head-on the nuns' insinuating suggestion of lasciviousness. Stung, she turns on them.

26 Lines 44-57: 'Formosa namque es bellaque psaltria / Illique certe digna iuvencla. / Sed ipse nobis heu tamen hactenus/ Ignota, primo dic age, que semus, / Tecum quid illi forte negotii! / Vultus venustas terret enim tui. / Tu fors an eius conscia lectuli / Complexa dulcis munia savii, / Furare, noctis ausa silentia, / Nobis negata sumere gaudia. / Fors ille vitro corpore purior/ Putatus, ille turture castior / Fideliorque perfidus, a, sua / Tecum, o puella, conteret otia.' *Conteret otia* is ambiguous: 'fills his leisure hours with terrifying things'?

27 'Taming the Muse', 138.

28 Lines 73-83: 'Nunc iam christicolae noscitur esse / Suadentesque viam pergere rectam / Castos diligimus, sancta docemus, / Mentis cultores semper amantes, / Interdumque iocos quimus honestos / Pangere, si petimur; turpe veremus / Ludere, ni fidus poscat amicus, / Hoc qui celare norit honeste, / Non ad lascivum intima verbum / Mentis subdendo, iudice Christo / Caelitus attente cuncta vidente'.

[I paraphrase, in italics]: *Your suspicion of Hermann and me shows that you envy the 'forbidden pleasures' we supposedly share. We pardon you for even thinking it. You resent it that we do not include you in a 'sweet alliance' (foedere suavi) to partake with us in those illicit embraces.*<sup>29</sup>

A sharp thrust home by the muse: only someone who desires forbidden pleasures could make such accusations. And here the language is laced with hooks and barbs: *Only guilty persons would hurl such an accusation. Perhaps what you have charged me with is what Hermann thinks of you, that you enjoy lascivious pleasures. Perhaps he is too shy to make such accusations, but while he may think it, he knows in his heart that he loves you; such distrust does not breed hate. He wants you pure and chaste for the heavenly bridegroom. But he has heard rumours that the mind of woman is inconstant, unstable, easily seduced, and he fears that you might prefer the loathsome pleasures of the night to that heavenly marriage.*<sup>30</sup>

The muse continues at length in a flood of invective, indicting sexual pleasure as disgusting and obscene. She checks herself: *I have not come for such railing, but rather 'to soothe you sweetly by various odes with notes rising graceful from the throat and shaped in the mouth, ... and to compose something for you ... which shall henceforth render you mindful of your friend.'*<sup>31</sup>

The sisters answer: 'Oh venerable young woman, cagey (*cata*), learned, beautiful and lovely, chaste and dear sister, sure friend of Herman': *You're being too hard on us and your language is really harsh. You're hiding the fact that it's really Hermann himself who has said these things. This is his style: to make a joke out of this sort of admonition and to make jokes while railing with a sharp tongue against vice.* [We'll come back to this series of comments on the pedagogy of joking]. *You're trying to bring out any secrets hidden in our*

29 Lines 84-91: 'Sed quod vos talem suspitionem / In me una et nostrum fertis amicum / Fingitis et turpem nosmet amorem / Noctem furari, nocte foveri / Dulcibus illecebris quodque putatis / Vobis haud fidum gaudia mecum / Illum partiti foedere suavi, / Donamus veniam'.

30 Lines 91-110: 'Conscia fors an / Culpa reos stimulat, insuper attat / Ille vicem vobis reddet in istis. / Nam non dissimilem suspitionem / In vos forte tenet, nec satis audet / Talibus in furtis fidere vobis, / Et tamen interne vos scit amare / Nec quia diffidit, vos simul odit. / Optat enim castas riteque mundas / Vos casto et mundo vivere sponso / Regalique thoro corpore puro / Dignas felicem cernere lucem / Reginas superae caelitus aulae. / Sed quoniam novit seaque legit – / Mentem femineam mobile quoddam, / Anceps, fluctivagum, flabile monstrum, / Suspectus metuit perque timescit, / Ne vos postposito lumine tanto / Tamque beatificis oppido taedis / Spurcida queratis gaudia noctis'.

31 Lines 176-183: 'Non ego veni vobis tanta loqui carmine tali, / Sed vos alternis suaviter odis / Mulcere et gratis gutture neumis / Oreque formati pangere vobis / Quiddam, quod gracili voceque dulci / Post hinc cantatum seu reboatum / Vos memores vestri reddat amici'.

*hearts by this speech – but we're onto your subtle strategy: anyone who shuns hearing vices mocked with biting speech reveals vices lurking in herself*<sup>32</sup>

Then follows, again, the question, what song she should sing. The Muse now addresses Hermann: *Your sisters, who love you dearly, want to know what you would like sung to them. They would like you to put aside jokes and sing sentiments pleasing to you.*<sup>33</sup>

Rather than answering, Hermann calls the muse to account: *What took you so long? Why are you returning so late? And you're still asking what to sing.*<sup>34</sup> The Muse answers: *We had a long conversation; we exchanged jokes and laughter. I answered their frivolous speech as was appropriate. What dullard would hear facetious, insulting speech without responding in kind? They made jocular comments about you and me sharing sweet crimes. I gave them back as good as I got. I met their false suspicions with some of my own. I said, we suspected that they were enjoying obscene, evil, frivolous love affairs. I spoke in pleasant jest, but didn't shrink from harsh words. If they are offended, it could only be because they are in fact guilty as insinuated.*<sup>35</sup>

These comments rouse Hermann's anger at the Muse: *I fear that you might have offended these loyal, honest, sweet-speaking friends. Your duty*

32 Lines 189-212: 'Veneranda tu puella, / Cata, docta, pulchra, bella, / Soror alma, casta, cara, / Herimanni amica certa, / Nimis arguis misellas, / Nihilum tacendo, nonnas / Neque parcis ipsa amatis, / Veluti fatere nobis, / Heriman ut ipse durus / Videatur haec locutus. / Solet ipse nempe tali / Monitu suis iocari / Velut et iocans acerbo / Vitium notare morsu. / Misera, o, amica nostri, / Rea quae putat notari / Sua conticenda furta, / Tua cum iocantur orsa. / Etenim libenter ista / Capit aure turba nostra, / Quia, quisquis odit acri / Vitiosa dente carpi, / Etiam tacendo prodit, / Vitii quid intus assit.'

33 Lines 233-244: 'Tuae rogant sorores / Te care diligentes, / Quo tu canenda dictes / Mihi et docenda mandes. / Amant enim remissis, / Ut asserunt, iocosis / Audire, quicquid ollis / Plus approbando mittis. / Nunc tu tibi placentem / Sententiae tenorem / Des, ipsa quem canendo / Queam iugare rithmo.'

34 Lines 245-252: 'Prius, o mihi grata camena, / Volo, dicas, quae tibi tanta / Fuit illic causa morandi / Tardeque ad me redeundi, / Si nondum, ut forte putavi, / Quae mandaram, cecinisti, / Demum nunc atque reversa / Hic percunctare canenda.'

35 Lines 253-278: 'Haec quid, queso, petis? / Quid ista queris? / Cum me dirigeres ad has sorores / Perlaetas hilarem tui sodalem, / Lusi certe mihi simulque risi, / Par ipsis retuli, iocis rependi / Ludens ipsa vicem. / Quis ad iocantem / Perstaret stupidus nihil locutus? / Cum me teque suum iocose amicum / Culpantes lepide forent adorsae, / Nosmet dulcia confovere furta / Fingentes, precium referre dignum / Ludis mox statui statimque coepi / Fari, nos quod et has tenere cunctas / Suspectas agimur, quod et veremur / Illis spurcidulum, malum, profanum / Furtum, quod miseras necat puellas / Subtractasque Deo pio, supremo / Sponso, illas zabulo dat execrando. / Ridens et licet has darem loquelas, / Nil parcens vitium tamen nefandum / Carpsi dura merum profundo verum. / Nil ledens nitidas, pias, pudicas, / Mordebam luteas, lupas, petulcas. / Nostras non tetigi sciensve laesi, / Ni se forte reae, quod absit, ipsae / Tactas dente sciant vel indolescant.'

*was to make our friendship closer by singing sweet sounding odes. I hope you haven't offended them to the point where they no longer love me/us. And here suddenly he turns nasty: Why did I ever send you to them, 'you dog, who have bitten them with your merciless teeth. Until now they were firm as rock [in loyalty and friendship]. Now you have angered them and made me lose the loviness (amorculum) I'm used to receive from them'.<sup>36</sup>*

The Muse, her own anger rising: *Are you kidding? Or are you crazy? (Ludis, insanisne?) I spoke the truth, and you, you dimwit (stupidus), fear that I've irritated your loveable sisters? Your foolish complaints must indicate there is some truth in their accusations. And isn't it you who are questioning their morals by believing they might be offended by my admonitions? And what an accusation you make against them! You're implying that they might be so taken with shameless lechery as to forget all the pains of punishment for licentiousness: [now I'm translating the list of pains]:*

The rebukes of the shocked public? The scourging from your judges? Whipping? The pain and shame of giving birth? The great danger of imminent death? Fear for your newborn baby; the need to hide the child? The terrors of hell waiting eagerly with its tortures? The laughter of demons and of Satan goading them on to torments? Finally, the lamentation of your heavenly bridegroom Christ, of all angels and citizens of heaven, keening sad laments at your deed of shame?<sup>37</sup>

Then follows, in still more lurid tones, a depiction of the sex act – not love at all, but rape by some brute driven mad by lust.<sup>38</sup>

*Shame on you, says the Muse to Hermannn, for even thinking the sisters capable of such laxness of mind. And don't take offense that I depict such shamefulfulness: it may be crude, but it's true. So, trust them, give them credit:*

36 Lines 295-301: 'A! quid queso fuit, quod mea compulit / Vota, ut te cuperem mittere, te canem, / Quae mordax acidis dentibus et feris / Ledens tot socias, quas adamantinas / Dudum credideram forsque putaveram, / Iratas faceres et mihi perderes / Illarum solitum mentis amorculum?'

37 Lines 320-334: 'Verba terrentum, flagra iudicantum, / Ventris instantem gravidi dolorem, / Anxium partum simul et pudendum, / Imminens magnum necis ac periculum, / Curam et effusi pueri occulendi, / Perpetes dirae gemitus gehennae/Omnibus poenis et ad haec hiantis, / Doemonum risum, / Satanae cachinnum Ista suadentis, cruciantis ista, / Atque postremo dominantem ab alto / Cuncta cernentem, truciter minantem / Caellitem sponsum dominumque / Christum Eius aeterni preciumque regni, / Angelos omnes superosque cives / Triste merentes facinus videntes.'

38 Lines 335-341: 'Sperneret et mecho subici nefasto / Foetido, spurco, tragico / Priapo Turpe rudenti vel adhinnenti, / Eius infando fera cum libido / More se inflammat simul et catillat, / Quas subans pulcras capiat puellas / Irruat, pungat misereque perdat?'

*they would not hate you for being told things they know to be true. You yourself often decry vice amid jesting and laughter. Because of what I've said they will love you even more deeply. So drop your foolish complaints and tell me what to sing.*<sup>39</sup>

Hermann's lengthy response, here much shortened: *I admit, you speak the truth, o Muse, even if you've gone too far by pressing the truth in this hard and biting tone. Now leave off ludicrous things; sing something serious and useful* (see lines 375-410).

The last 82 lines are given to more talk of what she should sing. The tone of irreverent banter alternating with invective fades. Melpomene then launches into the body of the poem, composed in elegiacs, until the final exchange of thanks and farewell between the Muse and her audience, the sisters. The rest is of little interest for our topic, because the learning reverts to 'vertical' and loses the striking 'horizontal' of the prelude.

The community of nuns addressed is nowhere identified in the poem, nor has a possible source been identified in religious communities around Reichenau in the early eleventh century.<sup>40</sup> The best conjecture is Buchau and Lindau, long-standing convents of canonesses. The name 'Engila' is prominently mentioned in Hermann's poem. She is to be 'first among the sisters',<sup>41</sup> but the reference does not make clear whether she is their teacher, prioress, or abbess. The name is no help in locating Engila or her nuns historically.<sup>42</sup>

It is worth mentioning that in the same years Hermann worked on his poem, the abbess of Zurich, Irmingard, was removed from her position

39 Lines 342-369: 'Absit hoc, absit, procul absit, absit, / Ut tuis caris sociabus istis / Ingeras tantum facinus nefandum, / Quatinus fingas tibi et extimescas / Hoc ob offensas vel amaricatas, / Quod nefas tantum merito execrandum / Persequor veris nimium loquelis. / Namque si dulces suimet sodales / Ista dicentes odiunt, fatentes / Conscias certe maculas aperte / Proferunt ipsae. Precor unde, parce, / Parce, ne pro his ita suspiceris / Corda prolatis inimica nobis / Sint quod illarum potius piarum. / Crede tu menti bona diligenti, / Quod nimis veras adament loquelas, / Diligent omnes pia componentes, / Quin magis per se lacerent sputentque / Omne non castum, petulans, pudendum. / Nonne colludens pariterque ridens / Sepe, quae dico, satis haec probando / Ipse tu nosti? Vitiumne acri / Crebro mordacique ioco notasti? / Et tamen castis, puto, non ab ipsis / Flebis abiectus, magis immo amatus / Ipse sinceris remanes amicis / Iunctus unito et amore certo / Usque dilectus et abhinc amandus.'

40 Williams locates the broader context for moral instruction of women in the decline of female monasteries following the Ottonian period, but without making a specific identification of the community addressed by Hermann, *Authority and Pedagogy*, 99-116.

41 Lines 59-62: 'Tibimet, Engila, memet ignotam poteram credere numquam, / nam fert fama loco te fore prim hic inter iuuenes, virgo, sorores'.

42 See Williams, *Authority and Pedagogy*, 109-10; Hollick, *Commentary*, in Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni (De octo vitiis principalibus)*, 11 and n. 6.

for sexual transgressions. Nothing else connects Hermann and his poem directly with this scandal, but it must have been well known in Reichenau. Hermann's abbot, Bern of Reichenau, wrote a letter to Henry III depicting Irmingard's sins in vivid colours and asking the emperor to show mercy and forgiveness.<sup>43</sup> Written in late 1044, it coincides with the time of composition of *De octo vitis*.

It has been conjectured that the teaching dialogue might be a fictional frame; that the work was basically addressed to men and that the address to women is a poetic conceit. It may hold true of the body of the text, which speaks variously to nuns, monks, and clerics. But the prelude explicitly addresses a community of religious women.<sup>44</sup> The stronger argument seems to be to accept the text as it presents itself: a beloved teacher composes a collection of poems to give a community of nuns instruction in poetics and morality, though the body of the work is pitched more broadly. Sending the composition via the muse is a convenient conceit. It creates a space to say things he clearly wants placed in the mouth of a third party. The whole complex tissue of ironic jesting, teasing, and taunting in the prelude has so firm a dialogic and psychological reality that it seems unlikely to be framed for an audience of the other gender – with what motive? So that the 'real' audience of men can enjoy some high-spirited off-colour banter? The cattiness of women in love relations is at issue in the prelude certainly, possibly a subject for male edification, if a tasteless one, but what fear would be roused in men and what lesson taught by evoking the pains and dangers of childbirth and the anxiety of concealing (getting rid of?) an unwanted child? The prelude is almost certainly a skilful, startlingly original, cautionary comedy-drama with a sharp edge against female-male erotic relations.

However, it should be said that Hermann the Lamé, the Cripple, has cast himself in a strange role: a man taunted with charges of lasciviousness and sexual relations with the muse. His biographer tells us that from youth on, his body was hardly usable for walking or talking; he had to be carried in a sedan chair.<sup>45</sup> So it seems unlikely that he would appear, even in the imagination of loving students, fit for country matters. I doubt that the audience for this poem would have missed the dark, ironic reverberation in the nuns' praise of his chaste body: *ille vitro corpore purior* (54).

43 Bern of Reichenau, *Epistola* 27, 61-4. Hollick, *Commentary*, in Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni (De octo vitis principalibus)*, 15.

44 Also in the title of the single full manuscript: 'opusculum Herimanni diverso metro compositum ad amicas suas, quasdam sanctimoniales feminas', cited from Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni Diverso Metro Compositum*, 2.

45 Berthold of Reichenau, *Vita Herimanni*, 6.

Out of the abundance of topics this long prelude offers, I will focus on three subjects important for understanding the form of learning at work here: poetics, the cult of love and friendship in teaching, and jest and earnest.

Poetics, the first, has been hardly mentioned until now. The entire work is a series of poems, and the metre changes with each change of speakers. The author himself has designated the verse form that follows, and the designations inject a decidedly pedantic tone into the otherwise impassioned temper of the exchanges. No single verse form repeats. Variety in metrical forms is clearly a goal of the poet.<sup>46</sup> In this the poem is similar to Dudo of Saint Quentin's *De gestis Normannorum*, a prosimetrical history-epic (996/1015) unmatched by any other medieval poem for the range of its metrical forms. Hermann offers twenty different metres. The pedagogic intent is underscored in scholia in the unique complete manuscript commenting on the metrics, probably by Hermann himself.<sup>47</sup>

Hermann makes the remarkable statement that poetry is the subject he cultivates most devotedly (*mi maxima cura*; 17). A serious confession, or a posture modelling commitment to poetry for the benefit of the nuns? The evidence argues for taking the claim seriously. His deathbed vision had him reading his own poem, imagined as complete, alongside Cicero's *Hortensius*. Throughout the prelude his admiration of classical Latin poetry is evident. Place these internal indications alongside the high stature of poetry in the schools of the period, and the claim is not improbable.<sup>48</sup> It should encourage scholarship on Hermann to consider the prime importance Hermann himself assigned to poetry in his oeuvre.

This virtual textbook of poetic forms is accompanied by implied reproaches for the nuns' neglect of poetry: Melpomene is surprised that they do not know who she is. She would have thought at least Engila knew the muse of poetry. Melpomene and her eight sisters love chaste women and those who cultivate the mind: *Mentis cultores semper amantes* (76). The nuns are prodded to become familiar with the muse and be or become *mentis cultores*. The eleventh century saw a remarkable blossoming of women's poetry, among both nuns and seculars, though the actual creations surviving are few.<sup>49</sup> Evidently Hermann's 'little ladies' wished or at least were offered the opportunity to participate in that trend.

46 See Williams's list of metres, *Authority and Pedagogy*, 124. Also in Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni Diverso Metro Conpositum*, 1-2.

47 See Hollick, *Commentary*, in Hermann of Reichenau, *Opusculum Herimanni (De octo vitis principalibus)*, 30-32.

48 On the high stature of poetry in monastic and clerical schools in the eleventh century, see Jaeger, 'The Stature of the Learned Poet in the Eleventh Century,' 417-438.

49 Dronke, *Women Writers*, 84-106.

An important element of the social climate of teacher-student relations is apparent in the mode of interaction posited in this poem: friendship and love are the norm of relationships, their default setting. All parties to the dialogue of the prelude speak a sweetened, sentimentalized language of love. The muse is Hermann's 'beloved' (*dilecta*; line 1), his 'dear' one (*cara*); the nuns are his 'dears' (*caras*), his little sisters (*sororculas*), 'little ladies' (*dominellae*). The muse answers Hermann's call: 'Have I drunk in with my ears that my friend Hermann calls me?'<sup>50</sup> He is her 'beloved brother' (*frater amate*). The sisters return this language. Facing the muse and questioning her for the first time, they begin with protestations of undying love for Hermann: 'Is it our very own dear *lieblich* Hermannlet, / who is seared deeply in our innards / beloved through all time, / who has sent you?'<sup>51</sup> The persistent use of diminutives makes the tone maternal, softly affectionate, and intimate, as if the language were that of prose lullabies. The sisters' first response to the muse: dear little Hermann (*liup Herimanulus*) is their little friend (*amiculus*). Mixing a German term of endearment (*liup*) with the relatively sophisticated, learned Latin, gives the phrase a flavour of home-spun familiarity.<sup>52</sup> Hermann fears that the muse's harsh words accusing the nuns will cost him the 'loviness' (*amorculum*; 30) to which he has become accustomed. That is a short list of diminutive terms from the first few exchanges. It could easily be doubled.

The exchange swerves abruptly into barbed comments. They notice the beauty of the muse, which is so great that it startles them. As if seized with sudden jealousy, they launch into the first wave of abusive suggestions: 'Do you embrace him in bed, enjoy his sweet kiss and indulge in the forbidden pleasures of the night?' The insinuation is a breach of friendship, and the Muse answers at once with a stinging and salacious taunt: 'what troubles you is that you are not included in that "sweet alliance" (*suave foedus*) that your imagination has dreamed up. You're jealous of those forbidden pleasures you imagine us sharing'. The important point is that the sardonic and snide elements in each exchange (and all three are guilty of them) get corrected back to the norm of friendship; even though they depart from that ideal a long way, reconciliation is always the outcome of exchanges. In the first exchange that swings from friendly to nasty, Hermann intercedes, chiding the Muse for possibly offending the nuns. He gets angry at her, calls her a

50 Lines 4-7: 'Mene vocari / auribus hausit? / Anne et amicum / mis Herimannum?'

51 Lines 40-43: 'Nosterne, noster ille medullitus / nobis inustus liup Herimannulus, / amandus ille saecla per omnia / transmisit, o, te, pulchra puella?'

52 Nicely captured in Williams's translation, 'our very own *lieblich* Hermannlet'.

dog, and accuses her of destroying his good relationship with the nuns. She responds, outraged: he is either joking or insane. She calls him 'stupid'. She explains with arch subtlety that it is *his* anger that casts serious aspersions on the nuns' integrity.<sup>53</sup> It may well indicate to them that there is truth in their accusation of illicit relations between Hermann and her. His anticipating their anger also implies his own guilt and a callous forgetfulness of the horrible consequences of lust. 'Probably, she concludes, they will love you more for receiving the lessons I've given them in the form of provocative jesting' (see 302-365), and she conjures the repair of the bond among them: 'you yourself remain bonded to true friends with a singular steady love, having thus far been held in adulation and henceforth to be loved'.<sup>54</sup>

Hermann agrees. And so this nastiest and crudest of exchanged barbs ends also in reconciliation and the promise of the return of a friendship that is only tested and strengthened by empty accusations. There is a *ius amicitiae* at work in the 'classroom' of this poem, and a basic narrative dynamic is the positing of this law, the violation, and the return to it.

Another element of the prelude is the alternation of jest and earnest, both in the content of the exchanges themselves and expressly addressed in the discussions of the participants. E.R. Curtius included an excursus on 'Jest and Earnest' in his great study of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.<sup>55</sup> Inevitably, commentators on Hermann's poem have cited Curtius to show its indebtedness to a topic of rhetoric from the ancient world. As so often, the authority of Curtius short-circuits attempts to locate poetic statements in a contemporary social context. In this case we do well to resist Curtius. Hermann's poem offers a distinct example of horizontal learning, the rhetorical fashioning of a classroom atmosphere. The learning happens not by the transmission of learned material and the citing of *topoi* (though that will be part of the lesson in the didactic part of the poem that follows) but by personal, social interaction of the teacher and students among themselves – in this case by thrust and parry, accusation and defence, slander

53 Lines 294-301: [HERMANNUS:] 'Quid fuit, / A, quid, queso, fuit, quod mea compulit / Vota, ut te cuperem mittere, te canem, / Quae mordax acidis dentibus et feris / Ledens tot socias, quas adamantinas / Dudum credideram forsque putaveram, / Iratas faceres et mihi perderes / Illarum solitum mentis amorculum? [MUSA:] Ludis insanisne, quid ista dicis? / Quodque ne veris stupidus vereris / Fatibus dulces tibimet sorores / fecerim infensas? Et ob hoc in istas / Proruis stultas timidus querelas?'

54 Lines 366-369: 'Magis immo amatus / Ipse sinceris remanes amicis / Iunctus unito et amore certo / Usque dilectus et abhinc amandus.'

55 Curtius, *European Literature*, 417-435. On joking and 'ludic' elements in poetry, see Bond, 'Iocus amoris,' pp. 176ff. Revised and extended in his monograph, *The Loving Subject*.

and extreme insult, followed by threshing out the moral truth underlying the issues raised by ludicrous statements.

In helping the Muse work out the subject of her songs, Hermann reveals some of his own pedagogic techniques. The choice of a song turns on the opposition of jest and earnest. He notes his students' preference for 'comic things' above 'serious ones'.<sup>56</sup> The Muse puts the choice to the nuns: 'If you wish, I will sing serious things; if not I shall be a comic singer'.<sup>57</sup> The muse opens to view a pedagogic strategy underlying this choice:

While we [muses] love cultivators of the mind, we can also now and then mix in decent jokes, if asked. We shun anything indecent, unless asked by our faithful friend (Hermann), who knows how to mask indecent things decorously so as not to subject the inner chambers of the mind to lascivious speech.<sup>58</sup>

This is odd praise, somewhat illumined when the sisters reveal the play of jest and earnest as a pedagogic strategy of Hermann. They react to the Muse's blunt innuendo by suggesting that Hermann is speaking through her: 'It is his custom to clothe such admonitions in a joking tone when speaking to his [students, people], and to jokingly give focus to some vice in a sharp, biting tone'.<sup>59</sup> The pedagogic jibe is related to the strategy indicated earlier by the Muse to the sisters: 'We hesitate to perform base subjects unless our faithful friend should ask. He knows how to mask dubious stuff to make it decent, so that the most intimate parts of the mind will not be subjected to lascivious speech' (n. 58 above). And again, 'Haven't you yourself often decried vice with a sharp and biting joke?'<sup>60</sup>

These passages support my thesis that this poem opens a perspective onto the classroom of Hermann of Reichenau, at least an imagined classroom situation. He reveals a peculiar teaching strategy, in which even harsh and nasty accusations become good pedagogy. If any reader is inclined to think a monastic school a rigidly earnest, priggishly pious institution, a reading of Hermann is warmly recommended as an antidote. It is possible

56 Lines 20-21: 'Novi, ludicra crebro, Malunt seria raro'.

57 Lines 38-39: 'Vultis, concino seria, / Sin, cantrix ero ludia'.

58 76-82: 'Mentis cultores semper amantes, / Interdumque iocos quimus honestos / Pangere, si petimur; turpe veremus / Ludere, ni fidus pocat amicus, / Hoc qui celare norit honeste, / Non ad lascivum intima verbum / Mentis subdendo...'

59 199-202: 'Solet ipse nempe tali / Monitu suis iocari / Velut et iocans acerbo / Vitium notare morsu.'

60 363-4: 'Vitiumne acri / crebro mordacique ioco notasti?'

to combine moral rigor with jocular familiarity. If Hermann's 'classroom' is exemplary, we can imagine monastic education as stringently demanding, and a lot of fun.

A parallel example from a teacher of a preceding generation, Froumund of Tegernsee, sheds light on Hermann's poem. Froumund (d. 1008), schoolmaster in the Bavarian monastery of Tegernsee, wrote a poem to his students that gives us a vivid look into his schoolroom. He chides them, with lots of wit, verve, and posed outrage, for preferring play-acting and showy but shallow entertainments to poetic composition.<sup>61</sup> Their Abbot Pernger has faulted them for never offering him so much as a line of verse. Froumund's poem is a response, dedicated to the abbot and urging the others to compose verse and send it to Abbot Pernger so as to 'drive the anger from his mind'.<sup>62</sup> He laments that his teaching has accomplished nothing, high though his standards were:

My words might be harsh, but in my heart I love you. Are all my efforts wasted, all my labor lost? [...] If I were to take somersaults and pratfalls, if I would play a wolf or bear or fox [...] if I composed fables, as Orpheus regaining Eurydice with his song [...] he nearest me in plainest sight would rejoice, and all the boys would shake with lewd laughter [...] The one who speaks the truth is less to you than a flapping shoe-tongue. Just look at the way you prefer jokes to composition. I have decided that it is better to play-act (*ludere*) in poems that enlarge the soul and the mind [...] Come brothers, let us compete now to make a metrical song!<sup>63</sup>

This poem has some of the elements of Hermann's poem: alternation of harshness and love (*I love you though I speak hard words*); criticism by ridicule, aimed at provoking the students to perform; and the opposition

61 *Tegernseer Briefsammlung*, 80-83, Carmen 32.

62 81, lines 9-10: 'Nunc facito versus, omnis, qui scribere nosti, / Ut modo pellatur mentibus ira suis.'

63 Lines 30-48, 61, 63-4: 'Sum mordax verbo, pectore vos sed amo. / Est meus iste labor cassatus, perditus omnis / Et torvis oculis me simul inspicitis? / Si facerem mihi pendentes per cingula causas – / Gesticulans manibus, lubrice stans pedibus, / Si lupus aut ursus, vel vellem fingere vulpem, / Si larvas facerem furciferis manibus, / Dulcifer aut fabulas nossem componere, menda, / Orpheus ut cantans Euridicen revocat, / Si canerem multos dulci modulamine leudos / undique currentes cum trepidis pedibus, / Gauderet, mihi qui propior visurus adesset, / Ridiculus cunctos concuteret pueros. / Fistula si dulcis mihi trivisset mea labra, / Risibus et ludis oscula conciperem. / Veridicax minor est vobis quam ligula mendax, / Diligitis iocos en mage quam metricos. / Ludere carminibus melius namque esse decrevi, / Que faciunt animum crescere et ingenium / [...] / Diligo vos animo, corde simul doceo / [...] / Eia, confratres, certemus carmine metri; / Hoc vincens aliquis sit melior reliquis.'

of ludicrous to serious subject matter. In Froumund's classroom there is an express element of theatricality: the boorish play-acting his students hope for from their teacher, and the higher 'ludic' element of the high-toned poems Froumund calls for. Levity is not banished from the classroom; far from it. Hermann's poem aims to combine the high-toned with entertainment that occasionally veers in the direction of an off-colour Punch and Judy show. And in both cases, these antinomies are resolved; with Froumund a compromise: he decides 'play-acting' (*ludere*) is fine, but only in the composition of poems that elevate the mind and increase genius ('*carmina que faciunt animum crescere et ingenium*'), i.e., jest combined with high sentiments. With Hermann the thrust and parry of ludic and earnest ends with the earnest being given priority, and that tone dominates in the main body of the *De octo vitiis* that follows the prelude. ('*Utile canta, casta camena, / ludicra respue, seria prome*'; lines 388-389). His biographer, Berthold, however, is unquestionably characterizing the prelude more than the preaching part of *De octo vitiis* when he calls the work a *libellum iocundulum* – getting in two more diminutives – 'a cheery little book'.<sup>64</sup>

The tone of this unusual comedy-drama of alienation and reconciliation, of offense given and offense returned, ending in docility and love, results from Hermann's double obligation: to maintain love and friendship with his students on the one hand; and to castigate female desire and sexuality with powerful rhetoric on the other. An important distinction between these two 'classrooms' for our purpose is the lack of any hint of sexual taunting in Froumund's verses and the prominence of sexual taunts in Hermann's. The coarse elements in Hermann's poem, I believe, are connected with the problem sketched above of men and women together in the life of the schools. The mutual sexual taunting is a rhetorical shield; its purpose is comparable to the raised left hand and arm's length by which Gunther of Lippoldsberg distances himself from Prioress Margaret (see above), joining them in spiritual marriage but setting clear limits. Its purpose bears comparison with the wall and thrice-locked door at Admont: take down the wall, and other means – discursive means – become the protective wall, more permeable but more humane and of greater moral strength. Those means still imply or suggest a threatening sexuality emanating from the women that men must ward off. Hermann alienates his students (or risks it) in order to wall off that threat and to establish licit love and a harmonious teaching relationship with them. In doing so he also establishes a discursive mode between students and teacher that is stringent, charming, and not without threat.

64 Berthold of Reichenau, *Vita Herimanni*, chap. 3, 10.

It would be hard to name a didactic poem by a medieval monk and scholar in any way comparable to this strange dialogue whose tone shifts from lightweight comic bantering to angry insults, passing through innuendo and obscenity, and funnelling into austere didactic exposition (the discourse on vices). It brims with personality and a wit versed in the art of rousing or restoring friendship by starting with insult and provocation. It revels in ironic posturing, a form of behaviour known and practiced in the Middle Ages called *facetia*. Its remarkable tone and the whole ethos of the prelude fit the personality of Hermann as described by his biographer:

[In spite of his physical impairment] to his auditors he was an eloquent and eager teacher, revelling happily in liveliness and energy. He showed great alacrity in disputation and seldom failed to answer each query with a courteous response [...] Forthright but not quarrelsome, he regarded nothing human as alien to him [...] He cultivated compassion with a bright, cheerful spirit [...] He strove for a marvelous kindness and affability, good humour and humane empathy, showed himself a model of decency and adeptness to all, and, being made all things to all men, he was loved by all.<sup>65</sup>

A comment by Ernst Dümmler, passed on by Manitius and now again by me, captures the sense of an energized and humanized asceticism evoked in Berthold's affectionate eulogy: 'The poet Hermann gives us a profound view into a soul which may have died to the world, but was very much alive to it.'<sup>66</sup>

## About the author

**C. Stephen Jaeger** is emeritus professor at the University of Illinois, and has taught at the Universities of Chicago and Washington, at the Northwestern University, and at Bryn Mawr College. He has been distinguished Visiting

65 Berthold of Reichenau, *Vita Herimanni*, chap. 2, 6-8: 'Quamvis ore lingua labisque dissolutis, fractos et vix intelligibles verborum sonos quomodocumque tractim formaverit, tamen auditoribus suis eloquens et sedulus dogmatistes tota alacritate festivus et in disputando promptissimus et ad inquisita illorum respondendo morigerus minime deficit... Homo revera sine querela, nihil humani a se alienum putavit [...] misericordiae cultor hilarissimus [...] Mirae benevolentiae affabilitatis, iocunditatis et humanitatis omnifariae conatu sese omnibus morigerum et aptum exhibens, utpote omnibus omnia factus ab omnibus amabatur'.

66 Manitius, *Geschichte*, 2. 769: 'dass uns der Dichter einen tiefen Blick in seine der Welt zwar abgestorbene, doch mit der Welt keineswegs unbekanntee Seele tun lässt [sic].'

Professor at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies of UCLA (1995), and Visiting Professor at the Central European University in 2012. He has also held an Ida Beam Distinguished Visiting Professorship at the University of Iowa (2004), an ACLS Fellowship (1974-75), two Fulbright Fellowships (1979-80 and 1991-1992), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1985-86), and a NEH Fellowship (1999-2000). He has been awarded the William J. Koren Prize of the Society for French Historical Studies, the Jacques Barzun Prize in Cultural History, American Philosophical Society, and the Research Prize of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation ('Forschungspreis'). He has been Honorary Research Fellow at Westfield College, University of London (1986), Member, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (1999-2000), elected a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America, (2002), elected professor in the Center for Advanced Study, University of Illinois from 2005, and Scholar of the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2005-2006). His most influential books include *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 935-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and European Social Ideals, 950-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), and *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

## 9 Heloise's Echo

### The Anthropology of a Twelfth-Century Horizontal Knowledge Landscape

*Babette Hellemans*

#### Abstract

This chapter presents Heloise of Argenteuil's quest for an intellectual voice through her correspondences with Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Peter the Venerable. The relationships between these four characters are deeply intellectual yet at the same time they are negotiated not only through intimate conversations, but also through collaborative monastic projects, through which the characters seek to transform the world around them. These performances open up a space that is at once aestheticized and intellectualized, in which interpersonal connections can develop. This is particularly true of vocal performances such as in the letters, in which the act of listening offers a moment of connection with the unmistakable individuality of Heloise as a performer.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, gender, orality, vocality, letter-writing, knowledge

Only her bones and the sound of her voice are left.  
Her voice remains, her bones, they say, were changed to shapes of stone.  
*Myth of Echo and Narcissus (Ovid, Metamorphosis, book 3)*

## Introduction

Heloise's place in scholarship is connected with the famous revival in twelfth-century monastic culture, often described in historiography as a Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Around this time, the countryside of Northern France was dotted with Benedictine monasteries; together these buildings created a new landscape of knowledge exchange. The lives in the monastery of monks and nuns were defined by the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. This Rule of conduct, in which men and women ought to live separately, became therefore part of how knowledge was constructed. How these two worlds lived together within a religious context is the topic of C. Stephen Jaeger's essay in this volume. The practice of living according to a Rule, apart and together, for better and for worse, is part of the historiographical debate on the rise of the twelfth-century individual. Heloise takes a particular role in this debate – and so does her so-called 'silence'.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the theme of this volume on the horizontal structure of medieval learning, this essay seeks to take the question of living spaces and knowledge exchange between men and women a step further. The anthropological approach to my understanding of horizontal learning is marked by the spatial setting of medieval knowledge exchange to artefacts representing them: letters.<sup>3</sup> The lived experience of monks and nuns was, in fact, concentrated on the nexus where horizontal and vertical learning collide: on the one hand, they followed a strict Rule of obedience; on the other hand, they were people who created an entirely new system of knowledge that would influence intellectual history for hundreds of years. The medium of letters would be central to this newly developed spatial setting of a monastic network. During Heloise's life, most monasteries followed the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. Yet, there was criticism too. It was the time that Bernard of Clairvaux developed his Cistercian Reform and Peter the Venerable was abbot of the powerful monastery of Cluny. This Benedictine variety in a period of great change did not prevent monks and nuns from keeping in touch, despite their different views on the Rule that bound them all. Spatial and remote monastic arrangements 'in the wilderness' reflected the unworldly connections with God and the afterlife. The degree of interaction that took place in the outside world, between the monasteries

1 I would like to thank Ineke van 't Spijker for her comments on an earlier draft of this article.

2 Von Moos, *Mittelalterforschung und Ideologiekritik*.

3 By putting the emphasis on the anthropological, I would like to stress the holistic approach of analyzing the individual within his/her culture as a whole. For a general overview of the debates on voice in anthropology: Weidman, 'Anthropology and Voice', 37-51.

themselves or with bishops and clerics living in cities, varied tremendously. From the stones with which these monasteries were built arises a spatial utopia, reminiscences of a culture in search of one single truth (the Rule and a life dedicated to God, a religious truth). The network of monasteries might add a new dimension and definition to what Foucault wrote about the heterotopic character of unreal places: 'As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live'.<sup>4</sup> As I shall argue, the twelfth-century epistolary outburst goes in hand with the dotted patchwork structure of the monasteries and their utopian knowledge landscape.

Letters represented a flexible medium for knowledge exchange. This patchwork structure is what I consider 'horizontal knowledge', by which I intend to stress the suppleness in the communication between men and women. The monastic epistolary culture is not self-evident as a field of study: the meaning of individual letters to others is also part of their own reference, that is, what a letter means to itself, and to their collection. Even if individual letters seem a suitable vehicle for personal expression and communication, letters represented also more or less public documents. This underlying notion of letters belonging to a public corpus is the reason why we cannot take the notion of an individual self in them, marked with a distinctive 'voice', as a distinctive feature.

In order to grasp the characteristics of the monastic culture in this horizontal knowledge landscape, I'll discuss the dynamics of a *vocality* functioning between the private and the public realm in the letters. The term *vocality* might need some further explanation. In order to grasp the multiple dimensions of voice, Paul Zumthor coined the term *vocality* (*vocalité*), by which he wanted to stress the historicity and usage of voice in medieval letters. That is, the thought of orality and spoken language to express ideas is suggested by written letters rather than the emphasis on a mere sound.<sup>5</sup> Since monastic culture was very concerned with keeping its honour within the codes of the Rule, and tried to keep conflict at bay by creating alliances with other monastic communities, letters played an important part. Letter collections created a monastic, and utopic, *vocality* that would fill the spatial gaps between isolated buildings. The figure of Heloise fits into this creation of a horizontal learning system since she represented the topos of female scholarship by excellence. The authority of the Rule and its daily practice implies the dominance of male presence over female life. Heloise's learnedness should therefore be understood through the interaction between

4 Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 4

5 Zumthor, *La lettre et la voix*, 19.

genders; it is on the nexus of this horizontality and verticality that we will be able to understand how both structures work together, rather than as opposites. In suggesting this, I do not want to deny medieval learnedness a certain female voice of its own. Rather, I would like to suggest new historical perspectives on understanding female authority as it functioned in a patriarchal society. Our understanding of universal associations defined by the Rule, and of abbots and abbesses dealing with bishops and popes, can certainly be challenged when horizontal learnedness is applied, which is the aim of this volume.

### Veiled Voices

For a modern reader, one of the most striking aspects about the letters, written by both men and women, is their radically affective speech and the sentiments expressed in them; sentiments of vulnerability and modesty, a self deeply moved by longing and feelings of love, not the sentiments of pride or autonomy, nor those of chaste individuals. What is it about their 'voices' that allowed them to express sentiments that run counter to the ideal of honour without jeopardizing the reputations of the individuals writing them? If we recognize that the utopic monastic network functioned on the nexus of both the verticality of the Rule and the horizontality of the letters, what does the discrepancy between the two modes of discourse tell us? Is there a difference in how men and women expressed sentiment?

Heloise of Argenteuil was a well-known abbess and scholar from the twelfth century.<sup>6</sup> She was probably born in 1101 somewhere in the north of France. Trained in classics, with a good knowledge of Latin and rhetoric, she also knew some Greek and Hebrew. Her uncle Fulbert was responsible for her education, and up to the present day, scholars speculate about Fulbert's motivation concerning Heloise's education; probably he hoped she would have a brilliant career as an abbess. Heloise's life would forever be connected with the life of Peter Abelard, who became her tutor around 1113. They had a love affair out of which their son Astrolabe was born. For the sake of Abelard's career – and perhaps Heloise's too – both took the monastic vow and became prominent intellectuals in their own time, creating the twelfth-century Renaissance, together with abbots such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable. Heloise ultimately became abbess of the

6 For an up-to-date overview of scholarship see: Hellemans, *Rethinking Abelard*, and Peter Abelard and Heloise, *Epistulae*.

monastery of the Paraclete founded by Abelard himself, and the five priories that were attached to it. Their letter collection has been the subject of much scholarly argument and will probably continue to provoke debate.<sup>7</sup> After a personal exchange in the first letters, they settled into a relationship in which Heloise asked Abelard to provide her with material for reading at her convent, to which he replied extensively, as indeed much of Abelard's writing became focused on her. Scholarship has taken the moment of Heloise's silence as a point of departure for a paradigmatic shift in understanding the voices in the letters, the nature of composition in letter collections, and the difference between a rhetorical silence (*aposiopesis*) and an intentional silence. I have written about this elsewhere, and we will come back to it later.<sup>8</sup> Although we have only two letters from Heloise asking for advice concerning monastic matters, Abelard's replies to her other requests in the guise of hymns and a monastic Rule designed for women give us some idea of the ongoing exchange between them.

Scholars specialized in the intellectual culture of the twelfth century have long debated the presence of Heloise as one of the authors in the letter correspondence. The oldest manuscript containing these letters is from the early thirteenth century; it ends with a monastic Rule created by Abelard for Heloise and her nuns at the monastery of the Paraclete. By taking the fact of Heloise falling silent in her letter correspondence with Abelard to be an anthropological moment, rather than a political or rhetorical example, I take Heloise's next writings as variations of that initial moment. I stress with this point of view how the anthropological approach can help us to understand some of the most fascinating *aporia* in medieval intellectual culture, namely how notions of unworldly ideals functioned within the human condition of these men and women. Since they adopted the attitude of *contemptus mundi*, they were living in the world, while at the same time accepting a state of *being* without any worldly frame to fall back on. I think that this fundamental impossibility has been lifted by the human nature resonating in the written words as these twelfth century voices were materialized on parchment. It is on the brink of an entirely new knowledge structure in the cities, on the eve of the rise of the universities, that this profoundly human polyphony is most beautifully voiced.

In the history of European intellectual culture, voice has always been associated with individuality, authorship, agency, authority, and power. *We have a voice, or give voice* to our beliefs, and we discover an *inner voice*.

7 See *infra*.

8 See also my article 'Abelard and Heloise between Voice and Silence'.

However, the voice is also a broader human category prominent in non-Western cultures, often related to anti-colonial movements and the discourse of human rights, the rise of the indigenous, with promises of choice and agency. With the *linguistic turn* and the emergence of French feminism, one of the major critiques of the political views on the suppressed voice within the realm of power structures was that this kind of voice, connected to the lack of agency and hidden censorship, represents an excessively disruptive capacity within the social order.<sup>9</sup> But what about voice that resists any representation? What about the musicality of the voice? Roland Barthes, for one, introduced the materiality of the body as having a voice, and this physicality being the source of all thoughts. The 'grain of the voice' (*le grain de la voix*), as Barthes has it, points towards the materiality of the body that is speaking its mother tongue in a dual production – of language and of music.<sup>10</sup> As a bodily instrument being essentially 'something to think with', the voice represents an epistemological tool that constitutes subjectivity. Therefore, the voice can be considered the hermeneutical tool *par excellence* for describing the 'horizontal' exchange that aims at shaping and reshaping thought expressed in the uttering of words rather than seeking a 'vertical' exchange of the written word connected to power, authority, control and imposition.

This pre-cultural significance of the voice that has been particularly prominent in the field of anthropology – with an emphasis on the voice's primordiality like a child learning to speak by imitating sound – has shown the multifaceted contrasts that exist in the representation of a signifying voice. It refers to the 'grain of the voice' in Barthes's example, rethinking the kind of vocality that lies outside a referential meaning, presenting the inarticulate vocality. The voice represents in musical terms the polyphonic nature of a composition that functions in an alternating sense of individual voice and collective harmony.<sup>11</sup> As will be shown, there is a specific kind of 'horizontal learning' in the notion of vocality. The presence of multiple voices will reveal an alternating effect of knowledge exchange in letter collections since these documents seem to be flexible enough to adapt to the desires of the public reader as well. This extraordinary suppleness and adaptation of voices, mirroring desires and expectations of the reader, is characteristic of the rhetorical quality in twelfth century epistolary culture. It is in this moment of recognition, listening to voices of such a

9 Hellemans, *Understanding Culture*.

10 Barthes, 'Music's Body', 245-312.

11 *Infra*, n. 9.

remote past, that we search for words such as Renaissance, that cover this 'humanistic' undertone.<sup>12</sup> However, what is the kind of knowledge embedded in the vocality of the letters? The monastic context requires in the end a disciplined, horizontal voice that instructs, for instance, Heloise and her nuns of the monastery of the Paraclete. On this nexus of vertical and horizontal knowledge the meanings of moral constraint and personal expressiveness are exposed and reveal a culture that seeks to transcend itself. Indeed, the very meaning of the monastic community in the utopic landscape is spiritual in order to transcend its worldly nature. Probably the monks and nuns that shaped this culture would consider any distinction between 'spirituality' and 'knowledge' artificial.

As such, the notion of the voice becomes more than a 'vehicle' of expression in the exchange of horizontal knowledge. Connected to their female bodies with immediate notions of honour and shame, voice is often the only tool women have to express their ideology and to counter the official male pride and decorum. The physical past of a woman directly affects her social status and this immediacy between body and expressiveness is why the musical grain in the woman's voice has such power. In history, Heloise's voice is especially discernable in her letters.<sup>13</sup> Her voice thus becomes poetic as it rises within the epistemological margins of sound and silence. Female vocality is marginal, subversive, and subjected. Like the gospels and the blues, they represent the voice of the suppressed away from the ears of power and learnedness. The nuns of the Paraclete, in which each woman had a history of her own, were mothers, widows, virgins, and divorcees, who were forced to voice their knowledge of the world – one of childbirth or childlessness, virginity, often with vulnerability – against the hierarchical structure of pride and power. This horizontal character of female knowledge is opposed to the verticality of a top-down authority, just as it is opposed to the hegemonic presence of normativity and morality. As a result, horizontal voicing invites us to listen to a half-hidden dialogue, like the shape of an echo, revealing an interiorized critique of the vanities of honour.

### Echo's Mimicking Knowledge

The echo as a figure of voice serves to reveal the poetics of female expression. The monastic landscape of horizontal knowledge exchange – reflecting a

<sup>12</sup> See Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*.

<sup>13</sup> Cherewatuk and Wiethaus, *Dear Sister*.

learning that is responsive rather than imposing – relates to the conceptualization of Renaissance in the twelfth century. In the same way, the metapoetic configuration in this culture of letter-writing can be considered as an echo of its horizontal nature. What is characteristic of the echo is that it represents a figure of sound separated from its original. The written word, however, represents that which does not emerge into sound but is confined to silence. The lively antiphonal character of letter-writing, however, seems to defy the muteness in relation to the written text. Hence several attempts have been made to ‘listen to the text’ – and its voice – rather than to read in silence.<sup>14</sup> Though this claiming of voice from a text is methodologically problematic, it is also interesting and therefore worth exploring, not the least because the reader becomes an active participant in giving meaning to the polyphony of voices. We, modern scholars, sometimes forget how this very practice of reading only became epistemologically visible in the technical change of writing manuscripts from the eleventh century onwards. In the words of Paul Saenger: ‘As reading became a silent and solitary activity, constraints imposed by the group were no longer efficacious, and explicit injunctions against private abuse were required.’<sup>15</sup> The absorption of knowledge through reading goes along with the idea that the text, in fact, represents authority. However, with an increasing number of individual readers in the monasteries, the practice of reading itself became, from the eleventh century onwards, more and more autonomous and horizontal. In addition, past studies on medieval intellectual culture have shown how knowledge exchange in the High Middle Ages operated from inside the cloister and classroom into the outside world, up to the point of the emergence of universities in European cities in the course of the thirteenth century. The monastic letter collections show how silent intramural knowledge becomes ‘audible’ to other monasteries in the outside world through the medium of letters; a world that responds not as a repetition of the cloistered mind but as the awakening of an echo out of its passive state. The voice in the letter’s reply, we might say some kind of a mimetic answer, is never verbally precise because the notion of privacy in reading these epistolary collections is lacking. The original voice has become distorted and changed. Before turning to this process of mimicking and distortion as a way of exploring the challenges of understanding voice as a tool for knowledge exchange, giving access to a

14 Wheeler, *Listening to Heloise*.

15 Saenger, *Space between Words*, 204. For an anthropological analysis of Anselm of Canterbury’s emphasis on the reading of the gaps between words, see the article of Burcht Pranger, ‘*Dimidia horae*’.

written mimicry rather than a spoken dialogue, it might be helpful to recall the deeper meaning of Ovid's myth about the figure of Echo. We will see how this ancient myth has been adapted during the history of its reception in Western culture, so fundamentally shaped by Sigmund Freud.

With Freud, the story of the myth has been placed within the context of a psycho-pathological disorder that describes an unbalanced self-esteem in relation to uses of power and boundaries, leading to exhibitionism or its opposite, a lack of identity. The emphasis is, more generally, put on a struggle with the Ego. In the monastic culture of the twelfth century, these post-Freudian notions cannot be applied without taking the differences between modern and medieval culture into account. We will come back to this. The story of the myth and the use of the Echo as a cultural figure might help us, however, to understand articulations of monastic ideas about the self and their strong disapproval of (self-) absorption, what we would call today 'psychological projection'.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the figure of the Echo is helpful to stress the passive nature of voice especially within knowledge communities that are not clearly defined, such as female knowledge. The process of projection as part of knowledge acquisition, therefore, cannot function according to a simple system of mirroring, because the original model has not been clearly framed. The mirroring process as part of the myth is symbolized by Narcissus, who is numbed by his own image. My introduction of the figure of Echo seeks to overcome such a numbness, using a term from the field of social psychology, called verbal mimicry. Verbal mimicry stresses the connecting and deeply social character of language and how meaning depends on a 'branched' system of semiotics. Hence, verbal mimicry – when voices are connected through imitation, rapport, and cohesion – seems to have a stronger impact than the clear-cut rational design of mirroring dialogue, which would be the case of *disputatio* in the monastic context.

The myth of Echo goes as follows. Ovid's Echo is a loquacious nymph 'of the echoing voice, who cannot be silent when others have spoken, nor learn how to speak first herself'. The nymph still had a body when she first saw Narcissus; she was not merely a voice. As in an echo, she made use of counter play, repeating sound in order to create meaning. Her phonetic playing became a rupture in words, laying bare the discrepancy between

<sup>16</sup> The differences between modern and ancient notions on the self, and the way dialogues in letters serve a free exchange of ideas, are well explained in Peter von Moos' article 'Dialogue et monologue', 327-342. A similar thought on the notion of dialogue as part of philosophical self-knowledge and the ethics of ipsiety can be found in Ricoeur, *Soi-même*.

sound and meaning. Talkative though she was, she had no other trick of speech than this: she could only repeat the last words out of many. It was Juno who brought about this state of affairs after Echo held her in long conversations on purpose, while the other nymphs fled from her husband, the god Jupiter. Echo was left with little power over her deluding tongue, as she only had the briefest ability to speak, repeating the last of what is spoken and returning the words she hears.

The conceptual meaning of the echo is profoundly semiotic, since it represents a separation between meaning and sound, like an incision cutting through the pair of signifier and signified, creating a rupture that is beyond repair. In his essay ‘The Role of Language in *Trauerspiel* and Tragedy’, Walter Benjamin cites this counter play of the echo as follows: ‘The interplay between sound and meaning remains a terrifying phantom for the mourning play.’ It is, according to Benjamin, an example of the satanic meaning that always foreshadows death – like a lament that will never become a sound.<sup>17</sup> Hence the epigraph of this article: ‘Her voice remains, her bones, they say, were changed to shapes of stone. She hides in the woods, no longer to be seen on the hills, but to be heard by everyone’. It is sound that lives in her. The story of the nymph Echo dramatizes the profoundly communicative and connecting nature of voice as an intellectual device. Echo’s mechanical repetition of words is perceived as alienating from the social realm. Her punishment is tantamount to the death of her communicative, intellectual self, and it illustrates how soul, body, and sound are dependent on successful and harmonic communication in the social realm of a community. This was, of course, the point Barthes wanted to stress when he described the individualized ‘grain of the voice’ within the polyphonic sound of community. It is also Benjamin’s description of voice, body, and the abyss of death in which feelings are endlessly lost because the acceptance of what is given (or not) is lacking.

### **Heloise’s Voice as a Case of Women’s History**

Let us now use these conceptual images to rethink the historiography of horizontal learning. What if voices of the past are not audible because

17 Walter Benjamin’s ideas about translation as part of analyzing the figure of Echo is part of this process of the verbal mimicry of knowledge, in *Selected Writings* 1:60: ‘Nature, according to the mourning play, and the nature of the mourning play [*die Natur der Trauerspiels*] [...] is obsessed by language, the victim of an endless feeling’.

they are 'written out of the canon of history'? This is the case of female voices and the voices of the suppressed, often called 'marginal cultures' in historiography. We pick up the case of Heloise again. Medieval scholarship has often focused on her presence in terms of 'voices' and 'silences'.<sup>18</sup> One thinks especially of the important academic discussion dealing with *Letter 6* in the letter collection of Abelard and Heloise, the moment where she falls silent about their common past, and Abelard's voice takes over. We have to be careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly, because it is only in this specific work that she falls silent, not in her life as the abbess of the Paraclete. However, in the horizontal knowledge structure, in which Heloise communicated with Abelard, *Letter 6* reveals a definitive shift from the one state to the other, from letters about their past as lovers to a monastic future in accordance with the Rule. The historiography of Heloise seems to follow what Simone de Beauvoir described in her chapter on History in the two-volume *The Second Sex*:

The action of women was never more than a symbolic agitation, [women] have gained only what men were happy to allow them; they have taken nothing, they have received [...] they don't have a history.

All history has been created by men [...] they always had the destiny of women in their hands [...] the male human being models the face of the world (1:114), at the reverse of women who do not represent art or thought. Men have all ties of the plot in hands, including the movements of emancipation.

Similar to historical reality, nature is not an inert given. Man is not a natural species: it is a historical idea. Woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming (1:73). [The body] is a situation [that has nothing intangible]. Biology cannot be able to command destiny. One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.<sup>19</sup>

18 'En ce qui concerne la forme énoncé dialogique, il faut se souvenir de la théorie de certains stoïciens pour qui la concision (*brevitas*) est à la fois une sorte d'ascèse verbale digne de l'innommable et l'un des raffinements les plus subtiles de la tyrannie du secret' ('Concerning the spoken form of the dialogue, it is necessary to remember the theory of certain Stoics, for whom brevity is a form of verbal asceticism worthy of the unspeakable while representing at the same time one of the most subtle refinements of the tyranny of secrecy'), in von Moos, 'Dialogue et monologue', *infra*, n. 13, here: 336.

19 'L'action des femmes n'a jamais été qu'une agitation symbolique, elles n'ont gagné que ce que les hommes ont bien voulu leur concéder ; elles n'ont rien pris : elles ont reçu [...] Elles n'ont pas de passé'. 'Toute l'histoire des femmes a été faite par les hommes [...] Ce sont eux qui ont toujours tenu le sort de la femme entre leurs mains. Le mâle humain modèle la face du monde (114), au rebours des femmes qui n'illustrent ni l'art ni la pensée. Les hommes tirent toutes les

De Beauvoir's book caused a paradigm shift in the historiographical debate and the increasing awareness that, in order to make women enter into the realm of history, one had to become aware that history is constructed as a narrative. In other words, history itself has become an academic discourse in which women's voices have been mostly absent. When dealing with the Christian culture of Europe in the Middle Ages, one should also, in a more general sense, think of biblical references suggesting that women *ought* to be silent in terms of authority of knowledge: 'Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent' (1 Timothy 2:11-12). To participate in this culture of absence, passiveness or a negation of women's role in the past (for instance, as scholars) implies that one is taking part in their dependence – and muteness. Our commitment to access the cultural history of silence towards women means acknowledging a profound aspect in the process of understanding knowledge acquisition and its horizontal structure. It also requires rethinking the biological nature of women as an *a priori* category, in which not all is perhaps given, and how different social structures respond to this, as Simone de Beauvoir has tried to express. If scholars make claims on the iconic letters of Abelard and Heloise regarding, for instance, the status of truthfulness and accuracy in representing the twelfth-century monastic context in which they were written, they make a historical or literary statement. But when the question comes from historical anthropology, the text represents an artifact of a specific intellectual approach of the utopic epistolary culture described earlier in this chapter. This implies that the question of Heloise's historical voice falling silent should also be challenged, since her correspondence was in fact never finished. She continued writing to other monasteries as an abbess and maintained a correspondence with no one less than Peter the Venerable, who wrote back a beautiful letter of consolation describing Abelard's death at Cluny. But also outside the monastic network she kept her voice: her first letter written as abbess and to be kept in the archives was addressed to Pope Innocent II.<sup>20</sup>

ficelles de l'intrigue, y compris celles des mouvements d'émancipation. [...] (222). 'Pas plus que la réalité historique, la nature n'est une donnée immuable. L'homme n'est pas une espèce naturelle: c'est une idée historique. La femme n'est pas une réalité figée, mais un devenir (73). [Le corps] est une situation [qui n'a rien d'intangible. La biologie ne saurait commander le destin.] On ne naît pas femme : on le devient.' Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe*, vol. 1.

20 The letter is dated 28 November 1131 and the original charter (pièce 31) is kept in the *Bibliothèque municipale* of Chalons-sur-Marne; see Mc Laughlin, 'Heloise the Abbess', 3. The forthcoming book by Bonnie Wheeler and the late Mary McLaughlin, *Heloise and the Paraclete: A Twelfth Century Quest*, will prove to be invaluable to gain further insight into the political side of Heloise's work as an abbess.

So why is scholarship so interested in Heloise's silence as a hermeneutical question? It seems that, with the paradigmatic change of seeing history as narrative and especially the place of women within this narrative, the question of fiction and factuality became also more challenged. While the historian seems to look for *what is factually missing* in the text considering its place within a historical context and how to solve this from a forensic point of view, literary scholars look for *what is there or what is lacking*. Where are the gaps? Where does the voice speak out again after a silent interval? Indeed, a letter correspondence is not a dialogue, but takes part in the verbal mimicry of a community. The framing of letter collections, therefore, goes along with constructing spiritual guidance, and its themes are eminently topical for constructing a horizontal knowledge community.<sup>21</sup> Letters are vehicles for expressing affiliating thoughts through individualized voices in such a way that only the frame of letter collections is socially acceptable within the monastic culture, and any other frame would be considered to damage self-image and self-presentation. The form of single letters as part of a bigger collection creates a patchwork of individualized voices that enables author(s) to be flexible in creating a rapport, allowing for contradictions and divergent expressions of honour and vulnerability, while giving room to contradictory emotions in individual letters, which can coexist at the same time within a collection. This delineation between the individual voice and the polyphony of many voices is what makes letter collections so fascinating to study. The historical anthropological approach requires rethinking the multifaceted nature of the letter correspondence within their 'utopic' monastic setting. Taking Western culture as the sole rational model of knowledge would thus not be acceptable. Falling back on *disputatio* as the rational model of horizontal knowledge *par excellence* by which the female voice echoes the male voice, would also not suffice. As Bruno Latour has convincingly stressed, anthropology considers the notion of 'error' as part of what defines knowledge as a cultural system: 'It uses the same terms [of symmetry] to explain truths and errors.'<sup>22</sup> Considering Heloise's silence as an anthropological moment, therefore, gives room for understanding variations of truth within this culture.

21 For a profound analysis of the poetic implications of letter collections, see Verbaal, 'Voicing your Voice', 103-124 and Haseldine, 'Affectionate Terms of Address', 201-254.

22 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 103.

## The Poetics of Horizontal Knowledge

Why do individuals in a monastic culture appear to be able to express in letters, through vocality and tropes, sentiments of learnedness that violate the vertical code of authoritative scholarship, and employ affectionate language that sometimes even seems to violate the modesty code? What is the significance of two culturally sanctioned types of knowledge – vertical and horizontal – available to the monks and nuns who relied on both of them to express their views? One key to this puzzle of horizontal lines and vertical lines in knowledge communities would be to ask why individuals can express certain meanings according to one line and not the other. The suppleness of epistolary rhetoric and its humanistic appeal is transformed into various conditions, both public and private. It exists between close friends, social peers belonging to the same community, between popes and emperors, and between lovers. Therefore, to consider letter collections as horizontal tropes of learning teaches us, modern scholars, about the poetic message they seem to convey. In the early twelfth century, the poetic force by which the epistolary genre made it possible to express political-theological messages can be best illustrated by the example of Heloise's 'brother in Christ', Bernard of Clairvaux. We know that Bernard visited Heloise at the Paraclete on one occasion.<sup>23</sup> In the words of Wim Verbaal:

Bernard [of Clairvaux] 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. [...] The image Bernard fashioned of himself in his letters [...] is the image of a man who realizes that he has spent much energy on a lost cause. And that the events he had to confront are not present to offer a view of early 12th-century history, but in order to show us the tragic story of being a tool of God, of being the Voice of God, 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.<sup>24</sup>

This example of Bernard's self-fashioning, even in letters that were actually never sent, confirms the flexibility of these kinds of documents, allowing contradictions to flourish and giving room to the poetics of tacit knowledge,

23 Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 162. The article of Julie Ann Smith gives us a very illuminating account of the way monasteries were directed; see Smith, *Debitum Obedientie*, 1-23.

24 Verbaal, 'Voicing your Voice', *infra*, n. 18.

of things that can be left unsaid.<sup>25</sup> Within the horizontal structure of letter collections, we get an inkling of an individual voice constructed through loose patches of texts. Within the exclusively male setting of the letter collections of Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable, and Abelard, Heloise is part of the process. She is silent about her own past with Abelard and audible about her future in the utopic network of monasteries.

But there is a deeper methodological concern than the one I just described regarding silence and voice as concepts of power and social construct. There is also knowledge which we will not be able to access if we acknowledge the rational attitude of searching beyond Western culture as the only form of anthropology. Every culture has a kind of *tacit knowledge* too; this is often the knowledge that deals with codes, taboos, and censorship. The strongly moral component in this kind of implicit knowledge is what interests anthropologists most, since they represent the reverse side of articulated and explicit forms of expression and therefore give a deeper meaning to culture. The patchwork-like structure of tacit knowledge is 'horizontal' by definition, since it can only be understood within a community of peers. This kind of knowledge weaves an understanding between spirits on an equal level, without any need of articulation. If we recall the epistemological concerns of lost voices, or the embodied voice of Roland Barthes, we have an ever more difficult nut to crack here. How can we grasp this kind of knowledge as part of the 'thick description' of an intellectual culture, to borrow the term from Clifford Geertz, a culture whose voices evaporated into thin air?<sup>26</sup> Through the 'thick representations' of vocality in letter collections and the misty historical muteness surrounding it, we also need to acknowledge the deeply social nature of listening. This seems especially crucial for the horizontality of knowledge communities with its shaping of letter collections and special claims on the authority of the written word. It also means that the process of creating a new vocabulary through voice and vocal mimicry sheds an entirely new light on what knowledge is

25 For instance, *Epistola* 119 addressed to Abelard was never sent by Bernard, as far as we know.

26 The notion of 'thick description' refers to a famous theoretical issue introduced by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. It raises the general question of what, as Gilbert Ryle has put it, *Le Penseur*, the famous sculpture by Rodin, is doing. In taking the wink as an example of communication, he thus raises the almost impossible notion of analyzing culture as a fixed epistemological category. The wink can be a coincidence (a piece of dust), a playful sign of mutual understanding, or one can imitate the latter as a parody. And one should not forget the 'zero-form twitches', in Geertz' words, 'which are in fact as much non-winks as winks are non-twitches'. C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-30.

through the function of *politics* in language. It is not the verticality of master-pupil that creates poetical knowledge; rather, it is the suppleness of horizontality because of its patchwork-like structure by which a social verbal community is constituted. This fact, of course, has an impact on the specific concepts we use in this volume, such as horizontal learning, community, voice, silence, religion, or culture.

The famous culture critic and scholar Raymond Williams, who was a pioneer in dealing with the interaction between language, culture, and society, underscores the active notion of understanding and knowledge, as opposed to authoritative vertical knowledge:

In a social history in which many crucial meanings have been shaped by a dominant class, and by particular professions operating to a large extent within its terms, the sense of edge is accurate. This is not a neutral review of meanings. It is an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical – subject to change as well as to continuity – if the millions of people in which it is active are to see it as active: not a *tradition* to be learned, not a *consensus* to be accepted, nor a set of meanings which, because it is ‘our language’, has a natural authority; but as a shaping and reshaping, in real circumstances and from profoundly different and important points of view.<sup>27</sup>

Looking at the prismatic aspect of culture and its language, Raymond Williams understood that it was only by *returning to modulations* of a given word through history that one could even understand a term in and of itself. Against the use of tradition based on a common ground that is *a priori* defined, this mimetic knowledge can be reconstructed by an approach that takes into account performances that surround a particular cultural setting, from which the texts arise. In the case of Heloise, we have her monastery of the Paraclete, the hymns, the monastic Rule written for Heloise by Abelard, the burial of Abelard’s body in the Paraclete, and other ‘performances’, such as the aforementioned visit of Bernard of Clairvaux to Heloise. These performances open up a space that is at once aestheticized, often by rituals, as well as sociable, in which interpersonal connections and intellectual exchanges can develop through non-verbal media. The letter collection of Abelard and

27 Williams, *Keywords*, 24.

Heloise shows the unfolding mimicry of dialogue modulating towards the sole authority of the monastic Rule. Clashes of voices or their silences suggest new possibilities of interpretation. To reduce everything to the absoluteness of silence and obedience to the Rule, however, would mean a denial of the history that is written before the Rule came into being, the troubled history of their own lives, that is. It would also deny the voices that created the document as a whole, and its liveliness. And it would underestimate the poetic expressiveness of tacit knowledge. To illustrate the danger of reducing the anthropological understanding of monasticism to mere silence as void (whether intentional or not), we recall the danger of apophatic silence as a paralysis of voice – illustrated by the myth of Echo and Narcissus.

The central question that arises from social life (in our case, the example of monastic life) and social transformation (in our case the debates about monastic reform and, as its sequel, the debates on heretical views about monastic life versus orthodox views) can be expressed through the prism of vocality: how are individual and group identities established in the performative realm? What are the consequences of suppressing voice? There is something at once deeply poetic yet also unsettling about Heloise's silence in *Letter 6*, which seems to echo against the monastic walls towards her male counterparts. In this letter to Abelard, she seems tormented by inner conflict over her task of embodying the iconic Christian image of female purity: her complex, intellectually shaped inner life runs counter to a static and authoritative image of femininity she is forced to embody. She had to deny her son, motherhood even, if she wants to adopt the monastic vow and her intellectual self. Heloise's complex relationship to speaking/writing and silence/paralysis reflects both the direct impact of the female body when she also wants to be part of a knowledge community, as well as contemporary twelfth-century values and ways of existing within the reforms of the Benedictine Rule. Viewing the destruction of the intellectual community 'bond' in the monastic realm as a kind of social death, Heloise uses silence as metaphorical death and thus as a means to escape the past she had with Abelard. Her rejection of her own vocality within the letter correspondence is a way of rejecting her 'history of calamities', which means a rejection of her female self, while at the same time regaining the intellectual bonds that tied her to the other characters. Heloise's silence as a figure of mimicry thus offers a way of understanding the place of voice in the social realm of kindred souls, and while she seems to understand the catastrophic implications of this decision, it seems too late to turn back;

she has nothing more to say. 'Speak to us then, and we shall hear', she concludes at the end of *Letter 6*.

### The Vocality of Kindred Souls

Yet a deeper answer to Heloise's silence, which would connect to what Barthes is saying about voice – body and soul – may present itself in her letter exchange with Peter the Venerable, and especially the latter's letter of consolation sent after Peter Abelard's death in 1142, after Abelard had spent the last years of his life in a priory of the monastery of Cluny. More than supporting the claim that Heloise fell silent because of her abandoned motherhood, to make her entrance within the monastery and regain her vocal authority, all of this part of her situation as a woman, the letter correspondence with Peter the Venerable shows how the horizontal and 'patchwork' knowledge structure is able to regain form. Heloise mentions a previous visit from Peter the Venerable when he brought Abelard's body back to the Paraclete. She also requested a written confirmation of Abelard's absolution and of Masses promised for his soul, and for her son some prebend, which was a stipend or a portion of the revenues, either from the bishop of Paris or from some other diocese. One of the most remarkable themes is the combination of pride and humility, voiced by Heloise:

To Peter, most reverend lord and father and venerable abbot of Cluny, Heloise, God's and his humble servant: the spirit of grace and salvation. The mercy of God came down to us in the grace of a visit from your Reverence. We are filled with pride and rejoicing, gracious father, because your greatness has descended to our lowliness, for a visitation from you is a matter for great rejoicing even for the great. [...] To me too, whom (unworthy as I am to be called your servant) your sublime humility has not disdained to address as sister in writing and speech, you granted a rare privilege in token of your love and sincerity: a trental of masses to be said on my behalf by the abbey of Cluny after my death. You also said that you would confirm this gift in a letter under seal. Fulfil then, my brother or rather, my lord, what you promised to your sister, or I should say, to your servant.<sup>28</sup>

28 Heloise, *Epistola ad Petrum Venerabilem* (ep. 167, 400-401); trans. Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 286-7; electronic source: <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/190.html> (accessed May 5 2018).

Humility refers to a state of honour and the corresponding acts of modesty or deference. Traditional historical scholarship that stops at Heloise's silence would interpret this example as being typical of the vertical authority in male and female relationships.<sup>29</sup> The cloaking of an inborn 'weakness' within the text through a language of formality would in such an interpretation correlate with required social distance between the two sexes. But epistolary voices also embody the poetic vulnerability of sharing the same language of intellectual rapport. So, to stop at Heloise's silence is to ignore her intellectual influence as abbess of the monastery that goes well beyond the closed boundaries of monastic walls. Even more, when we read Peter the Venerable's response to Heloise, we notice how the vocal mimicry of humility is shared within an intimate language:

To our venerable and dearest sister and God's servant, to the leader and teacher of God's handmaidens, from brother Peter, the humble abbot of Cluny, greetings in God and the fullness of love from us in Christ.

I have been greatly pleased to read your letter, from which I have learned that my visit to you was not merely a transitory one, in which I am assured not only that I was with you, but that I have never left you. That visit of mine was not, I realize, like the memory of a passing guest for the night and I have not become for you 'a stranger and a pilgrim' (Gen. 23:4), but, please God, 'a citizen of the holy places and a member of the household' (Ephes. 2:19). All that I said and did in that swift and fleeting visit of mine has been embraced so firmly in your pious memory, so deeply impressed on your gracious spirit, that not only what I said very carefully, but even words perhaps carelessly spoken, have not fallen to the ground. You have paid such careful attention to everything; you have entrusted all I said and did to that tenacious memory which springs from love of truth, as if mine were great, celestial and sacrosanct utterances, as if they were the very words and works of Jesus Christ!<sup>30</sup>

From the context-bound nature of the monastic epistolary genre, it seems that these two examples reveal an awareness between the social and the private, which corresponds to self-representation in the utopic monastic landscape. Given our own modern and Western assumptions

29 See for instance Newman, 'Authority, Authenticity', 121-157.

30 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola ad Heloisam* (ep. 168, 401-02); trans. Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 286-7; see also the electronic source: <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/190.html> (accessed May 5 2018).

of the 'real self' as expressed in a dynamic and spontaneous urge, shaped in heterogeneous voices in individual letters, we might think that this vocality is opposed to more vertical understanding of the institutionalized self, which considers the self as real only if embedded within explicitly expressed social ideals. Thus notions such as honour or humility, couched in the modest language of topical 'masks' worn within the community, seem to clash with the emotional and poetical language, and which is part of the affective vocal mimicry. However, this dramaturgical view of self-representation within knowledge communities in which every voice seems to carry its own self, underestimates the underlying desire to be universally moral and good. This is the tacit knowledge that ties all the voices together. Within the monastic culture of a shared 'utopia', moral standards were set high and perceived as values (rather than norms) and as a matter of self-respect. It was not an obligation pushed upon the individual by his or her peers, but rather should be seen as part of a common spiritual motivation. Hence moral virtue also means standing within the horizontal structure of the community. Belonging to the spiritual community was essential for monks and nuns as there was no alternative social life available outside the monastic walls for them. The belonging to this learned culture was therefore not a matter of merely a *mise-en-scène* of honour and authority. By framing the affective language between these 'brothers and sisters in Christ' in terms of honour, modesty, and vulnerability, it was possible to share a spiritual life while avoiding individual oppression or the open application of violence, leading to exclusion and shaming.

I would like to turn back to the epigraph of this chapter, which I chose as a leading thought throughout this text. The symbolic meaning of Ovid's myth and this phrase in particular struck me by its profundity. It challenges the grip on what knowledge is in history by showing the ephemeral status of what it is to know, because there will always be new readers with new questions. The fate of the historian working with ideas, concepts, and symbolic meaning lies in the acceptance that, in the end, vocality through the written word, some stones, and bones is really all we have.

## About the author

**Babette Hellemans** is senior lecturer (UD1) in History at the University of Groningen since 2010. In this position, she specialises in cultural and intellectual history in a diachronical and interdisciplinary context. Babette

Hellemans has a French PhD in historical anthropology and a Dutch PhD in the Humanities (co-tutelle de thèse). She has been a visitor at CNRS laboratories, at the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University, and at Oxford University, and taught at the universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam. She has published on many different topics, including on Peter Abelard.



# 10 Forms of Transmission of Knowledge at Saint Gall (Ninth to Eleventh Century)

*Nicolangelo D'Acunto*

## Abstract

The chapter focuses on the forms of transmission of knowledge within the monastic elite who controlled the monastery of Saint Gall from the Carolingian age to the Salian age. The chronicles of Saint Gall contain evidence that offer insight into the ways in which this elite created a shared cultural *humus*, through a process of 'horizontal learning' not strictly connected with the school, but which was based on the personal solidarity deriving from relationships. The mixture of the formal plane with the informal characterised the training processes of the monastic community, in which the transfer of competences and the training of the monks occurred both within the formalized scholastic structures and in an informal manner. In this way, the monastery and the school could overlap, and even become interchangeable.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, monasticism, friendship, teaching, learning

The monastery of Saint Gall, situated in what is today Swiss territory, offers an uniquely detailed insight in the life of a high medieval monastic community, thanks to the richness and quality of its sources.<sup>1</sup> Many original documents from the eighth to the eleventh centuries are conserved in its archives.<sup>2</sup> The numerous manuscripts produced and preserved in its library

<sup>1</sup> Vogler, *La abbazia San Gallo*.

<sup>2</sup> *Chartularium Sangallense*, vol. 1. 700-840, ed. Erhart, Heidecker, Zeller ; *Chartularium Sangallense*, ed. Clavadetscher.

are, moreover, fundamental for Western culture. This study, however, focuses on the monastery's exceptional set of chronicles, known collectively as the *Casus Sancti Galli*, which cover a period from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. Peter Erhart has justly observed that the *Casus sancti Galli* are not limited to a description of strictly patrimonial aspects of the history of the coenoby but instead offer the reader 'both a view of the life within the walls of a monastery (touching on topics such as hospitality, the internal and external schools and their students, conflicts and tensions between monks) and the notion of the cloister and of exchanges with the external world'.<sup>3</sup> These and other aspects of the life in a monastery and of its relationship with the surrounding world are illustrated in the Saint Gall chronicles with an exceptional wealth of particulars, in the etymological sense of the word.

In addition to this informational potential, the Chronicles of Saint Gall are now of interest because they tell us about various forms of informal and horizontal learning that took place among the elite members who guided the monastery over the centuries. Following some introductory remarks on the nature of this exceptional source and of the elite of which it was the expression, this chapter focuses on the challenges posed by the necessity of educating the members of aristocratic families for monastic life. Particular attention will be granted to the double dimension of this training, with the literary education on the one side and the leadership training on the other. The question of the disruptive potential of horizontal learning, especially in relation to the opposition between members of the elite and ordinary monks, will also be addressed, and the chapter concludes with a reflection on the overlapping between school and cloister, education and daily liturgical life in the monastery.

First of all, in approaching the chronicles it must be considered that they reflect the dynamic self-awareness that characterized this elite, by translating it into narrative terms. They allow us to perceive this form of awareness not as a static entity but, rather, as the result of institutional processes fine tuned from time to time to handle conflicts both within the community and with the external world, the *saeculum* – particularly with the Holy Roman Empire, which represent an essential feature of the entire medieval history of Saint Gall. This last aspect induced Erhart to define these chronicles as the expression of a 'militant historiography'<sup>4</sup> intended to guarantee the freedom of the monastery within the political

3 Erhart, 'Introduzione', vi.

4 Erhart, 'Introduzione', viii.

and institutional horizon of the Empire, which at the same time limited and strengthened this liberty.

Alongside this topic, which continues throughout all the Saint Gall chronicles, we find the scholastic and literary history of the coenoby, beginning with Ekkehard IV (who wrote around 1050).<sup>5</sup> With him, we enter fully into our topic, thanks to the wealth of information that he provides us on these aspects. In addition, in Ekkehard IV we find clearly attested the idea that the historiography of the monastery must express the self-awareness or, better, the sense of self-possession of the leadership group of the monastery.

This very select elite projected its own image into the community's cultural activities and entrusted two tasks to the narrative of the chronicles: the first and most immediate was that of describing the magnificence to which that leadership group had conducted the monastery over the centuries, aimed at legitimizing and perpetuating that hegemony. Together with this descriptive function, in the intentions of the Saint Gall monks the historiography also had a clear prescriptive and pedagogical function, which was to supply behavioural models and value systems to all those joining the monastic community. This function is also apparent in some passages of the chronicles containing discussions of a technical nature, such as those on barbarisms and on the order of words in translations from German to Latin, reported by Ekkehard with a clear didactic function.<sup>6</sup>

The protagonists of the *Casus Sancti Galli* belonged to a rather select circle of monks, almost always related to each other. They were further united by a very strong cultural strain, which they acquired through a process of 'horizontal learning' that was not strictly connected with the school but, rather, based on the personal solidarity deriving from relationships. It was not rare for them to hold positions of command in turn. Similarly, their habit to spend periods at the imperial court represented a continuous source of influence for the institutional evolution of the coenoby, preserving as much as possible its autonomy, especially from the perpetual enemies of the abbey: the bishops of Konstanz and the monks of Reichenau.

In fact, these groups of men who guided the monastery of Saint Gall were aristocrats of the highest rank, and acted in close contact with the Ottonian court and also in consideration of various relationships with the imperial family. For example, the abbot Purcard was chosen for the office of abbot because he was nephew of Otto I, despite his tender age and the fact that the *de facto* power laid in the hands of Ekkehard and of his

5 Kössinger, Krotz, and Müller, *Ekkehart IV*.

6 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 199.

immediate entourage.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that Purcard was a mere screen, but the chronicler himself recognizes the importance of the 'advice' that Ekkehard gave to Purcard. It often happened that certain figures, at least formally of secondary importance, were the real leaders during the offices of successive abbots.

To fully understand the family element, we should consider the effective functioning of the imperial institution, in which the personal element – as the studies of Gerd Althoff and of the school of Münster have clarified – was a constitutive one (nowadays we would call it constitutional), as often happens in non-state forms of power.<sup>8</sup> We find the same rationale replicated in the Saint Gall monastery, where we can reconstruct veritable genealogies of monks who were at the top of the community. For example, the aforementioned Ekkehard I brought four nephews, the sons of his brothers and sisters, into the monastery: among them were Burchard, who later became abbot, and Notker III.<sup>9</sup> This is a textbook example of how and to what degree the great abbeys were an expression of the highest aristocracy.<sup>10</sup>

This situation could lead to conflicts of values between a strongly connoted ethos such as that of the nobles and the values that the monastic community wanted to embody. We have testimony of this in a passage of Ekkehard, who tells the story of a monk, Wolo, the son of a count. He was *admodum literatus* (very literate), and the leadership of the monastery did not want to relinquish a man *talis ingenii* (of such talent), but he was also *inquietus et vagus* (volatile and unpredictable), and the dean and the famous Notker were unsuccessful in attempts (*verbis verberibusque*; with words and corporal punishment) to persuade him to obey.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting that the task of correcting Wolo was entrusted not only to a formal head of the community, the *decanus*, but also to Notker, a man of great culture described elsewhere as 'nostratium acer exactor disciplinis',<sup>12</sup> that is, inflexible in recalling the monks to discipline. Notker had overlapping responsibilities: he was both a teacher at the school and the *scriptorium* and also the guarantor of monastic discipline, especially of the younger men. Significantly, when Ekkehard speaks of the pressure exerted on the monk Wolo, he also mentions vaguely specified 'other persons' (*caeteri*), which shows that the training of monks was entrusted not only to those destined institutionally to that role

7 Burchard of Reichenau, *Gesta Wittigowonis abbatis Augiae divitis*.

8 Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*.

9 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 199.

10 Sergi, *L'aristocrazia della preghiera*.

11 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 133.

12 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 112.

but also to informally involved members of the monastic community, in an example of an informal and shared educational process.<sup>13</sup>

The chronicler states that difficulties in transforming nobles into good monks were not at all unusual. Although only free persons entered Saint Gall, the more noble ones left the straight path more often than the others ('nobiliores tamen sepius aberrabant'). These excerpts show how the monastic community attempted to 'convert' the aristocrats who joined and to modify their behaviour through an educational method that alternated exhortations with threats, slowly shaping the values and behaviour of individuals to adapt them to community life. Ekkehard continues his narration, noting that even Wolo's parents were unable to convince him to change. The narration ends with Wolo's tragic death, anticipated in the omen of the last phrase he wrote: 'Incipiebat enim mori' (close to death).<sup>14</sup> Having climbed the bell tower despite a prohibition to leave the cloister imposed by the dean, he leaped into the void, repenting only on his deathbed. The educational function of this passage of the chronicler is clear. The disobedience of the noble Wolo demonstrates that the lack of a resolution of the conflict of values between the aristocratic ethos and the monastic life leads to death.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the figure of the aforementioned Abbot Purcard, offered as an example of an aristocrat of the highest rank capable of synthesizing the two universes of value. The chronicler Ekkehard IV describes his training: 'educatur in monasterio delicate', that is, with refinement. Given his frailness, Purcard was spared the beatings of the teacher. In his case, the slow and gradual process of adaptation to monastic values worked, and, 'once he became a man', Purcard had internalized his own monastic vocation to transform 'virtues into second nature', so that he was deemed worthy of the position of abbot.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear from the Saint Gall chronicle corpus that the training of this monastic elite included strictly cultural competences, such as mastery of Latin and the ability to compose poems and letters according to the hereditary canons of classical tradition. This teaching and learning was not only hierarchical and vertical, as we will see, but could be shared and horizontal as well. In addition to these competences, the members of the monastic elite also had to be groomed, through an informal leadership training process<sup>16</sup>, to assume the roles of governance of the abbey, which would

13 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 133.

14 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 133.

15 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 207: 'Virtutes sibi ingenitas'.

16 Vanderputten, 'Communities of Practice', esp. 284-285.

inevitably entail outward projections, *in primis* towards the imperial court. The two tracks were not at all distinct, since full possession of linguistic, rhetorical, and literary abilities were indispensable to introduce oneself at court and to conduct effective actions there, in a context of considerable political and cultural conflict.

While the direction of the abbey was formally entrusted to the abbot and the dean, it is evident from the chronicles that this did not limit the importance of an informal and collective management on the part of the elite, who chose from among themselves and their relatives whom to elect to those offices. As often happened in monasteries, some monks, while never formally invested with any office, really governed the community, while various abbots succeeded one another. The case of Ekkehard is particularly significant in this regard; he was never invested with any office but actually governed the monastery in the Ottonian period.<sup>17</sup> This mixture of the formal plane with the informal also characterized the training processes of the monastic community, in which the transfer of competences and the training of the monks occurred both within formalized scholastic structures and in an informal manner through practices that can be traced back to what we will call horizontal learning.

This situation is particularly evident in the case of Saint Gall, and the chronicles give us numerous indications in this regard. The most significant examples concern those whom Ekkehard IV defines as 'the three senators of our republic' (*nostrae reipublice senatores*): Notker II called Balbulo, and Rapert and Tuotilo, active in the second half of the ninth century. Speaking of them, the chronicler transmits the memory perpetuated *a patribus* (that is, by the monks' tradition), which indicates that they were models for the community, able to exalt the monastery. Ekkehard uses the image of the Acts of the Apostles: they were, in fact, 'one heart and one soul' and were initiated by masters such as Isona for divine matters and Marcello for the seven liberal arts.<sup>18</sup> In this case we are unequivocally faced with a 'traditional' school model, in which the 'normal' imbalance between teacher and student applied. Nonetheless, along with rather clear references to forms of 'vertical learning', the chronicles of Ekkehard tell us that 'the three inseparables, with the authorization of the prior, during the night, in the interval between the Lauds, went together into the *scriptorium* and conducted *collationes*

17 In this way Ekkehard is behind all the abbots and in fact governs. See *Casus Sancti Galli*, 201-209, 219.

18 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 107.

on the Sacred Scriptures highly suitable to that hour'.<sup>19</sup> These *collationes* have a long tradition in the history of monasticism, and here they assume a particular colouring because they were not open to all the Saint Gall community but exclusively to the 'three senators', who instructed each other with an evident form of horizontal learning.

It is interesting to note, in the continuation of the *Chronicles*, the story of a certain Sindolfo, who, hating the three illustrious monks, eavesdropped on their conversations in order to report anything compromising to the bishop of Konstanz, enemy of Saint Gall. The three senators discovered him and beat him roundly. Even Ekkehard had to admit that, within the abbey, the monastic community was divided in their judgement of the episode.<sup>20</sup>

Here it is necessary to highlight an aspect of our discussion: horizontal learning, as an informal way of transmitting knowledge and the monastic discipline, could create divisions within the monastic community. Hence the condemnation in much monastic literature of the *conventicula*, autonomous cells of personal solidarity that disturbed the physiology of the monasteries and made it problematic to admit to the table of monastic values topics such as *amicitia* (friendship), which joined some monks together but at the same time separated them from the rest of the group, often creating conflicts.<sup>21</sup>

In this respect, it must be considered that the corpus of the Saint Gall chronicles gives us only a partial image of the reality of this enormous coenoby, which must have numbered several hundreds of 'normal' monks whose vicissitudes are completely neglected or else described only partially and in negative terms when they intersect with those of the leadership group to which the chroniclers belonged. For example, Otto I, eager to reform the monastery, sent his trusted monk Sandrato, whom he considered a master of monastic life, to inspect local observance at the abbey.<sup>22</sup> Local chroniclers viewed such interventions as incursions into their internal affairs. But in reality, these were totally normal interventions, through which the emperor gave substance to his function as defender of the ecclesiastic system. Such missions were entrusted to experts of monastic life who presented themselves to the communities as masters to imitate in the attempt to regain the discipline

19 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 116: 'Erat tribus illis in separabilibus consuetudo, permissio quidem prioris in intervallo laudum nocturno convenire in scriptorio collationesque tali horae aptissimas de scripturis facere'.

20 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 115-119.

21 D'Acunto, 'Amicitia monastica', 1-8.

22 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 293.

called for by the Benedictine Rule. What the chroniclers interpret as fierce resistance posed by the Saint Gall monks towards external adversaries was in reality the natural reaction of the leadership group of the abbey. This elite was fearful that the experts sent by the emperor might affect the compactness of the group in power and diminish their ability to structure the community around values and concepts conceived as a very precise religious and cultural system – fears that are quite visible in the chronicles.

In order to offer some conclusive remarks concerning the nature and perception of informal and shared learning at Saint Gall, we can return to the case of the three senators. Describing one of them, Ratpert, the chronicles refer to the crucial relationship between school and liturgical life: ‘Diligent in teaching, instead he did not dedicate much thought to the liturgical hours or the Mass, saying: “We have heard a good Mass when we teach the method of celebrating it”’.<sup>23</sup> Ekkehard also mentions informal meetings between Notker Balbulus and the younger monks, who with the permission of the prior were trained by him in the culture and discipline of the cloister, that is, outside the space reserved to formal instruction.<sup>24</sup> The same thing happened with Abbot Hartmann, who ‘loved doctrine to such a degree that for him there was little or no difference between school and the cloister’.<sup>25</sup> This interchangeability between school and cloister, between school and liturgical life, seems to be an essential characteristic of the monastery of Saint Gall and denotes a situation that is very useful for our purposes. It constitutes the presupposition of any form of horizontal learning in the broad meaning that we determined for this research.

The indications summarized here deserve further study, but I hope that what I have presented will constitute a useful element of comparison with other contemporary monastic experiences.

## About the author

**Nicolangelo D’Acunto** is currently full professor at the Catholic University of Milan and Brescia. He studied at the University of Pisa and the Scuola

23 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 115: ‘In scholis sedulus, plerumque cursus et missas negligebat: “Bonas”, inquiens, “missas audimus, cum eas agi docemus”’.

24 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 121.

25 *Casus Sancti Galli*, 139: ‘Doctrinas vero ita amabat, ut inter scholas et claustrum aut nihil aut parum intersit’.

Normale Superiore of Pisa and completed his PhD at the Catholic University of Milan. He spent research stays at the École Française and at the Istituto Storico Germanico of Rome, was Mitarbeiter of the Sonderforschungsbereich at the Technische Universität of Dresden, and was Research Fellow at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt. His research interests revolve around the institutional history of the tenth to thirteenth centuries, in particular the Ottonian age and the ecclesiastical reform of the eleventh century. He has also studied the history of Assisi and edited the letter-collection of Peter Damian.



# 11 Horizontal Learning in Medieval Italian Canonries

*Neslihan Şenocak*

## Abstract

In Italy, the organization of churches and worship evolved differently than other parts of Europe. From the sixth century onwards, Italian dioceses were further divided into districts of worship known as *plebium*, where the pastoral authority belonged to a baptismal church called *pieve* (*plebs*). Both the cathedral in the city and the *pievi* in the countryside were served by multiple clergy, called canons, who lived together in a residence (*domus* or *canonica*) attached to their church. This communal life facilitated horizontal learning among canons, while the liturgical services, and in particular the Divine Office, served as the major platform for the transmission of knowledge from experienced canons to those beginning their clerical career.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, Medieval Italy, liturgy, canons, teaching, learning

This volume on horizontal learning puts under the spotlight the kind of learning not acquired within the formal setting of a school, where knowledge is passed vertically from a professional teacher to student and where the teacher and student are not each other's peers. Horizontal learning presumes the existence of a community, and it can be defined as the knowledge passed from one peer to the other within the confines of that community. One can, of course, argue that these descriptions of vertical and horizontal learning are not mutually exclusive. The school setting itself is a kind of hybrid: there, students learn not only from a teacher but also from one another. Schools facilitate learning from peers by engendering a community, and

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by providing a common timetable and a common space, within which the act of learning takes place. To study horizontal learning among the religious we need to examine the religious communities and assess their daily organization and structure for the opportunities they present for the acquisition of peer-based learning.

While the majority of the contributions in this volume turn to the monastery as a community of horizontal learning, I will here examine Italian clerical communities. In many ways, Italy sets a unique example. Unlike the rest of Europe, care of souls in Italy before the fourteenth century was largely organized and carried out by churches served by multiple clergy rather than by parish churches serviced by a single priest. The clerical community in these collegiate churches lived in a residence attached to the church, today still called by its medieval name *canonica*, i.e., the place where canons lived, sometimes also referred to in medieval documents as *domus*. In this particular Italian context, *canon* does not mean a member of an order of canons regular but instead simply means a member of a residential community of clergy who were attached to a church, regardless of whether they followed a Rule or not. We see this kind of communal life of clergy in Italy in the cathedrals, collegiate churches, and in *pievi*. These three ecclesiastical institutions were spaces of horizontal learning on account of the fact that the clergy ate, slept, and prayed together. They followed a common timetable within a common space. The vast majority of the pastoral clergy in Italy lived in some form of collegiate church, particularly until the end of the thirteenth century. The exceptions would be clergy who served in the private churches and, later, those who served in the emerging parishes, who might live on their own next to the parish church.<sup>1</sup>

I mentioned above the two conditions necessary for people to learn from their peers: a common space, where peers frequently meet each other; and a common schedule, which allows them to see each other at designated times. To these two we can add a third: a daily cycle of communal performances or rites that provide the proper setting for the transmission of knowledge to take place, allowing peers to observe, learn from, and correct one another. The life of the vast majority of clergy in medieval Italy from the fifth century to the fourteenth was designed in such a way as to provide an optimal environment for horizontal learning to take place, with all of the three conditions mentioned above, namely, the space, time, and a regular cycle of communal rites.

1 For a more in-depth discussion and evidence on the common life of clergy in Italy see *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI e XII*, and Poggiaspalla, *La vita comune del clero*.

## *Pieve* and its Clerical Community

Among these three forms of clerical communities present in medieval Italy, *pieve* was the most common. From the seventh century onwards, all Italian dioceses were divided into smaller administrative districts, where each had one *pieve* (lat. *plebs*), that is, a head church (and at the same time a baptismal church), overseeing a number of dependent churches in its own district, its *piviere* (lat. *plebatum*).<sup>2</sup> Medieval documents refer to such dependent churches as simply *ecclesiae* or *cappellae*. *Pievi* were served by multiple clergy and offered full church services, as opposed to the dependent chapels (which later on gained their independence from the *pieve* to become the parish churches) that offered no baptism, penance, and often no regular Sunday sermon. While each diocese had only one cathedral and a few collegiate churches, it would have a high number of *pievi*. Although historians did not study *pievi* as canonries, it is nevertheless well known that the *pievi* often had an attached *canonica*, where the clergy serving at the *pieve* lived a communal life and were referred to in the medieval records as *canons*. Therefore *pieve* can be also a type of canonry, and in the Italian-speaking historiography they are referred to as *canonicas plebanales*.<sup>3</sup>

The system of *pieve*, as a setting where the pastoral clergy was trained, is special to Italy and is not observed elsewhere in Europe, where the parish churches, being at the same time baptismal churches, offered in effect all the pastoral services. It appears that at least one of the reasons, perhaps the most important one, why such a diocesan organization developed in Italy was the opportunity it provided for the young clergy to learn from the old by living in a communal setting. It is not known exactly when this system was established, but we know that it existed as early as the sixth century. In 529, the French bishops, gathered in Vaison, praised the Italian *pievi* for providing a sustainable system of clerical training:

The priests established in the parishes, according to the custom that is observed in all of Italy, accept young lectors to live with them in the same house, and there the young men are nourished spiritually, as they learn

<sup>2</sup> The fundamental literature on *pieve* is in Italian. See Forchielli, *La pieve rurale*; Violante, 'Che cos'erano le Pievi?', 429-438. The contributions in *Pievi e parrocchie in Italia nel Basso Medioevo* are particularly relevant and set the field of *pieve* studies in Italy.

<sup>3</sup> *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI et XII*, vol. 1, 508, refers to such *pieve*-canonries as *canoniche plebanali*.

to chant the psalms, the law of God and to read the Bible, and this way they become worthy successors to the priests.<sup>4</sup>

In 826, the Council of Rome, under the leadership of Pope Eugene II, ordered a cloister and refectory and other facilities necessary for the use of clergy to be built in all churches so that the clergy can learn the ecclesiastical disciplines.<sup>5</sup> In his classic book on the Italian *pieve*, Giuseppe Forchielli wrote that the *pievi* of Verona anticipated seminaries in which the minor clergy would learn everything pertinent to the religious life within the *pieve* itself, including their initiation to the holy orders. The archpriest of the *pieve* had the power to ordain them while they were still in the minor orders, and he would recommend them for ordination to the bishop once they reach the major orders.<sup>6</sup> This internal promotion also meant that the archpriest would have a special interest in getting the minor clergy in his *pieve* trained.

## The Community School

The communal life of clergy, particularly in Italy, was enthusiastically encouraged and supported by adherents to the eleventh-century reform movement. Not only would this allow the clergy to perform the night offices together but also, as mentioned in the council decrees cited above, it provided younger clergy with the opportunity to learn from older clergy. But what were the precise settings that enabled peer-based learning? Here we can talk of essentially three different settings: the daily meetings that the younger clergy had with the choirmaster; the religious rites; and the

4 'Ut omnes presbyteri qui sunt in parochiis constituti, secundum consuetudinem quam per totam Italiam teneri cognovimus, iuniores lectores, quantoscumque sine uxore habuerint, secum in domo, ubi ipsi habitare videntur, recipiant, et eos quomodo boni patres spiritualiter nutriendos, psalmos parare, divinis lectionibus insistere et in lege domini erudire contendant, et ut sibi dignos successores provideant et a domino praemia aeterna recipiant'. Quoted in *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI et XII*, 59 n. 77. The term *lector* here refers to the rank in the holy orders of clergy, and should not be confused with the later usage of the term in the scholastic milieu.

5 *Concilium Romanus (826)*, 570: 'Necessaria et enim res existit, ut iuxta ecclesiam claustra constituentur, in quibus clerici disciplinis ecclesiasticis vacant. Itaque omnibus unum sit refectorium ac dormitorium seu ceterae officinae ad usu clericorum necessariae. Ministri vero post episcopum super eos tales eligantur, quorum vita atque doctrina illos potius exornet quam dehonestet'.

6 Forchielli, *La pieve rurale*, 168.

daily chapter meetings. All three settings, I argue, presented opportunities for the clergy to learn from one another, and I will deal with them more in detail below.

When the term *cathedral school* is mentioned, we are accustomed to think of famous schools in a few select cathedrals such as Laon, Chartres, or Cologne, which were home to prolific scholars and which produced a remarkable body of theological or philosophical literature.<sup>7</sup> But alongside these was another kind of school, primarily a school of chanting, which was much more common than the cathedral schools bent on theology and philosophy. Medieval records of *pievi*, as well as of cathedrals, often mention offices of *magister scholasticus*, *magister scholarium* (sometimes *maiuscole* or *magiscolus* putting together *magister* and *scole*), *cantor*, or *primicerius*. Primicerius seems to be a teaching office common in the Early Middle Ages, a senior administrative position, but *magister scholarum* and *cantor* continue to exist into the Late Middle Ages as offices that trained the clergy.

In the major cathedrals, the schools of theology and chanting were separate. This was the case in the eleventh-century Milan cathedral, for instance. Of the two schools that the cathedral hosted, one was held in the atrium before the church, exclusively for the cathedral clergy in the minor orders (*pueri*), who trained in chanting. The other was dedicated to liberal arts, philosophy, and theology, open to pupils from outside of the cathedral also.<sup>8</sup> These two schools convened in different spaces, had different teachers assigned to them, and consequently had different curricula. We find the schools of theology in important cathedrals such as Pavia, Milan, or Vercelli. Possibly, though not necessarily, such schools of theology in the cathedrals and perhaps other important collegiate schools multiplied after the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which ordered metropolitan bishops to employ

7 On these type of cathedral schools, see Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*.

8 'Scolae vero, ubi cantus magistri ad docendos pueros cottidie conveniebant, in atrio ante ipsius ecclesiae regias duae erant, quae ab archiepiscopo, cum opus erat, mercede data numerorum, scolares a magistris emendabantur secundum quod Ezechiel propheta dicens affirmat: "Extra portam interiorem gazophilacia cantorum". In atrio interiori, quod erat a latere portae respicientis ad aquilonem, philosophorum vero scolae diversarum artium peritiam habentium, ubi urbani et extranei clerici philosophiae doctrinis studiose imbuebantur, erant duae, in quibus ut clerici qui exercitiis tradebantur curiose docerentur, longa temporum ordinatione archiepiscoporum antecedentium, stipendiis a camerariis illius archiepiscopi, qui tunc in tempore erat, annuatim earum magistris honorifice donatis, ipse praesul multoties adveniens, saeculi sollicitudines a quibus gravabatur, a se depellebat, ac magistros ac scolares in studiis adhortans, in palatiis sese demum recipiebat Ambrosianicis'. *Beroldus: Sive, Ecclesiae Ambrosianae Mediolanensis kalendarium et ordines, saec. XII; ex Codice Ambrosiano*, 155.

a theologian to teach theology in the metropolitan churches. The school meant in this decree is this type of school of higher theological learning, not the schools of chant, which, we can assume, existed in the *pievi* and other great churches over all of Italy prior to the thirteenth century. In fact, Italy seems to have a unique position in that the cathedral schools, and probably also schools of *pievi*, educated lay people even when they were not destined for clerical profession. And this fact greatly contributed to the higher rate of literacy found among the laity of the Italian cities compared to literacy elsewhere in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

*Scholares* or *schola cantorum* literally meant a group or community of chanters, which would have mostly consisted of the clergy in the minor orders, sometimes including also young men or boys who were not clergy. The job of teaching the chant could belong to more than one office. In the cathedral of Padua, the *magister scholarium* and *cantor* were two distinct offices, and both were involved in teaching the younger clergy. Young clerics would learn to chant the canonical hours, i.e., the Divine Office, which essentially consisted of chanting the entire Psalter over a week. This should not be thought akin to a pure music class; rather, this teaching must have included instruction in basic Latin grammar and essentially in reading, even if not so much writing. After all, a reading knowledge of Latin was also necessary in order to use liturgical books such as penitentials, missals, prayer books, etc. that were used to perform other divine services; and reading also was a way of aiding and reinforcing the memory. It is well known that the Psalter was used throughout the Middle Ages as a book to teach elementary Latin.<sup>10</sup>

The reason why the *pievi* in Italy were particularly keen to establish such schools also had to do with clerical ordination. The head of a *pieve*, the archpriest, usually was in charge of ordaining the clergy in the minor orders, so he had to see that they received the necessary training to make it to the next level of ordination. The link between the archpriest's right to ordain his clergy and the clerical education offered in a *pieve* goes back to the Early Middle Ages. In 796, the bishop Giso of Modena was advising the

9 On the subject of the education of laity in the schools of clergy see Black, *Education and Society*, 173-75.

10 'Ma sarebbe stato molto più facile imparare a memoria, mettiamo, l'intero salterio, se nello stesso tempo si fosse imparato a leggere; e molti documenti confermano che si adoperava il salterio come testo elementare di lettura nel Medioevo.' Bullough, 'Le scuole cattedrali', 116. On Divine Office as a means of teaching music and Latin reading to child oblates in the monasteries, see Boynton, 'Medieval Musical Education', 52-53. Boynton here focuses on the liturgical texts. For the use of psalms in moral instruction, see Mayeski, 'A Mother's Psalter', 139-51.

archpriest of a *pieve* that he should be diligent in keeping the community together and should teach boys (*in schola habenda et puerorum educandis*) so that they receive the learning necessary for clerical ordination. We have bishops issuing similar counsels to other archpriests of *pievi* in the records of Modena, from 908 and 882.<sup>11</sup> As for the frequency with which these classes of chanting were held, it is likely that the class met every day, when a *magister scholarium* was present in a clerical community. In the thirteenth-century Lucca cathedral, the *magister scholarum* was exempt from singing the Lauds 'on account of the classes which he must hold during the day'.<sup>12</sup> In the smaller *pievi* that did not have a designated teacher, presumably one of the elder and more experienced members of the community took on the job of teaching the younger clergy. In such cases, the teaching might have been done with lesser frequency.

At this point, it might be pertinent to address the question of whether this kind of learning can be legitimately considered 'horizontal'. The justifiable objections would be that, after all, here we have a group of students learning from a teacher, not from each other, and the learning takes place in regulated time and space rather than casually. However, the crucial point is that this is still a single clerical community: the teaching is done through regulations established internally. The cathedral or *pieve* school, whether it be of chanting or of theology, is an institution established by the community and for the community. The teacher and the student belong to the same community, and the learning takes place within the same space. Had the young clergy left the boundaries of the canonry and gone to another institution to be trained there by a teacher who is not a member of his own community – as was the case with university learning, for example – then we could talk of vertical learning. Here, however, there is enough justification to consider a cathedral or *pieve* school an institution of peer or horizontal learning.

## Liturgy as Education

The second element in the clerical communities that was conducive to horizontal learning is the liturgy. It has been argued that the Gregorian reformers saw liturgy as a tool to educate the laity in doctrinal matters.<sup>13</sup> However, there has not been sufficient consideration of the educational

11 Bullough, 'Le scuole cattedrali', 119-120.

12 Brand, 'Liturgical Ceremony', 166.

13 Cattaneo, 'La liturgia nella riforma gregoriana', 182.

function of liturgy for the clergy.<sup>14</sup> After all, everything that can be said about how laity learned about the Christian doctrine from the liturgy is true for the clergy as well. As Christianity was built around the life of a single man, Jesus of Nazareth, who was believed to be God at the same time, sanctity could only be achieved by approximation to Christ, his life, and his deeds. The early Christian saints were those who came closest to Christ in their lives and deeds (to his martyrdom especially), and the rites of sanctification for the faithful were essentially re-enactments of key episodes from Christ's life: baptism was a re-enactment of Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist; the Eucharist of his sharing of bread and wine in his last supper with the apostles; and Penance of his suffering on the cross. All these rites developed over a long period of time through the contributions of many prominent monks, bishops, canons, and popes, and all are still evolving to this day.<sup>15</sup>

Christian religious instruction thus was woven into Church rites. Readings from the Gospel, the Epistles, hymns, the lives of saints, and homilies written by the Church Fathers and preached by the priests – all serving to instruct people both in the basic tenets of the Christian faith and in the vices and virtues – were carefully blended into all Church rites. As the twelfth-century Italian theologian Prepositinus of Cremona wrote, the psalms signified good works, while readings during the Mass and Office constituted religious teaching.<sup>16</sup> Such instruction was not only a means of educating the lay people. The clergy too, as administrators and participants of these rites, received the same instruction and sanctification for salvation; rites were thus as much a means to educate clergy as they were a means to educate laity.

The liturgy observed in a *pieve* or cathedral was pretty comprehensive. It involved the performance of the Christian rites, including the Divine Office; all the sacraments and blessings given to the laity; and all of these were celebrated by more than one cleric. This is a very important point that distinguishes the canonry from the monastery with regard to horizontal

14 For the liturgy as education for laity, see Vitz, 'Liturgy as Education', 20-34; Boynton, 'Training for the Liturgy', 7-20, notably pointed to the importance of liturgy in the doctrinal education of younger monks.

15 For the development of liturgy in the early medieval period, see Hen and Meens, *The Bobbio Missal*, and Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy*. Mons. Enrico Cattaneo made important contributions to the history of liturgy and clerical communities in Italy. See for example his 'La vita comune dei chierici e la liturgia', 241-272.

16 Praepositinus of Cremona, *Tractatus de officiis*, 229: 'Post psalmos, per quos bona opera intelliguntur, sequitur Lectio, per quam fidei doctrina religionis significatur'.

learning. The difference lies precisely in the fact that the clergy in the canonries participate in a number of pastoral services – such as the scrutini- ties, exorcism, baptism, and last rites – which the monks, not having the cure, do not customarily perform, although there are exceptions and some monasteries did provide care of souls. These pastoral services contain a myriad of theological information; therefore, one might argue that canons and other clergy are exposed through the liturgy of pastoral care to more theology than the monks are in their daily cycle of liturgy.

Among all the liturgical functions, the Divine Office was probably the richest source of learning for the clergy. In any cathedral ordinal, by far the greatest space was accorded to the Divine Office, which was, like the Mass, conducted every day but (unlike the Mass) eight times a day. While there is a fairly large scholarly literature on each of the sacraments of Mass, baptism, marriage, and penance, the Divine Office has been relatively little studied by historians. In medieval historiography, the Office has not been associated with the care of souls, but rather studied within the domain of liturgy.<sup>17</sup> The late James W. McKinnon, a scholar of liturgy, wrote that ‘it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Western medieval liturgy consisted in the public singing of the Psalter’.<sup>18</sup> Also known as the ‘canonical hours’, ‘Hours’, or ‘the Office’, the Divine Office essentially is a daily cycle of prayer that involves eight periods of chanting such that all 150 psalms are sung within the course of a week.<sup>19</sup>

The Office was not just yet another Church service; it was the most comprehensive pastoral service offered in a church. It was doctrinal and moral instruction, prayer, praise of God, blessing, and confirmation of faith all bundled into one, and that explains the tremendous importance attached to the chanting of the hours evident both in synodal decrees and in records of episcopal visitations to canonries, where the first question was always whether the canons held all the canonical hours and whether there were any canons negligent of or absent from chanting.<sup>20</sup> Despite the

17 One of the few essential contributions dedicated to the subject of the Divine Office, Steiner, Baltzer, and Fassler, *The Divine Office*, contains no article exploring the relevance of the Divine Office to the care of souls.

18 McKinnon, ‘The Book of Psalms’, 43.

19 Collamore, ‘Prelude’, 3-11.

20 In the 1276 visitation of the Piacenza cathedral, the denial of distributions to canons who neglect Lauds and Vespers was the first item. Piacenza, *Bibl. Cap.* 27, f. 50: ‘In primis circa officium divinum ut negligentes et desides excitentur ad bonum, ordinat et statuit quod qui non fuerit in matutinis ante [...] primi psalmi et ad benedictus in fine amittat distributionem illius matutini!’.

obvious importance attached to the Divine Office in medieval records, we, historians, know little about its didactic function. Therefore, before setting out to discuss the various elements of the Divine Office, it might be expedient to give first an example from an ordinal describing the office of a canonical hour. The following is from the Siena cathedral ordinal of 1139 and is a particularly incisive account of the entire *ordo* of Prime, the first canonical hour of the day. The section is entitled ‘Concerning the Meaning and the Mystery of All That Is Said in Prime’.

Prime is celebrated because with the sun in the East, we have to pray for the sun to rise in justice to us, so that, walking in its light, we avoid the darkness of sinners and because the ‘Landowner went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard’ [Matt. 20:1]. And note that in all hours this versicle, ‘O God, come to my assistance’ [Psalm 70], is said first and is taken from the Old Testament. The Ark was surrounded every day by enemies and while it was lifted and carried, Moses was saying ‘Arise, O Lord, and all your enemies will scatter and those who hate you will flee before your face’ [Book of Numbers 10:35; see Psalm 67:2]. Just as the Church endures inside and outside, because we beg God for his help saying ‘O God, come to my assistance’, similarly in all hours, we say first the ‘Glory to God’ [a popular hymn: *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritu Sancto* ...] in order to glorify the Trinity: without it we can do nothing. Five psalms follow to strengthen divinely the five senses of the labourer during the day and the reason why we say three psalms after three *Glory to Gods* is so that the Trinity is glorified in our works and because without faith the worker cultivates in vain, and without faith, the pastor guards the flock in vain. Here the creed (*symbolum*) is uttered: that is to say, ‘Whoever wishes’,<sup>21</sup> which Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, when asked by the emperor Theodosius, decreed to eradicate the faithlessness of the heretics and to disseminate the Catholic faith. That is why it is said in Prime, because faith brings forth the beginning of our salvation. And note that in ‘Whoever wishes’, the people are taught their faith by their pastors. In ‘I believe in One God’<sup>22</sup> everyone confesses their faith like a learned person. Thence, in the

21 This is also known as the Athanasian Creed, *Quicumque vult saluus esse*: ‘Whosoever wishes to be saved, before all things it is necessary that he/she holds the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence’.

22 The Nicene Creed: ‘I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible’.

reading (*capitulum*), the pastor encourages his sheep and the landowner encourages his labourer so that they do not neglect the work: 'Act strongly' etc. [Acts of the Apostles 2:21]. Then the eager ones say 'Christ, the Son of God. Arise O Lord' [responsory], which really means, make us arise. The prayers that follow are the 'Kyrie eleison', which is said for three reasons: to stop superfluous thoughts, to ask mercy for the sheep who stray and weary labourers, and to postulate help against temptations so that we can invoke securely the Father in the Sunday prayer. 'I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost' [Psalm 118] signifies the sheep that are gone astray and that faith is the road to come back. Then the Apostles' Creed is uttered: 'I believe in God the Father'. After that the Labourer speaks for himself, for the pastors, for the kings, for the people, for the alive and the dead, and 'Have mercy on me O Lord' [Psalm 51] for the penitents and the litanies and prayers for the audience are multiplied, because through such fruits we are reconciled to God. And note that the priest first prays in prostration, and then getting up, he prays standing, which signifies Christ, who first prayed for the sinners living on earth, and then, after His resurrection and ascent to the Heavens, intercedes for us. And just as Christ used to greet his disciples saying 'Peace to you', so does the priest offer the greeting of the prayer. 'Let us bless the Lord' signifies blessing, by which Christ blessed his disciples after resurrection, and then the disciples give their thanks and the final praise, which will be in glory with the deeds of thanks, when Christ after his intercession will give his believers eternal salvation.<sup>23</sup>

23 'De Ratione et Mysterio illorum qua dicuntur ad Primam. Prima ideo celebratur, quia sole oriente postulare debemus solem justitiae nobis oriri, ut in lumine ejus ambulantes, peccatorum tenebras evadamus, et quia "Pater familias primo mane exiit conducere operarios in vineam suam": et nota quod in omnibus horis hic Versiculus "Deus in adjutorium meum intende" praemittitur, et est sumptus a veteri Testamento. Arca enim cotidie circumdabatur ab inimicis, et dum elevabatur, et portabatur, Moyses dicebat "Surge Domine, et dissipentur omnes inimici tui, et fugiant qui oderunt te, a facie tua". Sic et Ecclesia patitur intus, et extra, ideoque Divinum imploramus auxilium dicentes "Deus in adjutorium". Similiter in omnibus horis praemittitur "Gloria Patri", ut glorificemus Trinitatem, sine qua nihil possumus. Quinque Psalmi sequuntur ut quinque sensus Operariorum per diem divinitus muniant, vel tres Psalmi sub tribus "Gloriis" sunt comprehensi, eo quod Trinitas in nostris operibus glorificatur, et quia Operarius sine fide frustra vineam colit, et pastor sine fide frustra ovile custodit. Subditur Symbolum fidei: scilicet "Quicumque vult", quod Athanasius Episcopus Alexandrinus, rogatu Theodosii Imperatoris, ad eradicandam haereticorum, perfidiam, et divulgandam fidem catholicam edidit, quod ideo in Prima dicitur, quia fides principium nostrae salutis extitit: et nota quod in "Quicumque vult", populus de fide a pastoribus docetur. In "Credo in unum", fidem suam quasi doctus quilibet confitetur. Deinde in Capitulo Pastor oves, et Pater familias Operarios, ne in labore deficiant, consolatur: "Viriliter agite, quia omnis quicumque invocaverit et cetera". Unde alacres dicunt "Christe Fili Dei. Exurge Christe", idest fac nos exurgere. Preces, quae sequuntur, scilicet

This Sienese office of Prime thus starts with a passage from the Gospel to create a dramatic setting with the biblical image of labourers going out to the Lord's vineyard with the first light of the day, i.e., at the time of Prime. Prayers here implore God's help during the day as a means of spiritual fortification and blessing of the body. There follows praise to God in the form of *Glory* and the reading of a passage from the Gospels; twice there is confirmation of faith through the utterance of the Athanasian Creed and the Apostles' Creed; and finally there is penance as the penitential psalm is uttered.

### The Ordinal as a Source for Learning (*liber ordinarius*)

What makes the experience of liturgy even more educational for the clergy in the cathedrals and *pievi* is the presence of a particular liturgical book known as the ordinal or *liber ordinarius*. An ordinal contains the liturgy of the Mass, baptism, penance, and extreme unction, leaving out confirmation and ordination, which could only be celebrated by a bishop and therefore would belong to a pontifical. Apart from the *ordo* of sacraments, an ordinal also offers numerous blessings, prayers for various occasions, the *ordo* of burial, as well as the descriptions of offices within the collegiate church. In addition to containing the entire liturgy of the cathedral throughout the year, including the sacraments, the cathedral ordinals list the duties of the office of priests, deacons, sub-deacons, etc. In the thirteenth-century ordinal of Padua cathedral, for example, we find the job descriptions of the clergy of all ranks and of all major offices such as priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, cantor, *magister scholarium*, custodian, etc.<sup>24</sup> In

"Kyrie eleison", propter tria dicuntur, ad resecandas superfluas cogitationes, ad impetrandam misericordiam propter oves errantes, et operarios fatiscientes, et ad postulandum auxilium contra tentationes, ut possimus in Dominica oratione Patrem securius invocare. Per "Erravi sicut ovis, quae periiit", patet quod de ovibus errantibus agitur, et quia via redeundi est fides. Symbolum Apostolorum subditur scilicet; "Credo in Deum Patrem", postea pro se ipso loquitur Operarius, pro Pastoribus, pro Regibus, pro Populo, pro Vivis et Defunctis, et "Miserere mei Deus", pro poenitentibus, et aliquotiens Psalmi Poenitentiales et Litaniae, et Orationes pro Astantibus multiplicantur, quia per tales fructus Deo reconciliamur et nota quod Sacerdos prius prostratus orans, et postea furgens, et stando orans, Christum significat, qui prius conversatus in terris pro Peccatoribus oravit, et post resurgens, et ascendens in Coelum, interpellat pro nobis et sicut Christus discipulos salutavit dicens "Pax vobis", sic Presbyter salutationem Orationi praemittit. "Benedicamus Domino", significat benedictionem, qua Christus discipulis benedixit post Resurrectionem, unde ipsi gratias egerunt, vel finalem laudem, quae erit in gloria cum gratiarum actione, quando Christus post suam interpellationem Fidelibus salutem donabit aeternam'. *Ordo ecclesiae Senensis*, 436-37.

<sup>24</sup> *Liber ordinarius*, 6-8.

order to rise up the clerical ladder and be ordained to the next level, every cleric had to learn the duties of the higher orders, and that was only possible through observing the clergy belonging to these higher orders to see how they execute their job.

*Liber ordinarius* can also be thought of as a principal reference book for liturgy. Almost all Italian cathedral ordinals I have examined not only contain the rites but also – as seen in the example above – take the trouble to explain the meaning of every psalm, every hymn, and every prayer, along with their allegorical significance, as well as why a particular psalm is chanted in a particular hour of the Office or on a particular feast day. This amounts to a tremendous education in Church history and theology. An ordinal is a commentary not just on the psalms but also on the prayers, antiphons, and litanies, through which the reader is taught about Christ's life and his teaching and also about all other parts of the Bible (as in the reference to Moses and the ark in the example above). A cleric who had a sufficient degree of Latin could receive a solid and well-rounded theological education by just sitting down and reading a *liber ordinarius*. Even if a canon's knowledge of Latin was not sufficient to allow him to read and understand the ordinal, he would still have access to the content of this book through those canons who could read or more obviously the choirmaster or *magister scholarium* mentioned above.<sup>25</sup> That is why the medieval canons of Piacenza called their ordinal *liber magistri*, as it was believed to be a book used primarily by the master of students.<sup>26</sup> For the master of students and the chanter, the ordinal would serve as a textbook for teaching the text of the Divine Office and other rites to the canons, but while teaching they would also be able to explain the meaning of each element of liturgy in its own setting. The liturgy itself, performed with and within a community, would serve at the same time as training in the Christian doctrine. Thus wrote the ninth-century liturgist-canon Amalar of Metz, who cites Saint Jerome's words to point to the opportunities for learning in the psalms, hymns, and canticles:

'We learn most fully in the Psalter', he [Saint Jerome] says, 'about the difference between a psalm, a hymn and a canticle [...] hymns are those things that preach the strength and majesty of God and forever marvel

<sup>25</sup> *Liber ordinarius*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> The codex 65 of the Biblioteca Capitolare of Piacenza (twelfth century) is one of the finest examples of this genre, a towering volume of 450 folios with dimensions of 485x327 mm. (*Liber magistri*, ed. Racine, and *Liber magistri*, ed. Møller Jensen).

over his favors and deeds [...] Properly, though, psalms have a moral subject, to let us know what we should do and what we should avoid with the instrument of our body. And he who investigates higher things and sets forth as a subtle examiner the concord, order and harmony of the world and all creation – he sings a spiritual canticle'.<sup>27</sup>

The Office, where all the clergy chanted together seven or eight times a day, served as the major venue for the minor clergy to practise what they have learned during the day. This was the time when the younger canons observed the older ones, and the old ones had a chance to observe the young ones and correct their mistakes. In fact, we learn that sometimes this correcting went to extremes. During the 1346 visitation of the cathedral of Udine, some canons revealed the disorderly manner in which the Divine Office was sung. They complained that some of the canons did not show up and that some chatted during the Office. Some older clergy were clamorous and were scolding the younger canons, telling them off during the Office for having chanted incorrectly, sometimes saying things like 'for devil's sake' and thus scandalizing both the clergy and the laity present.<sup>28</sup>

The Office was not only a tool for instruction but also a communal rite that allowed each and every cleric to act as pastor to one another. The pastorage of the Divine Office, the office itself acting as a pastor through the chanting, is explained lucidly by Amalar of Metz with reference to Prime:

For just as sheep (who are kept at night in the fold, but who leave the village after their early-morning shelter to pasture in the wide fields) must have a shepherd to defend them from ravaging wolves, so must we, upon rising in the morning at the Lord's command, also have a pastor and a teacher to introduce us to his commandments and defend us from the wolves that we read about in the Gospel according to John: 'The wolf catches and scatters the sheep' [John 10:12].<sup>29</sup>

27 Amalar of Metz, *Liber officialis*, vol. 2, 329.

28 'Die V dicti mensis decembris in dicto loco. Dominus Nicolaus de Pola, canonicus dicte ecclesie, adiuratus ut supra, super primo capitulo, eo sibi lecto, respondit quod in officio divino non novit aliud defectum nisi quod plures clerici, dum sunt in choro frequenter loquuntur et impediunt officium divinum. Item sunt aliqui qui vociferant in choro, dicentes alicui clerici: facias vel non facias sic et sic, in nomine diaboli, ex quo verbo scandalizantur clerici et layci'. *Visitatio Ecclesie Capituli Utinensis (1346)*, 49.

29 Amalar of Metz, *Liber officialis*, vol. 2, 307. Throughout the section on the Divine Office, Amalar represents the act of chanting as a pastoral act. In his discussion of why Prime lacks a Gospel reading, he similarly says that 'it was not passed over in vain; rather, since the pastor at

The prayers at each of the hours were to act as a kind of spiritual shield for those who uttered them, a shield that would only be effective until the next hour of chant.<sup>30</sup> The office of Prime cited above includes a reaffirmation of faith in the form of the Athanasian creed; it implores God's help and it offers the best-known penitential Psalm 51, 'O God, have mercy on me', as a way of starting the day with strong faith and in a state of grace. Seen in this light, one can understand better the insistence of many Church reformers, who strove to keep the clergy pure and devout, on the chanting of all canonical hours.

As mentioned above, in addition to the Divine Office, many other pastorally oriented church services provided a venue for peer-based learning. Among the important ones are the Mass, baptism, and penance in particular. The Italian scholar Ferminio Poggiaspalla argued that the rite of baptism – which, in Italy, until the Late Middle Ages, included the rite of scrutinies and exorcism – provided training for the clergy as well for the laity.<sup>31</sup> In order to understand how and why this particular rite served especially as a framework for the clergy, one has to look at how it was performed. In the Italian rite of baptism, observed in many *pievi* and cathedrals, the catechumens – that is, the infants to be baptized – would come to the Church once a week for the three weeks before Easter Saturday, as they would go through the scrutinies and exorcism before the actual baptism. During the rite of scrutinies, the priest would ask those to be baptized what they seek (they would answer the grace of God) and what the grace of God means (remission of sins and the eternal life). Since the catechumens themselves were infants or toddlers, the answers to these questions would be given by the acolyte accompanying the priest on behalf of the faithful. In fact, the rite would have continued after the catechumens left, as the priest and the assisting clergy prayed together. Similarly, the minor clergy would be present with the priest during the rite of public penance, and of burial, after the corpse of the deceased was brought into the Church. All these rites contain a substantial amount of theological premises, attributes of God, and readings from the Bible, particularly the book of Job.<sup>32</sup>

that point wishes to suggest the figure of a teacher, he omits his teaching to teach that every teacher should first work and then teach'. Amalar of Metz, *Liber officialis*, vol. 2, 335.

<sup>30</sup> Amalar of Metz, *Liber officialis*, vol. 2, 327. 'None keeps us through the ninth hour and the tenth and the eleventh'. Amalar of Metz, *Liber officialis*, vol. 2, 353. See also the *Regula Sancti Chrodegangi*, chap. 129, 157: 'That is why it is appropriate for us to celebrate the Divine Office at these hours, with psalmody and prayer, so that by doing so we may be prepared and free from anxiety, whether we die, or whether the Lord comes'.

<sup>31</sup> Poggiaspalla, *La vita comune del clero*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Lambot, *North Italian Services of the Eleventh Century*.

The particular nature of the canonry as a pastoral institution made peer-based learning all the more crucial. A clerical career in a canonry meant that the clergy would start with the first of the holy orders and then rise up to the order of priesthood, and every canonical order in a clerical community had distinct duties and responsibilities. The community as a whole was responsible for training the minor clergy, not just in chanting the psalter but in every other type of pastoral duty that the clergy in various ranks has to perform. Clergy had to learn how to baptize, how to confess, how to give last rites, etc.

### Chapter as an Institution of Horizontal Learning

The third venue for peers to learn from each other was the daily chapter meetings in the canonries. The rules written for canons, such as that by Bishop Chrodegang of Metz (d. 766) and the early ninth-century *Institutio canonicorum Aquisgranensis*, called for the clergy to convene daily. This is how Chrodegang's rule introduced the obligation:

It is required that all the canonical clergy come to Chapter, where they will hear the Word of God, and this little rule of ours, which we have written with God's help for their own benefit and for their souls' salvation. Every day they should read one chapter, except on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays when they shall read at Chapter some tracts and other homilies or whatever may edify the hearers. We have said that all should come to Chapter every day, both that the soul may hear the Word of God, and also that the bishop, archdeacon or whoever is in charge may give whatever commands he has to command, may correct what needs correction and ensure that what needs to be done is done.<sup>33</sup>

As such, the chapter meetings present ample opportunities for the transfer of religious and moral knowledge among members of the community. There are the readings from the Bible, readings from the Rule that the community follows, there are homilies, and there is also correction of community members by the seniors or leaders of the community. Unfortunately, we do not have the records of these meetings, but it is not hard to imagine that the members of the chapters learned from everything talked about in the chapter and that it served as a moral and religious guide to the community

33 Chrodegang of Metz, *Regula*, 60.

as a whole. The public confession of venial sins during the chapter meetings was certainly a moral education, and hearing what penance the archpriest or the *prepositus* (i.e., the head of the community) asked from the sinner provides experience in hearing private confessions.

## Conclusion

In the Italian canonries, the cathedral, and the *pieve*, we find an institution that, from its very origins onward, appreciated and utilized horizontal learning as an effective way to train the clergy in the absence of seminaries and *ad hoc* schools. The major means of dissemination of knowledge was through the liturgy of the pastoral services, as all teaching was directed to making the clergy effective pastors. This system only starts to break down in the thirteenth century, when the clergy in many canonries no longer lived together and when the theological training was outsourced to the emerging schools of mendicants and universities. The outcry of the Parisian theologians at the end of the twelfth century concerning the lack of theology schools and their denunciation of ignorant clergy has to be taken with a grain of salt considering the community learning in the Italian cathedrals and *pievi*.

## About the author

**Neslihan Şenocak** is an associate professor of history at Columbia University. She specializes in medieval religious, intellectual, social and political history. Her research and teaching focuses on popular religion, political theology, criminal justice, medieval Italian communes and in particular the way the religious intellectuals influenced theopolitical institutions of the medieval Latin Christendom. She was a fellow of I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (2013-14) and of National Humanities Center (2015-2016). She is the author of *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order 1209-1310*, published in 2012 by the Cornell University Press. At present she is co-editing two volumes: *Italy and Christianity, 1050-1300* with Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, to be published by Cornell UP, and *Teacher as Shepherd: Theology and Care of Souls at the time Lateran IV (1215)* with Clare Monagle, to be published by Brepols. She is also writing her second monograph, *Care of Souls in Medieval Italy, 600-1300*, to be published with Cornell UP. She has published several articles on the

medieval Franciscans, in particular their learning, books and poverty, and on the religious confraternities in medieval Italy.

## 12 Concluding Observations

### Horizontal, Hierarchical, and Community-Oriented Learning in a Wider Perspective

*Sita Steckel*

#### Abstract

These concluding observations aim to discuss the potential of the horizontal learning approach, connect it to extant research paradigms, and set out some further questions prompted by this juxtaposition. After showing how the existence of 'horizontal' bonds is approached differently by different contributors to this volume, the text illustrates how the findings of this volume complement and combine with recent approaches to the history of learning, especially as it is currently transforming into a 'cultural history of knowledge' or an 'anthropology of knowledge transmission' during the pre-modern period. It concludes with three hypotheses concerning the growing role of horizontal learning during the High Middle Ages, which future research may want to develop or contradict.

**Keywords:** Medieval/Middle Ages, knowledge, community, historiography, teaching, learning

### Horizontal Learning: What Have We Learned?

With their scrutiny of the phenomenon of horizontal learning, the conceptual observations and case studies offered in the present volume pursue a 'road not taken'.<sup>1</sup> In showing the potential of this avenue of investigation, the contributions assembled in this volume put horizontal learning on

I would like to thank the editors of this volume, in particular Micol Long, for finding a way to allow me to participate in this project. Though the following concluding observations could not be based on first-hand experience of the conference, they very much retain the character

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the agenda, and at the same time remind us that many social contexts – hierarchical and horizontal, formal and informal – should be routinely investigated in studies dealing with practices of knowledge transmission. While the investigation of horizontal learning diverges in interesting ways from typical approaches within the history of learning, we also encounter intriguing convergences. In my concluding observations, I will therefore discuss the potential of the horizontal learning approach, connect it to extant research paradigms, and set out some further questions prompted by this juxtaposition. Invariably selective and coloured by personal research interests, my comments are formulated from the point of view of a scholar invested in a cultural history of medieval knowledge transmission, including but also looking beyond religious communities and horizontal learning.

As a starting point for a short summary, it may briefly be underlined how remarkable the documentable prominence of horizontal learning in religious communities is – for, of course, strictly speaking, there could be no equals in the monastery. As we know, the *Rule of Saint Benedict* organizes the monastic community according to a continuous *ordo* established by seniority and merit: ‘he who enters in the second hour of the day shall know that he will be junior to the person who entered in the first hour, whatever his age or dignity’.<sup>2</sup> As Cédric Giraud remarks at the outset of his discussion of horizontal relationships, concepts of religious formation developed within religious communities were indeed highly ‘attentive to the hierarchy of merits and to the theme of spiritual birth’.<sup>3</sup> We are thus confronted with a significant conceptual overlap and a certain tension between hierarchical and horizontal relationships.

It is therefore interesting to see that the classification of ‘horizontal’ bonds is approached differently by different contributors to this volume – a divergence at least somewhat indebted to the high degree of ambiguity and flexibility in the sources. First, there are horizontal relationships among individuals within religious communities that can roughly be considered ‘peers’. Second, there are horizontal relationships conducted in informal settings, mainly between religious houses, where no clear hierarchy could be established. Third, there are forms of horizontal learning within community settings in which existing hierarchies were pushed into the background.

of conference-style concluding thoughts in their essayistic nature and less than complete bibliography. Further thanks go to Christina Lutter.

1 See Giraud, ‘*Ut Fiat Aequalitas*’, p. 65 (in this volume).

2 *Regula Benedicti*, ed. de Vogüé and Neufville, chap. 63, 644–646: ‘qui secunda hora diei uenerit in monasterio iuniorum se nouerit illius esse, qui prima hora uenit diei, cuiuslibet aetatis aut dignitatis sit [...]’.

3 Giraud, ‘*Ut Fiat Aequalitas*’, p. 65 (in this volume).

## Knowledge Exchange Among Peers

The first and most narrow understanding of ‘horizontal learning’ – as knowledge exchange among peers within a community – is highly intriguing and, as the editors of the volume rightly assert, not as well researched as it should be. The contributions focusing on this type of horizontal learning also provide us with some indication of the underlying reasons: tensions exerted by the hierarchical bonds within religious communities appear significant, and within the convent, ‘peers’ are hard to spot. The contributions nevertheless manage to find them: Micol Long’s introductory chapter rightly draws our attention towards the two concepts of co-discipleship and of friendship within religious communities. She also, importantly, highlights instances of practical co-operation among roughly equal-ranking inmates of religious communities, such as scribal cooperation. With a discussion of Honorius Augustodunensis’s *Gemma spiritualis*, Karl Patrick Kinsella’s chapter actually contributes the example of a text written for the author’s *condiscipuli* but presented in the format of a didactic dialogue, a format that disguises its intrinsically horizontal structure. Nicolangelo D’Acunto discusses the complex patterns of scholarly alliances and contested hierarchies visible in the exceptionally well-documented case of the monastery of Saint Gall. He shows that alliances such as the intellectual companionship among Notker, Tuotilo, and Ratpert in ninth-century Saint Gall could draw enmity and, consequently, criticism that described such groups as illegitimate *conventicula*. Cédric Giraud’s contribution finally engages with the emerging literature of spiritual self-formation and thus with medieval theoretical discourses on the subject, highlighting that forms of equality and of friendship imagined as horizontal nevertheless became more prominent during the high medieval period.

## Learning in Informal Situations

A second group of contributions offers a slightly different take on horizontal learning by focusing on situations of knowledge exchange taking place outside of and between religious houses. The paradigm for this, discussed by Babette Hellemans and C. Stephen Jaeger, is knowledge exchange involving both male and female religious, who necessarily communicated across the boundaries and, hence, across the hierarchies of the respective all-male and all-female religious communities to which they belonged. Interestingly, these approaches define the ‘horizontal’ more generously and include nominally hierarchical constellations. Hermann of Reichenau, discussed

by Jaeger, was actually called a master, and classing this relationship as horizontal might seem problematic at first glance. But it actually has considerable merit: when a respected scholar like Hermann of Reichenau engaged in exchanges with nuns of a neighbouring convent, there was no institutional relationship between them that established any sort of sanctionable hierarchy, but even so, both sides chose to label this as a master-student relationship with all the attendant social gestures and literary tropes. Hermann may thus have been the *scholasticus* set over the pupils at Reichenau, but the magisterial authority ascribed to him by the nuns of a different community was socially negotiated, not institutionally defined. The nuns accorded him high status and authority based on his intellectual qualities, his social and institutional rank, and his gender.<sup>4</sup> But a relationship to such a distant interlocutor necessarily remained negotiable, as did the respective authority one abbot or abbess might accord another. Babette Hellemans's contribution shows us the rather protean nature of such informal bonds, especially where negotiated in the genre of letters. As the two monastic leaders Peter the Venerable and Heloise corresponded, they engaged in a round of negotiation of their mutual rank and intimacy by merging the terminology of friendship with overlapping references to their spiritual and institutional relationships, referring to each other, for example, as *magistra* and sister, or, correspondingly, as servant, father, lord, and brother.<sup>5</sup> Micol Long and Marc Saurette also discuss instances of such negotiated multi-level relationships, in which individuals encouraged interlocutors to understand their relationships as horizontal in spite of an existing hierarchy, at times as a gesture of humility and esteem for the other and at times as a gesture of intimacy and friendship.

### Learning Within the Community

Several case studies discussed in the present volume finally apply the concept of horizontal learning in a broader sense. They point to situations in which groups, or shifting constellations of individuals within a group setting, facilitated the acquisition of knowledge. While this form of learning remains close to basic patterns of group socialization in everyday interaction, highly specific types of knowledge transmission could be embedded in it. In spite of its focus on monastic silence, Saurette's contribution, for example, takes

4 On such practices in this milieu, see Lutter, '*Mulieres fortes*'.

5 See Hellemans, 'Heloise's Echo', at n. 28 (in this volume).

us on an intriguing tour of the monastery as a ‘didactic space’ for different types of spoken formative exchanges and narrations that took place in both formal (chapter, liturgy) and informal situations (discussion of hagiography). Taking up themes also discussed by Giraud’s observations on the literature of formation of the self, Jay Diehl points to processes of (shared or individual) reading as a ‘de-personalized’ – and thus also de-hierarchified – channel for knowledge transmission within monastic communities. Kinsella and Neslihan Şenocak discuss types of community-oriented texts, such as the didactic works of Honorius Augustodunensis or the liturgical handbooks of Italian priestly or canonical communities, and suggest understanding them as knowledge archives shaped by and actively shaping the everyday religious practices performed by inter-generational groups.

The term *community* emerges as central for the concept of horizontal learning in these contributions, and Tjamke Snijders’s discussions of its many dimensions therefore provides an important point of departure for the volume.<sup>6</sup> Her insistence on the construction of ‘communities of practice’ is especially *à propos* as the contributions discussing this type of learning situation focus strongly on the acquisition of wholly or partially practical knowledge. In particular, we often deal with formations of religious knowledge that amalgamated implicit/practical and explicit/propositional knowledge, for example ritualized forms of behaviour or speech organized around texts, which carried specific meaning or symbolic connotations that needed to be explicated or performed. Learners had to habitualize the relevant practices while also acquiring the relevant knowledge about their underlying norms and ideals, typically by studying written traditions intended to shape and interpret such practices.

### **Beyond the ‘Monastic’: Re-integrating Religious Communities into a Dynamized Approach to the History of Learning**

These observations complement and combine with recent approaches to the history of learning in a rather intriguing manner and seem to provide several impulses for this field. The study of medieval learning – in the past, often a highly tradition-oriented field focused on big men, big

6 On the concept of communities, see also these recent publications: Hovden, Lutter, and Pohl, *Meanings of Community*; Gingrich and Lutter, *Visions of Community*; Breitenstein, Burkhardt, Burkhardt, and Sonntag, *Identität und Gemeinschaft*; Melville and Ruta, *Potency of the Common*.

ideas, and big institutions such as schools and universities – is currently transforming into a ‘cultural history of knowledge’ or an ‘anthropology of knowledge transmission’ during the pre-modern period.<sup>7</sup> This sea change has allowed researchers to harness the full potential of the methodological toolkit provided by cultural history approaches. It has also allowed them to question the traditional grand narratives underlying nineteenth- and twentieth-century research, such as the typical orientation of most older intellectual histories towards the perceived ‘origins’ of the most appreciated forms of knowledge within Western modernity, such as the ‘scholastic’ and ‘humanist traditions’.

Research on knowledge transmission within religious communities, which became labelled as ‘monastic’ culture or theology during the twentieth century, has in a way found itself on the wrong side of such meta-narratives geared towards modern identities. As most researchers are well aware, the idea of a ‘monastic’ culture of learning received important impulses from Jean Leclercq’s pioneering study *L’amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* of 1957.<sup>8</sup> This study belonged within the context of the revival and modernization of Catholic Church history in the years leading up to the Second Vatican Council, and it originally spoke to an audience of modern religious orders and Catholic scholars of the 1950s, often intent on spiritual renewal of their orders and modernization of the Church. In this context, Leclercq, a Benedictine, serendipitously redefined monastic scholarship, describing it as a felicitous combination of genuine learning and lived spirituality. In highlighting the twelfth-century revival of ‘monastic’ culture and theology, he implicitly positioned his vision against the secular research paradigm of medieval ‘Renaissances’ that focussed on the reception of Aristotle and the modern sciences.<sup>9</sup> He also moved away from the more conservative forms of Catholic Thomism, whose foundational narratives cast the

7 Tendencies within medieval history are reviewed in Steckel, ‘Wissensgeschichten’, 9–58. Several works which pioneered this trend focused on the early modern and modern period, such as Cetina-Knorr, *The Manufacture of Knowledge*; Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*; Burke, *A Social History*; and Jacob, *Lieux de savoir*. For the medieval period, see e.g., Verger, *Les gens de savoir*; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*; Anheim and Piron, *Le travail intellectuel*, containing e.g., Mews, ‘Communautés de savoirs’, 485–507. In the German-speaking area, several pertinent appraisals of the history of knowledge have been published, see e.g., Sarasin, ‘Was ist Wissensgeschichte?’, 159–72; Zittel, ‘Wissenskulturen’, 91–109; Holzem, ‘Die Wissensgesellschaft’, 233–65.

8 Leclercq, *L’amour des lettres*. For a brief appraisal, see Ferzoco, ‘The Changing Face’, p. 1–7; Köpf, ‘Monastische und scholastische Theologie’, 96–135. For a more in-depth analysis see e.g., Penco, *Dom Jean Leclercq*.

9 Pioneered by Haskins, *The Renaissance*; see Colish, ‘Haskins’s Renaissance’, 1–15; Brentjes, Fidora, and Tischler, ‘Towards a New Approach’, 9–50.

thirteenth-century universities and the period of high scholasticism as 'their' origin of modernity.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the idea of monastic culture was soon absorbed into other grand narratives. Under the influence of sociological modernization and secularization theories of the 1960s and 1970s, and through the filter of Thomas Kuhn's concept of 'paradigm shifts', non-monastic historians soon appropriated the concept of a monastic culture of learning as a backdrop for their own versions of modernization narratives. Scholars such as Richard W. Southern, the rising doyen of Anglophone intellectual history of the High Middle Ages, quickly integrated the idea of 'monastic culture' into a new supra-national meta-narrative of a high medieval 'rise of the West', seen as an essential paradigm shift towards modernity.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of such visions of history, various scholars between the 1970s and 1990s recounted how the High Middle Ages witnessed a paradigm shift by which 'traditional' monastic learning, whose intellectual roots went back to the earliest Middle Ages, was replaced by the new scholastic learning of the coalescing schools and universities, which brought a more rational, scholarly, and ultimately secular outlook to society. A personification of this paradigm shift was constructed by pitting two monks, Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard, against each other in a seeming clash of opposites.<sup>12</sup>

As many scholars have by now remarked, this vision of a high medieval paradigm shift is a modern fable.<sup>13</sup> Yet this recognition has not been able to unseat the narrative in itself: the meta-narrative of a paradigm change from monastic to scholastic – with its implicit opposition between religious and secular, traditional and modern – helped to create boundaries (and attendant hierarchies) between the affected sub-fields of research, which are still making themselves felt today. Even today, most scholars are either invested in the history of religious orders *or* the history of schools and universities more broadly, in the religious side of the history of learning (focusing on early and high medieval learning, on monastic learning, or on female communities) *or* in the secular side (the history of universities, of philosophy, of theology, of 'hard' science, of anything to do with the

10 See del Colle, 'Chapter 18: Neo-Scholasticism', 375-94. See also the appraisal in Arnold, *Kleine Geschichte*.

11 See Southern, *Medieval Humanism*; and Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*. The research concept of the paradigm shift (see Richards and Daston, *Kuhn's Structure*) is clearly apparent in the latter.

12 See e.g., Verger and Jolivet, *Bernard – Abélard*.

13 See e.g., Godman, *The Silent Masters*; Giraud, *Per verba magistri*, 11; Steckel, 'Deuten, Ordnen, Aneignen', 211-213; Diehl, *The Grace of Learning*, 20-47.

Renaissance or, lately, with transcultural knowledge exchange between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, which can be associated with the modern concept of religious tolerance).

As a result of this fragmentation of the research field, several problems of the paradigm of medieval 'monastic culture' have long been diagnosed but remain to be tackled in a systematic fashion. As several researchers have pointed out, the very act of distinguishing a 'monastic' culture of learning from others is misleading in several respects.<sup>14</sup> It suggests a coherent set of forms of learning tied to monastic settings, which remained substantially unchanged across the Middle Ages and could be distinguished clearly from other forms. In reality, learning within religious communities was, of course, as diverse as these communities themselves. While a basic foundation for analogues exists in the reality of communities living together and transmitting knowledge across the generations with a religious intent, we know today that the practices of knowledge transmission that developed within religious communities across the Middle Ages (or even just from the eleventh century to the thirteenth) were sweepingly diverse. Similarly, the idea of an unchanged, constant tradition of monastic learning obscures the fact that we actually witness deep-seated transformations – though these often took the form of reappraisals of tradition labelled as 're-formations', obscuring their own innovativity.<sup>15</sup> Such forms of change do not, of course, fit especially well with the visions of progress towards projected modernities so popular among twentieth-century historians. Instead, transformations often appear as repeated conjunctures, or renegotiations, of specific cultural issues, which we may understand as episodic reconfigurations of patterns of learning for our purposes.<sup>16</sup> But they should most certainly not be ignored.

Finally, religious communities engaged closely with other communities of learning rather than isolating themselves. The new reformed monastic and canonical communities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were particularly interested in developing forms of knowledge transmission that were optimally suited to the needs of monks and nuns, canons and canonesses, resulting in a broad array of forms of learning that might be

14 See the overview in Köpf, 'Monastische und scholastische Theologie'; and see for particular aspects Goetz, *Das Geschichtsbild*, 81; Ferzoco, 'Changing Face of Tradition', 1; Diehl, 'Grace of Learning'.

15 See Constable, *The Reformation*.

16 See Walsham, 'Migrations of the Holy', 251-265; Steckel, 'Differenzierung jenseits der Moderne', pp. 78-79.

called 'monastic'.<sup>17</sup> Yet paradoxically, the very wish to transmit the most apt and essential parts of knowledge, and to institutionalize their transmission within the community, typically led members of monastic communities (just like other religious orders) to search beyond the convent's walls, opening religious houses to the intellectual and religious currents of schools and universities, courts and administrative centres, and even urban and rural pastoral care.<sup>18</sup> As monasteries ultimately remained closely tied to the world of lay religiosity throughout the Middle Ages, they also remained centres that gave impulses to these other institutional settings.<sup>19</sup>

To accommodate these tendencies, recent scholarship has developed more dynamic models for the description of the resulting intellectual links as well as the constant productive irritations between the worlds of the courts, the ecclesiastical and urban centres, and the rural or urban religious communities that emerged and transformed across the medieval centuries. Rather than looking for schools or other sites of neatly classifiable 'monastic' or 'scholastic' education, recent research has taken a broader view and investigated interrelated communities of learning, knowledge communities, networks of learning, *communautés de savoir*, *Wissenskulturen*, and so on.<sup>20</sup> These approaches typically converge in highlighting aspects of learning processes that are also central to the investigation of horizontal learning; they focus on the relationship between different societal settings for formalized or informal learning processes and on the dynamism generated where such different, heterogeneous communities engaged in transfer and exchange, or divergence and boundary-setting.<sup>21</sup>

As these studies have shown, we find medieval individuals and groups engaging with specialized textual traditions in a variety of formal and

17 For a number of different perspectives, see e.g., the contributions in Melville and Breitenstein, *Innovationen durch Deuten und Gestalten*; Carmassi, Schlotheuber, and Breitenbach, *Schriftkultur*; Poirel, *L'école de Saint Victor*; Beach, *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture*; Ferzoco and Muessig, *Medieval Monastic Education*. A thriving sub-field of research concerns religious women; see e.g., Griffiths and Hotchin, *Partners in Spirit*; Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights*; Lutter, *Geschlecht & Wissen*.

18 See e.g., Lutter, *Zwischen Hof und Kloster*; Lutter, *Funktionsräume – Wahrnehmungsräume – Gefühlsräume*.

19 This has been underlined for late medieval Observant Reform lately; see e.g., Roest and Uphof, *Religious Orders*, but see also e.g., Ramakers, Corbellini, and Hoogvliet, *Discovering the Riches*; Jamroziak and Burton, *Religious and Laity*.

20 See the literature cited by Snijders in this volume and see particularly Lutter, 'Normative Ideals'; Id., 'Social Groups', 45-61; Corbellini, 'Beyond Orthodoxy', 33-54; Mews and Crossley, *Communities of Learning*; Mews, 'Communautés de savoir'; Muessig, 'Communities of Discourse', 65-81.

21 For this model, see (with further references) Steckel, 'Networks of Learning', 191-195.

informal settings, and not just in schools. It has also become accepted that the learning processes may concern various types of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> In addition to intellectual, discursive knowledge in the form of sets of propositions (as, for example, the *ars grammatica*) we encounter many forms of practical knowledge and embodied, habitualized *savoir-faire*. Additionally, it has been made clear that such ‘communities of learning’ should not be misunderstood as homogeneous or static.<sup>23</sup> These perspectives of course merge seamlessly with the observation on communities and their dynamics made by Snijders in this volume.

More importantly, however, these approaches have also generated new observations that have the potential to help us rewrite the older narratives of the ‘rise of the modern West’, which so clearly marginalized the knowledge transmission of religious communities. One result of research has been to show that the new learning of the schools emerging from c. 1050 onwards and the new learning generated within the many new religious communities within Latin Europe were closely related and interlinked.<sup>24</sup> For example, I have argued that new religious communities of the High Middle Ages provided such an important ‘market’ for new forms of learning and new knowledge compendia during the earlier twelfth century that they might very well be called the most important driving factor underlying the emergence of professionalized schools, at least where theology was concerned.<sup>25</sup> More importantly for this volume, it has also been shown that religious communities – including monastic houses but also houses of regular canons and eventually mendicant convents – were one of the most important venues for transmitting religious knowledge to the laypeople. This tendency becomes highly visible and incontrovertible during the later Middle Ages, but it has clear roots going back to the high medieval period.<sup>26</sup>

This latter observation is highly relevant when we ask how the outdated master narrative of the ‘rise of the modern West’ might be rewritten. To explain the transformation from medieval to modern, twentieth-century

22 For this point, a pioneering influence within Medieval Studies was that of Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*. For a systematized view, see e.g., Zittel, ‘Wissenskulturen’, 101-105.

23 This is the point of Mews, ‘Communities of Learning’; developed in Mews and Crossley, *Communities of Learning*.

24 See especially Mews, ‘Monastic Educational Culture’, 182-97; Mews, ‘Scholastic Theology’, 217-239; Giraud, *Per Verba Magistri*; Giraud, ‘Isaac de l’Étoile’, 193-204; Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 863-1196; Diehl, ‘Grace of Learning’.

25 Steckel, ‘Deuten, Ordnen, Aneignen’, 248.

26 For the later medieval period, see Roest and Uphoff, *Religious Orders*. For the foundational importance of the high medieval period, see e.g., Constable, *Reformation*, or recently Cédric Giraud, *Spiritualité et histoire*.

research has traditionally focused on growing rationality as a sign of modernity – but another important marker for long-term transformation processes might be seen in a broader distribution of knowledge within society.<sup>27</sup> Already within nineteenth-century paradigms of secularization and rationalization, mastery of literacy, of the written authorities, and particularly of scholarly expertise, were seen as tools enabling individuals to emancipate themselves from the thought patterns imposed upon them by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>28</sup> But in this sort of research, the accent on secularity typically directed the gaze of scholars towards the world of the intellectuals, the schools and the universities, often causing them to highlight certain movements and periods labelled ‘humanisms’ or ‘Renaissances’ as the earliest instance of secular elites asserting themselves through learning.<sup>29</sup> Yet if we look towards religion as a primary source of societal norms during the medieval period, the clear distinction and segregation between priests and increasingly professionalized scholarly experts on one side, and merely educated or uneducated laypeople on the other, underwent multiple renegotiations during the medieval period: laypeople increasingly became members of new communities of interpretation engaged in the transmission of religious knowledge, either in mixed groups including scholarly or priestly experts (and often, one notes, *religiosi*) or in horizontal groups led by lay ‘active readers’.<sup>30</sup> In particular, laypeople appropriated practices and expertise developed for the cloistered religious, learned to choose among the different religious ‘options’ on offer,<sup>31</sup> and learned to criticize forms of religious power with which they did not agree.<sup>32</sup> This transformation of power relations, which several scholars have described as a ‘monasticization’ of the laypeople,<sup>33</sup> put considerable pressure onto the ecclesiastical hierarchy and led to a gradual and partly subcutaneous renegotiation of the status

27 See Corbellini, Duijn, Folkerts, and Hoogvliet, ‘Challenging the Paradigms’, 171–88.

28 The classic example would be Burckhardt, *Die Cultur*.

29 See the overview in Treadgold, *Renaissances*, and the re-appraisal of Colish, ‘Haskins’s Renaissance’.

30 This dynamic was recently the subject of the 2013–2017 interdisciplinary research network COST Action IS1301 ‘New Communities of Interpretation: Contexts, Strategies and Processes of Religious Transformation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, led by Sabrina Corbellini.

31 See Van Engen, ‘Multiple Options’; Jaspert, ‘Communicating Vessels’, 389–424; a theoretical appraisal is offered in Steckel, ‘Problematische Prozesse’ and Pohlrig and Steckel, *Über Religion entscheiden*.

32 On this phenomenon, see the literature on anti-clericalism and anti-fraternal traditions, e.g., Geltner, *The Making of Medieval Antifraternalism*; Dykema and Oberman, *Anticlericalism*.

33 An overview on this theme is presented in Caldwell Ames, *Crusade, Inquisition, and Monasticization*.

difference between priests/religious and laypeople. This contributed to the far-reaching transformations of the late medieval religious landscape and was an important factor in the epochal reconfigurations of the late medieval and early modern reforms and Reformations.<sup>34</sup>

Seen from this angle, it was not, or not only, the new knowledge of the schools that proved conducive to the transformation of medieval society. The forms of knowledge transmission coalescing in medieval religious communities – not least during the High Middle Ages as a sort of ‘incubation period’ for many late medieval developments – were equally transformative, and substantial societal shifts may be sought in the monasteries with as much legitimacy as in the schools.

### Potentials for an Integrated History

To arrive at a better understanding of the dynamics of knowledge transmission within pre-modern societies, forms of learning inside and outside of religious communities should – in fact, need – to be reintegrated. As the concept of ‘monastic learning’ in fact flattens out all differences between monastic, canonical, or mendicant intellectual traditions and their gendered sub-types, it is becoming a hindrance and should be scrapped. It should be replaced by a more differentiated approach to interrelated, dynamic communities of learning and by a practical approach to research, which consistently crosses the boundaries between monasteries, courts, schools, urban spaces, and private homes.

To arrive at such a more differentiated understanding of different forms of knowledge transmission inside and outside of religious communities, the concept of horizontal learning may prove highly valuable. Asking in more detail how different communities of practice engaged in knowledge transmission – how they managed to include and exclude members, how they structured their social hierarchies, and how they imagined learning processes on a practical and theoretical, epistemological level – would help us pinpoint the complex dynamics of medieval worlds of knowledge.

As a first step, asking what exact forms of learning may have been present in given settings – horizontal, hierarchical, and communal, related to concepts of ‘school’ or ‘community’ or both, or neither – may give us a welcome push to describe the settings of knowledge transmission in a more precise

34 See the appraisals of the relevant historiography in Van Engen, ‘The Christian Middle Ages’, 519–552; van Engen, ‘Multiple Options’ and Walsham, ‘The Reformation’, 497–528.

way. At first glance, the contributions in the present volume, for example, seem to suggest that a focus on horizontal learning, or more precisely on mutual edification in the community, might be a fairly distinctive characteristic of knowledge transmission in religious communities, perhaps even particularly in monastic communities. As Saurette's and Long's contributions show, we do indeed see monasteries being reconceived as 'didactic spaces' during the High Middle Ages.<sup>35</sup> Given their combination of a symbolically charged community structure and great need to acquire ritualized, regulated religious behaviours resting on particular written discourses that had to be appropriated, religious communities were extremely likely to develop a strong emphasis on forms of community-oriented learning.

Yet this is not the whole story. Other contributions in this volume, notably Şenocak's, immediately show that the mentioned combination was not, in fact, restricted to monastic houses. It was common in religious communities understood more broadly, and especially included communities of clerics and regular canons. If we open the horizon towards late medieval lay religiosity, similar forms of learning can be found there.<sup>36</sup> It may thus be that rather than the institutional setting, it was the transmission of the particular cultural formation of religious knowledge – combining strands of discursive, practical, emotional, and symbolic elements and a strong insistence on community – which generated the emphasis on horizontal, group-oriented learning.

To test this hypothesis, and to determine how strongly high medieval religious communities engaged with patterns of horizontal learning and what particular, distinctive twists they brought to it, a long-term comparative approach would be needed. Such an approach, which would necessarily imply cooperation among scholars specializing in different areas, might be a very apt way to develop the current approach to medieval communities of learning and to ask how different communities instituted or debated intellectual, symbolic, and physical 'regimens of schooling' (to use Mia Münster-Swendsen's apt phrase<sup>37</sup>). As community-oriented learning was highly important throughout the medieval period, collaborating scholars might write a multi-focal, entangled history of knowledge on this subject, making use of many different building blocks already present.

To give just a quick sketch: Detlef Illmer's pioneering research of the 1970s sketched the huge importance allotted to the *vita communis* as a

35 See Saurette, 'Spaces of learning', p. 131 (in this volume).

36 See. Corbellini, *Cultures of Religious Reading*.

37 See. Münster-Swendsen, 'Regimens of Schooling', 403-422.

pedagogical framework within monastic education during the earliest heyday of monasticism in the sixth and seventh centuries. As Illmer argued in terms borrowed from Max Weber, 'knowledge remained closely linked to the charisma of the community as a whole, and as a result, could not be transferred, but only "awakened" [within the student] by shared practice'.<sup>38</sup> Current research is revisiting these early connections between religion and education and is beginning to establish a transcultural and comparative perspective on them as well.<sup>39</sup> As I have discussed in my own research, such ideas were then reformulated and appropriated for the larger ecclesiastical community within the context of the Carolingian reforms of the late eighth and ninth centuries, where scholars such as Alcuin of York developed far-reaching educational ideals.<sup>40</sup> Alcuin and his contemporaries reached towards the monastic world to find ideals of learning that could complement and enhance those transmitted through the crumbling institutions of ancient pedagogy. Yet they adapted monastic material to describe learning in the universal Church. Alcuin in particular fused the idea of knowledge transmission with that of apostolic succession, prompting the development of concepts of sacralized mastership as well as forms of communal inter-generational learning imagined as a 'long series of ecclesiastical erudition', in which the members of each successive generation linked their local church back to their spiritual 'fathers' and 'mothers' through their teaching and learning.<sup>41</sup> In a next step, C. Stephen Jaeger's research shows that such ideals were gradually replaced within the eleventh-century cathedral schools, whose community ideals shifted from inclusive and universal concepts of the Church towards rather exclusive networks of noble elites preferring ancient virtue ethics to the broad, heavily spiritualized ideals of the earlier centuries. When professionalized schools emerged during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a further weakening of community bonds was caused by highly mobile students switching from one centre to the next and relying much more on horizontal bonds, such as their friends and relatives, than on high-ranking ecclesiastical patrons.<sup>42</sup>

38 See Illmer, *Formen der Erziehung*, 181.

39 See e.g. Tanaseanu-Döbler and Döbler, *Religious Education*; Gemeinhardt, 'Bildung und Religion', 165-179 (the latter sketching the research programme of the Sonderforschungsbereich 1136 'Religion and Education' at the University of Göttingen).

40 Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 77-240.

41 Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 161 (quotation taken from Alcuin of York, *Epistolae*, ep. 83, 126).

42 See (with further references) Steckel, 'Submission to the Authority'.

When the reform movements and new monastic orders of the twelfth-century subsequently reformulated ideals of learning within the community, they often reached back towards Antiquity or the early medieval period and redefined their religious identities against such trends. But so far there has been little comparative work on this *longue durée*, and none that has asked for concepts of communities or practices of horizontal learning in a thorough, comparative fashion. It would be highly interesting to ask whether horizontal and communal learning practices (including their different epistemologies, social and material settings and practices) can tell us something about transfer, adaptation, or divergence between different institutional settings during this period. We might bring out the scope of divergences within different monastic communities (not least between male and female houses) and within the developing networks of regular canons as well as clerical schools in much more detail. As set out above, such research might be especially productive if we also keep the later medieval centuries in view and establish ties to a research field where transmission of knowledge between religious networks and laypeople is at the centre of attention.

### **Further Questions on the Intellectual and Social Transformations of the Long Twelfth Century**

As the contributions in this volume suggest, however, the high medieval period, and especially the eleventh and twelfth centuries, also hold particular interest. As many contributions clearly illustrate, they indeed constitute a period when 'traditional institutions and attitudes were stretched to the maximum and made to accommodate new forms of life and new sentiments'.<sup>43</sup> As we know, many contemporaries commented in unusual detail and emphasis upon patterns of learning, and though there has been in-depth and critical research on many aspects of learning, there have been few recent efforts to synthesize.<sup>44</sup> A second avenue to follow in future research might thus be to integrate the investigation of horizontal learning into a broader reappraisal of the long twelfth century and its many intellectual reconfigurations. Based on the contribution to this volume, I have three suggestions or hypotheses concerning the growing role of horizontal learning, which future research may want to develop or contradict.

43 Constable, *Reformation*, 5.

44 But see Noble and Van Engen, *European Transformations*; and more importantly in this context, Giraud, *Brill's Companion to the Twelfth-Century Schools*.

## Materialities of Learning

A first observation is that it might be interesting to review many of the innovations of the long twelfth century from the point of view of the mediality and materiality of knowledge transmission. In his contribution on the newly emerging literature of self-formation, for example, Giraud engages with the traditional assumption that the High Middle Ages witnessed a 'discovery of the individual'. Though it might indeed be stressed that the high medieval period witnessed a new premium on interiority, scholars familiar with early medieval sources have typically rolled their eyes at this claim.<sup>45</sup> As Giraud clarifies, however, the religious 'self' was not invented during the eleventh century. Rather, it was thrown into high relief by the emergence of a whole literature devoted to it. The same could be said for the theme of the individual's conscience, which was also, otherwise, far from a new concept but generated a new literature during the High Middle Ages.<sup>46</sup> This important role of new textual genres as markers of the transformation of practice is also highlighted in Şenocak's contribution, as well as other recent research, for example on the emergence of the theoretical *ars dictaminis* from earlier, practice-based training in letter-writing.<sup>47</sup> With her focus on the actual manuscripts used by inter-generational groups, Şenocak exemplifies that one of the most important ways forward for the history of knowledge may be to integrate our conceptually driven perspectives much more closely with the materiality – more precisely, with the manuscripts, images, diagrams, and architecture surrounding medieval learning processes.

Such an approach could also take up impulses from the study of medieval manuscript culture, which has recently intensified the scrutiny of the materiality of knowledge archives, be it in the analysis of the layout, annotation practices, and user traces visible in book manuscripts<sup>48</sup>

45 See the discussion in Corradini, Gillis, McKitterick, and van Renswoude, *Ego Trouble*; Kramer, *Sin, Interiority, and Selfhood*; on the overall debate on the individual see currently Lutter, 'Conceiving of Medieval Identities'.

46 See Breitenstein, *Vier Arten des Gewissens*.

47 See Hartmann, *Ars dictaminis*.

48 See e.g., the different approaches in van Renswoude and Steinová, 'The Annotated Gottschalk', 243-270; Steinová, *Notam superponere studui*; Snijders, *Manuscript Communication*; Angotti Fournier, and Nebbiai, *Les livres des maîtres de la Sorbonne*; Schuh, *Aneignungen des Humanismus*; Poleg and Light, *Form and Function*; François and den Hollander, 'Wading Lambs and Swimming Elephants'; Kwakkel, McKitterick, and Thomson, *Turning Over a New Leaf*.

and of didactic images<sup>49</sup> or in the study of individual and institutional libraries.<sup>50</sup> As Kinsella's contribution on the role of the church building shows, medieval architecture and the material surroundings of religious life should also be investigated as changing didactical frameworks. There had been church buildings (and architectural metaphors) long before the eleventh century, of course. But possibly due to the many institutional innovations within high medieval religious communities, and especially reform communities, which often built their convents and libraries from scratch, there was an unprecedented window of opportunity to shake up established didactic genres and to include concepts such as architectural space into new knowledge compendia. As we attempt to reflect and rewrite traditional narratives, which invariably projected modern ideals of learning back towards the Middle Ages, and transform them against a changed horizon of transcultural intellectual history,<sup>51</sup> it might be a helpful corrective to actually build the periodization of the history of knowledge transmission on the concrete materiality, media, and genres of learning.

### **Transformation of Social Networks: Inside, Outside, Between**

A second observation concerns the transformations of social networks during the High Middle Ages, in which horizontal learning was invariably embedded and implicated. Several contributions in this volume highlight the overlap and tension between descriptions of social ties as horizontal on one side, and hierarchical on the other. As mentioned above, Hellemans's contribution for example mentions how Abbess Heloise was addressed as both the sister and daughter of Abbot Peter the Venerable. This certainly shows us that hierarchical ties were superseded and fused with horizontal ones during the High Middle Ages. But how to explain this phenomenon? The question has already been asked in a dense body of research on medieval friendship

49 See e.g., Cleaver, *Education in the Twelfth-Century*; Mersch, *Soziale Dimensionen*; Hamburger and Bouché, *The Mind's Eye*; Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*.

50 See e.g. Becker, Licht, and Weinfurter, *Karolingische Klöster*; Carmassi, Schlottheuber, and Breitenbach, *Schriftkultur und religiöse Zentren*; Embach, Moulin, and Rapp, *Die Bibliothek des Mittelalters*.

51 On this process, cf. the contributions (by myself and others) in the forthcoming volume by Kellner, Hugon, and Lutter, *Rethinking Scholastic Communities*, which will appear as an issue of the journal *Medieval Worlds*.

networks.<sup>52</sup> As this research has shown, forms of *amicitia* underwent a marked surge in popularity during the High Middle Ages, not least because of changes in communication patterns: for example, a new emphasis on personal letters as a medium that favoured the nuanced expression of mutual relations. Such observations can be developed into a more expansive argument: as the summary of contributions above showed, most examples of ambivalent relationships actually cut across community boundaries and therefore lacked a clear definition of mutual status. Jaeger's and Hellemans's contributions look at horizontal knowledge exchanges taking place in the undefined space *between* religious communities. In this communicative space, shared by different religious communities, *amicitia* had actually long had the particular function of creating links and postulating imagined communities – a task to which it was particularly suited, as it established a status of mutuality without describing the relative status of each partner too closely, as this might lead to rivalry and conflict.<sup>53</sup> Letters, as the medium *par excellence* of this communicative in-between, were especially tailored to the negotiation (or the smooth glossing over) of such complex relationships, a fact that is already visible in early medieval letters. The correspondence of Alcuin of York, who left a collection on a par with the twelfth-century 'Golden Age' collections, for example contains many instances of letters addressed to recipients apostrophised as 'father, friend and brother', or 'sister and daughter', similar to those found by Long, Hellemans, and Saurette.<sup>54</sup> As one notes upon analyzing Alcuin's technique in detail, his layering of the semantics of friendship, shared learning, and (spiritual) kinship often reacted to actual changes within a given relationship – for example, the fact that former students might have grown up and reached high offices themselves. But it was also, and often, applied to the space between communities.<sup>55</sup>

From this diagnosis, it is only a short step to the observation that this communicative space between communities – and hence also the areas

52 With an eye to twelfth-century religious communities, see especially McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; Brian Patrick McGuire, *Brother and Lover*; and several relevant studies by Julian P. Haseldine, such as 'Friendship and Rivalry', 390-414 and 'Monastic Friendship in Theory and in Action in the Twelfth Century', 349-94. Generally, see Haseldine, *Friendship in Medieval Europe*; Ysebaert, 'Medieval Letter-Collections', 285-300; Nederman, 'Textual Communities of Learning', 73-83; Julian Haseldine has summarized the work of the interdisciplinary research network 'Medieval Friendship Networks' (2005-2010) in 'Medieval Friendship and Friendship Networks', ix-xii.

53 See Haseldine, 'Friendship and Rivalry'.

54 Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 166-169. For an in-depth analysis of Alcuin's correspondence, see Garrison, *Alcuin's World*; Garrison, 'Les correspondants d'Alcuin', 319-331.

55 Cf. Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 148-191.

in which relationships could not be defined by institutional hierarchies – increased exponentially during the High Middle Ages. We simply seem to observe much more communication in this space, as several tendencies converged to give us a stronger source base. There was an overall increase in the density of communication networks because of social and economic growth processes. Personal letter collections came to be *en vogue*, and the *ars dictaminis* became professionalized, yielding a rich crop of extant documents. There were also religious and political movements that led to the formation of new social networks with increased internal mobility and communication frequencies, and it has already been pointed out that both the world of politics<sup>56</sup> and the world of learning were affected by this.<sup>57</sup> Yet in the case of religious communities, we witness an even more relevant phenomenon: religious communities were increasingly organized in supra-local structures, predominantly in those institutionalized networks we call religious orders, but also in communities and networks cutting across orders.<sup>58</sup> Whether we think of reform movements and observances of the type spearheaded by Cluny or Hirsau, of the new religious orders like the Cistercians, Carthusians, and many congregations of regular canons, or, finally, of various semi-permanent affiliations of male and female communities for pastoral and didactic purposes, we always encounter an internal communication network where communication was necessary while fixed hierarchies were impossible to define. How else but in a somehow horizontal manner could one Cistercian address a *co-religiosus* from a different Cistercian house? How else were partners in a reform alliance encompassing different religious houses to refer to each other? As a hypothesis, one might thus formulate that the reorganization of institutional identity within high medieval religious networks caused the typical forms of communication prevalent between communities to become mirrored on the inside of such communities, generating new emphases on horizontality. Put differently, in a community made up of many different communities, horizontality would necessarily gain ground over hierarchy. In following up this hypothesis, future research might actually cut across existing research on communication networks, on specific relationships such as *amicitia*, and on the bonds underlying knowledge transmission in a very fruitful manner.

56 See Robinson, 'The Friendship Network of Gregory VII', 1-22; Robinson, 'The Friendship Circle', 185-198.

57 Steckel, 'Submission to the Authority of the Masters'; Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 803-813.

58 See e.g., Andenna, Herbers, and Melville, *Die Ordnung der Kommunikation*.

## Tensions between the Hierarchical and Horizontal

A third and final observation takes this line of enquiry into a complementary direction. In his highly intriguing contribution, Jay Diehl introduces the notion that learning processes may have become ‘depersonalized’ during the high medieval period.<sup>59</sup> In his specific instance, the discussion of texts about lying, he links this to the problems engendered by the many crises and schisms that gripped monastic houses during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. As he argues, such ‘crises of trust’ might actually have undermined the functioning of learning processes, as learners could no longer be asked to place unquestioning trust into authority figures and were encouraged to engage with texts instead.

While this intriguing hypothesis may prove to be very hard to substantiate, it very credibly suggests that we might do well to explain an increase in horizontal learning as a decrease in hierarchical learning. Having engaged with master-student relationships from the ninth to the twelfth centuries myself, I would strongly support this line of questioning. As several scholars have argued, there was a specific culture of religious teaching and an ideal of sacralized mastership pervading the communities of learning of the early and high medieval Latin Church.<sup>60</sup> This ideal set a high premium on the hierarchical relationship between master and disciple and actually charged this relationship with many of the qualities that have been emphasized for horizontal learning here: master and student constituted the nucleus of a religious community by engaging in a mutually binding religious relationship. Rather than just filling the student’s head with sets of propositions, masters acted as exemplars, teaching in word and deed and engaging in shared practices meant to hone the student’s innate potential. Though the hierarchy of these relationships was based on religious norms and community rules, their success depended heavily on the voluntary (or perhaps sometimes calculated) engagement of the students with their master or *magistra*, as

59 Diehl, ‘Truth as Teaching’, p. 104 (in this volume).

60 For research on master-student-relationships during the high medieval period (within Latin Christianity), see Cleaver, *Education in Twelfth-century Art*; Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*; Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, chapter 5; Münster-Swendsen, *Masters and Paragons*; Mia Münster-Swendsen, ‘The Model of Scholastic Mastery’, 306-342; Münster-Swendsen, ‘Medieval “Virtuosity”’, 43-64; Münster-Swendsen, ‘Regimens of Schooling’; Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*; Steckel, ‘Submission to the Authority’; and Steckel, ‘Charisma and Expertise’, 641-679. The topic has also been explored with a broader, cross-cultural approach recently; see Speer and Jeschke, *Schüler und Meister*; Lee-Kalisch and Renger, *Meister und Schüler*; Georges, Scheiner, and Tanaseanu-Döbler Ilinca Scheiner and Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Bedeutende Lehrerfiguren*; Renger, *Meister und Schüler*; Van Engen, *Educating People of Faith*.

it was ultimately the students who made and transmitted his or her fame and authority. As Mia Münster-Swendsen has pointed out, close emotional ties and 'selective affinities' often developed in such constellations, which always remained based on complex and volatile negotiations of power.<sup>61</sup> But this set of cultural patterns had never been totally coherent and was transforming and eroding by the eleventh century. Under the onslaught of several different institutional innovations of the long twelfth century, it dissolved into many new configurations.

One factor, already briefly mentioned, was that ecclesiastical education was pluralized with the emergence of a higher number of schools. In an earlier world with fewer centres of learning, these could still function as a gate-keeping system, where influential masters and dignitaries chose to enable the careers of a few select disciples and were in turn celebrated as patrons, often in communication accenting the hierarchy of their relationships, even where the student was long emancipated. Once educational possibilities multiplied, this social field developed features of a market instead: learners might choose their schools and often relied on family ties or horizontal networks to help raise the money necessary to study. They thus no longer needed to call on patrons to the same degree, whereas masters had a greater incentive to treat their (now paying) students as friends and *socii*.<sup>62</sup>

But the pluralization of schools and monastic centres, resulting in a highly dynamic landscape of communities of learning during the long twelfth century, also led to the deconstruction of hierarchical ties in other ways. In a pluralized setting in which there was invariably some disagreement and debate – between masters in different schools but also between the leaders of different religious observances – authority figures could no longer aspire to represent and embody absolute Christian truth, in a way that had still been possible during the early eleventh century. During that period, masters had still been portrayed as shining exemplars of all the virtues, possessing all the learning necessary for an ecclesiastical life.<sup>63</sup> Given the pressures of professionalization and specialization, this became unrealistic during the twelfth century. The new theologians of the schools insisted that they held the specialized expertise to interpret Scriptures – but they no longer aspired to represent Christian perfection in their personal life and to teach it in word and example. As a corollary, the authenticity and authority of the knowledge they transmitted became lodged in texts.

61 Münster-Swendsen, 'Model of Scholastic Mastery', 308.

62 See (with reference to further literature) Steckel, 'Submission to the Authority'.

63 This point is made by Jaeger, 'John of Salisbury', 499-520.

The religious leaders of the period, in contrast, pioneered new ways of modelling Christian exemplarity in lived practice. However, after a brief period of contestation, they left the handling of specialized textual discourses such as canon law and some forms of theology to the schools. Religious communities also, and more importantly, began to apply patterns of conflict resolution and norm-enforcement that relied on these emerging new normative frameworks. As Diehl's contribution correctly reminds us, this was much more urgent and necessary in a world in which almost every community was or had been shaken by conflict and when the religious customs of new monastic or canonical communities had to withstand the pressure of emerging alternatives. A shift towards the textual may thus also be explored as one of the reasons for other transformations within community and network structures.

### About the author

Sita Steckel is junior professor at the University of Münster. She received her doctorate in medieval history in 2006 from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. Her dissertation dealt with the networks and authority of scholars before the universities, when their role and importance was defined by religious rather than just learned expertise (published as *Kulturen des Lehrens im Früh- und Hochmittelalter. Autorität, Wissenskonzepte und Netzwerke von Gelehrten*, Böhlau). She continues to be interested in the role of scholars in the Middle Ages and in medieval scholarly networks. Currently, she is engaged in a study of the clashes between the secular clergy and the Franciscan and Dominican orders in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France, not least in the social microcosm of the medieval university of Paris. Perspectives and questions connected to this research project concern the role of conflicts as catalysts for long-term developments and the role of intra-ecclesiastical religious polemics for the shaping of religious identities. Another research interest which arose over the course of the last ten years is the modern historiography of medieval religion, with its conflicting master narratives of secularization and religious radicalization in the Western Middle Ages. From 2012 to 2017 she has held a Diltthey Fellowship, granted by the Volkswagen and Fritz Thyssen Foundations.

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