Karin Becker

Reading the Psalms: The Relationship between Visual Organisation and Ritual in Medieval Latin Psalter Manuscripts

Abstract: Medieval Latin psalter manuscripts are closely linked to religious practices such as the Divine Office and private devotional practices. The core of these ritual practices were the biblical psalms contained in these manuscripts. However, the use of psalter manuscripts presents some challenges to the owners: access to certain psalms or groups of psalms was particularly important, for example, but, unlike modern books, medieval psalter manuscripts usually do not contain page numbers or running titles that would make it easier for the users to find their way through the manuscript. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals other aids that make it possible to find certain sections or highlight individual psalms. This article examines the correlation between the visual organisation and the (potential) use of these manuscripts in the Divine Office.

1 Introduction

During the Middle Ages, psalter manuscripts played an important role in various areas of daily life. For one thing, they were used in monastic learning; to be *psalteratus*, i.e. to know the psalter by heart, was, as Carol Gibson-Wood among others states, 'synonymous with knowing how to read Latin'.[1] It was not only in the context of monastic learning that psalms were of great importance, but in Christian liturgy – the Divine Office – and in private devotional practices, too. The Divine Office, nowadays largely known as the Liturgy of the Hours, is a Christian practice that, as Jonathan Black puts it, 'served as the liturgical fulfilment of the scriptural precepts exhorting the faithful to pray at all times'.[2] As a result, eight services structured the course of the day and night. The celebration of each of the 'hours' – as the services of the Office were called – took place at a

1 Gibson-Wood 1987, 11. See also Brown 2006, 16; Gross-Diaz 2012, 443; Rankin 2017, 277–279, for example. On the different roles of psalms in daily life, see Gross-Diaz 2012, 441–442.

2 Black 2001, 45. The scriptural precepts are found in Luke 18:1, 1 Thess. 5:17, Eph. 6:18 and Heb. 13:15.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111343556-010

set time of the day. The respective hours were called Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Each of these services had at its core the reciting of psalms; over the course of a week, the complete biblical Book of Psalms had to be recited, which consists of 150 psalms.[3] Apart from the psalms, other elements, such as canticles – songs or hymns whose texts come from other books of the Bible – and scriptural lessons were integral parts of the Divine Office.[4] In the Latin Church, the two predominant cursi were the secular (or non-monastic) and the monastic; they are similar on the surface, but differ in some respects, such as the distribution of psalms over the week. The secular cursus ends with Matins on Saturdays, for example, during which Psalms 97 to 108 were recited. In contrast, the monastic cursus, which is based on the distribution of psalms in the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (sixth century), requests monks to recite Psalms 101 to 108 in Matins on Saturdays.[5]

There are numerous manuscripts that only contain the Book of Psalms, but not the other books of the Bible.[6] One such type of medieval psalter manuscript is the 'biblical psalter', in which the Book of Psalms is sometimes presented in more than one language or with glosses; these manuscripts were primarily intended for study, not for prayer.[7] This paper focuses on a different type of psalter manuscript, however, namely the liturgical psalter. The term 'liturgical' already indicates that this type of manuscript is closely connected to Christian worship, and this also includes manuscripts made for private devotional practices. Apart from the 150 psalms, liturgical psalters include textual material that

3 See, for instance, Harper 1991, esp. 74–75; Billett 2014, 13–23, esp. 14 here.

4 Additional materials are described in depth in Harper 1991, 75–86. See also Hughes 2004, 231–236; Dyer 2012, 664–670. Two tables outline the details of Matins on Sundays in the secular and monastic cursus in Billett 2014, 21–22. See also Harper 1991, 93–96; Hughes 2004, 53–68, esp. 55.

5 Detailed tables showing the distribution of psalms in the secular and monastic office can be found in Sandler 1999, 17–18, and Billett 2014, 16–19, for instance. For a detailed differentiation of the monastic and secular cursus, see Billett 2014, 13–77. See also Harper 1991, 73–108; Black 2001, 51–61; Hughes 2004, 50–80.

6 Lucy Freeman Sandler points out that 'as early as the sixth century the 150 biblical psalms were extracted from the Old Testament to constitute a separate text'; Sandler 1999, 16. See also Gross-Diaz 2012, 441. There are three substantial Latin versions of the Book of Psalms: the *Gallicanum*, the *Romanum* and the *Hebraicum*. On this matter, see, for instance, Leroquais 1940, xiv–xl, esp. xxvii–xxxvi; Gross-Diaz 2012, 427–430; Rankin 2017, 279–281. See also Kahsnitz 1979, 93–109, esp. 93–94; Hughes 2004, 225; van der Horst 1996, 36–37.

7 See Kahsnitz 1979, 115; van der Horst 1996, 37; Sandler 1999, 16, for instance. Victor Leroquais gives several examples of such biblical psalters. He argues that some manuscripts were, in fact, used liturgically. See Leroquais 1940, xliv–li.

was needed for the Divine Office; the psalms can be followed, for example, by chants, collects (short prayers) or the litany of saints.[8] Liturgical psalters are also usually preceded by calendars and can include prefatory miniature cycles, richly ornamented initials or lavish marginal illustrations, just like psalters in general.[9]

As indicated above, psalter manuscripts do not normally contain all the texts needed for the Divine Office; additional manuscripts were needed in order to pray the different hours. An antiphon (a short text) was sung before and after most psalms, for example.[10] Antiphons were seldom included in psalter manuscripts, but were sometimes added by a later scribe who wrote them down in the margins. To perform the Divine Office, an additional manuscript was therefore required that gathered these chants: the 'antiphonary'. Other books were also needed, such as a lectionary containing the biblical readings that were also part of the hours. These two examples alone show that several essential elements for the Divine Office generally are not part of psalter manuscripts. Many of the manuscripts discussed below were written at a time when two more user-friendly types of books already existed: firstly, efforts to combine the elements of the Divine Office in a single manuscript led to the development of the breviary, a type of liturgical book for the clergy,[11] and secondly, the book of hours became widespread from the middle of the thirteenth century, which was a comparable private devotional book for use by the laity.[12] Despite the development and increasing popularity of these two types of books, psalter manuscripts continued to be produced in large numbers throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Psalter manuscripts contain at least 150 texts – the psalms – and a few other texts such as the canticles were usually added as well. Due to the amount of

8 See, for instance, Harper 1991, 312; Sandler 1999, 18–19; Gross-Diaz 2012, 440–441. Sandler mentions a third type of psalter – the ferial psalter – that has an even closer relation to ritual use. In addition to the materials contained in liturgical psalters, these also include 'invitatories, antiphons and versicles that are chanted in conjunction with the recitation of psalms'; Sandler 1999, 19. The terminology has not been used consistently in research. According to Andrew Hughes, for example, the terms 'ferial psalter', 'liturgical psalter' and 'choir psalter' should be used synonymously; see Hughes 2004, 226.

9 'The psalter was one of the most frequently illuminated medieval texts'; Sandler 1999, 19. See Kahsnitz 1979, 141; van der Horst 1996, 55.

10 The materials needed for the Divine Office are discussed in Harper 1991, 75–86, for instance.

11 For a detailed study of a fifteenth-century breviary, see the article by Eva Ferro in this volume.

12 On the development and contents of books of hours, see, for instance, the short overview in Calkins 1983, esp. 243–250. See also Duffy 2008.

content in them, these manuscripts are often considerably more than a hundred pages long – the Luttrell Psalter has 309 folios, for example. It is therefore worth considering how potential readers were supposed to navigate through the manuscripts and access specific texts. Like any other medieval codex, a psalter manuscript is a three-dimensional object. It is therefore necessary to consider not only the arrangement of the content on a page, but how the pages are arranged in the codex. Codicological properties, layout and the pictorial design of the three-dimensional object can be summarised by the term 'manuscript architecture'.[13] A single-text manuscript that was intended to be read continuously from beginning to end may not have needed an elaborate manuscript architecture that helped its readers navigate through the manuscript. But a psalter manuscript's architecture is particularly important to consider with respect to the potential use of these books in the Divine Office, as the 150 psalms were 'seldom read in a continuous sequence',[14] as Michelle Brown rightly points out. Take Psalms 1 to 3 and 6 to 14, for example, which were recited consecutively on Sundays in the secular cursus, while Psalms 4 and 5 were left out.[15] This intermittent reading of the psalms, distributed over the eight daily hours on the seven days of the week, was rarely reflected in the way they were written down – which was strictly in numerical order. Thus, there would have been a need to access certain psalms directly for the Divine Office. This is precisely where the architecture of psalter manuscripts is important, as it could provide an elaborate system to make certain psalms easily accessible. As Lucy Freeman Sandler aptly sums up, '[i]n a practical sense decoration served as text articulation, facilitating the finding of the beginning of the text subdivisions'.[16] In the following, different visual characteristics of psalter manuscripts will be discussed that (in theory) enhanced their usability in the Divine Office – regardless of whether the manuscripts were ultimately used or not.

13 The term 'manuscript architecture' was established at the SFB 950 collaborative research centre, 'Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe', at the University of Hamburg. See the short discussion in Tumanov 2017, 28 on this expression.

14 Brown 2006, 16.

15 Different numbering systems are used for the psalms. In this study, the numbering follows the Septuagint (and thus also the Vulgate). The numbering systems are discussed in Harper 1991, 67–68.

16 Sandler 1999, 20.

2 Dividing the Book of Psalms and structuring the psalter

Psalter manuscripts display an inner structure, if only because the Book of Psalms is not a coherent text, but rather a collection of individual psalms. Accordingly, the minimum level of structuring the text is the separation of 150 psalms. This is expressed by the use of coloured initials in the manuscripts.[17] Additional modes of division which can be found in extant psalter manuscripts group together varying numbers of psalms for purely organisational reasons or according to different usages. One of these modes is a formal division into three equal parts with fifty psalms each.[18] A second mode is found in liturgical psalters that are, as Sandler puts it, 'structured to facilitate the recitation of psalms in Christian worship'.[19] In this context, the Book of Psalms was usually divided into eight sections according to the secular cursus. The first seven sections were recited at Matins on each successive day of the week (beginning with Psalms 1, 26, 38, 52, 68, 80 and 97), although individual psalms in these groups were recited at other hours instead. The eighth section, in contrast, comprises all the psalms sung at Vespers in the course of a week (starting with Psalm 109) without any further subdivision according to different days of the week. Numerous psalters combine the formal division into three and the liturgical division into eight parts. Since Psalm 1 marks a division in both systems, the manuscripts thus show a ten-part division.

In his study on the Werden Psalter (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. theol. Lat. fol. 358), Rainer Kahsnitz remarks that the 'liturgical purpose naturally had an influence on the content, the internal structure and the features [or decoration] of psalter manuscripts'.[20] Medieval Latin psalter manuscripts could be 'individually adapted to the current needs of a

17 Sandler notes that verses usually begin with an initial, too. She points out that psalm initials were treated 'more elaborately than line initials' from early on (by the seventh century); Sandler 1999, 20. On the matter of psalm initials, see also Hughes 2004, 226–227.

18 On different divisions, see, for instance, Leroquais 1940, xc–xcix; Kahsnitz 1979, 117–141, esp. 117–118; Calkins 1983, 208; van der Horst 1996, 38–39; Hughes 2004, 225. There are also other ways of dividing the Book of Psalms than those discussed in this article.

19 Sandler 1999, 16.

20 Kahsnitz 1979, 115. Translated by the author; original quotation: 'Die liturgische Zweckbestimmung hat naturgemäß auf den Inhalt, die innere Gliederung und die Ausstattung der Psalterhandschriften eingewirkt'.

particular church, allowing for local details of the Calendar or local practice',[21] for example. Despite their individual character, some features recur frequently. They pertain to the internal structure of the manuscripts and should be considered as aids to access specific psalms and navigate through the book as a whole.

Rubricated headings, *tituli* or numbers cannot be considered standard features in medieval Latin psalter manuscripts. Nonetheless, these manuscripts can display an elaborate decoration system that subdivides the Book of Psalms into smaller sections. With regard to the liturgical eightfold division, Sandler points out that '[t]he beginning of each of these sections was articulated visually, generally by enlarged [...] initials'.[22] This is also true for other systems of dividing the psalms. Initials marking these divisions can be ornamental or historiated; some fill entire pages like miniatures. They are, therefore, easy to distinguish from ordinary psalm initials.[23] One example can be found in the Hamburg Psalter (Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. in scrin. 85). The manuscript dates to 1220 and was presumably produced in Thuringia or Saxony.[24] The psalms are divided into ten sections, the beginnings of which are highlighted visually by a full-page initial. Page 70 contains the beginning of the second division, which comprises the psalms sung during Matins on Mondays in the non-monastic cursus, namely Psalms 26–37 (Fig. 1).

The division begins with a full-page initial of the letter *D*, the first letter of Psalm 26. It stands out from the rectangular golden background in a green-and-red frame. The first verse is continued on the next page with the rest of the first word, *dominus*, written in alternating red and blue letters. A distinction is made between the formal three- and the liturgical eightfold division in the ten initials designed in such a prominent manner. Psalms 1, 51 and 101 are not only preceded by such an initial on the reverse of the respective leaves, but by a miniature on the corresponding obverse as well. It is not uncommon for psalter manuscripts to also include miniature cycles in general and miniatures that precede specific sections in addition to the enlarged initials.[25]

21 Harper 1991, 58.

22 Sandler 1999, 16. See also van der Horst 1996, 38. Sandler notes that in early times, psalm initials were treated in a similar way to line initials; first changes occur by the seventh century and 'by the twelfth century they might be the work of different individuals'; Sandler 1999, 20.

23 There are additional possibilities to subdivide the text visually, such as the use of a majuscule script for the first words or images. See, for instance, Kahsnitz 1979, 119; van der Horst 1996, 38.

24 Brandis 1972, 138–140.

25 See Sandler 1999, 16. In the case of the Hamburg Psalter, the miniatures directly preceding the three psalms (i.e. Psalms 1, 50 and 100) show the Crucifixion (page 29), Resurrection (page 117) and Christ in Majesty (page 209). They complement the miniature cycle on pages 14–28. However, they

Fig. 1: Full-page initial *D* to Psalm 26. Hamburg Psalter, Germany (Thuringia or Saxony), 1220, Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. in scrin. 85, p. 70; courtesy of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg.

are not in the right order with regard to the chronology of the narrative. On page 29, for instance, Psalm 1 is preceded by the depiction of the Crucifixion. The Crucifixion follows two miniatures showing the Burial of Christ (page 26) and the Ascension (page 28). It has been pointed out in another context that scenes of the Incarnation and Childhood were often grouped together in the miniature cycle preceding the psalms, while the dramatic or triumphant stages of Christ's salvific work were shown at the main divisions of the Book of Psalms. See Büttner 1992, 19.

Similar, albeit more subtle, ways of structuring the book can be observed in London, British Library, Add MS 42130. The so-called Luttrell Psalter, named after its first owner, Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, was produced between 1330 and 1345.[26] In this manuscript, a distinction is made between ordinary psalm initials and those marking the beginning of one of the ten divisions. While ordinary psalm initials generally extend over two lines, the first letter of those psalms that mark the beginning of a new division takes up four lines (Fig. 2). Psalm 1 is an exception to this: in the Luttrell Psalter, as in many other manuscripts, the first initial occupies a special position.[27] It can be considerably larger and often shows David as the author of the Book of Psalms. Distinguishing between simple psalm initials and those at the beginning of a new division is thus relatively easy in the Luttrell Psalter. Upon closer inspection, however, the manuscript reveals an even more complex disposition: only two of the ten initials do not extend over four lines, namely those found in Psalms 51 and 101, which are only three lines high (Fig. 3). In this respect, it is possible to distinguish between the formal division into three parts and the liturgical eightfold division solely on the basis of the size of the initials. This sort of hierarchy established within the tenfold division appears to have gone unnoticed – or it has not been pointed out explicitly, at least.[28] In this case, the hierarchy of the two modes of division appears to be reversed compared to the Hamburg Psalter, the Luttrell Psalter's visual organisation elevating the eight-part liturgical division above the formal three-part one. While the division into ten sections is often found in English psalter manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a differentiation or hierarchisation between the initials of the threefold and eightfold division was no longer common at this time.[29] The visual organisation with the subtle distinction between formal and liturgical divisions in the Luttrell Psalter is remarkable in this respect.

26 On the Luttrell Psalter, see Michelle Brown's substantial commentary in the facsimile, Brown 2006. For a detailed record of the manuscript, see British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Add MS 42130'.

27 See, for instance, Brown 2006, 31.

28 Brown states that '[t]en major (usually 4-line) historiated initials' are at the beginning of the divisions, but she did not explicitly link the two exceptions to the threefold division; Brown 2006, 31. Hughes argues that the exact size of initials 'may vary within the same source, and there seems to be no significance to these minor differences'; Hughes 2004, 227. He considers it 'likely that scribes forgot what sizes and schemes were in use'; Hughes 2004, 227. Varying sizes of initials can, indeed, be observed frequently. In some cases, however, as in the Luttrell Psalter, the difference in size appears to be part of a well-thought-out system.

29 Regarding English psalter manuscripts, Günther Haseloff notes that a uniform decoration of the tenfold division predominates towards 1200, while there was a greater emphasis on Psalms 1, 51 and 101 in the first half of the twelfth century; see Haseloff 1938, 9. See also Kahsnitz 1979, 122.

Fig. 2: Christ points to his eye in the four-line initial *D* to Psalm 26. Luttrell Psalter, England (Lincolnshire), *c.* 1330–1345, London, British Library, Add MS 42130, fol. 51r; courtesy of the British Library Board.

Fig. 3: A man kneels in prayer before the Lord in the three-line initial *D* to Psalm 101, whose head appears in the cloud. Luttrell Psalter, England (Lincolnshire), *c.* 1330–1345, London, British Library, Add MS 42130, fol. 177^{v}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

It is not only the initials marking the beginning of individual psalms and psalter divisions that serve practical purposes among the many decorative elements in psalter manuscripts. Apart from miniatures such as those of the Hamburg Psalter, frames were sometimes incorporated into the manuscripts to highlight specific pages even further. Depending on the degree of decoration, these frames can be very distinctive or practically invisible. London, British Library, Arundel MS 155, which dates back to the beginning of the eleventh century, features prominent golden initials for Psalms 1, 51 and 101 that take up about half a page (Fig. 4).[30] The first words of the respective psalms are written in green and red ink and supplement the golden initial. An elaborate frame drawn around each of the three initial pages highlights them further. Other pages in London, British Library, Arundel MS 155 do not show any marginal decoration,[31] and it is precisely for this reason that the three decorative pages stand out even more – it is almost impossible to miss the beginning of the three divisions when leafing through the book. Unquestionably, in those psalter manuscripts that include lavish marginal decoration, frames are less eye-catching and therefore less effective as a codex-structuring element. In manuscripts that have a very similar frame on every page, these can hardly be used as a highlighting tool.[32]

30 Fols 12^{r}, 53^{r} and 93^{r} respectively. For a detailed record of the manuscript, see British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Arundel MS 155'.

31 According to the online catalogue entry from the British Library, a single marginal drawing on fol. 88^{v} was added at a later date.

32 This is the case with the psalter manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 10435 from the end of the thirteenth century, for example. For a detailed record of the manuscript, see BnF, *Archives et manuscrits*, 'Latin 10435'.

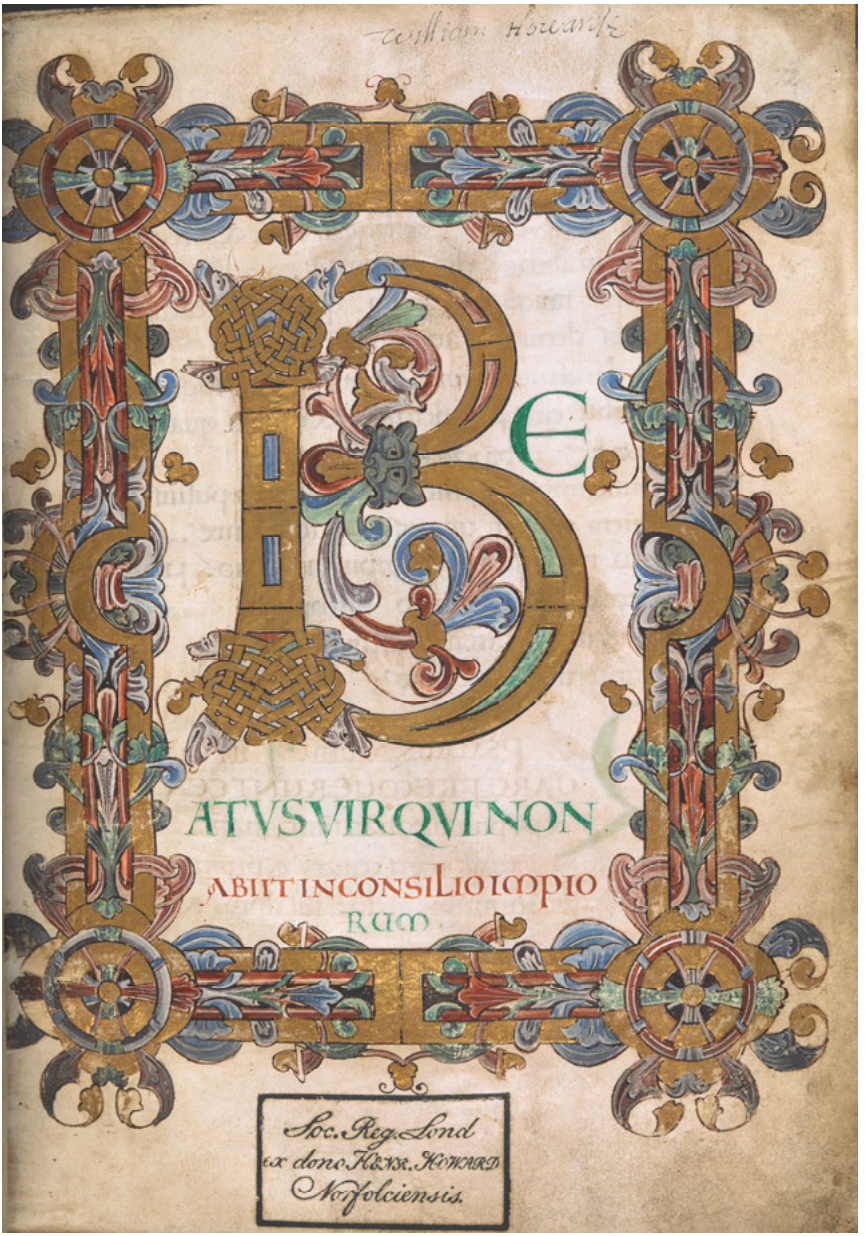

Fig. 4: Full-page initial *B* to Psalm 1 in gold followed by the opening words of the psalm written with green and red ink; full border in gold and colour. England (Canterbury), first half of the eleventh century with mid-twelfth-century modifications, London, British Library, Arundel MS 155, fol. 12^{r}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

Once one recognises how frames can be of practical use, subtler, yet similar patterns can be observed in other manuscripts. Again, the Luttrell Psalter may serve as an example. The degree of decoration varies enormously in this manuscript, with pages that are barely ornamented and others that are lavishly decorated. Many of the pages are decorated with partial borders that include floral ornaments in the inner, outer and upper margins (Fig. 5). They are often enriched by small animals, fantastic beasts and human figures. The lower margins were often used for figurative scenes, some of which develop into narratives spanning more than a page. The rich marginal illustrations conceal the structuring function of the frames, which is only revealed upon closer inspection. If a new psalter division starts on a page, rectangular bars constitute the frame (Figs 2 and 3). In the facsimile edition published by The Folio Society, some of the frames – the ones on fols 97^{v}, 98^{v} and 149^{r}, for instance – are described as being 'more extensive, elaborate and rectilinear than usual'.[33] The commentary attests a '[f]ull foliate bar border'[34] for the frame on fol. 121^{v} (Psalm 68). While there are also partial rectangular borders, especially on the pages containing psalm initials (such as fol. 110^{v}), those that mark the beginning of a new division tend to be made of thicker rectangular bars that are joined at the corners to form right angles. This makes the frames appear heavier and the overall look of the page seems more orderly.[35] Arguably, this is a weaker case than London, British Library, Arundel MS 155. Nonetheless, the frames fulfil a structuring function that can only be discovered by a very attentive reader who is familiar with the psalter.

33 Brown 2006, 41–42.

34 Brown 2006, 42.

35 Variances occur regarding the manifestation of the rectangular frames around the pages that mark a new division. The frame on fol. 97^{v} (Psalm 51) is an exception; this consists of a single thick bar to the left of the text block, which does not form the right angles just described. From Psalm 80 onwards, the frame bar at the bottom of the pages on which a new division begins is about twice as wide. Unlike the initials, this cannot be linked to a distinction between the formal and liturgical division of the Book of Psalms. An additional frame that is very similar can be found on fol. 215^{r}, where Psalm 118:33 begins with a two-line initial.

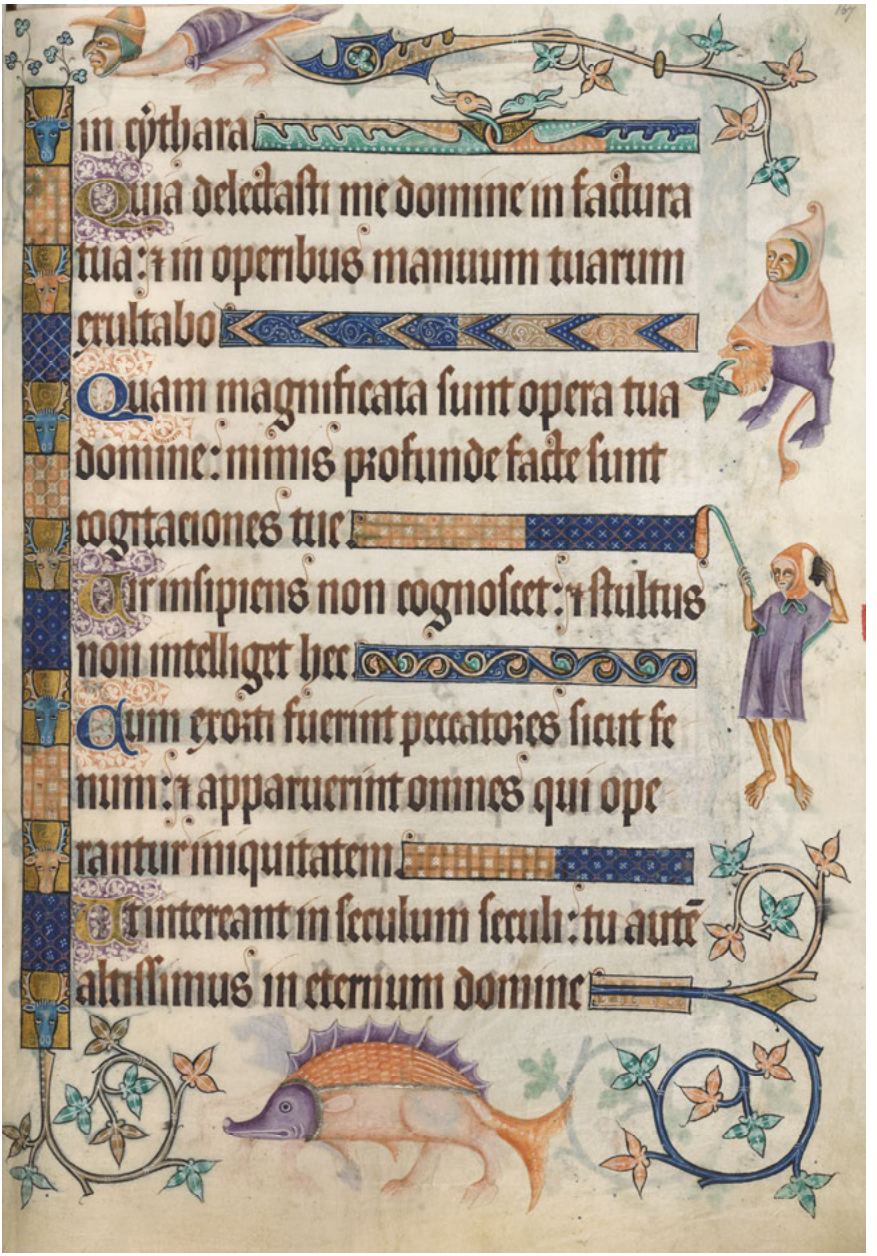

Fig. 5: Partial border and various marginal grotesques such as a human hybrid and a fool with the bladder balloon in the outer margin. Luttrell Psalter, England (Lincolnshire), *c.* 1330–1345, London, British Library, Add MS 42130, fol. 167^{r}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

3 Distinguishing the psalms from other texts

Initials and frames can thus help users of the manuscript to navigate through it and access specific psalms, and in this respect, they enhance its usability. At the same time, the visual organisation can also complicate the reader's use of the codex in certain instances such as the transition between different texts. Since liturgical psalter manuscripts include more than just the Book of Psalms, it is not only the elements that structure the text itself that should be examined, but also those that separate different texts from one another. Typically, the first canticle directly follows the psalms, but without further distinction, it is not always obvious where the Book of Psalms ends and the first canticle begins. The Luttrell Psalter provides another example here, as the Song of Isaiah (Isa. 12:1–6) directly follows after Psalm 150 on fol. 259^{v} (Fig. 6). The change in text is not apparent without reading it: there is neither a textual indication (apart from an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century addition in the margin), nor a page break or a striking initial that can be distinguished from ordinary psalm initials.

Formulas like *incipit* (lat. 'it begins') or *explicit* (lat. 'it ends'), which are familiar from other medieval manuscripts such as Gospel books, were not used frequently in psalter manuscripts.[36] Rubricated *tituli* are a primary written indication of which text a reader has in front of them. These denote individual psalms – sometimes with a number added – but they can also indicate canticles. While many psalter manuscripts do not include rubricated headings, other (additional) means were used to distinguish between different texts. A change in text can be reflected by the use of initials, for instance. One particularly interesting case is the York Psalter (London, British Library, Add MS 54179), which dates to 1260.[37] In this manuscript, the Book of Psalms is subdivided into ten sections, the beginning of each of which is marked by a large historiated initial (Fig. 7). As the first part of the manuscript has been lost and the text commences with the remainder of Psalm 14:5 (fol. 7^{r}), the exact appearance of the first initial is unknown.

36 There are exceptions, such as the Psalter of Charles the Bald (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 1152). An incipit page (fol. 4^{v}) precedes the initial page (fol. 5^{r}) and together they form an elaborately decorated opening with golden letters on a red or purple background with an elaborate gold frame. For a detailed record of the manuscript, see BnF, *Archives et manuscrits*, 'Latin 1152'.

37 A detailed record of the manuscript is available at British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Add MS 54179'.

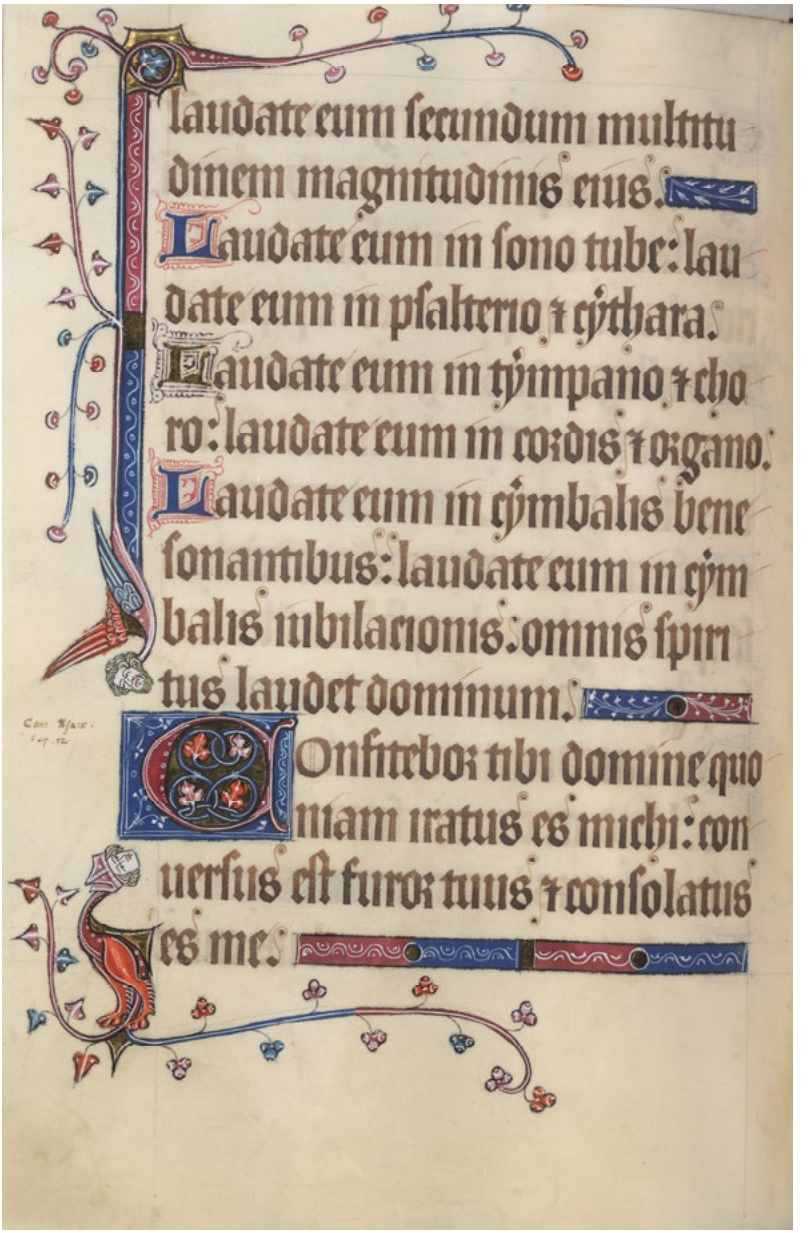

Fig. 6: Beginning of the first canticle, the Song of Isaiah (Isa. 12:1–6) as noted by a later hand in the margin with a two-line initial *C* following Psalm 150. Luttrell Psalter, England (Lincolnshire), *c.* 1330–1345, London, British Library, Add MS 42130, fol. 259^{v}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

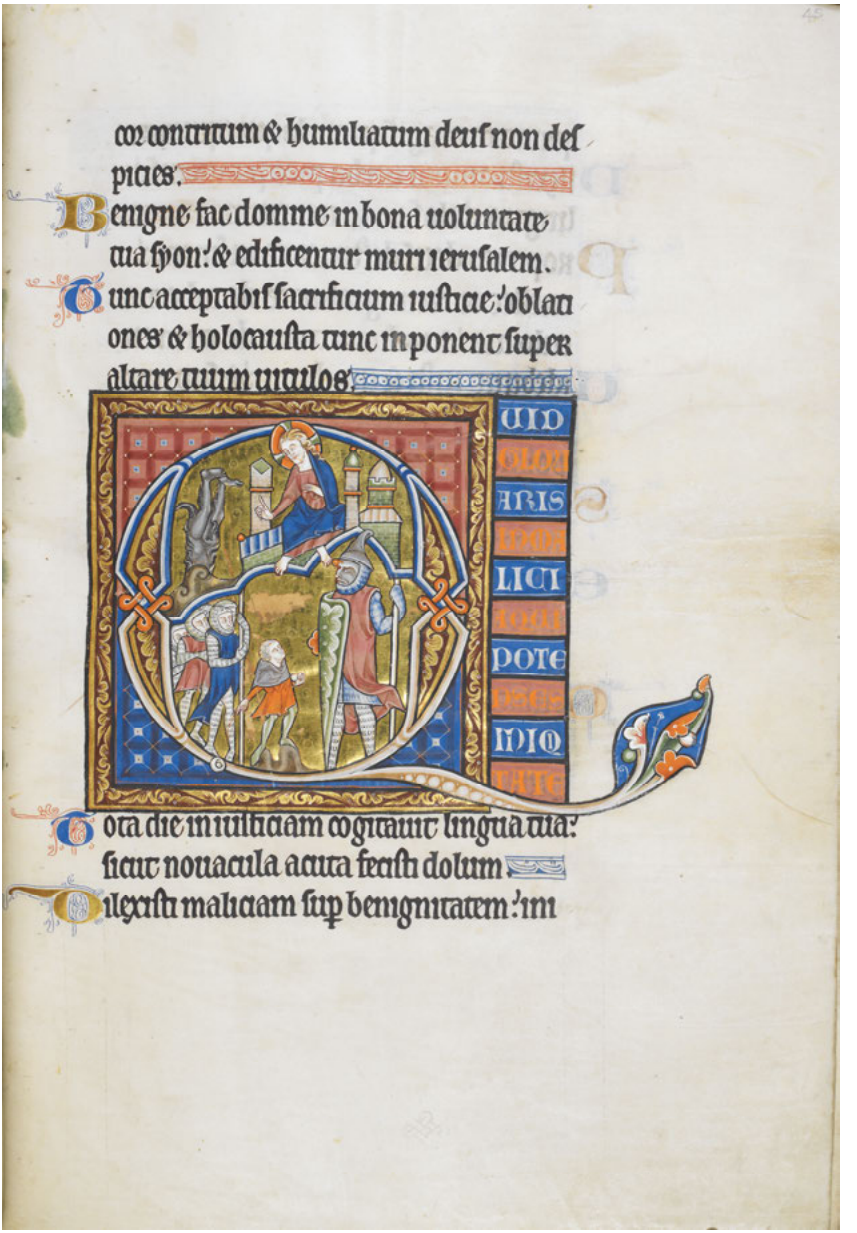

Fig. 7: The Temptation of Christ (upper register) and David against Goliath (lower register) in the half-page initial *Q* to Psalm 51. York Psalter, England, *c.* 1260, London, British Library, Add MS 54179, fol. 45^{r}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

Fig. 8: Half-page foliage initial *C* at the beginning of the first canticle. York Psalter, England, *c.* 1260, London, British Library, Add MS 54179, fol. 144r; courtesy of the British Library Board.

On fol. 144[r], an additional initial of the same size clearly highlights the beginning of the first canticle (Fig. 8); the canticles have thus been treated similarly to a psalter division. However, the illustrator did distinguish between psalter divisions and canticles: while the remaining nine division initials are all historiated, the tenth initial is described as 'a larger decorated initial in colours, with elaborate foliage and on a gold ground'[38] without any figurative elements. While it clearly marks the beginning of the canticles, a visual distinction between the psalter divisions and canticles is established (perhaps even a hierarchy).

4 Initials and frames – effective finding and reading aids?

Numerous manuscripts include such structuring aids, in particular the distinction between initials that mark different parts of the text. In the context of (potential) use in the Divine Office, it is important to think about the usefulness of these structuring aids. Initials at the beginning of the divisions make specific sections easily accessible, which is especially true for those cases where ordinary psalm initials and division initials are noticeably different. Nevertheless, the liturgical eightfold division does simplify the actual use of the psalms in the Divine Office. Each of the first seven sections contains the psalms sung at Matins on a specific day, but as Andrew Hughes says, 'some are "removed" for use at other hours. Standard throughout the ages has been the position of Ps. 94, *Venite exsultemus*, used as the invitatory psalm at the beginning of Matins'.[39] Taking the example of Psalm 94, this means that in the recitation of psalms at Matins on Fridays, Psalm 93 was followed by Psalm 95, Psalm 94 being used outside the sequence in the psalter as an introduction to prayer. It becomes apparent that the division of the text into eight liturgical groups is only helpful to a certain extent; in general, the psalms that are 'removed' for use at other hours are not 'removed' from the written text, nor is there a visual indication that the psalms are not to be recited in numerical order. Given the large initials and sometimes the frames, it seems fairly easy to locate the beginning of a specific division. In contrast, individual psalms in the eight groups are not usually given any special markings, which is why it is more difficult to access them directly. Psalm 126, for example, is usually marked by a simple psalm initial,

38 British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Add MS 54179'.

39 Hughes 2004, 51. See also Harper 1991, 70; Gross-Diaz 2012, 437; Billett 2014, 15.

although it is the first psalm to be recited at Vespers on Wednesdays and easy access to the psalm would therefore presumably be necessary.

Eamon Duffy rightfully points out that psalter manuscripts 'presented unique problems of navigation for the lay (and indeed clerical) user'.[40] Finding a particular psalm within a division proves to be rather difficult without reading the text (and knowing it by heart, given that not all psalter manuscripts are numbered). In this respect, psalter manuscripts seem to lack some practical indications – at least from a modern perspective. Additions made after their original production can be found in a greater number of psalter manuscripts. In particular, these include numbering of the psalms. This can be observed in the Luttrell Psalter, for instance: a later hand added a small Arabic number next to every psalm.[41] Apparently, the presentation of psalms in numerical order, but without numbering each psalm, was deemed to be inadequate by a later user of the manuscript. Further additions may assign divisions to specific hours – or individual psalms to them, particularly in the eighth section. In the early fourteenth-century Ramsey Psalter (St. Paul im Lavanttal, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 58/1), German rubrics indicate the groups of psalms recited at Matins and Vespers on the respective days of the week.[42] Next to Psalm 143 (fol. 147^{r}), for instance, one can read 'Vesper am Sambstag', Psalm 143 being the first psalm to be recited at Vespers on Saturday, as indicated by the rubrics. These rubrics enabled a contemporary reader to find the beginning of the subsections within the eighth section. Thus, they made the manuscript more usable and linked different sections verbally to a specific use, namely the secular cursus.[43]

While large initials and frames can generally be considered effective finding aids, they are only of limited use with regard to the respective manuscript as a whole since they only allow easy access to a very limited number of psalms. Other requirements in the context of the Divine Office or even private devotional practices are given little or no consideration in the visual organisation. As Duffy

40 Duffy 2008, 93.

41 The numbers date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Brown points out, the numbering is in accordance with St Jerome's Vulgate; see Brown 2006, 31. Numbering can also be applied to the divisions rather than single psalms. This is the case in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl. G. 185, for example on fols 20^{r} and 43^{v}. Some pages of the manuscript are available online at the Digital Bodleian.

42 See Sandler 1999, 110–111. All the German rubrics are listed there; they also indicate the parts of Psalm 118 that were recited daily at Sext and None. For changes that did not require rebinding, such as adding texts in the margins, see Rudy 2016, 62–99.

43 As Sandler points out, the rubrics also 'reveal a shift in the use of the Ramsey psalter'; Sandler 1999, 111.

aptly puts it, 'the layout of medieval Psalters [...] militated against easy reference to individual Psalms other than those which headed the traditional eightfold or tenfold division of the Psalter'.[44] This also seems to be evident in the many different addenda and notes in the margins, some of which were inserted shortly after the manuscripts were written.

5 The *Gloria patri* as part of the layout

As mentioned before, the Divine Office was not only built on the recitation of psalms, but also included other elements, such as canticles or scriptural lessons. A doxology was repeated after each psalm. The term describes 'a form of praise to God', and as John Harper points out, what is known as the lesser doxology, i.e. *Gloria patri*, was 'recited at the end of most psalms, canticles, and hymns, and near the beginning of most Offices'.[45] Although the *Gloria patri* was occasionally inserted towards the end of psalter manuscripts, it has a more prominent place in some of them. This is the case in three psalter manuscripts held by the British Library, for instance: London, British Library, Arundel MS 305 (second half of the thirteenth century), Burney MS 345 (third quarter of the thirteenth century) and Royal MS 2 B III (first quarter of the thirteenth century).[46] While they all originate from northern or central France, Ghent or Bruges, other examples show that the inclusion of the *Gloria patri* is not an exclusive feature of manuscripts produced in this geographic area. Interestingly, the doxology in these three examples has not been included after every single psalm as one might expect with regard to its use during the Divine Office. Rather, its position in the manuscripts seems quite random at first glance. The three manuscripts present the lesser doxology in a relatively similar way, including it once, or more than once, albeit in varying stages of completeness. Based on the material objects, it can be concluded that the lesser doxology was only added where it was 'convenient' in terms of the visual organisation, as in London, British Library, Arundel MS 305.

Large initials have been drawn at the beginning of the divisions in all three manuscripts. In the case of London, British Library, Arundel MS 305,

44 Duffy 2008, 93.

45 Harper 1991, 297. See also Harper 1991, 300; Hughes 2004, 24.

46 For detailed records of the three manuscripts, see British Library, *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 'Detailed Record for Arundel 305', 'Detailed Record for Burney 345' and 'Detailed Record for Royal 2 B III'.

there are ten large initials that extend over six or seven lines (Fig. 9). The *Gloria patri* is included in two places, namely on fol. 104^{r}, directly following Psalm 67, and on fol. 177^{v}, directly following Psalm 108. In both cases, there is no visual distinction between the psalm text and doxology, i.e. no indication that the following lines are not another verse of the psalm itself. On fol. 104^{r}, the text of Psalm 67 leaves three lines of the page blank (Fig. 10). Since those initials that are at the beginning of a division take up six or seven lines, the initial of Psalm 68 could not have been placed in the remaining space on fol. 104^{r}. Rather than simply leaving these three lines blank and placing the large initial for Psalm 68 on the next page, as was the case in other manuscripts,[47] the doxology was used to fill the page.

Depending on how much space was left at the bottom of the page, the doxology was either included in its entirety or in parts in abbreviated or unabbreviated writing. In London, British Library, Arundel MS 305, the decision to fill the blank lines with the *Gloria patri* appears to have been an aesthetic one: the doxology was not added after every psalm, nor was it put at the end of every section of the psalter. In fact, this only happened in the two cases where the last psalm of one division ended with an unfavourable number of lines left on the page. Although the *Gloria patri* is part of the Divine Office, the lack of consistency in presenting the formula in the three manuscripts and the fact that it is not a compulsory element of psalter manuscripts indicates that there was no practical need to include the doxology in this type of manuscript. Instead, the text seems to have been used to meet the requirements of the layout.[48] Nonetheless, the lesser doxology is a text that is closely linked to and, indeed, essential for the Divine Office, thus linking the manuscript to the ritual.

47 This is the case in London, British Library, Add MS 54179, for instance, which was produced *c*. 1260. Three lines on fol. 45^{v} have been left blank; Psalm 52 is marked by a large initial on the following recto page.

48 Further systematic research is necessary to obtain more reliable figures on the actual frequency and possible geographical limitations of this phenomenon.

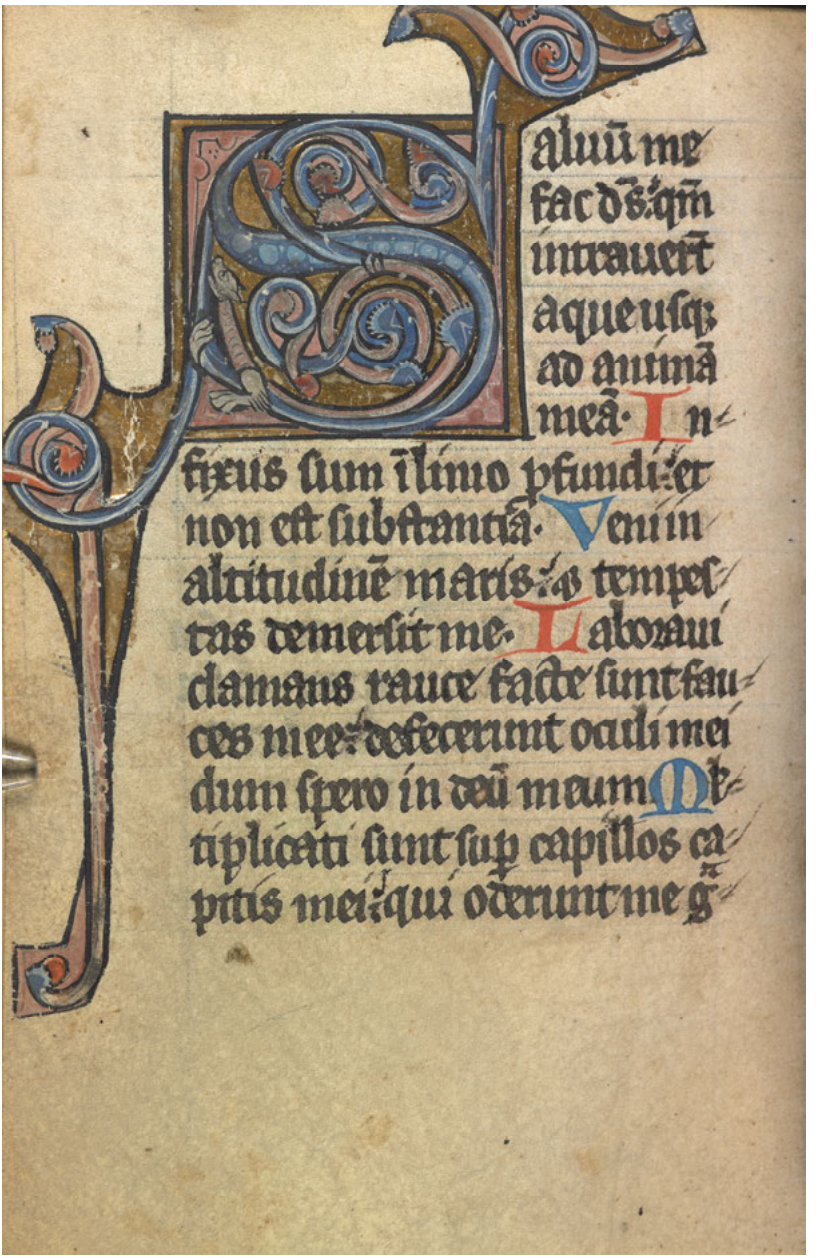

Fig. 9: Six-line foliage initial *S* to Psalm 68 in gold and colours with an incorporated animal and extensions into the margins. Spycer Psalter, France (north or central), second half of the thirteenth century, London, British Library, Arundel MS 305, fol. 104^{v}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

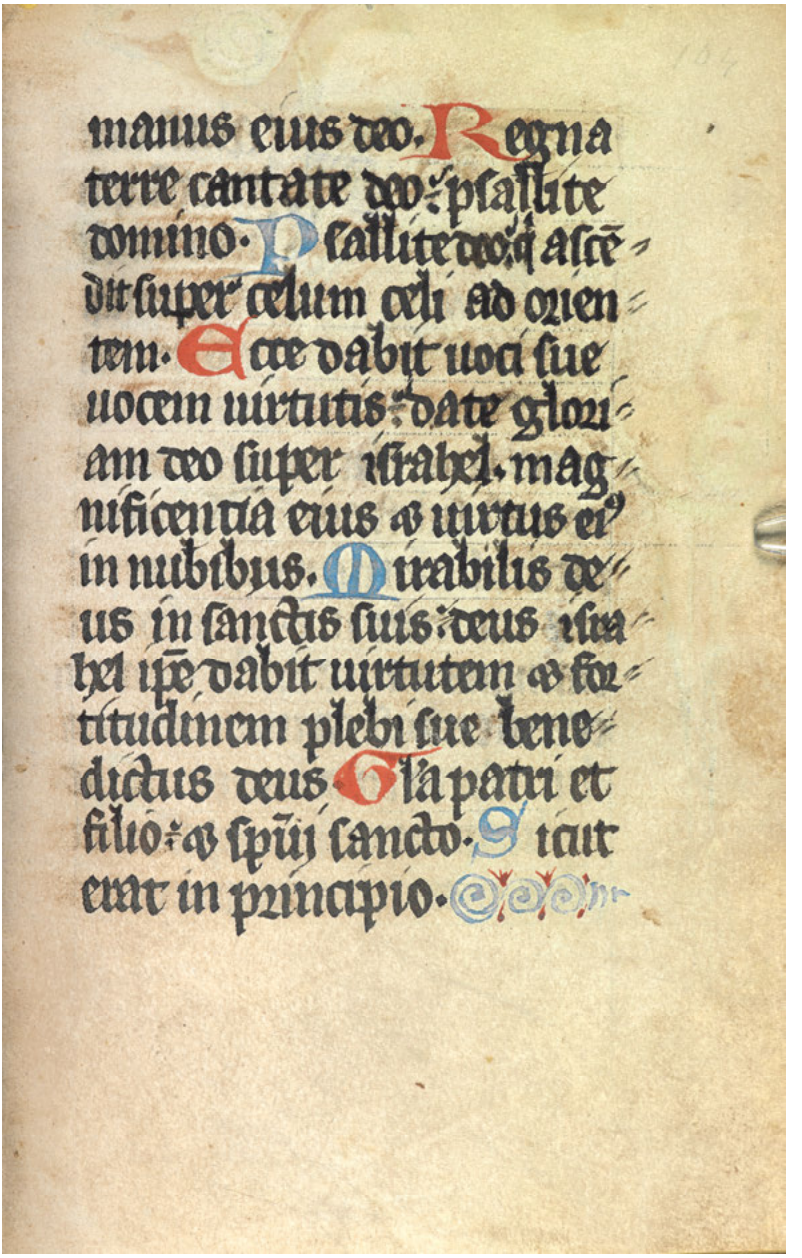

Fig. 10: The lesser doxology (*Gloria patri*) directly follows Psalm 67 in the last three lines. Spycer Psalter, France (north or central), second half of the thirteenth century, London, British Library, Arundel MS 305, fol. 104^{r}; courtesy of the British Library Board.

6 Conclusion: rituals in manuscripts and manuscripts in rituals

While non-monastic clergy or laypeople could find the beginning of the divisions recited in the secular cursus by using the visual organisation of their manuscripts, they were confronted with three issues. Firstly, although the majority of the psalms were recited in numerical order, some of them were used at other hours and were not actually repeated as part of their respective sections. However, this is not reflected in the visual organisation of psalter manuscripts. On the contrary, the 'removed' psalms have been written down in numerical order along with the others and usually lack any visual hints as to their use at different hours. Secondly, the eighth section comprises all Vespers psalms in both the monastic and non-monastic cursus. Consequently, it is divided into seven groups that correspond to the seven days of the week. Again, this is not usually reflected in the original visual organisation of psalter manuscripts. Thirdly, even though the distribution of psalms differs in the non-monastic and monastic cursus, liturgical psalter manuscripts were generally subdivided according to the non-monastic cursus, even if the manuscript was produced for a monastic user.

The first two problems were addressed and resolved to some extent by more recent, post-production additions in the margins, the most frequent being numbering of the psalms. In some cases, later additions also indicate a shift in use. Apart from the problems mentioned above, the reader had to be highly familiar with the manuscript in order to truly recognise and appreciate the intricacies of its visual organisation. Furthermore, it was essential for the reader to have at least some basic knowledge of the ritual practice. While the visual organisation of a psalter manuscript does structure the codex and does offer a potential reader easy access to certain psalms, the purposes for certain features of the visual organisation remain unclear without an understanding of the related practices. The division into the eight liturgically used groups of psalms, for example, is only understandable to readers if they can link them to the Divine Office and thus understand their origin.

Overall, the visual organisation of a manuscript can have an impact on the reading process, making different psalter manuscripts useful for certain purposes, but not for others. The visual division into liturgical sections makes direct reference to the secular Divine Office, enabling a reader to find the opening psalms of the seven sections to be prayed at Matins throughout the week as well as the group of Vespers psalms. The texts included in addi-

tion to the Book of Psalms, such as the canticles, were relevant for the Divine Office and also for private devotional practices, for example. However, it can be difficult to find them quickly, as they were not always highlighted visually. Regardless of the recurring structuring and textual elements in them, which are closely linked to the Divine Office, it is unclear how or to what extent psalter manuscripts were actually used. This is even more the case for psalter manuscripts owned by laypeople. Although it can be assumed that laypeople took part in the celebration of individual hours, especially Matins and Vespers, the exact use of the manuscripts is not documented.[49] It is therefore impossible to say what requirements there actually were on the users' side regarding manuscript architecture and whether (or how) the manuscripts were incorporated into ritual practices. However, various parts and characteristics of the Divine Office have become physically manifest in the manuscripts (e.g. the eightfold division) and are standard features of the visual organisation of medieval Latin psalter manuscripts.

Acknowledgements

This article is a result of the research project 'The "Painting" of Writing: The Iconicity of Writing and Word Pictures in Latin Psalter Manuscripts Used in Religious Rituals', which was carried out within the scope of the SFB 950 'Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe', funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). I would like to thank Hanna Wimmer for allowing me to work on the visual organisation of psalter manuscripts somewhat outside the actual focus of the project. I would also like to thank the members of the SFB 950 Working Group R: Ritual for asking the questions that prompted me to study the visual origanisation of psalter manuscripts in more detail.

49 The most likely use of the manuscripts, according to Duffy, was for laypeople to read along with the psalms as they were recited in their parish church, for example; see Duffy 2008, 94.

Manuscripts

Berlin,
  Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz,
    Ms. theol. Lat. fol. 358

Hamburg,
  Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek,
    Cod. in scrin. 85

London,
  British Library,
    Add MS 42130
    Add MS 54179
    Arundel MS 155
    Arundel MS 305
    Burney MS 345
    Royal MS 2 B III

Oxford,
  Bodleian Library,
    MS. Rawl. G. 185

Paris,
  Bibliothèque nationale de France,
    Latin 1152
    Latin 10435

St. Paul im Lavanttal,
  Stiftsbibliothek,
    Cod. 58/1

References

Billett, Jesse D. (2014), *The Divine Office in Anglo-Saxon England 597–c. 1000* (Henry Bradshaw Society, Subsidia, 7), London: The Boydell Press.

Black, Jonathan (2001), 'The Divine Office and Private Devotion in the Latin West', in Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (eds), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 45–71.

BnF, *Archives et manuscrits*, 'Latin 1152' <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc84406> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

BnF, *Archives et manuscrits*, 'Latin 10435' <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc72156s> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

Brandis, Tilo (1972), *Die Codices in scrinio der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg 1–110* (Katalog der Handschriften der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, 7), Hamburg: Hauswedell.

British Library, *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 'Detailed Record for Arundel 305', last revised on 2 December 2005 <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=1788&CollID=20&NStart=305> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

British Library, *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 'Detailed Record for Burney 345', last revised on 3 April 2014 <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8002&CollID=18&NStart=345> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

British Library, *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 'Detailed Record for Royal 2 B III' <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7949&CollID=16&NStart=20203> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Add MS 42130' <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=0&ref=Add_MS_42130> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Add MS 54179' <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_54179> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*, 'Arundel MS 155' <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Arundel_MS_155&index=0> (accessed on 5 February 2023).

Brown, Michelle P. (2006), *The Luttrell Psalter: A Facsimile. Commentary by Michelle P. Brown*, London: The Folio Society / British Library.

Büttner, Frank O. (1992), 'Die Illumination mittelalterlicher Andachtsbücher', in Hans-Peter Geh and Gerhard Römer (eds), *Mittelalterliche Andachtsbücher. Psalterien, Stundenbücher, Gebetbücher. Zeugen europäischer Frömmigkeit*, Karlsruhe: *s.n.*, 11–54.

Calkins, Robert G. (1983), *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Duffy, Eamon (2008), 'The Psalms and Lay Devotion in the Late Middle Ages', *The Bodleian Library Record*, 21/1: 93–105.

Dyer, Joseph (2012), 'The Bible in the Medieval Liturgy, c. 600–1300', in Marsden and Matter 2012, 659–679.

Gibson-Wood, Carol (1987), 'The Utrecht Psalter and the Art of Memory', *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 14/1–2: 9–15, 33–35.

Gross-Diaz, Teresa (2012), 'The Latin Psalter', in Marsden and Matter 2012, 427–445.

Harper, John (1991), *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Haseloff, Günther (1938), *Die Psalterillustration im 13. Jahrhundert: Studien zur Geschichte der Buchmalerei in England, Frankreich und den Niederlanden*, *s.l.*: *s.n.*

Hughes, Andrew (2004), *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology*, paperback edn, Toronto: University of Toronto Press [1st edn: 1982].

Kahsnitz, Rainer (1979), *Der Werdener Psalter in Berlin Ms. theol. lat. fol. 358: Eine Untersuchung zu Problemen mittelalterlicher Psalterillustration* (Beiträge zu den Bau- und Kunstdenkmälern im Rheinland, 24), Düsseldorf: Schwann.

Leroquais, Victor (1940), *Les Psautier manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France*, vol. 1, Mâcon: Protat.

Marsden, Richard and E. Ann Matter (eds) (2012), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *From 600 to 1450*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rankin, Susan (2017), 'Singing the Psalter in the Early Middle Ages', in Daniel J. DiCenso and Rebecca Maloy (eds), *Chant, Liturgy, and the Inheritance of Rome: Essays in Honour of Joseph Dyer*, London: The Boydell Press, 271–289.

Rudy, Kathryn M. (2016), *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized Their Manuscripts*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.

Sandler, Lucy Freeman (1999), *Der Ramsey-Psalter: Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe von Codex 58/1 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Paul im Lavanttal (fols. 2–5, 11–174) und Ms. M.302 der Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (fols. 1–5 = 6–10 der Originalhandschrift)*, vol. 2: *Commentary/Kommentar*, tr. Frankie and Hans-Joachim Kann (Codices Selecti, Commentarium, 103*), Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt.

Tumanov, Rostislav (2017), *Das Kopenhagener Stundenbuch: Bildprogramm und Layout im Kontext spätmittelalterlicher Lektüre- und Andachtspraktiken* (Sensus: Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst, 9), Cologne: Böhlau.

van der Horst, Koert (1996), 'The Utrecht Psalter: Picturing the Psalms of David', in Koert van der Horst, William Noel and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld (eds), *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, 't Goy: HES Publishers BV, 22–84.