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Objects or Actors? Medieval Latin Manuscripts in Ritual Performances

Abstract: Having the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) developed by Bruno Latour in mind, I explore the fecundity of an approach considering manuscripts as actors on the stage through three contrasted case studies from the medieval Latin tradition. Firstly I examine the metaphor of the open book in the *Dies irae*, a famous late medieval liturgical poem. The central section investigates how the authority of Pope Gregory I is embedded into liturgical books and how this authority is transferred to later periods, especially through Ekkehard IV of St Gall in his continuation of the *Casus sancti Galli*. Finally the most spectacular case of a manuscript acting in a ritual performance is that of the ninth-century Pürten Gospels re-used as a miraculous therapeutic instrument.

1 Introduction

In search of a comparative perspective on ritual uses of handwritten books within a fundamentally cross-cultural horizon, this paper will use the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), developed by the Paris-based scholar Bruno Latour and others in the 1980s.¹ It seems indeed tempting to extend ANT's fundamental caveat on behalf of subject-object dichotomies into a field such as manuscript culture(s), in this case with a specific focus on European material. As Beth Williamson put it in her seminal reflections on pre-modern material culture as a whole: 'Rather than thinking only of what people do with objects, we need also to think of how objects do things to and with people'.² In what follows, I would like to demonstrate the utility of such a change of perspective by presenting three case studies on ritual use of manuscripts in the context of Western Latin tradition – a choice which is clearly selective and culturally biased, as well as being inevitably conditioned (and limited) by my disciplinary competences. I do hope, however, that these examples will offer a potentiality of *translation* into other fields, to stimulate reflection and discussion not only on possible analogies but also – and probably even more so – on differences and even alterity.

1 See, in particular, Latour 2005.

2 Williamson 2014, 65.

2 ‘Another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life’: building a poetical phantasm

My first example, instead of dealing with a materially existing manuscript, refers to the literary narrative as an object. Its subject is a book celebrated in one of the most popular late medieval liturgical poems: the famous sequence *Dies irae* (‘Day of Wrath’), widely disseminated as part of the Mass of the Dead from the thirteenth century onwards:³ ‘probably the most representative, culturally momentous and therefore famous poem of the Latin Middle Ages’.⁴ The origin of the piece, attributed for a long time to the Franciscan friar Tommaso da Celano (d. 1260), still remains a riddle.⁵ Yet this did not, by any means, affect its impressive longevity – the sequence notably survived the almost complete extermination of this liturgical genre in the wake of the Tridentine Council⁶ – and its far-reaching cultural appeal to this day. The array of musical settings of the text within the long tradition of European Requiem composition is more than impressive, and the same holds true for the almost countless evidence of textual or musical quotation, ranging from the Cathedral scene of Goethe’s *Faust* right up to Howard Shore’s score for *The Lord of the Rings*.

In this paper, my intention is obviously not to deal with the career of the *Dies irae* but rather with some of its textual aspects, in particular with the fifth strophe which is conspicuously marked by bookish connotations: ‘Liber scriptus proferetur / in quo totum continetur / unde mundus iudicetur’ (‘A written book shall be brought forward, which contains everything and from which the world shall be judged’).⁷

First, two short preliminary clarifications: (1) This part of the text, like the whole sequence, refers to the Last Judgement as a unique event intended to close and suspend history, as it were, and therefore lacking an essential aspect of rituality, which is repetition. Nevertheless, this eschatological projection is obviously modelled on patterns of long-established juridical practices. (2) Although the *liber* mentioned here, instead of being a materially graspable entity,

³ Heyse 1986; Rädle 1987.

⁴ ‘[W]ahrscheinlich das repräsentativste, kulturell folgenreichste und darum berühmteste Gedicht des lateinischen Mittelalters’, Rädle 1987, 334.

⁵ A circumspect discussion of the scenario of the poem’s ‘phased’ genesis and propagation in Rädle 1987, 334–336.

⁶ For some illuminating reflections on its suppression by the Second Vatican Council, see Stock 2002.

⁷ All English translations, unless stated otherwise, are the author’s.

obviously has to be considered an element of literary fiction, its enormously influential agency as a highly symbolic socio-cultural ‘reality’ is not diminished at all by this qualification.

As with many other examples of medieval liturgical poetry, the sequence shows obvious evidence of a strategy of authorization by means of biblical references.⁸ For the general scenario of the ‘Day of Wrath’, the poet’s major inspiration seems to be Zephaniah 1:14–18.⁹ But, at least to some extent, he might equally have considered the established tradition of biblical commenting, as the very beginning of the verse under scrutiny – ‘*liber scriptus proferetur*’ – seems to reveal. The theme of the book is absent in Zephania, nor does the prophet use the verb *proferre*. I would like to suggest Jerome’s commentary on the minor prophets as a reference, for he has both elements, even presenting them in an inspiring conjunction. Conflating the Zephaniah text with the mention of the book in similar eschatological contexts (notably Apocalypse 20:12), Jerome presents the day of the Lord’s final judgement as the day ‘of the opening of the book’ (‘*aperiendi libri*’) and hence of the ‘disclosure of everybody’s conscience’ (‘*pandendae conscientiae singulorum*’) where ‘all the pomp and shadow of former crimes and vices and of a life of luxury are brought to light amidst the assembly’ (‘*et omnis pompa et imago antiquorum scelerum et vitiorum atque luxuriae proferetur in medium*’) (Fig. 1).¹⁰

Whereas in Jerome, *proferetur* with its important connotation of public promulgation refers to the sins listed within the *liber*, and hence to its contents, the *Dies irae* links the verb to the book itself, making it act as the true protagonist. This scenario is underscored by the last member of the strophe, ‘*unde mundus iudicetur*’ (‘[from the book] the world will be judged’), and is further reinforced by a simple but highly effective exploitation of a typical feature of the sequence’s formal structure with its couplet-like textual and musical parallelism between two subunits (Fig. 2).¹¹

⁸ For more details cf. Rädle 1987 and Stock 2002.

⁹ The sequence’s beginning (‘*Dies irae dies illa*’) can be found verbatim in v. 15 of the Zephania text, where we also have the *tuba* (v. 16), which offers the exact model. For the remarkable poetical potential of the biblical text itself, cf. Irsigler 1977.

¹⁰ Jerome, *Commentarium in Sophoniam*, ed. Adriaen 1970, ll. 399–405.

¹¹ Prose phrases in the first period of the genre, from around 1100, with increasingly rhythmic verses additionally structured (as in this case) by internal end-rhyme. Cf. Hiley 1993 (on ‘rhymed sequences’: 189–195), and as a case study on one of the earliest and most interesting examples of this shift, Arlt 1992.

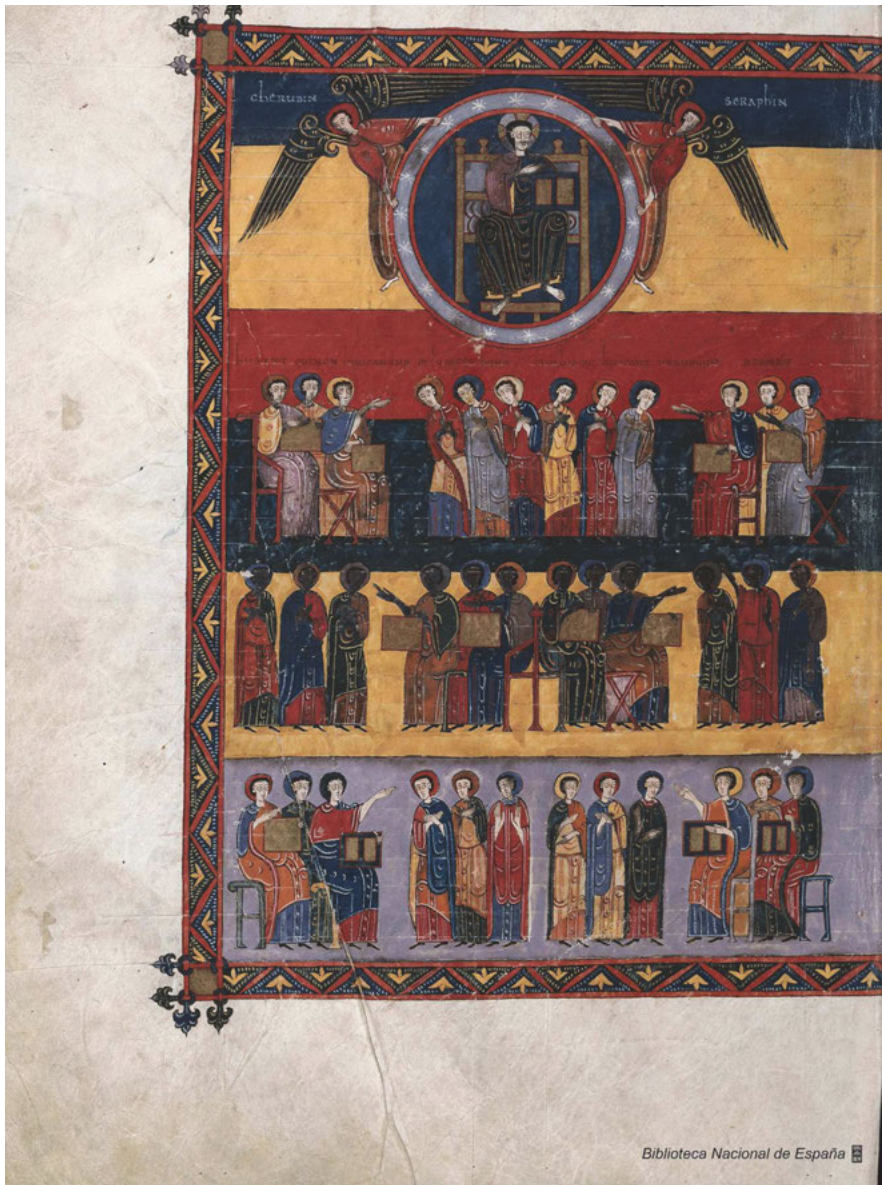


Fig. 1: Last Judgement. Facundus-Beatus, 1047; Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, VITR/14/2, fol. 250^v; public domain.

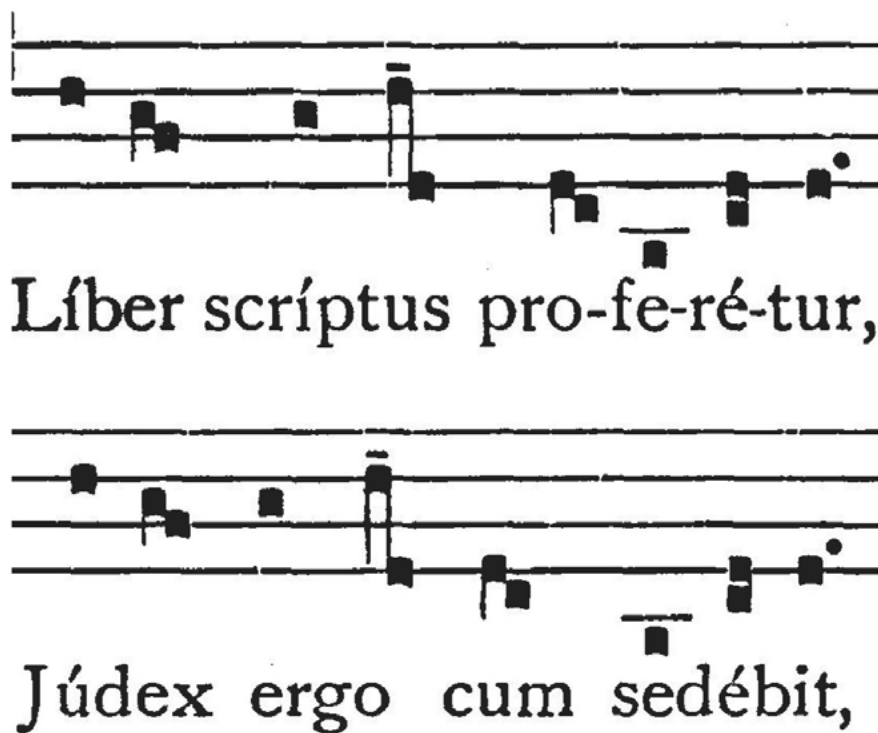


Fig. 2: *Dies irae*, str. 5–6 ('Liber scriptus [...]', 'Judex ergo [...]'); taken from *Liber usualis*, ed. Benedictines of Solesmes 1962, 1810 (details).

The analogous positioning of *liber* and *iudex* at the opening of the paired versicles, combined with an identical melodic shaping, enhances their semantic relation within the musical performance itself: the agency of the book represents that of the judge!

But there is more. Following Jerome's example, the author of the sequence mobilizes a biblical background reaching beyond the Old Testament prophet. The phrase 'liber scriptus' evidently goes back to Apocalypse 5:1: 'Et vidi in dextera sedentis super thronum librum scriptum intus et foris signatum sigillis septem' ('And I saw on the right hand of him who was sitting on the throne a book written inside and outside and sealed with seven seals'). This reference not only confirms the intimate nexus between book and judge, but equally leads to a better understanding of the somewhat puzzling phrase 'liber scriptus'. Far from just indicating a handwritten book, and thus being a somewhat tautological expression (in the thirteenth century a book could but be manuscript), the

phrase is an elliptic quote from the Johannine text. The author of the sequence has cut the complement 'intus et foris' ('inside and outside') of the verse of the Apocalypse, which in turn draws on Ezekiel 2:9–10: 'Et vidi et ecce manus missa ad me in qua erat involutus liber et expandit illum coram me qui erat scriptus intus et foris et scriptae erant in eo lamentationes et carmen et vae' ('Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me, and a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe').¹²

A glance at the material aspects of the *libri* mentioned is not devoid of interest here: Ezekiel's 'involutus liber' is of course a scroll and the same holds true for the Apocalypse, whereas medieval readers of these texts would tend to associate them with the idea of a codex, as illustrations in numerous manuscripts actually show. Now, 'scriptus intus et foris', while thinking of a scroll, simply means that it had writing on both of its sides, which was rather unusual. The biblical phrase is thus primarily meant to indicate the fullness of the message of the mysterious book in question: the entire body of God's revelation to men that could not be contained by the material capacity of an ordinary book.¹³ That is also Bede's interpretation in his influential commentary on the Apocalypse. According to him, the 'Liber scriptus intus et foris' stands for the Holy Scripture meant to contain the totality of knowledge about salvation: the Old Testament being written outside and the New Testament, as the visible fulfilment of the Old, inside.¹⁴ Given the fondness of allegorical thinking within patristic and medieval exegetic traditions, the growing influence of a re-reading of this interpretation in the sense of multi-layered semantics has nothing of a surprise. This is already the case with the seminal interpretation by Gregory the Great in his homilies on Ezekiel, where he distinguishes between outside and inside as representing the literal versus the spiritual understanding of Holy Scripture.¹⁵ Interestingly enough, the author of the *Dies irae* seems to have in mind the first part of Bede's argument, for, while he abbreviates the biblical quote, he replac-

¹² On the general importance of Ezekiel as a subtext of the Apocalypse, see Sängner 2006 and Boxall 2007.

¹³ See also Blount 2009, 103.

¹⁴ 'ET VIDI IN DEXTERA SEDENTIS SVPER THRONVM LIBRVM SCRIPTVM INTVS ET FORIS. Haec visio mysteria nobis sanctae scripturae per incarnationem domini patefacta demonstrat, cuius unitas concors vetus testamentum quasi exterius et novum continet interius', Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypseos*, I, 6, ed. Gryson 2001, 287, ll. 1–5.

¹⁵ 'Liber enim sacri eloquii intus scriptus est per allegoriam, foris per historiam, intus per spiritalem intelligentiam, foris autem per sensum litterae simplicem, adhuc infirmantibus congruentem', Gregory the Great, *Homeliae in Ezechielem prophetam*, I, 9, ed. Adriaen 1971, ll. 590–595.

es in turn the deleted phrase by supplementing its meaning according to Bede's idea of textual entirety:

Apocalypse 5:1: *Librum scriptum / intus et foris.*

Dies irae v. 5: *Liber scriptus proferetur / in quo totum continetur.*

Still, the accent is different. As the liturgical poem is actually drawing on the juridical categories of a lawsuit, its emphasis on the completeness of the book aims at all the records of the names and deeds of those who are going to be judged according to Apocalypse 20:11–12 (Vulgate,¹⁶ with King James Version below):

Et vidi thronum magnum candidum, et sedentem super eum, a cuius conspectu fugit terra, et cælum, et locus non est inventus eis. Et vidi mortuos magnos, et pusillos stantes in conspectu throni, et libri aperti sunt: et alius Liber apertus est, qui est vitæ: et iudicati sunt mortui ex his, quæ scripta erant in libris secundum opera ipsorum.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

It is conspicuous that this amazing text, which also marks pictorial representations of the eschatological judgement from medieval manuscript illuminations, resonates at this point of the sequence. If one follows Hans Blumenberg's fascinating discussion of Western metaphors on books and reading, in his *Legibility of the World*, this biblical model reflects a typical scenario of a juridical process where the judge relies on two different species of reference books for his sentence: the legal code – Augustine in his *City of God* proposed to understand the many books of Apocalypse 20 as those of the biblical Old and New Testament, functioning as a mandatory moral compass¹⁷ – and the records of human actions. The author of the sequence however suspends this comparative duplicity, reducing the plurality of books of Apocalypse 20 to the one and only 'Liber

¹⁶ *Biblia sacra*, ed. Weber 2007.

¹⁷ 'Ergo illi libri, quos priore loco posuit, intellegendi sunt sancti, et veteres et novi, ut in illis ostenderetur, quæ deus fieri sua mandata iussisset' ('By those books, then, which he first mentioned, we are to understand the sacred books old and new, that out of them it might be shown what commandments God had enjoined'), Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei libri XXII*, 10, 14, ed. Dombart and Kalb 1955, ll. 31–33.

scriptus intus et foris' conflated with the *Liber vitae*, the Book of Life in which everything is contained.

Apocalypse 5:1 further enhances the auratic status of the 'Liber scriptus' while insisting on its strongly arcane nature by presenting the book as being 'sealed with seven seals' ('signatum sigillis septem'). This is another significant mystification of the book which, although immediately following the phrase 'intus et foris', is again omitted by the poet, despite the broadly attested medieval iconographic tradition of this remarkable feature.¹⁸

Switching to the commentary tradition, it is interesting to go back again to Augustine, who makes a particularly interesting point while dealing with the almost surreal concept of a single book containing the entirety of all deeds of mankind:

*Qui liber si carnaliter cogitetur, quis eius magnitudinem aut longitudinem ualeat aestimare? Aut quanto tempore legi poterit liber, in quo scriptae sunt uniuersae uitae uniuersorum? An tantus angelorum numerus aderit, quantus hominum erit, et vitam suam quisque ab angelo sibi adhibito audiet recitari? Non ergo unus liber erit omnium, sed singuli singulorum.*¹⁹

If this book be materially considered, who can reckon its size or length, or the time it would take to read a book in which the whole life of every man is recorded? Shall there be present as many angels as men, and shall each man hear his life recited by the angel assigned to him? In that case there will be not one book containing all the lives, but a separate book for every life.

As Augustine's conclusion is hardly compatible with the biblical text compelling us to think of just one single book, he no doubt has to call on a sort of miraculous divine power to solve the conundrum. However, speaking in such a 'physical' way (*carnaliter* in Augustin's terms) of a book of incommensurable size and ponderousness might have substantially contributed to the 'imaginary' tradition of the eschatological *Liber vitae* up to such suggestive representations as William Blake's design *The Day of Judgement* of 1805 (Fig. 3).

¹⁸ Cf. the entries 'Apokalypsemotive' and 'Thron (Hetoimasia)' in Kirschbaum and Braunfels 1968–1976, vol. 1, col. 143 and vol. 4, col. 307.

¹⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei libri XXII*, 20, 14, ed. Dombart and Kalb 1955, ll. 35–40.



Fig. 3: William Blake, *The Day of Judgement*, 1805; watercolour illustration for Robert Blair's poem *The Grave*; courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago.

A last comment on the *Liber vitae*: even though we are dealing here with an imaginary book referring to an eschatological future, this 'phantasm' also produces a historical phenomenon that can still be found in specifically organized manuscripts storing institutional memory, produced since the late eighth century and reaching their peak in the ninth century. Sometimes, these bookish con-

tainers of memory were purposefully called ‘libri vitae’, an obvious hint at the eschatological reference on which these lists were supposed to be modelled.²⁰ The concept of name is absolutely crucial in this context, something that becomes clear if we look again at the fifth chapter of the Apocalypse: ‘Whoever prevails, so shall he be clothed in white vestments. And I will not delete his name from the Book of Life’.²¹ This is a pledge taking up the archetypal promise to the people of Israel formulated in the prophetic message of Isaiah: ‘I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine’ (Isaiah 43:1). With such biblical resonances the crowded and almost congested name lists of these manuscripts are given their real significance. Some exceptionally decorated examples such as the confraternity book of the church of Durham with its names written throughout in gold and silver ink seems even to lay claim to a *material* emulation of the heavenly reference they are foreshadowing.

To briefly sum up this first part: the ‘liber scriptus’ of the *Dies irae* is definitely more than just an object. A phantasm empowered by biblical authorization as well as a reference for materially existing manuscripts, this imaginary book, charged with highly auratic connotations, enters on stage as a leading actor of the ritually shaped finale of the *theatrum mundi*, cast as a master of eternal life and death.

3 Books authorizing ritual

While the case of the *Dies irae* paradigmatically illustrates the fundamental nature of Christian liturgy as a practice bound forwards, towards its eschatological completion, the service books used as ritual tools to orchestrate this anticipation of ‘heavenly liturgy’ are instead oriented backwards, essentially subjected by tradition to concepts of standardization. That is why in a medieval perspective, reformation of liturgical discipline is fundamentally conceived as a return to a supposedly ideal state of original perfection. Thus, to paraphrase the emblematic title of a magisterial study by Klaus Schreiner on late medieval monastic reformation,²² renovation is mostly remembrance.

This is particularly evident in one of the crucial moments of the history of Christian liturgy in the Latin West: the eagerly desired and politically under-

²⁰ Niederkorn-Bruck 2012, 384.

²¹ ‘Qui vicerit, sic vestietur vestimentis albis, et non delebo nomen eius de Libro vitæ’ (Apocalypse 5:3).

²² Schreiner 1988.

pinned 'Romanization' of liturgical rites and repertoires promoted by the Frankish rulers in the Carolingian period, on many occasions and especially in Gaul harshly defended as the pristine purity of tradition ('*puritas antiquitatis*') demanding to be protected against innovations.²³ Numerous liturgical codices of this period explicitly claim their dependence on 'authentic' Roman books ('*libri authentic*'),²⁴ many of them explicitly hoisting the flag of Pope Gregory I.²⁵ In the case of sacramentaries, this is performed by means of an almost standardized prefatory formula referring to the venerable model 'worked out by the Roman Pope Saint Gregory' ('*a sancto Gregorio Papa Romano editus/editum*'),²⁶ whereas the pope's authorship of the body of the Mass chant is indicated by a versified encomium, the famous *Gregorius Praesul* (Fig. 4).²⁷

The early-ninth-century Monza Cantatorium, the oldest known copy of Frankish reception of this repertory, probably from northern France (perhaps Corbie), represents a particularly interesting case of this labelling. The manuscript written on purple dyed parchment not only has *Gregorius Praesul* as an introduction to the textual body inside the manuscript (fol. 2^r) but signals the presumed 'Gregorian' authorship even before the book is opened (Fig. 5).

The codex has the typical oblong shape of early Cantatoria and is bound in a re-used early-sixth-century consular diptych showing portraits of two Roman consuls slightly reshaped and renamed by two captions as David and Gregory, the latter being additionally tagged above his (later) tonsured head by the first two verses of the aforementioned poem.²⁸ By such a suggestive parallelization, Gregory and the body of chants named after him are embedded in the reference tradition of cultic praise par excellence: the biblical singing of psalms attributed to David!

²³ The phrase is taken from an often-quoted additional canon of the Synod of Meaux (845) condemning non-biblical additions to the traditional 'Gregorian' repertory. See Crocker 1977, 418–420; Haug 1991; more recently Leitmeier 2013, 38.

²⁴ See Heinzer 2008.

²⁵ On the ideological backgrounds of this ascription cf. Mews 2011.

²⁶ Deshusses 1971, 62–63; Heinzer 2008, 39–40.

²⁷ Hesbert 1935, 2; Stäblein 1968; McKinnon 2001.

²⁸ For more details see Steenbock 1965, 72–73 (no. 7 and Fig. 9), who proposes to date the adaptation of the diptych including the Gregory caption to around 900, and Palazzo 1998, 79–80.

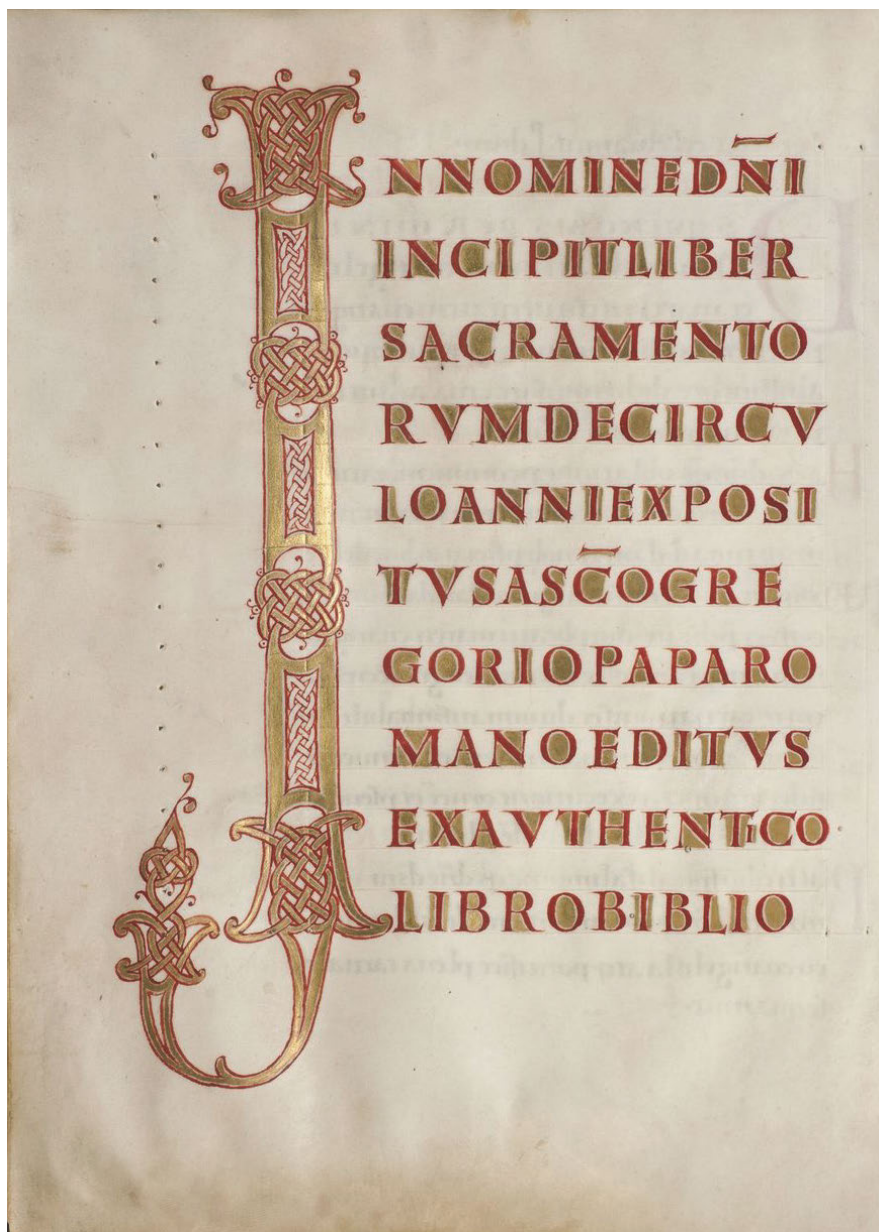


Fig. 4: Reichenau sacramentary, Reichenau, mid-ninth century; Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Don. 191, fol. 5^v; public domain.



Fig. 5: Monza Cantatorium, ivory diptych (King David and Pope Gregory the Great), early ninth century; Monza, Tesoro della Basilica S. Giovanni, 109; https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dittico_di_gregorio_magno_monza_museo_della_cattedrale.jpg (accessed on 18 July 2023); public domain.

The use of ivory plates for bindings of this genre of book²⁹ seems to be a rather consistent practice, as the material evidence of preserved specimens suggests.³⁰ Moreover, this tradition is historically attested by an oft-quoted passage by the ninth-century liturgical commentator Amalarius of Metz, in his *Liber officialis* of 820, in which he compares the Christian cantor to the Old Testament Levites, the musicians who performed in the Temple:

²⁹ For a general presentation of its typology and history, see Huglo 2001.

³⁰ Jeffery 1995, 65–66; Ganz 2015, 302; more generally on use (and re-use) of the material for bindings of liturgical codices, see Carmassi 2015, 90–95.

*'Laudabunt enim Dominum levitae per manus David, sive in organis quae ipse fecit sive psalmos quos ipse instituit concinentes'. Eorum vice cantor sine aliqua necessitate legendi tenet tabulas in manibus ut figurant illud psalmistae: 'Laudent nomen eius in choro et tympano et psalterio psallant ei.'*³¹

'The Levites will praise the Lord through the hands of David, either with the instruments that he made or by singing the psalms that he instituted' [quoting Bede's commentary in Esdras]. In their *place the cantor holds tablets in his hands*, without any need to read [i.e. sing] from them, so that they symbolize the words of the Psalmist: 'Let them praise his name with dancing, psalming to him with tambourine and lyre!' [Ps. 149:3]

This allegorizing actually suits the presence of David on the Monza tablets surprisingly well, with Amalarius adding an important remark on the material aspect of the tablets: 'Tabulas quas cantor in manu tenet solent fieri de osse' ('They are customarily made of bone').³² Obviously, the Cantatorium is the typical attribute of the cantor and his outstanding role in the field of liturgical chant, as a signature of his noble office of directing the liturgical chant of the community. This seems to be indicated by the formulaic phrase 'Cantor cum cantatorio' in the description of the Roman Mass in the *Ordo Romanus I* of around 700: between the readings of the Epistle and of the Gospel, 'Cantor cum cantatorio ascendit et dicit responsum' ('the cantor with the Cantatorium ascends [the steps of the ambo] and chants the response').³³

While artefacts like the Monza Cantatorium do speak for themselves, it is equally true – as Andreas Haug has emphasized in a survey on the dossier of narratives about this transalpine migration – that we actually have very little reliable contemporary information about the organization of this process, and know little about the actors and media on which such transfers were based.³⁴ That means, as Haug judiciously points out, that our scholarly understanding of this complex and highly momentous cultural process is marked significantly by what Patrick Geary has called 'Phantoms of Remembrance', that is, by narratives of authors writing several generations later³⁵ and thus creating what Jan Assmann calls memory which is 'made'.³⁶

³¹ Amalarius of Metz, *Liber officialis*, III, 16, ed. Hanssens 1948, 303.

³² Amalarius of Metz, *Liber officialis*, ed. Hanssens 1948, 303.

³³ Andrieu 1960, 87, no. 57.

³⁴ Haug 2014.

³⁵ 'Much of what we think we know about the early Middle Ages was determined by the changing problems and concerns of eleventh century men and women, not by those of the more distant past', Geary 1994, 7.

³⁶ Assmann 2005, 7–8.

The story told by Ekkehard IV in his continuation of the *Casus sancti Galli*³⁷ on the famous St Gall Cantatorium of around 922 to 925, considered to be the oldest known consistently notated record of Roman-Frankish Mass chant,³⁸ now housed in the former abbey's library as St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 359,³⁹ fits perfectly into that picture (Fig. 6).

The manuscript still shows the typical diptych shape and format as in the case of the Monza codex, and its front cover presents two ivory reliefs representing Dionysus fighting the inhabitants of India, stemming from an early-sixth-century Byzantine context (Fig. 7):⁴⁰ a deliberate use of *spolia* whose material and iconography were seemingly intended to give the manuscript an aura of venerable antiquity and hence of outstanding authority, which is actually the nucleus of Ekkehard's narrative, created about a century after its production. The codex is celebrated here as a direct copy from the purported original of Gregory himself, the *authenticum* as it is called here again, eventually brought to St Gall by a Roman cantor. This bears witness to an increasing emphasis of the role of the book within the context of the transfer, typical of the eleventh century, as Andreas Haug has emphasized.⁴¹ At its final destination the book was allegedly placed on a kind of pulpit in the choir of the abbey church, to serve as a reference to be looked at as in a sort of mirror ('quasi in speculo') in instances of doubt about the correctness of a given chant: 'in cantu si quid dissentitur'. Once again, as in the case of the eschatological *Liber vitae*, the book is enthroned and appointed to act as a judge!

³⁷ Ekkehard IV, *St. Galler Kloster geschichten*, ed. and tr. Haefele 2013, 106–109; for some nuances of the translation see now Ekkehard IV, *Casuum Sancti*, ed. and tr. Haefele and Tremp 2020, 279.

³⁸ The codex was evidently designed for this new element from the very start, as the scribe purposefully left the required space between the text lines to have the neumes filled in.

³⁹ <<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/csg/0359>> (accessed on 4 April 2023). Most recent codicological description: von Euw 2008, 470–472 (no. 131). See also Guilmar 2015; Heinzer 2015.

⁴⁰ Von Euw 2000, 96–97.

⁴¹ Haug 2014, 121: 'Die Texte des neunten und die des elften Jahrhunderts unterscheiden sich signifikant hinsichtlich der darin waltenden Vorstellungen von den Medien und Mechanismen des Transfers. An diesen Differenzen lässt sich die wachsende Bedeutung von Büchern für den räumlichen Transfer und für das Tradieren von Musik ablesen und auch der mediengeschichtliche Übergang zu Büchern mit Notation'.

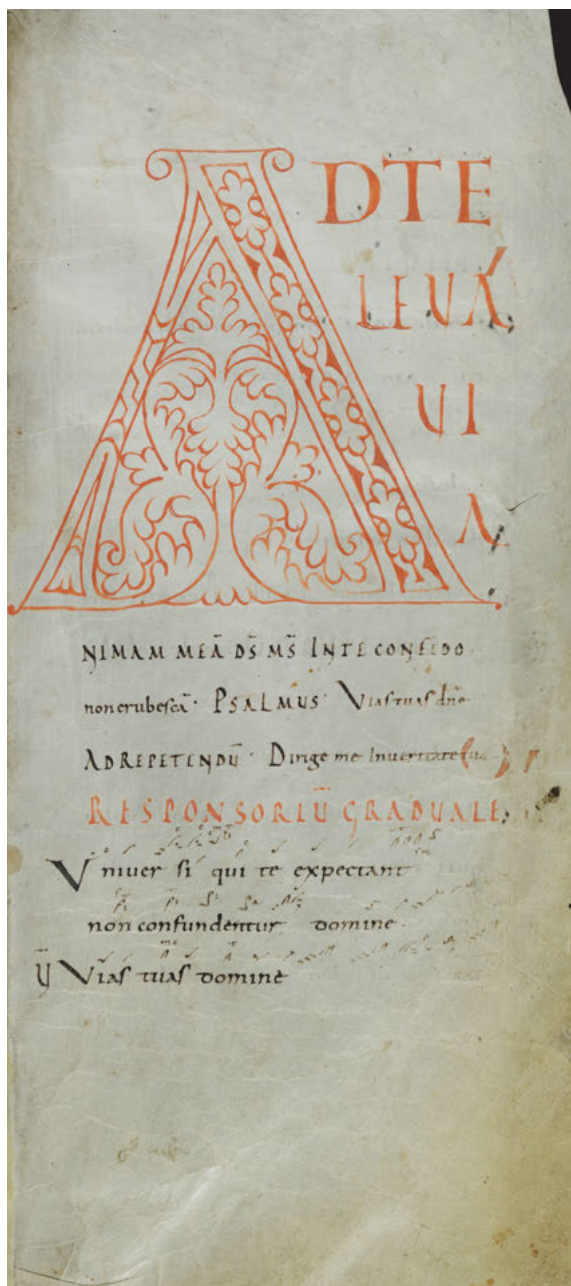


Fig. 6: Cantatorium of St Gall, c. 922–925; St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 359, p. 25; public domain.



Fig. 7: Cantatorium of St Gall, ivory cover (early sixth century); St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 359.

Ekkehard seems to suggest here an imitation of the Roman situation where, he states, the autograph of Gregory's (Mass) antiphonary was enthroned in a similar way:

Erat Rome instrumentum quoddam et theca ad antiphonarii authentici publicam omnibus adventantibus inspectionem: repositorium quod a cantu nominabant cantarium.

*Tale quidem ipse apud nos – ad instar illius circa aram Apostolorum cum authentico – locari fecerit, quem ipse attulit exemplato antiphonario.*⁴²

In Rome there existed a sort of instrument with a shelf allowing public inspection of the autograph of the antiphonary to everybody who would come, a repository which from 'cantus' was named 'cantarium'.

A similar one to that which was located in the vicinity of the altar of the Apostles which he [Romanus]⁴³ had placed there for the copy of the antiphonary he had brought.

This rather intricate text demands some comments. Its subtext is the narrative of the transalpine reception – and alteration! – of Roman ('Gregorian') chant in the Carolingian period as it is seminally told in Chapters 6 to 10 of the second book of the late-ninth-century *Vita Gregorii Magni* by John the Deacon,⁴⁴ with the 'original' antiphonary of the pope as the main protagonist of this story. This background is confirmed by the following addition in the upper margin of page 54 of the late-ninth- to early-tenth-century St Gall copy of John's text (St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 578), already mentioned by Ildefons von Arx and attributed to Ekkehard's own hand by Susan Rankin.⁴⁵

*Subaudis: Petrum et Romanum. Sed Romanum febre infirmatum nos Sanctigallenses quidem retinuimus, qui nos cantilenas Karolo iubente edocuit, et antiphonarium e suo exemplatum in cantario, sicut Rome est iuxta Apostolorum aram, locavit.*⁴⁶

You should supply: Peter and Romanus. But as for Romanus, falling ill with a fever, we of St Gall kept him with us, and he taught as the melodies at Charlemagne's behest, and located the antiphonary copied from its own model in the same way as it was in Rome in the vicinity of the altar of the Apostles.

⁴² I am following here the edition of Ekkehard IV, *Casuum S. Galli Continuatio I*, ed. von Arx 1829, 102–103, while the somewhat over-articulating punctuation (for the sake of presenting the structure of the text as clearly as possible) and the translation are mine.

⁴³ Not Petrus, as Haug 2014, 142 erroneously has it.

⁴⁴ Buchinger 2008, 137–138, n. 86.

⁴⁵ <<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/csg/0578//54>> (accessed on 4 April 2023). See Ekkehard IV, *Casuum S. Galli Continuatio I*, ed. von Arx 1829, 103, n. 55; Rankin 1995, 373–374.

⁴⁶ St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 578, p. 54.

The page where the note was inserted into St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 578 contains John's Chapters 9 and 10 with the author mentioning Gregory's 'authenticus antiphonarius' and the two (unnamed) singers sent by Pope Hadrian to Gaul on Charlemagne's behest, to bring the true tradition of Roman chant to the Frankish church, and Ekkehard's addition refers exactly to this couple of singers.⁴⁷ Its wording is very close to that of the aforementioned passage of the *Casus* (see above) which most likely goes back to this note. In both instances, Ekkehard suggests a parallel between the Roman situation of Gregory's 'original', and the way its copy (the 'exemplatus antiphonarius') is staged at St Gall. This point is somehow unclear in Hans F. Haefele's translation,⁴⁸ whereas von Arx, while editing the text for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, must have already sensed the potential danger of confusion, and added a footnote to ensure the right understanding of the passage.⁴⁹

What might make Ekkehard's construction a little puzzling is his mention of an 'altar of the Apostles'.⁵⁰ In this specific Roman context this obviously points to Peter and Paul as the Princes of the Apostles, traditionally associated with the Church of Rome. However, as they are buried in two different places, there is no trace of a Roman altar dedicated to the two of them. This irritation is most likely due to the blurred description of the Roman situation by John the Deacon himself,⁵¹ that Ekkehard tries to render with his phrase 'circa aram apostolorum', presumably shaped on a similar but widespread wording clearly referring to Rome as the 'home' of the two apostolic saints: the formula of the 'limina apostolorum', attested as early as the eighth century. As for the interesting term *cantarium*, it might equally have been coined by Ekkehard. The *Mittelateinisch-*

⁴⁷ See Haug 2014, 108–109, n. 15 and 132.

⁴⁸ Ekkehard IV, *Casuum Sancti*, ed. and tr. Haefele and Tremp 2020, 275–276, n. 14.

⁴⁹ Ekkehard IV, *Casuum S. Galli Continuatio I*, ed. von Arx 1829, 103, n. 55: 'Sensus horum verborum est iste: Romanus antiphonarium hoc, quod ipse Romae de authentico descriptum attulerat, in S. Galli templo exposuit eodem modo quo b. Gregorius M. antiphonarium suum circa aram apostolorum locaverat' ('The sense of these words is this: Romanus exposed the antiphonary, he had brought himself from Rome as a copy of the autograph, in the church of St Gall doing this in the same way as the holy Gregory the Great had located his antiphonary in the vicinity of the altar of the Apostles'; my translation).

⁵⁰ I was not able to find any other evidence for the term 'ara apostolorum'.

⁵¹ In the section of his *Vita Gregorii* under scrutiny here, the venerable chant book is mentioned along with other relics of the Pope (including his bed and the rod he used to exert discipline over the boys of his school). According to the author, these were preserved without any further distinction in Gregory's two former habitations near the entrance of Old St Peter's and at the Lateran basilica.

*es Wörterbuch*⁵² records only two instances of its use: Ekkehard's *Casus* and an addition to the *Gesta Karoli Magni* of Notker Balbulus in a twelfth-century manuscript of the *Gesta* written by a scribe of Zwiefalten abbey obviously familiar with the passage in question of Ekkehard's *Casus*.⁵³

The strategy seems obvious: Ekkehard, trying to produce a *pro domo* re-writing of the narrative that Johannes Diaconus had drafted a century and a half before him, bridged his re-writing on one of the two *cantores* sent from Rome – to which he gave a (programmatic) name, Romanus – and on a set of manuscripts: Gregory's 'antiphonarius authenticus' allegedly preserved in Rome, and the Cantatorium at St Gall as its transalpine counterfort. It is interesting though to observe a slight but important difference when comparing the aforementioned notice he entered in the St Gall manuscript of the *Vita sancti Gregorii*, with the version of the same story in the *Casus*. In the notice of St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 578 (see above) a third book is edged in between the two piers, for here, interestingly enough, Ekkehard has the St Gall copy enthroned on the repository by Romanus 'copied from his own transcript' ('e suo exemplatum'). Ekkehard might have been aware of the Cantatorium as a codex written by St Gall scribes in a style he was familiar with, and would therefore have known that it was not a Roman book. In the more literary context of the *Casus*, however, he condensed his narrative rather effectively in view of a two-step rhythm with the Roman original and the book Romanus had brought from Rome ('quem ipse attulit') to represent the Roman original at St Gall. While this trick highlights Ekkehard's skills as a storyteller, the scenario of 'Phantoms of Remembrance' (with a nod at Patrick Geary's felicitous formula) is garnished by a thoroughly material element: the ivories on the front cover of the manuscript!

Where did these spolia come from and when did they travel to St Gall? To quote Anton von Euw: 'Es gibt eigentlich nur eine sinnvolle Erklärung, nämlich, dass sie schon Bestandteil der Hülle jenes Antiphonars (Cantatorium) waren, von dem Cod. 359 im 10. Jahrhundert abgeschrieben wurde' ('There is really only one sensible explanation, namely that they were already part of the cover of the very antiphonary (Cantatorium) from which St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St.

⁵² Prinz et al. 1969, 186. Cf. Peter Stotz's 'Introduction' in Stotz 2002, vol. 1, 323 (§ 68.9).

⁵³ According to Hans H. Haefele (Notker der Stammler, *Taten Kaiser Karls des Großen*, ed. Haefele 1959, 15, n. 4). However, this addition ('Sed et piissimus imperator cantorem illum sibi allec-tum, Petrum quidem nomine, sancti Galli cenobio immorari aliquantis-per iusserat. Illic enim et cantarium sicut hodie est cum autentico antiphonario locans Romani cantare et discere [...] iussit') was again affected by the already discussed misunderstanding, as the scribe had the Gregorian *authenticum* located in St Gall instead of Rome! See now Ekkehard IV, *Casuum Sancti*, ed. and tr. Haefele and Tremp 2020, 515, n. 1.

Gallen, Cod. 359 was copied in the tenth century').⁵⁴ This recalls Ekkehard's aforementioned addition to the *Vita Gregorii Magni* in St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 578, where he had the codex brought by Romanus copied on the spot by local scribes producing what is now St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, Cod. 359. The ivories of the former book's binding would then have been re-used to clothe the St Gall copy, staging it as a tangible pledge of its venerable genealogy as a 'Roman' book, as it were, and thus acting as a warranty of conformity with pristine Roman tradition. Moreover, and this is a really salient point, the ivories were also meant to authorize an unheard of element, which the Monza Cantatorium for example did not contain: the musical *notation* that the book crafted north of the Alps consistently contained; hence, not only the textual but even the *musical* aspect of the 'Gregorian' repertory comes into play.

Literary and material aspects thus converge to make the Cantatorium an emblematical symbol of the abbey's claim to *Romanitas*. This is a strategy which seems to dovetail perfectly with a tendency that has been singled out by modern scholars such as Steffen Patzold⁵⁵ and others, as the intrinsic rationale of the *Casus*: 'Ekkehard uses the assembled tales on late-ninth- and tenth-century life in the Gallus cloister as evidence for his house's adherence to an unremitting preservation of the Rule of Benedict in his own day' – and hence as an argument at rejecting external attempts at reform.⁵⁶ As Karl Schmid suggested in 1991,⁵⁷ the momentum of this *causa scribendi* might have become even stronger after 1034, the year of the imposition of the 'foreign' abbot Norpert, stemming from Stavelot as a stronghold of monastic reform in early-eleventh-century Lotharingia. His arrival seems to have caused severe troubles within the St Gall community, which Ekkehard might actually have had in mind in his Chapter 136 when speaking of 'times of a schism among the monks' that his community suffered 'from the French'.⁵⁸ Against this backdrop, Ekkehard's creation of such a ponderous 'Codex-myth'⁵⁹ appears in an even more programmatic light: a monastery in possession of no less than a copy of Pope Gregory's own antiphonary, has every right to claim its exemption from any need of reformation as it is supposed to follow an unimpeachable – Roman – tradition of liturgical practice.

⁵⁴ Von Euw 2000, 97.

⁵⁵ Patzold 2000; Patzold 2013.

⁵⁶ Kruckenberg 2017, 64 (cf. also 60–61 with a rich bibliography in n. 6).

⁵⁷ Schmid 1991, 122.

⁵⁸ Ekkehard IV, *St. Galler Klostergeschichten*, ed. and tr. Haefele 2013, 264 ('tempora quae a Gallis patimur monachorum scismatis'), commented by Patzold 2013, 301–302.

⁵⁹ In the sense of the term coined by Graf 2015.

However, such ‘monumentalizing’ of the codex might outshine a subtle but important relativization of its agency in the way Ekkehard himself tells this story. Here, the book alone appears to be insufficient to fully bear the transmission of the repertory it is charged to convey from Rome over the Alps, as it needs to be accompanied by an expert of *vocal performance*: the Roman cantor.⁶⁰ Yet, this interesting alliance between human and bookish agency is not just a personal invention of Ekkehard, but can be observed as a consistent leitmotif in narratives about ‘missionary’ achievements in the context of ecclesiastical reform activities. For the eleventh century, suffice it to remember the consistent policy of the Hirsau movement to settle new foundations systematically with monks equipped with a basic set of books, including the *Constitutiones Hirsau-gienses* and mostly (carefully corrected) liturgical manuscripts. These were considered indispensable for the installation of a regular monastic life⁶¹ – a practice echoed slightly later by the paradigmatic formula of the *Summa Cartae Caritatis* (c. 1123/1124) about the foundation of new houses corresponding to the guidelines of the order: ‘Non mittendum esse abbatem novum in locum novellum sine monachis ad minus XII nec sine libris istis; psalterio, hymnario, collectaneo, antiphonario, gradali, regula, missali’ (‘A new abbot is not to be sent to a new place without at least twelve monks, or without these books: psalter, hymnal, collectary, antiphony, gradual, rule, missal’).⁶² Exemplary personnel – the number of monks obviously points to the model of the twelve Apostles – and exemplary books are the two bearers of this mission, with the humans interpreting and animating the non-human entities. To quote Latour again: ‘an actor on stage is never alone in acting’.⁶³

Ekkehard’s two-track model thus fits with a long-term perspective. Yet, looking at the Romanus episode, one cannot help detecting some in-house background. I am thinking here of an interesting feature of the prologue of Notker’s *Liber Hymnorum*,⁶⁴ another foundational St Gall story: the ominous ‘presbyter quidam de Gimedia’, a priest who had fled from Jumièges, which had recently been devastated by the Normans, and who had arrived at St Gall with his antiphony (‘antiphonarium suum deferens secum’), a book which allegedly acted as a trigger for Notker’s invention. Thus, once again, a cleric arriving from a distant shore with his book! There is no doubt as to the obvious differ-

⁶⁰ Rankin 1995, 371–376.

⁶¹ Heinzer 1991, 263.

⁶² Bouton and van Damme 1974, 121; English translation according to Waddell 1999, 408.

⁶³ Latour 2005, 46.

⁶⁴ Haug 2008 (with an edition and translation of the text).

ence of value and function between the two books, or to the contrasting messages of the two stories: innovation in Notker's case, affirmation of tradition with Ekkehard. Still, the latter certainly was more than familiar with the former's text, and we might detect at least some traces of continuity on the level of narratological *motifs*.

4 Miraculous books: the case of the Pürten Gospels

At the beginning of the last section of my paper I would like to recall a differentiation which is of general interest for the study of manuscripts from a *longue-durée* perspective and, in particular, for the topic of the contributions brought together in this volume. Dealing with the issue of specific uses of codices, in this case in the context of rituality, we are regularly confronted with shifts between original and secondary functions, either in the sense of a succession of use and re-use, with the latter replacing the former, or of an overlapping of different 'vocations' of one and the same artefact. Obviously, this kind of 're-coding' is a rather common phenomenon in the field of manuscripts originally destined to be used ritually. Magical (re-)using of 'holy books' is widely attested in pre-modern times, including protective and apotropaic contexts, but also healing practices as well as prognostics, ordeals and the like, as attested by an impressive body of evidence, presented at the 1999 Münster conference on *Pragmatische Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur* by Klaus Schreiner.⁶⁵

It is in this dossier that Schreiner points to the book I am going to consider more closely in this final part of my paper: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 5250, a fully outfitted Gospel book with canon tables and full-page representations of the four Evangelists, known for its alleged healing qualities for the mentally ill (Fig. 8).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Schreiner 2002.

⁶⁶ Bischoff 2004, 230 (no. 2985). See now <http://www.manuscripta-mediaevalia.de/?xdbdtdn!%22obj%2031724511%22&dmode=doc#/4> (accessed on 23 August 2023), including a digital presentation of the manuscript and a detailed description by Juliane Trede.

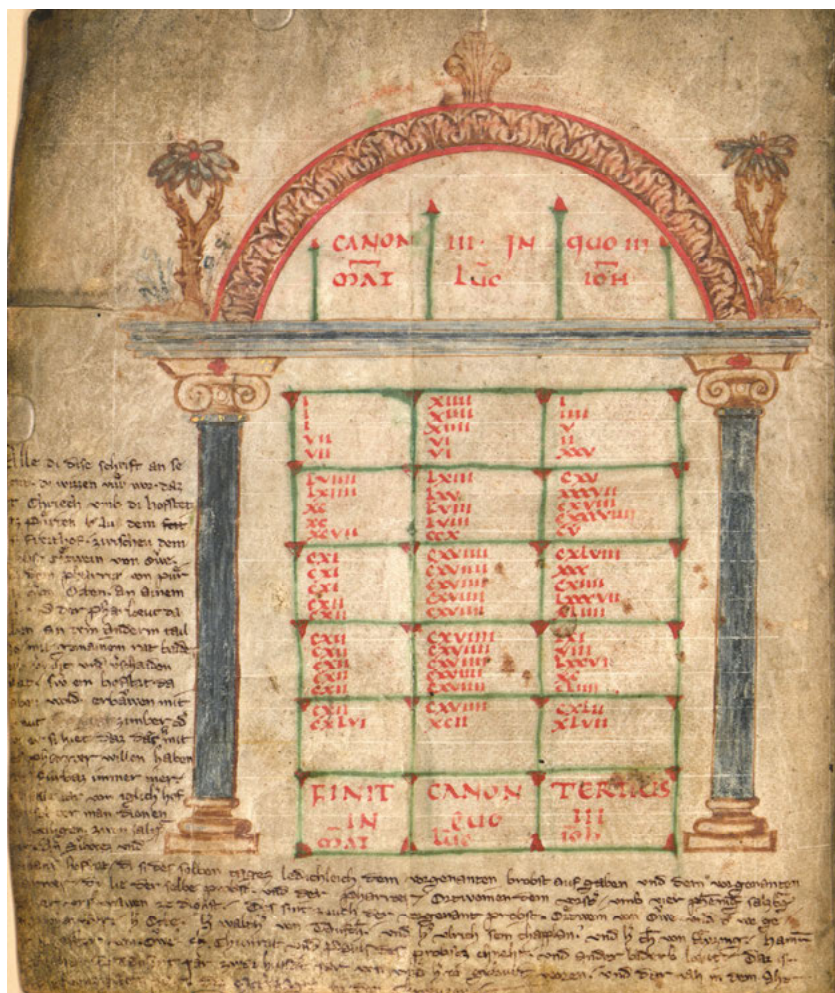


Fig. 8: Pürten Gospels, late ninth century, canon tables; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 5250, fol. 4^v, with additional late medieval vernacular notes; public domain.

The origins of the manuscript can be dated to the late ninth century and located in the Reims area on the grounds of both the illumination⁶⁷ and the scribal notice (fol. 205^v) of the priest and recluse Framegaudus, accredited by Bernhard Bischoff with at least four more manuscripts now housed in Paris and Wolfen-

⁶⁷ Bierbrauer 1990, 131–132 (cat. no. 249).

büttel.⁶⁸ Under circumstances which remain unclear, the codex travelled to Bavaria where it can be traced from the late eleventh century onwards in the parish church of Pürten on the river Inn in Upper Bavaria. This chronology is based on an entry of that period in the codex (fol. 9^r) concerning two donations ‘ad purtin’ by Chadalhoch III, count in Isengau, and his wife Irmingard (d. 1075).⁶⁹ The latter, coming from a family of the lower Rhein area connected with the Ottonian emperors and other members of high nobility, might have played an active role in the history of this book’s stunning journey.⁷⁰ Three more entries on the possessions and rights of the Pürten church were added between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, again in the prefatory part of the manuscript⁷¹ making it appear as a sort of conservatory for data of specific importance for the identity and institutional memory of the house owning it. This was moreover not a single case, as we can find similar evidence elsewhere⁷² – an interesting ‘archival’ role that Gospel manuscripts seem to share sometimes with other liturgical codices.⁷³ It is a function confirming the outstanding prestige of such books, although one which, as far as I can see, has never been studied systematically.

A much more spectacular re-coding of the Pürten Gospels is obviously represented by the aforementioned shift to being considered a miraculous book. The fact that such a re-coding concerns an evangeliary comes as no surprise, as these books had always been charged with a particular thaumaturgical potential. The reason is obvious: if books written by holy men were considered (like their relics) to guarantee the presence of those who had crafted them – one of the most spectacular cases being the famous *Cathach* of Columba, a psalter

68 Bischoff 1980, 176–177.

69 Schroll 1999, 3–4.

70 A plausible hypothesis proposed by Schroll 1999, 7–8.

71 See again Schroll 1999, 3–4; some more details in the manuscript description by Trede (see above, n. 66).

72 To quote just two examples: the twelfth-century Gospel book of the Hirsau priory Alspach in the Alsace (now Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Bibl. Fol. 71), with two blocks of copies of charters added at the beginning and at the end of the codex (fol. 2^{r-v} and fols 119^r–121^r), cf. Stenzel 1926, 52–54, and the famous *Liber Viventium* of Pfäfers (St Gall, Stiftsarchiv, Cod. Fab. 1), a Carolingian evangelistary housing several inventories of the abbey’s relics, books and treasures as well as necrologies; see von Euw 1989).

73 I might mention here the lists of books written at the behest of the Weingarten abbot Berthold in Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, HB I 40, and at the end of his magnificent early-thirteenth-century sacramentary. See Spilling 1999.

manuscript of the later sixth century allegedly copied by Columba of Iona⁷⁴ – then this status was attributed *a fortiori* to the Gospel as a written embodiment of Christ himself. This outstanding prestige of the evangeliary in the context of medieval Christianity is evident on the level of ritual practice – for instance the ceremonial veneration with which it was accredited in the context of its use on the liturgical stage, or its predominance with regard to precious book covers of ritually used codices⁷⁵ – as well as in the field of theological reflection. Regarding the latter, I would like to mention a particularly remarkable passage in a sermon of the English twelfth-century Cistercian Isaac of Stella, dealing with the idea of different grades of ‘materialization’ within God’s self-revelation to men:

*Ipsum, fratres mei, verum Verbum caro factum, ipse Dominus Iesus, ipse unus magister noster Christus, etiam nobis liber fit [...] Ipsum sanctum Verbum, quod beati oculi apostolorum viderunt in carne, manus tractaverunt, hodie est nobiscum, visibile in littera, in sacramento tractabile. Si autem in carne recessit, sed littera mansit [...] nobis [...] sanctum Evangelium, benignus indulsit, ut sit quasi invisibilis [my conjecture of visibilis in the edition] Verbi praesens corpus, sancti Evangelii textus.*⁷⁶

The true Word incarnate, my brethren, the Lord Jesus himself, our only master Christ himself *has become a book for us* [...] The holy Word of God incarnate that the blessed eyes of the Apostles saw in the flesh and their hands touched, is now visible in the letter and tangible in the sacrament. And if he departed in the flesh, still he *remained* in the letter, [...] bestowing the holy Gospel on us, so that the text of the Gospel (*textus Evangelii*) may be the visible and present body of the Word.

It is important to note here that the term ‘textus Evangelii’ does not mean a mere linguistic entity but denotes a ritually employed codex, that is, the evangeliary used during Mass and in processional contexts and the like; suffice it to mention here the Cluniac *Consuetudines Udalrici* or the Hirsau *Liber ordinarius* (largely based on the Cluniac model).⁷⁷

Back to the Pürten Gospels: its use as a miraculous therapeutic instrument was officially attested for the first time in 1592 in an account requested by Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria, who had heard about healings of persons suffering of mental illness (‘zerrittenen oder gar besessenen Persohnen’).⁷⁸ The author of the

⁷⁴ Schreiner 2002, 325–326, with some other examples. For the Cathach see De Hamel 1986, 22 and pl. 12; and Ó Cróinín 2009.

⁷⁵ Heinzer 2017, 34–35.

⁷⁶ Isaac of Stella, *Sermones*, ed. Hoste 1967, 208–211.

⁷⁷ Most telling are formulations like ‘textum evangelii portans or textum de altari tollit’, see Heinzer 2009, 53–56; cf. equally Lenten 2005, 141–146.

⁷⁸ A transcription of Wilhelm’s questions and the provost’s answer is given by Schroll 1999, 14–16.

document, Abraham Cronberger, provost of the Augustinian chapter Au (charged with the pastoral care of Pürten from the late twelfth century), reported a local tradition that had been brought to Pürten by a legendary French princess called Alta.⁷⁹ He described in some detail the therapy which took four nights, during which the Gospel book, opened at the pages showing the four evangelists, was put under the patient's head. Cronberger also mentioned that the book was frequently lent to individuals outside of Pürten, who were asked to pay a fee for the church's maintenance; hence the apparently poor condition of the manuscript ('aineßthails verletzt umb deß vilfeltigen außleichens unnd gebrauchts willen'). Interestingly though, as the provost pointed out, there was reluctance to rebind the damaged book because of the concern that it might lose its effect and power ('hatt aber sorg tragen, es möchte ain sein Würkung unnd Krafft dadurch entzogen werden').⁸⁰ The integrity of magic agents always seems to be an important condition of their efficiency!

The Gospel imported from Reims now acted in a different way, as the book's ceremonial reading framed by a liturgical community was replaced by individuals' silent physical contact with the 'visible body' of the Word (to recall Isaac's argument), worn in a way to increasingly emulate the wounded corps of the victimized Saviour. The pages close to those with the representations of the evangelists are conspicuously marked by the stress of the procedure described by Cronberger, showing stains and tears, while the miniatures themselves are in an absolutely deplorable state (Fig. 9): Luke is almost completely destroyed, and John was replaced by a surrogate in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Schroll 1999, 14, 19–20, probably suggesting here a sort of mystification of the Reims provenance of the codex and of the role of Irmingard.

⁸⁰ Schroll 1999, 15.

⁸¹ This replacement is probably no coincidence, as the fourth evangelist was traditionally very popular in the field of magical practices, especially the prologue *In principio erat verbum*, venerated as a sort of 'quintessence' of the gospel, containing its divine power in a concentrated form. See Ruh 1983 and the impressive dossier of amulet-like uses of this text against a diverse array of diseases and dangers, as well as damage due to adverse weather conditions, demoniac tribulations, sexual dysfunctions, or simply fever, collected by Schreiner 2002, 315–322.



Fig. 9: Pürten miracle book, late ninth century, full-page miniature of the Evangelist Luke (heavily damaged); Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 5250, fol. 67'.

At approximately the same time the Pürten church was decorated with a fresco of the aforementioned Alta legend. The caption, dated 1716, refers to the princess' arrival from France with her book, said to have produced many and great miracles for centuries until the present day.⁸² These practices were apparently continued

⁸² 'durch welches vor schon etlich Hundert Jahren, bis auf heuntigen Tag, ser vill und grosse Wunder an denn betrüebten und anderen Leuthen gescheehen seindt und annoch geschehen', Kern s.a. See also the slightly diverging transcription in Rinkes 2020, 313, n. 1208.

until the late eighteenth or even the early nineteenth century, as a letter of the parish priest, written in 1858, mentions an eyewitness still alive at that time.⁸³

What about the beginnings of this ‘magical’ use of the Pürten codex? Juliane Trede has recently pointed to a hitherto unnoticed detail: three entries (fols 58^v, 108^v, 115^v) by a hand of the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century, marking the destination of specific sections of the Gospel text to be read during Mass.⁸⁴ Does this evidence point to a still ongoing – and even exclusive – liturgical use of the manuscript around 1500, thus postponing the functional shift to a status of miraculous book into the first decades of the sixteenth century, perhaps assuming a transitional period in which this new employment of the book overlapped with its original vocation?

There is however no doubt whatsoever that the general tradition of attributing thaumaturgical qualities to Gospel books can already be found in much earlier times. For instance, in a passage of the seventh of Augustine’s homilies on the Gospel of John, dealing with remorse and penitence as spiritual remedies offered by God to sinners, the author inserted a short digression on practices of treating bodily ailments – a headache in this case – by means of the physical application of Gospel manuscripts:

*Quod ergo? Cum caput tibi dolet, laudamus si evangelium ad caput tibi posueris, et non ad ligaturam cucurreris. Ad hoc enim perducta est infirmitas hominum, et ita plangendi sunt homines qui currunt ad ligaturas, ut gaudeamus quando videmus hominem in lecto suo constitutum iactari febribus et doloribus, nec alicubi spem posuisse, nisi ut sibi evangelium ad caput poneret; non quia ad hoc factum est, sed quia praelatum est euangelium ligaturis.*⁸⁵

What then? When your headaches, we praise you if you place the Gospel at your head, instead of having recourse to an amulet. For so far has human weakness proceeded, and so lamentable are those who have recourse to amulets, that we rejoice when we see a man who is upon his bed, and tossed about with fevers and pains, placing his hope on nothing else than that the Gospel be laid at his head; not because the Gospel is made for this purpose, but because it is preferred to amulets.

The accent of resignation is unmistakable: despite the fact that the bishop considered this to be a blatant misuse of the holy book which was ‘not made for

83 Schroll 1999, 22–23. In the same letter, the priest claimed to know that the official in charge of transporting the codex to the Munich court library in 1805, tormented by desperation and remorse for what in the eyes of the priest was an impious and ruthless act, had committed suicide soon afterwards – a bizarre perversion of the book’s miraculous agency supposed to have revenged itself on the man!

84 See above n. 66.

85 Augustine of Hippo, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, cxxiv, tr. 7, 12, ed. Willems 1954.

that' ('non ad hoc factum'), he seemed to be relieved if it was at least the Gospel and not an amulet that was applied as a remedy. Practices like these had obviously become a habit already by the early fifth century.⁸⁶

A last remark here addresses the 'multi-layered' authorization of the book's agency. First and mainly, albeit not exclusively, the Gospel acts as an embodiment of Christ. During the nocturnal therapy the evangelists enter the stage, as the sick are placed with their head on the images of the book's four human authors: a remarkable situation which recalls the iconographical conflation between the *Maiestas Domini* and the symbols of the evangelists frequently found in evangeliaries. Whereas, according to a felicitous formula of Augustine, the shepherd's (i.e. Christ's) voice is transmitted to us through the evangelists' mouths,⁸⁷ in the Pürten book his healing power is transmitted by the images of these four messengers. But there is even a third actor on the stage: Alta, the legendary French princess venerated for having – miraculously – brought the book to Pürten. The aforementioned fresco caption of 1716 has her arriving at her final destination already dead, her corpse on a wagon pulled by a pair of mules with the book lying on her chest, ready to unfold its miraculous powers as soon as Alta had been buried ('so bald man sye zur Erdten bestettete'). Interestingly, this connection between the saint and the book has been suggestively materialized by the architectural arrangement: in one of the corners of the fresco a rectangular niche, where the book used to be kept, is still visible.

Once again, such a concept of synergy between bookish and non-bookish actors, which we have already dealt with in the section on the St Gall Cantatorium, obviously has older roots. Suffice it to mention the narrative of the alleged autograph of the Gospel of Saint Matthew purportedly found by nomadic shepherds around 500 in the grave of Saint Barnabas, who is said to have used the book for healing purposes.⁸⁸ The story was related by Jacobus de Voragine in his *Legenda Aurea*,⁸⁹ but actually goes back to much earlier Greek sources.⁹⁰ This example, not the only of its kind, clearly shows how deeply such narratives are embedded in late antique traditions of mystification of handwritten books and

⁸⁶ Schreiner 2002, 323.

⁸⁷ 'vocem pastoris nostri [...] per ora evangelistarum nobis apertissime declaratam', Augustine of Hippo, *Ad catholicos de secta Donatistarum*, 12, 32, ed. Petschenig 1909, 202.

⁸⁸ Schreiner 2002, 318.

⁸⁹ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse 1846, 627–628: 'Eius [sc. Matthei] autem Evangelium anno domini D, quod manibus suis scripserat, com ossibus beati Barnabae reperiuntur est' (cf. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Häuptli 2014).

⁹⁰ Cf. for instance Alexander Monachus of Cyprus, *Laudatio s. Barnabae Apostoli*, 450C (cf. Alexander Monachus of Cyprus, *Laudatio s. Barnabae Apostoli*, ed. Van Deun 1993).

their discoveries – mostly in graves – with the fabulous eyewitness account of the Trojan war by Diktys the Cretan being a paradigmatic case.⁹¹

In this chapter on the Pürten book, I have deliberately tried to refrain from assessing the recycling of sacred books, in this case of a Gospel, in categories of theological ‘correctness’ versus ‘misuse’, as another question seems to be historically more meaningful and hence more interesting: to what extent do such cases of re-coding actualize potentials already latent in what we might call the original status of such artefacts? For the Pürten book, for example, it is not without interest to look back to the *Ordo Romanus I* as a fundamental referential frame for the liturgical use of the Gospel book. Whereas in the solemn reading it obviously realizes its true vocation, in the ritual choreography which frames this moment it mostly acts as a *closed* book, staged and venerated as a ‘bodily’ representation of Christ. Hence, use of the *textus evangelii* as an instrument of healing as attested not only in Pürten but elsewhere and much earlier as well, instead of being criticized as a surprising or even scandalizing practice, might be considered as nothing other than an attempt to re-read the very old and venerable theologoumenon of *Christus Medicus*, albeit with a thoroughly *somatic* understanding of a fundamentally spiritually accentuated concept!⁹²

Conclusion

Having used a term like ‘actor’ in my analysis of cultural relations and dynamics, it might be helpful – coming back to Latour for a moment – to ‘reactivate the metaphors implied in the word’, remembering thus ‘that this expression, like that of “person”, comes from the stage’. This means that ‘far from indicating a pure and unproblematic source of action, they both lead to puzzles as old as the institution of theatre itself’.⁹³

In the three case studies presented in this paper, manuscripts *are* more than just objects, they appear as actors entering the stage, even – and perhaps most prominently – in the remarkable case of a phantomatic book such as the ‘Liber scriptus’ dominating the eschatological scenario of the ‘Day of Wrath’. Still, their status remains to some extent unfathomable, and if Latour rightly insists on what he terms the *dislocation* of action per se being ‘borrowed, distributed,

⁹¹ For a still impressive survey of this tradition, see Speyer 1970. Cf. Graf 2015, 17–19.

⁹² For this seminal figure of thought, see for instance Arbesmann 1954; Fichtner 1982; Steiger 2005; von Bendemann 2002.

⁹³ Latour 2005, 46.

suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated',⁹⁴ this seems especially true for the agency of manuscripts destined to be used within the complex and multi-layered field of ritual. Neither a consideration of books simply as 'raw matter' brought to life by human action, nor an undifferentiated glorification of bookish materiality would be helpful here. To be sure, books, especially manuscripts with their individual figuration, are *perceived* as actors in pre-modern times, and presumably – to use Beth Williamson's felicitous formula – they still are doing things 'to and with people',⁹⁵ if only in a metonymical understanding. Yet, and this is an important qualification, their agency must not be considered independently from that of humans: they are not operating *instead* of humans, but as part of a *network* of actors, mediators and intermediaries, including 'many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer inexistence'.⁹⁶ That is why it is important to recall once again the synergy between books and their human 'partners', repeatedly emphasized in the course of this investigation.

One question still remains though: what makes manuscripts and above all ritually used manuscripts particularly idoneous to assume such a role? It seems to me that this aptitude is due an interaction of different yet related aspects:

1. The fundamentally incarnational nature of Christianity as a religion anchored in the central tenet of God 'materializing' himself while becoming flesh.
2. The substantial role of 'physicality' within medieval religion and devotion.⁹⁷
3. The seminally *bookish* orientation of Christian religion and its official worship practice.⁹⁸
4. The 'medial' authority of the (pre-modern) codex with its *aura* of uniqueness and – especially in the realm of the sacred – of outstanding artistic quality and material preciousness.

While modern scholars in their search for historical and philological information are mostly looking at medieval manuscripts as containers of texts (in a very broad sense of the term of course), anthropologists would insist on the necessity to challenge this kind of 'text-centred' methodology. *Beyond the text* is the symptomatic title of a seminal study published in 1987 by the American scholar Lawrence A. Hoffman, on Jewish ritual tradition.⁹⁹ Instead of a merely

⁹⁴ Latour 2005, 46.

⁹⁵ Williamson 2014, 65 (see above, n. 2).

⁹⁶ Latour 2005, 72.

⁹⁷ With a specific focus on late medieval culture: Bynum 2011.

⁹⁸ For aspects of differentiations and relativizations of this status, see Heinzer 2017.

⁹⁹ Hoffman 1989.

text-bound focus on what Hoffman calls the ‘literary remains of Liturgy’,¹⁰⁰ he argues for a perspective centred on the issue of ‘how these texts, played out as lived liturgical practice, had consequences for the people who used them’.¹⁰¹

I would like to add a small yet substantial nuance to this statement: books, especially manuscripts, are more than just texts, and we should examine them – and perhaps even more so the historical narratives about them – with regard not only to the people reading them, but also to those making, transmitting and *transforming* them. This could be a meaningful step towards an increasing awareness of the specific medial agency of these artefacts, including their potential for being re-contextualized and re-coded, hence leading to a better understanding of texts as living entities.

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100 Hoffman 1989, 3.

101 Hoffman 1989, 173.

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