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Contents

The Canons of Medieval Literature
from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract. Taking literature in the wide sense of the entire handwritten book-culture of the European Middle Ages (here with focus on Latin Christendom), this article sketches some of the important turning points of the parameters of textual canonicity, in the Middle Ages themselves, as well as in the early modern and modern period. These critical junctures lie around 1050, 1300, 1450 and 1800. In this article, book-technical and linguistic accessibility is suggested as an agent of change in itself – in addition to the factors of cultural politics, ideologies and shifting tastes. In the second part of the article a model is proposed for assessing and measuring the canons operative today – still basically faithful to the romantic turn around 1800. The paper ends with reflections on how the present age of radical accessibility puts us at another historical watershed in how we engage with the rich textual record of the Middle Ages.

The canons of medieval European literatures are mainly being sustained by national educational systems and their geographic or language-specific cultural concerns. Most modern European countries (and regions such as Provence, Catalonia and Wales) either cultivate the medieval origins of their national-language literatures or they partake in a literary geography with locally important medieval texts in shared, adjacent or colonial languages. In addition, the North and South American academic systems are strong stakeholders in language-specific medieval textual culture (mainly Spanish, French and English).

But there are signs that we are beginning to move away from canons defined *only* by national geography or language,[1] which raises profound questions about our possible investments in the rich medieval textual record from a non-nationalising and non-language-specific vantage point. In an increasingly international world, will the engagement with medieval literature ultimately wane along with its national justification, or are there new emerging "systems of relevance"[2] connected to European and global constituencies of education, learning and readership?

In the present essay I want to make two suggestions. First of all, I will emphasise that the ups and downs in the long afterlife of medieval texts cannot be explained exhaustively in terms of ideology, political and educational context or shifts in literary taste. These are all crucial in canon formation, I argue, but I want to see the development through the lens of book and library history as well: I believe that *accessibility* is an important, but somewhat overlooked, factor in canon formation. Secondly, I would like to propose a neutral and testable model for assessing which

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[1] For the period 1348-1418 we now have the ground-breaking European literary history edited by David Wallace 2016. The aspirations for, and the problems inherent in a European view of medieval literatures, are explored in the OA journal *Interfac-* *es. A Journal of Medieval European Literatures* (2015-), especially in first issue and the opening article by Borsa *et al.*

[2] Ann Rigney's term, see note 23 below.

canons are actually operative today and what forces hold them in place. On this basis a few indications can be given of how and why we may find ourselves in a new situation in the beginning of twenty-first century.[3] But before doing this I want to give a very brief historical sketch of the way that canons of medieval texts have been established, from the Middle Ages themselves up to the present day.

A Snapshot of Authorship around 1300

In the Middle Ages no two books were exactly alike; until the invention of moveable type printing around 1450 they were all copied by hand and therefore each copy was a textual edition in its own right, sometimes with only minor alterations of lay-out and format, but often with differences in terms of quality, text selection, additions, comments, links to other texts etc. Another fundamental difference between medieval and modern book culture is the absence of copyright and any firm idea of intellectual property. These two features alone meant that the prospect of becoming a famous, influential or even canonical writer was very different from what it is today. Many great medieval texts are anonymous, and many are to some degree unacknowledged compilations from other texts, often of uncertain or unspecified origin. One could reasonably claim that we should not talk of authors in any modern sense for most of the medieval period, but rather about poets, singers, entertainers – and about clerics, bishops, abbots, aristocrats and merchants who also happened take an interest in writing or dictating texts. But by the thirteenth century at least, something significant appears to have

happened with the role of written languages, books, intellectuals and authorship in Latin Europe, as the following three examples show.[4]

The long and adventurous life of Ramon Llull (c. 1232–1316) was truly extraordinary, as were his ideas. Coming from a privileged background in Majorca, he embodied a number of social and professional roles in his life: noble courtier, poet, chancellor, student, teacher, friar, missionary, ambassador, philosopher, mathematician – and he kept on putting out books towards the end of his very long life. We know from his many writings, including an "autobiography" written a few years before his death,[5] that he turned his back on his empty court existence by a vision of Christ who persuaded him to devote his life to convert the Muslims. His Iberian background, living among Muslim subjects in the expanding Christian kingdoms, made this a more peaceful project than simple crusading – which had made very few converts in any case. Arguments were needed – arguments that did not begin with a quotation from the Bible, and arguments that were presented in the non-believer's own language, Arabic. Ramon Llull made it his life project to set up missionary schools in which languages were taught along with his philosophical system with its emphasis on the rationality of Christianity.[6] This was supported by his own tireless stream of writings in Latin, Catalan, and in Arabic. At the centre of this obsessive literary production was the idea he had formed at his conversion; as it is told in his autobiography:

While turning over these doleful thoughts in his mind, suddenly – he himself did not know how; these are things only God knows – a certain impetuous and all-compassing notion entered his heart: that later on he would have to write a book, the best in the world, against the errors of unbelievers. Since, however, he could conceive neither the form nor the manner of writing such a book, he was most amazed. Nevertheless, the greater and more frequent was his wonder, the more strongly the inspiration or notion of writing the aforementioned book grew in him.[7]

This ideal book, in other words, should contain the highest human wisdom and be able convince the infidels of their errors. (In fact Llull kept rewriting his *Art* – as it was called – in different forms and languages).[8]

A younger contemporary with equally high self-esteem, or perhaps stubbornness, was the German Dominican, philosopher and preacher Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327). Like Llull, he is today recognized for his role in shaping a high or learned register of his native tongue: as Llull is celebrated as the father of learned Catalan, Eckhart claims an important place in the development of High German. But his *magnum opus* was mainly devised in Latin – in the incomplete *Opus tripartitum*, which consisted of a work of teachings (*Opus propositionum*), a work of problems (*Opus questionum*) and a work of biblical exegesis (*Opus expositionum*), to which most of the surviving material belongs.[9] Eckhart is especially famous for his striking biblical readings in his German sermons, full of apparent contradictions, surprising metaphors and poetic language. In the words of one Eckhart scholar "Eckhart's sermons combine vivid imagery, philosophical abstraction, and dramatic phrasing to create texts that give at once the impression of plain speech and veiled hints."[10] But he also

knew he had startling things to say in Latin, as is clear from the prologue to the *Opus propositionum*; here he warns the reader that "some of what is to follow will seem at first glance strange (*monstrosa*), questionable (*dubia*), or wrong (*falsa*)."[11] The novelty of his work partly lay in a philosophical position which was heavily influenced by the twelfth-century Jewish scholar, Maimonides, and by trends in Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, moving beyond the standard Aristotle and his Arab commentators.[12] He also broke new ground in his attitude towards formulating these teachings in the vernacular. Although Eckhart is routinely categorized as a mystic, it was in fact his insistence on rationality and the intellect which must have caused his university colleagues, pupils and other audiences to pay attention – claiming, as he did, that the principle of intellect was higher than that of being, and that God was pure intellect rather than pure being.[13] Several of his teachings could also be taken in a dangerously pantheistic sense, for example his idea that there is an uncreated part of our souls which is divine. This brought him into trouble and during the last years of his life he was under investigation for heresy, and a number of his teachings were condemned posthumously.[14]

A third and last example is the most canonical medieval author of them all, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). An exact contemporary of Meister Eckhart, Dante was formed in a different and lay environment, as a rich burger in the booming Florence of the late thirteenth century – one of the largest cities in Europe at the time, which grew spectacularly in the thirteenth century to a size of up to c. 100.000 inhabitants.[15] As an affluent and influential citizen in this town, Dante cultivated and developed new sophisticated forms of poetry in friendly competition with his peers from Florence and elsewhere in Italy. His pride in intellectual and poetic originality pervades both his Latin and Italian works; one of

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onwards, cf. Szpiech 2013.

[7]   Bonner 2010, 35.
[8]   Priani 2017: "The *Ars*, […] is the most important and original product of Ramon Llull's philosophy, and the main core of his work." It was written in many versions in two distinct phases, 1274-1283 and 1290-1308.
[9]   Tobin 1986, 20-23.
[10] Milem 2013, 337-338.
[11] Quoted from Tobin 1986, 24.
[12] Schwartz 2013.

[13] Cf. Mojsisch & Summerell 2011: "Once back in Paris [in 1302], however, Eckhart inaugurated his teaching with a bombshell. With a new thesis directed against Thomas Aquinas, as well as against his own Thomistic thinking prior to 1302, Eckhart contends that the absolute principle (or the absolute cause: God) is pure intellect and not being."
[14] Tobin 1986, 8-14.
[15] Matching the size of the three major cities of Milan, Venice and Genoa: Coleman 2004, 51.

his Latin treatises begins by stating that no old truths are going to be rehearsed there, but rather daring and unheard-of-truths (*intemptatas veritates*).[16] Similarly his first Italian work, the remarkable self-commented and semi-autobiographical collection of poems, *Vita Nova*, ends by explaining that this kind of poetry will not suffice to sing the praises of Beatrice, and that he plans to study so that he can write about her in a way that nobody has ever written about someone before.[17] In contrast to Ramon Llull and Meister Eckhart, he *did* finish the book that was meant to contain all essential wisdom and change the readers' vision of the world; the fact that he was exiled a few years after he mentioned his writing ambition in *Vita Nova*, probably gave him even more an identity of "author" that we can recognize as modern: the position from which he was speaking became uniquely his own.[18]

These three authors share many features and can be seen as a culmination of a development that had been underway for some time in Latin Europe: they are three of the primary movers of an important transformation in the status of the author, and in the imagined impact of self-consciously opening up new literary and intellectual spaces. First of all Ramon Llull, Meister Eckhart and Dante Alighieri were deeply familiar with a vast body of theological, philosophical and scientific literature that by the end of the thirteenth century had accumulated in Latin – both via translations from Greek and Arabic and through a massive in-house university production of Latin texts in the thirteenth century. But they employed their encyclopaedic command of this material in order to formulate it in new ways and in languages which did not yet have a written standard of expressing abstract arguments and philosophical concepts, namely Catalan, High German and Italian. They channelled and developed insights from the fairly closed, but interregional, world of privileged educated males (mostly serving in the lay ecclesiastical or monastic/mendicant hierarchy) into a

more local, but also wider, marketplace of lay people, including women.

Equally ambitious and original, Llull, Eckhart and Dante embody different trajectories towards modern canonicity. Ramon Llull's great plans for missionary schools never materialized, and his teachings were not sufficiently promoted by his immediate pupils. A list of his teachings was later condemned by the Pope, the same fate that Eckhart's grand philosophical vision suffered following his death. Dante wrote and completed his poetic encyclopaedia, *The Divine Comedy*, in exile and his literary fame was already achieved around or just after his death. All three relentlessly pursued self-consciously new ideas, and Ramon Llull and Dante chased the dream of writing *one book* that would perfectly encapsulate those new ideas and enjoy a very special status among all the books in the world.

The works of Llull and Eckhart were not entirely ignored during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but only Dante's immediate afterlife matched that of his own vision and ambition. Even he, however, suffered from the general disdain of things medieval during the period of Enlightenment. Seen from the vantage point of leading intellectuals of the eighteenth century, such as the anti-clerical Voltaire, Gibbon, Holberg and many more, the Middle Ages were now stamped as the Age of Faith that had, finally, given way to the Age of Reason. The medieval literary heritage, however, came back with a vengeance when it was turned into an ideological pillar of the nineteenth-century edifice of the nation, the people and the national language.[19] In this way, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, our three authors were each in their own way propelled to undisputed canonicity, on the strength of their writings in the "common" tongue, the vernacular, while their important Latin works have remained the domain of specialists. Dante, of course, is the national poet par excellence and a global phenomenon

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16 *Monarchia* 1.1.
17 *Vita Nova* 31: "… io spero di dire di lei quello che mai non fue detto di alcuna".
18 As explored for instance in Ascoli 2008. The desire of the merchant or bureaucratic class to speak with its own literary and learned voice at exactly this moment can also be illustrated by Dante's non-canonical compatriot, the notary and lawyer Francesco da

Barberino (1264-1348) and his ethical and poetical treatises provided with self-commentary; cf. Jacobsen 1986.
19 For the historical framework of national thought in the early nineteenth century and the romantic promotion of the medieval past, see especially Leerssen 2006 (on Germany, France and more), Geary & Klaniczay 2013 (mostly on East Central Europe)

with a pre-modern canonicity only superseded by Shakespeare: in his tracks we find a torrent of events, translations, learned societies, popular and scholarly publications, teaching traditions and so on. Ramon Llull and Meister Eckart today live on a more modest level, but are certainly canonical: they are both served by professional websites and repositories;[20] several universities and research departments are named after Llull and he is a towering pioneer figure for a national literature in a nation without a state, – as well as a famous philosopher and mathematician. Meister Eckhart is celebrated as the first German philosopher to write in German and is equally the object of study by dedicated learned societies and research institutions.

The Dynamic Middle Ages
Divided into Three Periods
The ambitions, works and literary fates of Llull, Eckart and Dante already indicate some of the important junctures in the longer timeline of the canon of medieval literature. A significant development obviously unfolded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and we therefore need to consider how best to periodize the Middle Ages with respect to the questions of authorship and canonicity. In another context I have argued that – seen from a book-historical point of view – the three traditional periods of Early, High, and Late Middle Ages may be characterized as, respectively, "exegetical" (c. 600-c. 1050), "experimental" (c. 1050-c. 1300), and "critical" (c. 1300-1450).[21] The beginning and end point of this chronology suggest themselves through two parameters: (1) book technology, (2) the relationship between intellectuals and the great authorities of the Latin and the Greek world – the two Empires and their respective religious authorities, The Papacy and The Patriarchate. As for (1), the years around 600 signal the ultimate triumph of

the parchment codex and the disappearance of the leisured aristocratic library culture of Antiquity, and the years around 1450 the emergence of the revolutionary moveable type printing. Regarding (2), c. 600 can again be used as an approximate date because of the effective disconnection between the Greek and Latin cultural worlds (and hence a new beginning for the Papacy), while the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was obviously of immense importance for the cultural geography of Europe and the perception of the tasks and the authority of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy.[22]

In terms of the literary history of Europe, therefore, the early Middle Ages can be said to run from the collapse of the ancient Roman educational system around 600 until approximately 1050, at the eve of the Great Schism (1054) and the Investiture Contest (1076-1122). The production of books and the composition of new texts happened almost exclusively within ecclesiastical institutions, predominantly in monasteries. Books were rare, and book culture was both prestigious, exclusive and centred around the divine service and biblical exegesis. To borrow a phrase that a literary historian, Ann Rigney, coined for understanding the canon of the nineteenth century, the "system of relevance" is easy to identify for the early Middle Ages.[23] The Latin (or Greek) Bible was *the* canonical book[24] and people of learning were invariably clerics whose task it was to bring the biblical text to bear correctly on the Christian communities through liturgy and preaching. The system of relevance for early medieval book-culture was therefore uniform. There are many exciting early medieval chronicles and other types of non-scriptural writing, but they are all firmly grounded in an understanding of contemporary events as an extension of biblical history. The same holds true for the explorations in writing in

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and Matthews 2015 (on Britain).

[20] Base de Dades Ramon Llull (University of Barcelona); www.meister-eckhart-gesellschaft.de.

[21] The three labels serve to characterize new dominant features of each period; the concern for exegesis thus pervades all three periods, and experiments the last two as well. I am basing this periodization scheme of literary history on a paper under publication at the online *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*; I refer the reader to further arguments and references there.

[22] Most strikingly seen in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's imperial history (soon known under the name *De Europa*), occasioned by the Fall of Constantinople (finished 1458, just before his rule as Pope Pius II, 1458-64). Cf. Piccolomini 2013.

[23] Rigney 2001, 69-70.

[24] Metonymically speaking, as the scriptures were predominantly contained in several volumes during this period, e.g. the Pentateuch, Psalms, Gospels etc. The one-volume Bible became more frequent from the thirteenth century onwards, but it became

other languages than the cosmopolitan – or rather imperial – languages of Latin, Greek (in the East) and Arabic (in Al-Andalus). The early-medieval Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Old High German book cultures, for instance, were all devised to be at the direct service of monastic and pastoral aims, not in any way to substitute the dominant Latin literary culture. The very few epic texts or fragments like *Beowulf* and *Hildebrandslied* were completely marginal phenomena taken down in a single manuscript, and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century fame and high canonicity is an excellent example of what happened when a vernacular language was identified with a national language in the wake of Romanticism. The canonical authors of this early period, measured by the actual medieval resonance of texts written during these centuries, were three luminaries from the sixth, seventh and early eighth centuries: a pope, Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), a bishop, Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), and a monk, Bede (c. 672-735), who contributed to one or more of the core genres of encyclopedias, Biblical exegesis, pastoral writing, hagiography and ecclesiastical history.

While a relative scarcity of books and a uniformity of the system of relevance characterizes almost five centuries (c. 600-c. 1050), the period beginning around the middle of the eleventh century brought both qualitative and quantitative upheavals. This age of "experiments" – of which we can regard Llull, Eckart and Dante as the culmination around 1300 – saw significant growth in Western Europe (and in Byzantium) on all demographic and economic factors, including urbanisation, education, and the production of handwritten books. This was the period when books proliferated outside monasteries and bishoprics, finding homes in private collections and becoming a constituent part of trendy aristocratic lifestyles and those of the rapidly growing merchant class. With the thirteenth-century rise of universities the composition, rewriting and copying of books also became a much more efficient and faster process to better serve teachers and students. According to a recent estimate the production of books in Latin script tripled from the eleventh to the twelfth

centuries, and was then more than doubled again in the thirteenth century.[25]

The thirteenth century also saw the true vernacular revolution in Western Europe. In the age of Dante, a book in French, Old Norse, Castilian or German was no longer a single curiosity hiding in shelves full of Latin. But it is important to note – and this is something that literary histories are still not making clear – that Latin book culture expanded even more than that of the vernacular.[26] Standard narratives also still project the idea that it was with the breakthrough of the written vernacular languages that literature was now allowed to entertain – rather than just instruct – and therefore became more fictional. This is also a myth, because Latin, Greek and Arabic literature took on these new roles at the same time, or often before the vernaculars.[27]

The Bible was obviously still at the core of the study of theology at the universities, but since the twelfth century it was accompanied by a number of study aids that had become canonical in themselves, most prominently Peter the Lombard's (c. 1096-1160) thematically organized handbook, the *Sentences*. At the top level this was combined with philosophy in which the singularly canonical author was the Latin Aristotle, in turn embellished by a host of translated commentators, of which the Arab philosophers Avicenna (Ibn Sina c. 980-1037) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd 1126-1198) were the most important. This university system furthermore produced its own canonical authors, most famously Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274); in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period he was regarded as the leading Dominican philosopher. His domination of *all* medieval philosophy in modern handbooks and scholarship began with the Vatican's Neo-Thomist wave set in motion by Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, reacting to the numerous secular and atheist trends in nineteenth-century philosophy. In the words of a modern historian of the movement: "One of the most important outcomes of *Aeterni Patris* was a tremendous upsurge of scholarly interest in the history of medieval philosophy"[28] – including the so-called Leonine edition of the

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a standard only after print (van Liere 2014).

25   Buringh 2011, 261.

26   For the parallel growth of both Latin and vernaculars in a new "fast" way of writing and copying, Mortensen 2015.

27   Cf. Agapitos & Mortensen 2012.

28   Shanley 2002, 7. *Ibid.* 1-20 a survey is given of the development leading up to 1879 and from then to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) in which philosophical pluralism was promoted. Since then, however, Aquinas has remained a dominant presence in Catholic philosophy.

collected works of Thomas Aquinas (1882-).[29]

But then we also find completely different constituencies for books, like the aristocratic audiences of book-related storytelling who, in the thirteenth century, were enjoying the mostly anonymous sagas in Iceland, Norway, and to some extent Denmark and Sweden. Or the German poets of long epics and romances whom we know entered into a competition for greatest recognition, chiding and teasing each other explicitly – as we can see in Gottfried of Strassbourg (d. c. 1210), Wolfram von Eschenbach (d. c. 1220) and others. While these were still mainly singers or entertainers rather than authors in a modern sense, their pride in their craftsmanship and the fact that we know their names indicate that a new age of books and authors was dawning.[30] Finally there were powerful vernacular texts which bridged the university and aristocratic environments – most prominently the widespread poetical treatise *Roman de la Rose* (thirteenth century).

The existence of multiple systems of literary and learned relevance was further reinforced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries – the "critical" period (c. 1300-c. 1450) both in terms of crisis and of a new level of literary critique. Although in many ways a calamitous time, with the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), the recurrent plague beginning in 1347 which diminished the population of Europe by at least a third, book production actually flourished and the book trade continued to diversify. The deep crisis of papal authority during the period of the Avignon exile (1309-1376) and the subsequent schism and conciliar period (lasting until 1449) elicited intellectual debate, and produced an avalanche of political and religious writings questioning the very foundation of legal, political and theological authority. This included, most famously, writings by Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275-c. 1342), William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347), Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415) and John Wycliffe (d. 1384). The vernacular literatures became established entities, and writers such as Boccaccio (1313-75), Petrarch (1304-74), and Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) – to mention the most canonical today – could draw on previous writing in other vernaculars and in their own language. In the same period a number of other vernacular standards had emerged and were now available as a real alternative to Latin. These included Low German, Czech, Swedish, and more, each forming their own canons. The new status of literary authors is also reflected in the phenomenon of poet laureates, beginning with Albertino Mussato in Padua in 1315, and followed by the trendsetting coronation of Petrarch in Rome in 1341. Both were honoured for their Latin poetry, which would later be seen as the beginning of Humanism; the fashion of crowning poets was institutionalized by the Emperors from 1355 and onwards.[31]

Apart from fostering a stronger sense of authorial originality and a widespread criticism of authorities – including the early humanist critique of contemporary university culture – the "critical" period also saw a book-technological breakthrough. The large-scale introduction of paper as a substitute for parchment for book production around 1400 made books much cheaper and much more numerous and accessible (the sophisticated European production of paper had begun already in Dante's Italy).[32] While there was a significant rise of book production in the fourteenth century it became explosive in the early fifteenth century, especially in the two decades before print.[33] This created the book market on which Gutenberg around 1450 could capitalize, and which he and other printers then expanded on an entirely new scale.[34] Interestingly, the main output in the early period of print were "medieval" texts; the output of classical and contemporary literature in print only seems to have overtaken texts with a medieval origin by the early sixteenth century.[35] Some of these medieval texts are still famous – for example the thirteenth century *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobo da Voragine, the authoritative collection of

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[29] Not yet complete, but most of the works are available online at www.corpusthomisticum.org.

[30] Bumke 2000, 48: "Die gebildeten Epiker haben grossen Wert darauf gelegt, dass ihre Werke schriftlich abgefasst waren und nicht nur gehört, sondern auch gelesen werden konnten. Sie haben betont, dass sie ihren Stoff aus "Büchern" schöpften, und haben ihre eigenen Dichtungen den Hörern als "Bücher" vorgestellt."

[31] Dović & Helgason 2017, 42-44.

[32] Febvre & Martin 1976, 29-44.

[33] Buringh 2011, 261; Neddermeyer 1998, vol. 1, 256-264.

[34] Cf. Clanchy 1982 who describes the invention as the culmination of a medieval development.

[35] Febvre & Martin 1976, 264.

saints' lives which was translated, adapted and printed numerous times in all of Latin Europe. But many others are almost unknown today as they were anonymous and provided study tools for liturgy, language, law, theology etc. This phenomenon was highlighted by Marshall McLuhan when he pointed out that "the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw more of the Middle Ages than had ever been available to anyone in the Middle Ages".[36]

From Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment Disdain to Romantic Admiration

The epochal changes of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries also made writers and intellectuals turn their backs on the Middle Ages. They did this first of all by inventing them. The idea that a long middle period of humanity was now coming to an end took root during fifteenth-century Renaissance humanism, and was greatly strengthened in Northern Europe by the Reformations: an epoch was definitely over and writings from that period were automatically tainted with danger and moral corruption. Painting with a very broad brush therefore, it is tempting in the present context to lump together the age of early print, the mature Renaissance humanism, the Reformations, the age of the Thirty Years' War and the entire Enlightenment – so roughly the three and a half centuries from c. 1450 to c. 1800 – as one period: it was broadly characterized by its disdain for the Middle Ages, and it had little or no declared interest in its literature or intellectual heritage. Although there were many real continuities between the late medieval and the early modern epochs in intellectual and literary trends, the Middle Ages were often brushed aside as the early modern period developed a cult of the classical as well of its own new

science and contemporary literature.[37]

The great mass of medieval texts was to a large degree preserved in private aristocratic or royal collections of medieval manuscripts or early prints, and, in Catholic Europe, also in the medieval institutional context itself – at monasteries and in episcopal libraries. There *were* splendid antiquarian efforts during these centuries to publish medieval texts, for instance encyclopaedias (like the thirteenth-century *Speculum* of Vincent of Beauvais), chronicles which illustrated the long history of a city, country or a dynasty; similarly some exegetical works (like the early fourteenth-century standard biblical commentary of Nicolaus de Lyra) and many saints' lives remained central in Catholic Europe (cf. *Legenda Aurea* above). But in other genres, like philosophy, epic, didactic, and lyric poetry, travelogues, geography, and other sciences, medieval texts were mainly discarded, forgotten and superseded by classical and modern ones.[38] There was little interest in medieval vernacular literature, and texts such as *Beowulf*, *Niebelungenlied*, *Mio Cid*, the *Song of Roland*, the *Poetic Edda* and Chrétien de Troyes' romances were completely obscure; and if the contents of their works were known in any measure it was in a paraphrase or reworking, sometimes in Latin.[39] Dante and Chaucer (and Boccaccio and Petrarch) certainly did have readers in this period, but on a scale very far from the Dante and Chaucer industry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in Chaucer's case only after he had been repackaged in the sixteenth century as a premature protestant and in the seventeenth century as a puritan *avant la lettre*.[40]

Therefore, the first decades of the nineteenth century represent a very sudden and radical break in the appreciation of medieval texts all over Europe. The romantic and nationalist

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[36] McLuhan 1962, 142; cf. also Clanchy 1982, 170.
[37] This is especially true from the sixteenth century on when the concept of the Middle Ages became more entrenched in European learning. In the reformed parts of Europe, the age of the incunabula, the first c. 50 years of print, would be perceived as remnants of a bygone, Catholic age.
[38] The *Roman de la Rose* and the invented fourteenth-century *Travels* by Mandeville were among the exceptions, cf. Febvre & Martin 1976, 257, 259; but the general picture is clear: "Rapidly, under the mounting flood of new books written for an ever increasing public, the heritage of the Middle Ages lost its hold" (*ibid.* 261).
[39] It is significant, for instance, that the now hyperca-

nonical *Poetic Edda* ("The Older Edda") was identified in the famous thirteenth-century Codex Regius in the seventeenth century but only published in its entirety in the Romantic period (between 1787 and 1828), cf. Lassen 2011, 29 (Snorri's (prosimetric) *Edda,* however, was edited by Peder Resen Hansen in 1665, provided with both Latin and Danish translations). The same negligence applied to Chrétien de Troyes's romances, influential in their own day, but then gradually overwritten by prose narratives and forgotten in the early modern period, only to be resuscitated in the mid-nineteenth century; for this trajectory of Chrétien's literary fame: Hult 1998. For the other texts see below.
[40] Jones 2015.

movements selected a few medieval texts, not only for sudden appreciation, but even in some cases turned them into the very foundation of a long national past. Some of the keywords for this development are intellectual and emotional reactions to rationalism and industrialization, others are individualism, historicism, nationalism during and after the Napoleonic wars, the elevation of national poets, as well as the gradual inclusion and empowerment of "the people" as a politically constitutive and culturally creative force.[41] There is also a strong tie to contemporary neo-classicism, although in the understanding of the period itself classicism was usually opposed to romanticism. The late eighteenth-century interest in Ossian (an invented Celtic bard)[42] and in Homeric studies worked across romanticism and classicism through the same emerging philological ideals; Homer became the holy grail – if a medieval metaphor is allowed – of the new quest for a national epic. All nations wanted their own Homer, and many eventually reached their goal in the course the nineteenth century.[43]

In Germany the *Niebelungenlied* was dug out from obscurity and properly edited and translated by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen in 1807 and 1810, followed by studies (1816) and a magisterial edition by Karl Lachmann (1841).[44] In France the *Song of Roland* was found, embarrassingly in an English manuscript in Oxford, and edited in 1837. During the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 a propaganda war also played out on the respective merits of the *Niebelungen* and the *Roland.* The great romance scholar Gaston

Paris pronounced "in a word, the *Nibelungenlied* is a human poem, while the *Chanson de Roland* is a national poem" – which today would be praise for the German epic, but of course then was meant as relegation to a second rank, Germany just unifying as a national state and in need of a heroic literary birth certificate.[45] *Beowulf* had a more complicated route before ending up as the first chapter of English literature. It was "discovered" by Frederik Nicolai Grundtvig whose Danish translation was the first complete rendition into a modern language (1820); the poem, after all, does take place in Lejre in Denmark. Its language, however, basically a kind of Old German, was not ideal for a Nordic national epic. The Germans themselves made some efforts to appropriate Beowulf as theirs, but Anglo-Saxon was gradually seen as a precursor to English, and by the early twentieth century Beowulf was secured its place in the English canon and educational system. The theoretical underpinnings of this edifice were finally provided in an important article on *Beowulf* by J. R. R. Tolkien in 1936 – in which he criticized the previous romantic impulse to read the poem as an epic with a historical nucleus;[46] it is worth noting that Tolkien's fictional work created a native mythology that Anglo-Saxon literature failed to provide, thoroughly christianized as it was. This envy of a complete pre-christian mythology was much older than Tolkien and was fuelled by how well the Icelanders and Norwegians were doing with the thirteenth-century collection known as the *Poetic Edda* (and supplemented by Snorri's contemporary

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[41] Again I refer to the work of Leerssen 2006 and his characterization of the epoch's "literary historicism"; more specifically this has been developed in Leerssen 2004a; Leerssen 2012; Leerssen 2013; Leerssen & van Hulle 2008. The changes in the early nineteenth century had in many ways been prepared in the late decades of the eighteenth century, and Leerssen favours the chronology c. 1780-1840 as the breakthrough period, but also emphasizes the important new developments especially in German Romanticism after the confrontation with Napoleon, promoting the idea of a nation's soul expressed through its literature and language (Leersen 2006, 125-126).

[42] Cf. Leerssen 2004b.

[43] Cf. Leerssen 2004b and Leerssen 2013. To the broad picture painted by Leerssen and the three main factors he enumerates (Ossian, Indo-European Studies, public collections of medieval manuscripts) one should add the intense Homeric studies which ran parallel with the Ossian fever: Some key moments in England and Germany are the transla-

tions by Alexander Pope (1720, 1726) and Heinrich Voss (1781, 1793), Robert Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1769, referring to the 1765 Ossian), Goethe's systematic juxtaposition of Ossian and Homer in *Werther* (1774), and the epoch-making *Prolegomena ad Homerum* by Friedrich August Wolf (1795); cf. Matuschek 2010.

[44] The famous C manuscript (c. 1200) had already been identified in 1775 and the text had been edited in 1784 (Myller), but gained little resonance before the German romantic–nationalist movement during the Napoleonic Wars; cf. Härd 1993, 18-19. Leerssen 2006, 121 describes von der Hagen's preface as "firebrand", written as it was at the nadir of the German fortunes of war, in 1807.

[45] Quoted from Moore 2010, 212. For the canonization of *Beowulf* and *Roland* in the context of a broader literary history: Beecroft 2015, 228-232.

[46] The first complete English edition and translation were published already by John Mitchell Kemble in 1833 and 1837.

prosimetric *Edda*, which was introduced with an elaborate mythological framing tale);[47] the Danes, Swedes and Germans of the nineteenth century saw few obstacles in making it their own as well (it was translated into German by the brothers Grimm in 1815, into Swedish by Afzelius in 1818 and into Danish by Magnússon in 1821-23). The Finns were at the outset at a disadvantage as the record of the vernacular language only began with a sixteenth-century biblical translation. But the folklore of Kalevalaic poetry had strong pagan mythological potential, and through the editorial work of Elias Lönnrot – with his mind fixed on longer epic forms as known from Homer, *Niebelungen* and more – *Kalevala* provided the Finnish nation with its epic as early as 1835 (it was translated into Swedish in 1841, and an extended edition of the Finnish original was published in 1849).[48] Similar efforts to establish a medieval record of a song-cycle, an epic or a prose tale were made in Estonia (*Kalevipoeg*), Russia (*The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, Bylinas), Ireland (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*), Serbia (collections by Vuk Karadžić 1814-15), and other nations, and the early clear-cut Finnish example is adduced here mainly to illustrate the immense, and pan-European, desire for an original epic story stemming from the genius of the people.

Italy did not need to look far for its national epic, although Dante's masterpiece was philosophical, historical, encyclopaedic, personal, strongly authored and poetological rather than anonymous and heroic. In Spain the fascinating story of the Cid, a warrior between the Christian and the Muslim world of eleventh century Iberia whose epic dates from around 1200, was rediscovered in the late eighteenth century (edited by Tómas Antionio Sanchéz in 1779).[49] And in Greece a twelfth-century "vernacular" epic (i.e. written in a register of Greek different from the classicizing Byzantine standard) about a similar middling figure, *Digenis Akritis*, was found by Savvas Ioannidis

in a manuscript in Trebizond in 1868 and fit the bill perfectly (fully published in Paris in 1875).[50]

The dramatic formation of medieval canons in the early nineteenth century was to a large degree accompanied by the public appropriation of the medieval texts as well as of their physical carriers, the medieval hand-written books themselves. On the practical level the great series of national textual collections were formed, spearheaded by the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (initiated in 1819) and gradually imitated by every European country who could claim medieval texts for themselves (in Latin or in "national" languages). This made a wide range of texts available for a much broader audience than the expensive learned publications of the early modern period with much smaller printruns. The accessibility of the of the heritage of old texts was also significantly enhanced in a symbolic way, when national libraries emerged and book treasures of the past were now being housed in the public institutions that took over the responsibility as keepers of the written cultural memory from princely and aristocratic collections.[51] The actual medieval books became the possession of the nation (though sometimes of the wrong nation, like Britain for *Roland* and Denmark for the *Edda*), and the manuscripts of the canonical vernacular texts turned into magnets of attention and were kept and exhibited like crown jewels.

The Canons and the Archives

The canons that arose from these national systems of relevance for medieval literature – with one or two poetic, fictional, vernacular texts at the very centre – are, with a few modifications and extensions, still with us and kept in force by national curricula and their language-specific agenda. In order to specify more precisely which canons are operative today, it is in principle possible to apply objective criteria. The point of departure for thinking about canons and archives in this mode lies

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[47] See note 41 above.

[48] Anttonen 2005 contextualizes the composition and dissemination of *Kalevala*.

[49] The reception in the long nineteenth century in Spain is dealt with by Galván 2001. It also had a substantial reception outside Iberia, in the early nineteenth century as documented in Galván & Banús 2004. On German romantic interests in medieval Spanish literature cf. Leerssen 2006, 121-122.

[50] The Trebizond manuscript, probably dating from

around 1600, was later lost. The two main versions of the text are edited with translations by Jeffreys 1998.

[51] For this re-appropriation and re-interpretation of the distant past as a national treasure in the revolutionary and romantic period, Jensen 2011 is a fundamental recent study (although focusing on the heritage of the incunabula (c. 1450-1500), the underlying shift of interpretation and ownership is similar to that of medieval hand-copied books of national interest).

within cultural memory studies, particularly as articulated by Aleida Assmann in an article about canon and archive (2008) which sets out the basic mechanisms for cultural remembering and forgetting, each in their active and passive forms. She characterizes the canon by three qualities, namely selection, value and duration, and contrasts it to the archive in this way:

> Cultural memory, then, is based on two separate functions: the presentation of a narrow selection of sacred texts, artistic masterpieces, or historic key events in a timeless framework [the canon]; and the storing of documents and artefacts of the past that do not meet all these standards but are nevertheless deemed interesting or important enough to not let them vanish on the highway to total oblivion [the archive].[52]

Her distinctions are made for a very wide cultural field (religion, art and history), so it is necessary to be more specific when dealing with our modern engagement with pre-print literature. The four-level system presented here should be able to accommodate all medieval texts which have survived to this day:

1. The High Canon (global impact; multimedial and popular presence as well as domination in scholarship)
2. The Broad Canon (mostly country-specific impact; the scholars' canons; contains numerous texts)
3. The Open Archive (texts regularly referred to by specialists)
4. The Closed Archive (marginal, unidentified, unedited texts)

The few texts belonging to the first level, the High Canon, both feature a strong multimedial presence and are endowed with the highest prestige in scholarly and educational systems. The high canonical texts will honour most of these criteria in each of these two lists:[53]

Criteria for level one – the High Canon:
1. Multimedial presence and popular culture
- Lieux de memoires, statues, museums, banknotes, stamps
- Schools, departments, streets, bookstores etc. named after author or figures in the work
- Exhibitions, performances, centenaries and other anniversaries
- Plays, movies, music
- Value of key manuscripts (world heritage, limited access)
- Highest visibility in library and academic bookstore taxonomies
- Professional plus popular websites
- Historical paintings, illustrated editions / translations
- Translations into many languages, often re-edited, renewed
- Translations by famous modern authors
- Referred to in a wide range of non-specialist writing
- Modern literary adaptations, imitations, children's books, comics, etc.
- Historical novels about authors / protagonists / places

Criteria for level one – the High Canon:
2. Academic activity and status
- Organisations, learned societies, regular conferences
- Dominant position in literary histories
- High frequency of scholarly articles
- Editions on all levels
- Dedicated journals
- Continuous output of dedicated monographs
- Companions – also to subthemes like reception etc.
- Around-the-year university courses; also taught below and besides university
- Constant flow of university assignments, essays etc.
- Grant applications / grants
- Theoretical approaches (including experimental and fringe theory)
- Academic capital (prestigious chairs, status of leading specialists, rewards of new findings)
- Negative criticism of the texts is not part of the scholarly discourse

All criteria are easily met by the global phenomena of Dante and Chaucer, but Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chrétien de Troyes

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[52] Assmann 2008, 101.
[53] For a real empirical test of this, one would need to

specify that a few key criteria as well as a significant number of them be honoured.

all probably score consistently enough on many parameters to be included. The same can be said of several of the anonymous "national epics", at least *Beowulf, Niebelungen,* and *Mio Cid,* (with museums, operas, movies, artwork, children's books, academic capital etc.), as well as the *Poetic Edda*, and perhaps even the most famous of the family sagas, that of Njál (late thirteenth century). A few lyric poets apart from Petrarch may also be considered here, such as the main Provençal troubadours (twelfth-thirteenth centuries), Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170-c. 1230) and François Villon (1431-c. 1463), although lyric poetry obviously faces some difficulties in entering mainstream popular culture without the strong narratives of epic, romance, sagas and framed short stories. On closer inspection, the high canon turns out to be very exclusive, and fundamentally true to the principles of the Romantic turn; the only clear new entries the last fifty years are by female writers, namely Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Christine de Pizan (1364-c. 1430). Four figures who would score highly, although they are probably more famous for their actions and destinies than their writings, are Marco Polo (1254-1324), the above-mentioned Jan Hus, and Héloïse (d. 1164) and Abelard (1079-1142). In their multimedial presence (and in Marco Polo's global fame) they certainly reach beyond national constituencies and though they may be unusual fare in history, literature or philology classes, their level of canonicity is borne out by the high risks and rewards in new findings, recently illustrated by the attribution controversy over the so-called lost love letters of Abelard and Héloïse.[54]

These few texts and authors are so iconic that there is a strong feedback mechanism between the multimedial, popular and educational presence and the research activities and agenda which is not found for texts in the broader scholarly canon. It means that almost no new finding is too small to publish and that the research is in a state of inertia. Or, to put it in another way: in spite of a huge new bibliography every year, no one would ever make the argument that it was time for

a moratorium during which the efforts could be spent on less known texts. This continuous investment solidifies the canon even more, and brings to mind Marx's distinction between the exchange value and the labour value of a commodity (defined by the how much labour has gone into the product). If we want to understand why the high canonical texts always respond well to a change of paradigm, the first and obvious answer is of course that these texts are sufficiently rich, versatile and universal in themselves (the exchange value). But the iconic texts enjoy the privilege of continuous laborious interpretation, which both implicitly displays their value and is put to work to make them constantly speak to new audiences and new cultural concerns (the labour value) – an advantage texts in the other categories do not have. The labour value that has accrued to the few hypercanonical texts is so massive that it becomes difficult to distinguish between the intrinsic and the culturally accumulated value; given the enormous scholarly and educational investment they are able to constantly honour the highest expectations of sophistication, profundity and cultural relevance – no doubt well deserved, but still a privilege that one could wish was sometimes also bestowed on texts outside the High Canon.

The second group could be termed the Broad Canon, or the scholarly canon. The names which would appear in this group will at least be familiar to most medievalists as they are continually recycled and referred to for many reasons. The main distinction from the High Canon here is the lack of strong multimedial and popular commemorative presence. This is why this category is the right place even for prominent theologians, visionaries and philosophers – like Ramon Llull, Meister Eckhart, Thomas Aquinas, Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) and more – who command transnational constituencies of readership and scholarship (and worship): they do have monuments and international learned societies, but not any significant showing in translations by famous modern authors, in films, children's books, exhibitions or other interactions with mainstream culture.

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[54] When an anonymous medieval love letter collection was first published in 1974, few scholars took notice. But when an Abelard specialist declared in 1999 that these were in fact the lost love letters between Heloise and Abelard, the texts were studied intensely by both critics and supporters of the at-

tribution. The 1974 edition is by E. Könsgen and the attribution to Abelard and Heloise was made by Mews 1999; a status on the debate was made by Forrai & Piron 2007, and a recent appreciation and overview is given by Newman 2016.

Criteria for level two – The Broad Canon
- Important sources for historians (national, legal, philosophical, religious etc.)
- New and updated editions
- Often anthologised
- Edited in one or more canonical series (Patrologia Latina / Graeca, Corpus Christianorum, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, Rolls Series, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, Lettres Gothiques, Íslenzk fornrit, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Oxford Medieval Texts etc.)
- Includes foundational national texts (Bede, Isidore, *the Primary Chronicle of Kiev, the Jutish Law, the Eric Chronicle,* early "national" hagiography such as lives of Patrick, Willibrord, Boniface, Stephen, Olav, Canute, Adalbert, Cyril and Methodius etc.)
- Can be the object of an entire conference; numerous single conference contributions
- Regular university teaching, assignments
- Companions (for some authors/ texts)
- Translations are kept updated in one or more main languages of the constituency
- Important national fields of research in their own right, some with international attention
- Negative criticism of the texts can be part of the scholarly discourse

The Broad Canon is the firm basis for all types of scholarship; in contrast to the High Canon which is mainly poetical and fictional in some sense, we encounter a multitude of prose texts, and all kinds of contents (law, philosophy, history, mysticism, theology). There are now many entries in Latin (and including Byzantium and Al-Andalus in Greek and Arabic too). This means that the broad canon contains both "literary" texts (in the strict modern sense of fictional) and texts dealt with mainly by the fields of history, philosophy, theology, law and so on.

Moving down from the canon to the archive, we will be dealing with texts that are accessible in principle, but really only the concern of specialists. For pre-print literature it makes sense to divide the archive into two levels, the Open and the Closed Archive:

Criteria for level three – The Open Archive
- Object of sporadic research by specialists
- Generally unknown to, or unstudied by other medievalists
- Conference contributions, but not whole conferences
- Are found in good editions (occasionally in canonical series), and in some cases translated into one or two modern languages
- Often get mentioned in detailed literary (philosophical etc.) histories
- Rarely subject of entire university courses, usually only as supplementary material

What one could finally call the closed archive contains texts which are either still lingering unedited in manuscripts, or texts which are poorly edited or hiding in publications which are difficult to access, physically, linguistically or otherwise. Pre-print texts need this division of the archive – perhaps in contrast to more modern literary archives – because of the specificities of textual transmission and of scholarly editorial procedures. This category also includes hypothetically lost or certainly lost texts whose existence and / or possible reconstruction from other texts is the subject of scholarly dispute.

Criteria for level four – The Closed Archive
- Texts that are unedited or only found in obscure, partial or poor editions
- Never translated
- Not even mentioned in specialised histories of literature (philosophy etc.)
- Do not emerge in conference contributions and very rarely in the margins of specialised papers
- Mostly poorly identified, dated and localised
- Much basic editorial research attempts to lift texts from level four to three

Such a four-tiered model could, if refined and tested with concrete texts and real weighted measurements applying to each descriptor, structure an understanding of the modern practices related to medieval texts.

Looking ahead
In trying to assess the situation today, it needs to be stressed again that there are not only

ideological and political factors in play, but that *accessibility*, linguistic and technological, can be an agent of change in itself. Looking back at this long story there are some striking critical junctures in terms of reproduction, storage and accessibility of texts.

The "exegetical" period (c. 600-c.1050) is characterized by a small and precious elite book culture. Books were copied for and stored mainly in monastic institutions. Although in principle these were "public" libraries, in fact they were extremely exclusive, and very small. Almost everything was written in Latin (or Greek or Arabic), adding to the exclusivity of access.

In the "experimental" period between c. 1050 and c. 1300, private book collections emerged as a significant phenomenon, as well as the more efficient university book culture and the unstoppable rise of vernacular texts. Around 1300 it is fair to talk about the author (in a more modern sense), about a book market and about a wider – linguistic, technical, and economic – accessibility.

These tendencies were further developed in the "critical" period (c. 1300-c.1450), with a steep rise in the production of books, first of all due to the introduction of paper, and, shortly after that, to the invention of print.

The whole mass of medieval texts from the entire period of c. 600 to c. 1450 were fairly well preserved in aristocratic and royal libraries during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment (c. 1450-c. 1800). In different ways they were looked down upon and ignored, but for those who were interested, there was no great linguistic barrier, because Latin was still the dominant vehicle of learning in the West, and because most of the consolidating vernacular languages of the period had grown directly from their late medieval forms.

In the last two hundred years, beginning with the dramatic romantic reappraisal around 1800, the preservation and promotion of medieval texts have centred on national libraries and library systems as well national language institutions and school systems. This increased accessibility enormously within the nation, but the downgrading of Latin also meant that the medieval Latin literature, by far the most voluminous in medieval papal Europe, was cut off, or was, at best, served with a few key translations into the national language. The national-romantic attitude also strongly worked against comparative methods and promoted an idea of "non-translatability": without deep philological knowledge readers were not initiated into any real understanding of old national literary monuments.

In the internet age, the national and other leading institutional libraries are still extremely important for this heritage, but the results of the media revolution are so staggering that no one could ever have dreamt of them even two decades ago. We can now browse wonderfully reproduced medieval manuscript books anywhere we want, we can compare them to other manuscripts, to editions, translations and studies on the same screen. Together with internet accessibility we have the rise of global English, also in the realm of literature. There is now a true explosion in the number of medieval texts being translated into English which is at the same time becoming the second or third reading language of millions of people. While this is happening quality translations take on a very different role than they had in the romantic paradigm of non-translatability: distant reading based on translations is now a legitimate comparative method, at the same time as the rigours of philological close reading are also assisted by wide accessibility of the original texts (although the latter is challenged by the decline of philology worldwide). This gives us the chance to question the national canons of medieval literature and to take possession – in both amateurish and professional ways – of what should be seen as a global heritage. The High Canon, and country- or language-specific concerns, will still be excellent ambassadors for these riches, but the globally distributed constituencies can now also find numerous gates into the less canonical and enjoy a wider pre-modern literary geography than ever before. It is of course difficult to say whether this will eventually revitalize any broader interest in medieval European literatures, but it is very probable that we stand at a watershed similar to those of the Renaissance and of early Romanticism; and if we as medieval textual scholars do not wish to abandon the entire field to complete fragmentation and private initiative – or to one-sided ideological exploitation – we need to find ways to supplement our existing master-narratives for this extremely large and multifaceted record of verbal art and pre-modern human insight.

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