

**NEW DIRECTIONS IN LATER
MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT STUDIES**

Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference

Edited by Derek Pearsall

New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies

ESSAYS FROM THE 1998 HARVARD CONFERENCE

Manuscripts are the basic primary material evidence for literary scholars and historians; no longer regarded as inert witnesses, they now contribute in manifold ways to the continuing process of discovery. Derek Pearsall, whose work has been of first importance in establishing the value of the evidence manuscripts can offer, here leads a British–North American group of scholars in discussion of current developments and vital questions about the future of manuscript study. Topics include codicology and book production; textual criticism; the material structure of the medieval book; the relation of manuscripts to literary culture, social history and medieval theatre; and emerging technology.

DEREK PEARSALL is former Professor and Co-Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies, York, and Professor of English at Harvard University.

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Edited by
DEREK PEARSALL



THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

YORK MEDIEVAL PRESS

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Introduction

DEREK PEARSALL

The study of manuscripts is one of the most active areas of current research in medieval studies: manuscripts are the basic primary material evidence for literary scholars, historians and art-historians alike, and there has been an explosion of interest over the past twenty or twenty-five years. Manuscript study has developed enormously: codices are no longer treated as inert witnesses to a culture whose character has already been determined by the modern scholar, but are active participants in a process of exploration and discovery. All aspects of the manuscript's physical existence are relevant to such an enquiry, not just the texts it contains, but the materials, the choice and arrangement of contents, the lay-out and format of the page, the choice of script, the hierarchy of decoration, the illustration, the use of marginal annotation and glossing. Even after a manuscript has been 'published', it remains an active witness to the culture of its reception, in the scope it offers for readers' marginal and other comments.

I believed all this twenty years ago, when during the early 1980s I organised a series of biennial conferences at the University of York on late medieval English manuscript studies. Two books of essays collected from the papers given at those conferences were subsequently published: *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), and *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987). The conferences were continued, on a slightly different basis and with a different emphasis, after I left York for Harvard in 1985. But I have lost none of my conviction of the centrality of manuscript studies to the discipline of medieval studies, and so it seemed to me appropriate that during my last year at Harvard I should organise another conference on medieval manuscript studies, to see where the subject had got to. Such was the originating moment of the conference at Harvard University in October 1998 held under the auspices of the Committee on Medieval Studies. The title, 'New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies', was entirely predictable, given the rapid approach of the millennium with all its expectations of renewal.

Not all the twenty-one papers presented at the conference were available

for publication but there are enough here to indicate something of the rich and suggestive variety of contributions that were offered. Late medieval manuscript studies have in fact entered a particularly exciting phase, in which the work of the last two or three decades is beginning to be consolidated. More and more detailed work on individual manuscripts is gradually filling in pieces in a large jigsaw, and there were papers at the conference by scholars who are beginning to see what the large picture looks like. Since it seems to me that arrangements of such a collection of essays by topic often obscure important cross-currents of connection and pretend to an impossible divisibility of the subject-matter, I have left them in alphabetical order of author's surname, with the exception of the essay by Ian Doyle, which stands properly first. Doyle bravely took on the task with which he was charged of giving a survey of recent developments and of anticipating what other speakers might have omitted. His talk, as he makes clear, was the opening event of the conference, and it was as magisterial in its command of the field as one might expect from the doyen of late medieval English manuscript studies. He attends, in turn, to palaeography, codicology, the material structures of manuscripts, scribal and production practice, and more briefly to the overlap of manuscript and printed book production, book-binding, and the emerging technology of computerised digitisation and hypertext display.

Let me begin my brief introduction to the essays in this volume by drawing attention to the three essays that fall into Doyle's last category and that constitute, without question, the newest of new directions. Norman Blake offers, not for the first time, an explanation of the 'Canterbury Tales Project' which he has master-minded, an approach to the analysis of textual variants involving a computerised analysis of affiliations (using techniques derived from the biological sciences) which is more comprehensive and systematic than anything previously achieved by hand. This, as he explains, is made possible by the digitised representation through electronic transcription of all manuscript witnesses and the provision on CD-ROM of a facility (in future searchable) by which all witnesses can be simultaneously accessed. The advantages of this new method, which Blake makes freshly evident, are that it gives all manuscripts, including those not traditionally favoured by editors, a chance to play their part in the understanding of text-generation, and it eliminates the curse of the lemma, by which changes introduced in different manuscripts are made to seem, in their truncated and unintelligible form, solely in relation to the chosen copy-text and without the surrounding context, aberrant.

Martha Driver, in a closely related study, designed, as she says, to 'comfort the fearful', investigates some of the possibilities for future research offered by electronic resources. She includes an interim survey of manuscript sites available on the World Wide Web, a lively examination of some of the recent Internet publicity generated by the electronic Canterbury Tales Project, and

an enthusiastic account of some of the opportunities offered by electronic media for teaching manuscript studies. Of all the essays in the volume it is the one most whole-heartedly committed to a 'New Direction'. Alison Stones gives an account of a specific project for the computerised study of manuscripts. She describes the creation of a searchable database of manuscript pages and images of certain medieval French prose romances so as to provide more information on the makers and illustrators of these manuscripts, their intentions and practices. In the process she provides much information on other Web sites where digitised images of illuminated manuscripts are available or being planned.

There are comparatively few essays here on certain traditional aspects of manuscript study relating to the material structure of the manuscript book and the hands of scribes. Perhaps this reflects the primary interests of the organiser of the conference. But Peter Gumbert offers a study of some of the technical aspects of the make-up of the medieval manuscript book and in particular of the means by which the skins of animals were made into parchment bifolia and quires convenient for the use of the scribe. It is, as he says, part of the history of the craft of book-making, part of the history of the book, and as such, no less than the study of the texts that the manuscripts contain, part of cultural history. Investigation of the making of books is also Linne Mooney's principal subject. She describes the way in which scribal profiles have been built up for scribes identified in several extant manuscripts, and how the making of the profiles might be made more accurate and comprehensive in the future by digital means. I suppose that there are ways in which this could inform text-investigation (in the case of multiple copying of the same text by the same scribe) but the main bearing would be upon the history of book production as a specialised but nonetheless important aspect of cultural history.

For the rest, the essays in the volume deal with the ways in which manuscript study enhances understanding of the texts that they contain and of the literary histories in which those texts are incorporated. The broadest approach to such questions is offered by Ralph Hanna and John Thompson. Hanna is emphatic about the role of the study of manuscripts in the making of cultural history, and most people, I am sure, would accept his view, provided they were allowed to make their own definition of 'cultural history'. Hanna's own contribution, an investigation of the manuscripts that might be used to give a context for the hitherto contextless Auchinleck manuscript and therefore a new picture of London culture and English literary history in the years from 1320 to 1350, is central to such an understanding of the direction manuscript study should take. Thompson examines some of the positions that have been taken up, whether consciously 'theoretical' or not, in assessing the kinds of evidence manuscripts provide about medieval textuality, manuscript culture and the history of the book and of reading. He takes up two issues in Hoccleve and Lydgate manuscripts

relating to 'father Chaucer' and shows from the evidence of the manuscripts that matters are not so clear-cut as they have sometimes been represented in literary history.

More particular questions are taken up by Julia Boffey and Tony Edwards. Boffey, responding to a call to say something about the interface between literary manuscripts and archival materials, shows some of the rewards that accompany the expansion of manuscript searching by literary scholars to include those kinds of documentary record that usually get missed. She gives glimpses of the unexpected finds that have been and are still to be made in such archive repositories – literary manuscripts unexpectedly turning up in record offices, and poems and verses found inscribed in record rolls, rentals, court rolls, liturgical calendars, account-books, legal indentures and land-grants. She points thus to a very positively New Direction, one that might lead to new finds. Edwards, concerned with the manner in which the manuscripts of medieval texts are represented, and misrepresented, in modern editions, concentrates on typographical rather than editorial (that is, emendatory) practice, and makes some contrasts between the primacy accorded the text *qua* text in modern critical editions and the respect paid to the manuscript representation of the text in early editions by Sir Frederic Madden. The modern critical edition, Edwards points out, seems designed to separate the reader of the text from any consciousness of the physical and maybe messy reality of its origins. Facsimiles are one way of restoring that reality, but they are expensive to produce, and the most promising future lies perhaps in the direction of electronic facsimiles and manuscript digitisation. This, it will be seen, is a recurring theme of this collection, and not just in the essays devoted to electronic new directions.

Finally, there are three essays that deal with particular texts or groups of texts and show how new approaches to the study of the manuscripts in which they are contained offer promise of new understanding. Eckehard Simon, in an essay remarkable for its pioneering scholarship, describes how the manuscripts that survive of the fifteenth-century German carnival plays do indeed record texts, but are important also as evidence of the lost arena of performance, the urban culture in which the plays had their real existence. In a way that is more obvious than with non-dramatic or high-culture texts, the manuscript *is* the meaning of the text. English drama-historians will be green with envy when they read this essay, for they have nothing to match the richness of this archive and its immediacy to the circumstances of performance.

There are also two essays on *Piers Plowman*. David Benson traces some of the ways in which the complex manuscript situation of a poem like *Piers Plowman* has been differently interpreted, beginning with the idea that every manuscript must belong to one of three versions of the poem and that those three versions represent discrete stages in the evolution of the poem and the author's developing intention for it. He shows how more recent students of

the manuscripts and the texts they contain are inclined to read the situation differently – as evidence of more than three stages, none of them discrete, or as evidence of versions being produced ad hoc for different audiences, or as evidence of the complex interaction of author and scribe in text-production, or as evidence of the existence of a certain amount of inexplicable mess. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, in her essay on ‘Professional Readers of Langland’, describes how vital manuscripts are to literary scholars. ‘Professional readers’ are those people (including scribes) who made conscious decisions about how a text was to be presented in a manuscript-book. That such decisions were constantly being made is clear from the often sophisticated activity of editing, annotating, correcting, rubricating and illustrating that goes on. The presence of a text in a manuscript is just one piece of information: every aspect of text-presentation has further information to yield about the classes of readers and the reading-practices in which the work is to be situated. These kinds of information are not additional to a primary understanding of the text that might be derived from other sources, historical or intuitive: they are not mere ‘reception-history’; they are an essential part of the meaning of the text.

In conclusion, let me thank all the participants for accepting the invitation to come to the conference and give papers, and thank particularly those who have prepared their papers for publication in this volume. The conference was sponsored by the Committee on Medieval Studies at Harvard University, to whose members I am most grateful, as to Mary-Jo Arn, who gave me much help in the preparation of the final copy for the publishers. It will be clear that I have not attempted to erase the traces of the style of address adopted by the speakers for the purposes of their conference-presentations, and it will be likewise clear that there are some who use more colloquialisms and asides than others.

Recent Directions in Medieval Manuscript Study

A. I. DOYLE

You may have noticed the divergences of my title from that of the conference as a whole: 'Recent' for 'New' and 'Study' for 'Studies'. I am not confident that much of what I am going to talk about, nor, I suspect, other speakers, is entirely new, and whereas they may legitimately devote their interest and attention to single approaches in the study of manuscript books of the high and later Middle Ages, I believe my task is to try to survey and relate all in a more inclusive view, and, riskily, to supply anticipated omissions. I hope it will be seen that I am at a disadvantage in having to guess what the following speakers are going to discuss, from the titles they have given to their talks and what I know of some, if not all, of their previous work. I am taking it that our starting date is c. 1100, as first announced, and, from the programme, that the focus is on northern Europe and predominantly England.¹

I think I can best illustrate from my own experience the difference between probably the majority of students of medieval manuscripts, who concentrate on a restricted range of questions, if perhaps aware of wider ones, and those of us who have come to be inquisitive almost equally about every feature. Like many of the speakers here I started in English literature, by trying to discover who were the earliest readers and hearers of the late fourteenth-century alliterative poem of *Piers Plowman*, and when I decided that I could not find enough direct and indirect evidence about that work² I extended my research to a much wider audience of Middle English religious verse and prose. These were of course not even then untrodden paths; they have come more recently to be called Reception Studies, by what I think is a legitimate extension of the sense of an older German or French term, but I am disinclined to theorize about it.

¹ For details of and comments on earlier publications, up to 1981, there are two useful English resources: (i) L. N. Braswell, *Western Manuscripts from Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance: A Handbook* (New York, 1981); (ii) L. E. Boyle, *Medieval Latin Palaeography: A Bibliographical Introduction* (Toronto, 1984), professedly concentrating on the period 1150–1450 'for beginners'. The annual 'Bulletin Codicologique' in *Scriptorium* offers digests and comments, but belatedly, and not comprehensively for vernacular texts or manuscripts.

² It may be a mark of progress that subsequently several people, including me, have found more to say about this.

Records of English books in medieval library catalogues and other institutional lists are scarce; bequests in wills, somewhat more frequent, lead to backgrounds of testators and recipients, in recent years increasingly exploited,³ and in a few cases to surviving books. Examination of all the extant copies of a text offers the possibility of finding more names of early owners, if not always indisputable in date, the identity of whom may also be discoverable from documentary sources, and their social circumstances. But one soon comes to realise that it is the verbal and graphic contents of the manuscripts together with their physical characteristics which are the prime indicators for what sort of person and purpose, where and when each copy may have been made – not only the codices which contain a single text but also those which include several or many, whether assembled at one time or more, within the Middle Ages. That involves considering the associations of those other texts and their occurrence, separately or together, in other manuscripts, and any evidence for the latter's own histories. Vernacular texts were not always copied apart from those in Latin and, as I have more than once insisted elsewhere, manuscripts containing vernacular texts are and were always only a small proportion of the production and dissemination of literature, and scholars cannot afford to forget or neglect this if they are to make progress in the reconstruction of medieval mental and social relationships. And so, from inferring the interests of the people who commissioned or acquired the codices, you may be led, as I have been, into asking who actually made them and how the contents were communicated, both before and after copying.⁴

Even if you wish to limit your enquiries to one text, one genre or one language you will need help from palaeography, in its narrower sense of categorizing and dating scripts, and art history for decoration, textual criticism for affiliations and alterations of copies, linguistics for localizations, while still engaged in literary history. Each of those studies is an engrossing occupation in itself, though one may be able gradually to learn enough of some or all of them to do one's own assessment of manuscripts. Our keener consciousness of the desirability of this all-round treatment is, I suppose, one of our recent directions, yet hardly new, being presumed by the best earlier scholars.⁵

³ E.g., Susan Cavanaugh, 'A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300–1450', 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1980, University Microfilms 1983), primarily from printed sources; J. B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse, NY, 1995), using the York registers.

⁴ See *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, England, 1989); *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1990); *Rationalisierung der Buchherstellung im Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit*, ed. P. Rück and M. Boghardt (Marburg, 1994); *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1995).

⁵ E.g., Henry Bradshaw, Leopold Delisle, M. R. James, Paul Lehmann, N. R. Ker.

Palaeography, in the narrower sense already mentioned, has undoubtedly made considerable advances, with regard to the high and later Middle Ages, over the last half-century. The then newly instituted Comité International de Paléographie sponsored a symposium on *Nomenclature des écritures livresques* in 1953,⁶ and also the series of catalogues of dated and datable manuscript books in the libraries of each country, starting with France from 1959, and now running to over forty volumes (many double), three of such pairs so far for England.⁷

Between 1953 and 1963 T. A. M. Bishop published a number of concise notes identifying the work of scribes in late eleventh- and early twelfth-century English codices, two albums, the first with Pierre Chaplais in 1957 and 1961, on scribes of writs and charters in the same period, and in 1971 one on *English Caroline Minuscule*; while Neil Ker in 1960 produced his *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest* based on his Lyell lectures of 1952–53. From this groundwork (and one should not forget Sir Roger Mynors' monumental *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century* published in 1939 and so scarcely influential until after the Second World War) more recently, since 1982, Rodney Thomson, Tessa Webber, Michael Gullick, Richard Gameson and others have attempted to sort English sheep from foreign ones and into their home flocks and pedigrees, employing evidence of text and decoration in addition to script and chronicle.⁸ The method has been to examine closely and critically manuscripts associable with particular centres, monasteries and cathedrals, trying to discern sequences of production and acquisition in each place in relation to their specific histories. This of course is palaeography in a broader sense. The effect has been to provide a range of facsimiles, arguments and expertise which have facilitated comparative judgments of the probable dating and possible origins of manuscripts in England over the whole of the twelfth century and just before and after.

As I have already implied, this has been in consort with improvement in the corresponding art history, by a keener codicological awareness, from C. R. Dodwell's book on Canterbury manuscripts, 1954, Jonathan Alexander's on Mont Saint Michel, 1970, and Michael Kauffman's volume in the Survey of British Illuminated Manuscripts, 1975. Mont Saint Michel is a reminder that

⁶ B. Bischoff et al., *Nomenclature des écritures livresques du IXe au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1954).

⁷ For an interim view see G. Grand et al., *Les Manuscrits datés: premier bilan et perspectives* (Paris, 1985).

⁸ R. M. Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey 1066–1235*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1982); E. P. McLachlan, *The Scriptorium of Bury St Edmunds in the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1986); T. Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral c.1075–c.1125* (Oxford, 1992); M. Gullick, 'The Scribe of the Carilef Bible: A New Look at Late Eleventh-Century Durham Cathedral Manuscripts', in *Medieval Book Production*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg, pp. 61–83; R. Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c.1066–1130)* (Oxford, 1998).

the traffic of manuscripts, scribes, artists and styles across the Channel constantly requires acts of discrimination, and there is still a need for fresh formulation of criteria, running on into the thirteenth century, and beyond. *A l'autre côté de la Manche* François Avril has been the counterpart and collaborator of Jonathan Alexander in this work, some of it summarized in the survey of Bibliothèque Nationale illuminated manuscripts judged insular, 1987, and now we have Walter Kahn's pair of general volumes on Romanesque illuminated manuscripts, 1996, in the new Harvey Miller French survey edited by both Avril and Alexander. Along with the existing catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts for both countries there is no shortage of published material, and ample unpublished, for further progress in this period, nor is there any lack of activity.

I cannot speak with personal authority about other countries, especially in southern Europe: but I know of notable work on German and Slovenian scriptoria, for instance, which illustrates both international resemblances and distinctive characteristics.⁹

Gothic book hands of the thirteenth and later centuries have so far had less attention, except in the detailed descriptions of German vernacular books by Karin Schneider, from 1987, to which one would welcome English and French equivalents.¹⁰ I was not able to attend the Sandars lectures on book hands at Cambridge (England) by Albert Derolez, when he may have tried to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge about the *littera textualis*; he tells me publication is on the way. Nigel Morgan's two-volume survey of thirteenth-century English illumination gives guidance to the probable centres of patronage or production, with salutary instances of the peripatetic careers of artists, and the caveat that more research on non-illuminated manuscripts in the period is still needed.

The development of cursive scripts in and after the thirteenth century and their application to books resulted in a greater diversification nationally or regionally, and the great multiplication of documentary manuscripts affords a wealth of possibility of closer dating and even localizing criteria, but in England anyway archivists, since the days of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, do not appear to have been much interested in determining or discussing them for the benefit of other scholars. Early charters including the vernaculars (before the time when they occur often in England) have had attention in France and the Low Countries, as much for the language as script, I think. But here I hope for some amplifying or correcting comment from other people present.

It is the hierarchy and morphology, and therewith the development, of cursive scripts in books which were addressed in the Comité symposium on

⁹ A. Cohen-Mushlin, *A Medieval Scriptorium: Sancta Maria Magdalena de Frankendal*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1990); N. Golob, *Twelfth-Century Cistercian Manuscripts: The Sitticum Collection* (London, 1996).

¹⁰ K. Schneider, *Gotischer Schriften in deutscher Sprache*, I, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1987), et seq.

Nomenclature by Gerard Lieftinck in 1953. He not only proposed a nomenclature for the degree of formality of specimens but also a definition of the key graphs of a type of script for which at that time he took the prevalent broader term 'bastarda', but later decided to substitute a less over-used, yet comparably ambiguous name, 'hybrida'. This genuinely distinct script was one common at first only in a relatively limited geographical zone of the Low Countries and Germany in the fifteenth century, though paralleled and imitated increasingly elsewhere; but the term has been resisted, even for the same type, by some scholars who have preferred sticking to the longer-established bastard, while a few have used 'hybrida' equivalently for any script of mixed forms. Moreover Lieftinck's system was not all-embracing even for northern Europe and some scripts, notably the English, did not fit it. To circumvent this impasse Peter Gumbert, Lieftinck's successor at Leiden, has devised an ingenious Cartesian cube which enables one to designate the set of key characteristics of a cursive or semi-cursive script by a simple unprejudicial code, but it has not had a great deal of publicity and so cannot yet be said to have caught on.¹¹ I am afraid palaeographers are very loath to change their habits in such respects, and other manuscript students tend to follow older models unwittingly or else to adopt new terms uncomprehendingly. Impelled by the Comité *Nomenclature* and the problems of teaching, Julian Brown worked out a quite elaborate though very consistent scheme covering all types of Latin script, which he never published but which his pupil Michelle Brown has adopted patchily in her *Guide to Western Historical Scripts*, 1990. (I should make it clear that I am *not* referring here to his system for the early insular scripts, which he outlined in his Lyell lectures at Oxford, but has never been published in full; it falls outside the date-limits of this conference.¹²)

Following leads by Neil Ker it was Malcolm Parkes who produced a fresh diagnosis of *English Cursive Book Hands* in his Oxford album of 1969.¹³ The term Anglicana has been generally welcomed to describe the obvious features of the traditional cursive script which persisted in England after they had been superseded in most continental regions by the second half of the fourteenth century. The term Secretary, applied by Ker and Parkes, on good historical and morphological grounds, to the British adoptions and adaptations of the newer continental Cursiva, from the last third of the fourteenth century on, has however not always been applied accurately in subsequent accounts of manuscripts by editors, cataloguers and other scholars, because of the manifold combinations or mixtures of features (graphs and duct) from Anglicana and Secretary script in fifteenth-century manuscripts, where judgments of the predominance of the one or the other

¹¹ J. P. Gumbert, 'Nomenclatur als Gradnetz: ein Versuch an spätmittelalterlichen Schriftformen', *Codices Manuscripti* 1 (1975), 122–5.

¹² See T. J. Brown, *A Palaeographer's View*, ed. J. Batley et al. (London, 1993).

¹³ Reprinted with addenda (Aldershot, 1979).

naturally may differ. Users also find it difficult to distinguish in practice between Parkes's Bastard Anglicana and Anglicana Formata. The term Fere-Textura, which I think I introduced as a parallel to one of Lieftinck's, has also suffered separation from the specific limited conventions it was intended to describe.¹⁴

Some people have an impatience with terminology, but we do need special names to emphasize things and concepts, and particularly in teaching. We do not all need to use the same words for the same things, but we do all need to be able to translate *within* one language as well as from one language to another, and so to know when the meanings coincide and when they do not. One of the Comité International's long-standing projects is a multilingual vocabulary of palaeographical and codicological terms, the former to be founded in part on research into medieval usage. It has not yet emerged, and the English members of the Comité preferred to encourage the codicological vocabulary without strictly palaeographical terms, of which Denis Muzerelle produced the illustrated French version in 1985, followed by an Italian in 1996 and a Spanish in 1997.¹⁵ And now there are additional reasons, besides national honour, for aiming to produce an Anglophone vocabulary, not only codicological but also palaeographical. The recent projects for electronic cataloguing standards for manuscript codices on both sides of the Atlantic, EAMMS (Electronic Access to Medieval Manuscripts) here and MASTER (Manuscript Access through Standards for Electronic Records) in Europe, besides previous independent subject-based and national ones, require thesauruses (or thesauri if you like) of recognized terms in all aspects of descriptions, multilingual or even English only (since it has become the electronic lingua franca), for the records to be word-searchable, whether free-text or within fields, as may be convenient. Such a thesaurus could be a large concordance of known terms, some synonyms, to allow for a variety of users and also to encourage consistency in use, not to dictate complete uniformity. Of course it should not be compiled only in England. Small working-groups on both sides of the Atlantic and in the Antipodes at least might draw up and exchange lists of terms within particular fields, and meet, if at all, only to finish publishable drafts of portions. The European vocabularies have had public funding for dedicated workers, and an English-language one would be expedited if someone could be hired or would volunteer as general editor.

The European vocabularies contain many terms for technical processes and things in the making of manuscript books which will be unknown to, or unneeded by, many students of texts and their reception, yet are increasingly wanted by others. I said how I started as such a literary historian but have become ever more interested in how manuscript books were made, not just in

¹⁴ Specifically with both *f* and long *s* descending below the writing line, which is not so in strict *textura*.

¹⁵ M. Maniaci, *Terminologia del Libro Manoscritto* (Rome, 1996); P. Ostos et al. *Vocabulario de Codicología* (Madrid, 1997).

one period or place. If one is, as I have been, a curator and cataloguer of a collection of medieval manuscripts of diverse dates, languages and subjects, and furthermore a guide to them for other people, whether students in classes or occasional visitors, one is asked, or asks oneself, various things about manufacture which handbooks of palaeography or *Handschriftenkunde* do not mention, or else do not sufficiently explain. The more manuscripts of the same texts one examines in comparative study the more one is challenged to understand why they differ or accord in certain physical respects. And to ask, can such physical details tell us more about the makers and circumstances of making? This is one aspect of what has come to be called codicology, more narrowly the archaeology of the book, not only the processes and materials of its making but also the cultural and historical circumstances. It is forty years since Geoffrey Ivy published a short essay on elementary practical questions,¹⁶ but there is not as yet an embracing treatment in English, though I know that there are at least two potential authors here present. There is a useful privately-circulated loose-leaf manual in Dutch, *De Descriptione Codicum*, by Hermans and Huisman, 1981. Jacques Lemaire's *Introduction à la Codicologie*, 1989, owing much to Léon Gilissen, is not comprehensive enough. We may well envy Malachi Beit-Arié's *Hebrew Codicology*, 1981, based on the comprehensive analytical surveys of that comparatively limited field conducted in France and Israel, and learn from it, as well as the pamphlet on contemporary *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* by Sergew Hable Selassie, also published in 1981.¹⁷

But investigation of western medieval materials and practices has been improving rapidly since those dates in the 1980s. If we look at particular aspects in order, the writing surfaces, *le support* in French, first the study of watermarks (about the value of which for a long time many scholars and cataloguers were frankly sceptical) has become very fruitful, from the combination of exact copying methods (betaradiography and others) and more extensive repertories, most notably the revised Briquet and Piccard; secondly, the different dimensions of paper sheets, affecting the size and format of codices through folding.¹⁸ Understanding of these factors has, it seems, spread backwards from the bibliography of early printed books, initially to manuscripts on paper and then to asking the same questions, much harder to answer, of manuscripts on membrane. Peter Gumbert will be

¹⁶ G. S. Ivy, 'The Bibliography of the Manuscript Book', in *The English Library before 1700*, ed. F. Wormald and C. E. Wright (London, 1958), pp. 32–65.

¹⁷ M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology* (Paris, 1977; repr. with addenda and corrigenda, Jerusalem, 1981); S. H. Selassie, *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* (Leiden, 1981).

¹⁸ See R. J. Lyall, 'Materials: The Paper Revolution', in Griffiths and Pearsall, *Book Production*, pp. 11–29; P. Needham, 'Res Papirea: Sizes and Formats of the Late Medieval Book', in Rück and Boghardt, *Rationalisierung*, pp. 123–45; J. P. Gumbert, 'Sizes and Formats', in *Ancient and Medieval Book Materials and Techniques*, ed. M. Maniaci and P. F. Munafò, Studi e Testi 357–8 (Rome, 1993), I, 227–63.