INTRODUCTION: MEDIEVAL LIBRARIES, HISTORY OF THE BOOK, AND

LITERATURE

Medieval libraries are studied as collections of books, but much less frequently as collections of ideas. They are somewhat neglected by literary scholars, who tend to define the parameters of their studies in terms of authors, genres, themes, traditions, or movements, rather than library collections. Such critics are interested in where individual texts come from or where they go, and much less in which texts were gathered together in libraries and thus made sense together. Studies have increased awareness of the intertextuality of medieval literature,[1] especially of the interplay between literature and philosophy in the later Middle Ages;

[1] See especially Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the 'Rose' to the 'Rhétoriqueurs'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Alain Corbellari, *La Voix des clercs: littérature et savoir universitaire autour des dits du XIIIᵉ siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2005).

medieval literary texts were of course in dialogue with other sorts of knowledge. But the potential for using popular literary texts — the *incontournables* of medieval libraries — to inform an idea of what those libraries symbolized, or how they were conceived or used, remains unexploited. Nor has the medieval library been deployed to make sense of the texts found within it, despite the fact that the meaning of any text is inevitably informed by familiarity with the other works alongside which it is found. Rather, History of the Book has been the main field to tackle medieval libraries. Scholars in that domain show well how people needed, made, or used books. Patronage, ownership, lending, and production are central foci as the histories of particular manuscripts and the activities of makers and collectors are documented. Meaning is found in the physical forms of writing, or in the structure and presentation of manuscripts, including paratextual features, such as rubrics and marginalia.[2] But History of the Book's statistics-driven approach, reliant on empirical data, remains epistemologically cautious and runs up against natural limits where such information is sketchy or unavailable. History of the Book is interested in the supply and demand of books as objects; it has concentrated on tracking and measuring book ownership.[3] But it lacks the 'human contexts for the production and reception of texts'.[4]

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[2] These are the subjects dominating the recent compilation of the work of two of the most important scholars in History of the Book: Richard H. and Mary A. Rouse, *Bound Fast with Letters: Medieval Writers, Readers, and Texts* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). For an overview of the field, see Alexandra Gillespie, 'Analytical Survey 9: The History of the Book', *New Medieval Literatures*, 9 (2007), 245–86.

[3] See the critique of History of the Book offered in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, 'Introduction', in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp. 1–36; Roger Chartier,

Expanded to the level of the library, the positivist approach of History of the Book shows its limitations more clearly. The library is reduced to being a symptom of the processes of production; thus Jenny Stratford and Teresa Webber note the tendency to focus on individual books and owners, due to lack of evidence about how books were 'perceived, acquired, or used as collections'.[5] Though sociological questions, such as taste and temperament, can be answered via knowledge of the economics of the book trade, this tends again to tabulated data. Codices become mere figures in defined lists of knowable facts, and the library is viewed as the aggregation of these facts, a bigger data set. Hanno Wijsman's recent work on the libraries of Burgundian nobles, for example, carefully records the ownership of texts in particular languages and genres. He shows how the ducal library, in the later Middle Ages, was 'geared to secular use and the representation of worldly power […] The book in the noble library now becomes chiefly a source of secular knowledge and identity and is no longer predominantly in the service of the culture of prayer'.[6] This is precisely the kind of reductive claim about texts — which are made monochromatic — that dominates the field. The nature and dynamics of this 'secular knowledge' remain unexamined. Elsewhere, the same answers are peddled: aristocratic libraries contained standard corpora; they reflected the noble world-view; they manifested wealth and status;

L'Ordre des livres: lecteurs, auteurs, bibliothèques en Europe entre XIVe et XVIIIe siècle (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1992).

[4] Gillespie, 'History of the Book', p. 249.

[5] 'Bishops and Kings: Private Book Collections in Medieval England', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland I: to 1640*, ed. by Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 178–217 (p. 183).

[6] *Luxury Bound: Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1440–1550)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), p. 153.

they served political, dynastic, or crusading aims.[7] Scholars in History of the Book quite

rightly criticize the tendency of scholars in other fields to disembody medieval texts — that

is, to treat them outside of the context of the books they circulated in[8] — but History of the

Book in turn focuses on the embodiment of the texts to the detriment of the texts themselves.

It flattens texts for which multiple readings and resonances are possible, and sidelines the

capacity of works to create and disrupt their own systems of meaning.[9] Medieval libraries

have thus become part of social and economic history, without being properly integrated into

the history of ideas. History of the Book fails to show how individual works fitted within a

wider body of knowledge, and why books and libraries mattered to medieval readers

intellectually. This special issue aims to take steps towards rectifying that. In the rest of this

Introduction, I will argue that an approach informed by Foucault can help illuminate the

phenomenon of the medieval library.

Foucault and libraries

In *Les Mots et les choses*, Foucault repeatedly turns to the library as a figure of knowledge

organized, completed, mastered, totalized. Describing Renaissance knowledge in terms of

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[7] See, on the Burgundian collection, *The Ideology of Burgundy*, ed. by D'Arcy Jonathan

Dacre Boulton and Jan Veenstra (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Deborah McGrady sees book

acquisition as aggressive assertion of power: 'What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship

in MS Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works', in *Christine de Pizan and the

Categories of Difference*, ed. by Marilynn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Press, 1998), pp. 195–214.

[8] Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*,

ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 1–6.

[9] Gillespie, 'History of the Book', p. 256.

resemblance, Foucault suggests it forms a second-degree treasure trove, a classification

system, a set of marks, referring to the treasure of nature: 'la vérité de toutes ces marques —

qu'elles traversent la nature, ou qu'elles s'alignent sur les parchemins et dans les

bibliothèques — est partout la même: aussi archaïque que l'institution de Dieu'.[10] He also

writes that La Croix du Maine 'imagine un espace à la fois d'Encyclopédie et de Bibliothèque

qui permettrait de disposer les textes écrits selon les figures du voisinage, de la parenté, de

l'analogie et de la subordination que prescrit le monde lui-même'.[11] The library is, then, a

collection of texts which together provide a complete and systematic representation of the

world. Foucault writes at more length about libraries in two lesser-known pieces: 'Des

espaces autres' and *La Bibliothèque fantastique*.[12] In the former, Foucault develops his idea

of 'heterotopias', which are defined first of all in contradistinction to utopias. Utopias are:

> les emplacements qui entretiennent avec l'espace réel de la société un rapport général
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> d'analogie directe ou inversée. C'est la société elle-même perfectionnée ou c'est
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> l'envers de la société, mais, de toute façon, ces utopies sont des espaces qui sont
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> fondamentalement essentiellement irréels.[13]

Heterotopias, on the other hand, are simultaneously real and mythical:

> des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui sont dessinés dans l'institution même
>
> de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies

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[10] *Les Mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p.
49.

[11] *Les Mots et les choses*, p. 53.

[12] 'Des espaces autres', in *Dits et écrits IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 752–62; *La
Bibliothèque fantastique: à propos de la 'Tentation de saint Antoine' de Gustave Flaubert*
(Bruxelles: La Lettre volée, 1995).

[13] 'Des espaces autres', p. 755.

effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacements réels, tous les autres

emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois

représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux,

bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables.[14]

Foucault ventures six arguments about heterotopias. First, all cultures create heterotopias:

primitive societies have what he terms crisis heterotopias (privileged, sacred, or forbidden

places, reserved for individuals in a state of crisis: menstruating or pregnant women, the

elderly). Such heterotopias are disappearing today, replaced by a second category:

heterotopias of deviation (psychiatric hospitals and prisons). Second, particular heterotopias

can change function over time. Third, 'l'hétérotopie a le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu

réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles'[15] —

the best example is the theatre, which brings onto the stage, successively, a series of places

foreign to one another. The cinema works in a similar way, and the garden is the oldest

example of this sort of heterotopia: 'le jardin, c'est la plus petite parcelle du monde et puis

c'est la totalité du monde. Le jardin, c'est, depuis le fond de l'Antiquité, une sorte

d'hétérotopie heureuse et universalisante (de là nos jardins zoologiques)'.[16] Fourth, temporal

discontinuities are also often absorbed, making 'heterochronias' such as museums and

libraries: 'il y a […] les hétérotopies du temps qui s'accumule à l'infini, par exemple les

musées, les bibliothèques'.[17] Fifth, heterotopias are not freely accessible: either one is locked

in, such as in prison, or entry requires ritual or purification. And sixth, finally, heterotopias

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[14] 'Des espaces autres', pp. 755–56.

[15] 'Des espaces autres', p. 758.

[16] 'Des espaces autres', p. 759.

[17] 'Des espaces autres', p. 759.

can be communities relying on the exclusion of the outside world, which is denounced as illusory or imperfect; this type is like a realized utopia, such as the Jesuit colony.

Worlds in miniature which stand in a variety of problematic, shifting relationships with the real world, heterotopias destabilize any opposition between order and disorder. They contain disorder within an ordered structure, or else hold multiple, competing orders within one space. And the library is for Foucault a heterotopia peculiar to modernity:

> au XVIIe, jusqu'à la fin du XVIIe siècle encore, les musées et les bibliothèques étaient l'expression d'un choix individuel. En revanche, l'idée de tout accumuler, l'idée de constituer une sorte d'archive générale, la volonté d'enfermer dans un lieu tous les temps, toutes les époques, toutes les formes, tous les goûts, l'idée de constituer un lieu de tous les temps qui soit lui-même hors du temps, et inaccessible à sa morsure, le projet d'organiser ainsi une sorte d'accumulation perpétuelle et indéfinie du temps dans un lieu qui ne bougerait pas, eh bien, tout cela appartient à notre modernité. Le musée et la bibliothèque sont des hétérotopies qui sont propres à la culture occidentale du XIXe siècle.[18]

The library is organized in a way that compensates for the disorder of the real world; it is a place where the discourses of the world — spatially and temporally different — find their place, within one big system. But this vision of the library, as an embodiment of the nineteenth-century desire to know, catalogue, and master, stands in contrast to the one developed in *La Bibliothèque fantastique*, Foucault's reading of Flaubert's *Tentation de Saint-Antoine*. Antoine, living as a hermit in a hut high up on a cliff overlooking the Nile and the desert, is overcome by despair and solitude. He prepares to leave his hermitage, but hates himself for weakness, and throws himself down to the ground where he falls into a trance. As he lies immobile, he is tempted by the devil who deploys a wide variety of illusions. The

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[18] 'Des espaces autres', p. 759.

universe parades before Antoine: he sees manifestations of desire, knowledge, power, imagination. Visions of plenty (food, drink, wealth, adulation) are followed by the appearance of his disciple Hilarion, who represents science and reason, and critiques Antoine's doctrinal knowledge. Various heretics appear, as do other gods and beings, such as dwarfs, the Sphinx and the Chimera. For Foucault, *La Tentation* is a library; he speaks of its erudition and mentions some of the many books Flaubert consulted on doctrine, heresy, and mythology. Scholars have lamented this aspect, claiming the work drowns under the weight of its knowledge.[19] But Foucault sees it as a comprehensive tour of knowledge types: 'comme un soleil nocturne, *La Tentation* va d'est en ouest, du désir au savoir, de l'imagination à la vérité, des plus vieilles nostalgies aux déterminations de la science moderne'.[20] However *La Tentation* is not a library as we know it. The idea of the library as a heterotopia takes on new dimensions in this text: it is entered as a dream, an illusion; it is a sacred, forbidden space of crisis. This library is a fantastic reconciliation of the rational with the irrational, and the dreamlike with the scholarly. In the text, we see the library 'ouverte, inventoriée, découpée, répétée et combinée dans un espace nouveau'.[21] Play and imagination are untrammelled by the barriers of order. Foucault contrasts *La Tentation* to *Don Quixote* and the Marquis de Sade's *Nouvelle Justine*: both are books created by absorbing and reacting to other books.

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[19] Such critiques are summarized by Allan H. Pasco, 'Trinitarian Unity in *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*', *French Studies*, 56 (2002), 457–70, who also notes critical attempts to find order. Mary Orr reads the text as a set of dialogues between sacred and secular knowledge: *Flaubert's 'Tentation': Remapping Nineteenth-Century French Histories of Religion and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[20] *La Bibliothèque fantastique*, p. 23.

[21] *La Bibliothèque fantastique*, p. 26.

But they ironize the books they devour, whereas Flaubert's text holds out quite different possibilities:

> *La Tentation*, elle, se rapporte sur le mode sérieux à l'immense domaine de l'imprimé; elle prend place dans l'institution reconnue de l'écriture. C'est moins un livre nouveau, qu'une œuvre qui s'étend sur l'espace des livres existants. Elle les recouvre, les cache, les manifeste, d'un seul mouvement les fait étinceler et disparaître. Elle n'est pas seulement un livre que Flaubert, longtemps, a rêvé d'écrire; elle est le rêve des autres livres: tous les autres livres, rêvants, rêvés, — repris, fragmentés, déplacés, combinés, mis à distance par le songe, mais par lui aussi rapprochés jusqu'à la satisfaction imaginaire et scintillante du désir. Après, *Le Livre* de Mallarmé deviendra possible, puis Joyce, Roussel, Kafka, Pound, Borges. La bibliothèque est en feu.[22]

Foucault describes a delirium of literary research here. There is madness within order, and order within madness. He also reconnects here with the garden imagery of 'Des espaces autres':

> *La Tentation* est la première œuvre littéraire qui tienne compte de ces institutions verdâtres où les livres s'accumulent et où croît doucement la lente, la certaine végétation de leur savoir. Flaubert est à la bibliothèque ce que Manet est au musée.[23]

Flaubert captures the library in its essence as a vast space of possibility that no longer just contains knowledge but also facilitates its creation. He unleashes the literary potential of the library. Indeed library scientist Gary Radford sees in the piece possibilities for 'an alternative perspective from which the rationalistic assumptions of a positivistic epistemology can be foregrounded, transcended, and critiqued, along with the conception of the academic library

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[22] *La Bibliothèque fantastique*, p. 10.

[23] *La Bibliothèque fantastique*, p. 11.

which it supports'.[24] For Radford, traditional concepts of knowledge, meaning, and communication in library and information science face a crisis because they fail to understand how people experience their interactions with the modern academic library. Refusing the idea of absolute knowledge, Radford suggests that the library be seen as a route to particular knowledges, each created as a user moves through the collection. Users need the freedom to find different itineraries, forming individual rationalities that will never add up to a single, stable order of knowledge. Radford's piece dates to 1998, but his conclusions apply *a fortiori* to the era of digital scholarship, Google and *Wikipedia*, when readers need to ask questions about authority, citation and the nature of truth — rather than being able simply to depend on the fact that the provided content is reliable — but are also allowed to become contributors in their own right. Mary Franklin-Brown begins and ends her study of medieval encyclopaedias with comparisons to *Wikipedia*: both have labyrinthine qualities, polyvocality, and most importantly, a tension between the aspiration to universality and order on the one hand, and unstable practices of citation, cross-referencing, and openness to revision on the other.[25] Both medieval encyclopaedias and *Wikipedia* arguably replace and supplement libraries, but also provide a model for understanding them. Indeed the disruptive dimensions of both correspond well to Foucault's imagining in *La Bibliothèque fantastique* of the library as a multifarious, unsettling cavalcade of irreconcilable ideas, rather than as storehouse of a tamed and fixed *savoir*; thus in turn invites critique of his historicization in 'Des espaces autres', by conjuring away the shift from the medieval and early modern library

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[24] 'Flaubert, Foucault, and the Bibliotheque Fantastique: Toward a Postmodern Epistemology for Library Science', *Library Trends*, 46 (1998), 616–34 (p. 616).

[25] *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 1–12; 305–10.

as personal collection to the modern library as a culture's ordered archive. The nineteenth century, along with other periods, had wildly different conceptions of the library.

The Middle Ages in fact show symptoms of many of the phenomena Foucault attributes to the nineteenth century. First, the term 'library' must be used carefully: Foucault deploys it as much to designate an imaginary space of encounter between books as an institutional space where they are stored. For the medieval period, it is the former sense, closer to the idea of book collection, that is arguably more important: ordered, institutional libraries were still nascent, with many sets of books housed in chests or cabinets rather than rooms with shelves. Yet works were circulating with greater intensity and coming into contact, because the proliferation of books is not unique to the era of print, as Michael Clanchy cautions: 'a vigorous book-using culture was the precursor to the invention of printing rather than its consequence'.[26] Christopher de Hamel even speaks of 'a sudden excess of knowledge' from the twelfth century onwards, which accelerated book production; there was 'an almost relentless stream of new titles in the lists of desiderata, in theology, history, politics, geography, natural history (bestiaries, for example), liturgy (missals rather than the older sacramentaries), and the first ancient Greek works translated into Latin from Arabic intermediaries'.[27] The secular book trade was growing apace;[28] and the prologues to works of the period often speak of the number and diversity of books. There was evidently a bewildering increase in the amount of written material. It is common for authors to start an

[26] 'Parchment and Paper: Manuscript Culture 1100–1500', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Eliot and Rose, pp. 194–206 (p. 195).

[27] 'The European Medieval Book', in *The Book: A Global History*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and H.R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 59–79 (p. 64).

[28] Richard and Mary Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Production in Medieval Paris 1200–1500*, 2 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

encyclopaedia or compilation by saying that it has been written because there are many
books, such as here when Bartholomaeus Anglicus explains his reasons for producing his
encyclopaedia:

> Ut simplices et parvuli, qui propter librorum infinitatem singularum rerum
> proprietates, de quibus tractat scriptura, investigare non possunt, in promptu invenire
> valeant saltem superficialiter quod intendunt.
>
> [so that uneducated people and children, who cannot investigate the properties of
> individual things that Scripture discusses, because of the infinity of books, can easily
> find want they want, albeit on a superficial level.][29]

This of course also raises questions about accessibility and changing audiences. New
vernacular reading publics were hungry for translations; the book trade grew rapidly in
response. Bartholomaeus's encyclopaedia would itself become vastly popular in its French
rendering as well as its Latin original. The desire for rationality, order, and truth was also
manifest in the way in which books were becoming easier to consult thanks to rubrics, tables
of contents, indexes, *notae*, and running heads. It was a world of more and longer books: the
drive to complete and compile explains the vogue, from the thirteenth century onwards, for
anthologies, florilegia, miscellanea, codifications, *summae*, and mammoth literary texts such
as Arthurian prose cycles. Frédéric Duval sketches an ideal late medieval Francophone
library by cataloguing all those texts with more than fifty surviving manuscripts dating to the
period 1350 to 1500.[30] Amongst other works, he notes the presence of *Bibles historiales*;

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[29] *De Proprietatibus Rerum: Volume I (Prohemium, Libri I–IV)*, ed. by Baudouin van den
Abeele and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 6. My translation.

[30] *Lectures françaises de la fin du Moyen Âge: petite anthologie commentée de succès
littéraires* (Geneva: Droz, 2007).

prayerbooks and moral guides; Frère Laurent's *La Somme le roi*; the *Roman de la Rose*;

manuals of hunting and falconry; medical works; encyclopaedias (*Sidrac*, Gossouin de Metz's

Image du monde and Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*); great histories (the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à*

César, the *Grandes chroniques de France*); and works by Boethius, Guillaume de

Digulleville, Jean Gerson, and Christine de Pizan. Many of these are attempts to summarize

and compile certain forms of knowledge (historical, medical, moral, philosophical, or

practical), or to dramatize human encounters with the limits of the knowable. Three

contributors to this special issue have worked on literary cycles, seeking models of

completeness and narrative order, as well as moments when disorder imposes itself.[31] Such

thinking informs our approach to libraries. Cycles, anthologies, and the like are microcosms

of libraries, modes of gathering, organizing and making sense of diverse material; they are

products of a search for classifiable, totalizable, and manageable knowledge. Yet they also

betray the fear that knowledge might spiral out of control, or that particular pieces of

knowledge might prove impossible to locate. Foucault's heterotopia corresponds to the

multiple systems for ordering the things of the world — competing discourses and disciplines

are represented and related, without ever tessellating completely — that are found in

medieval libraries. Yet, in a dimension missing from Foucault's idea of the library, the

medieval book collection was also heterotopic because it gathered codices each with a highly

individualized history of production, ownership, and use, bound up with practices of gift-

giving and inheritance (here, there is great potential for the reconnection of History of the

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[31] Miranda Griffin, *The Object and the Cause in the Vulgate Cycle* (Oxford: Legenda, 2005);

Thomas Hinton, *The 'Conte du Graal' Cycle: Chrétien de Troyes's 'Perceval', the*

Continuations, and French Arthurian Romance (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012); Luke

Sunderland, *Old French Narrative Cycles: Heroism between Ethics and Morality*

(Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010).

Book's thinking with literary and philosophical work). Foucault thinks teleologically — he seems to picture the library as an institution, a fixed place where ever more texts accrete — but medieval libraries were frequently temporary projects, prone to dispersal. Collections often broke up after the death of their owners; books were stolen, sold or destroyed; parchment was reused. Viewed synchronically at any one moment, a medieval library held varieties of books, texts, and discourses in an imperfect crystallization of knowledge new and old. But considered diachronically, the medieval library appears personal, transitory, and palimpsestic. The relationship between writer, rewriter, reader, and text varied from manuscript to manuscript. An individual vision of order could always be replaced by a new one when books or collections changed hands; particular elements within the knowledge set retained their distinctiveness, and along with it their potential to combine differently, with other works and other systems, in new locations.

Many medieval codices gather diverse texts and books within them and could be considered libraries in miniature. In this sense, it is perhaps the encyclopaedia that best represents the library — indeed, Foucault uses the ideas of the library and of the encyclopaedia interchangeably as figures of knowledge mastered and completed in *Les Mots et les choses* — and my dialogue with Foucault in this context is inspired by Franklin-Brown's work on the scholastic encyclopaedia, already referenced. Franklin-Brown reveals how encyclopaedias reproduce other texts and other discourses, juxtaposing historically and generically different ways of knowing, through the scholarly practices of commentary and compilation. Attacking Foucault's historical argument, she casts Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum maius* as a medieval heterotopia:

> the desire to create such a space is not uniquely modern, a fact to which the *Speculum maius* bears most eloquent, overwhelming testimony. Like the modern library, the scholastic encyclopedia compensated for the confusion of volumes piled into the

armarium or book cabinet, for the heteroglot murmur of discourses circulating

through the walls of the monastery, the school, the university, and the castle, by

gathering them all into a single space, the book, and fixing them on the page, in some

comprehensible order that, itself, lent order and meaning to the world it represented.

The constitution of a utopia of knowledge, the realization of that utopia in an actual

place: it would be difficult to find a better summation of what drove the scholastic

encyclopedists to pick up their quills.[32]

Foucault's description of *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, however, has other potential links. It

could well be applied to the *Roman de la Rose*, another product of the opening up of

intertextual possibility as a set of books is consumed to create another. The presence of books

together in libraries allows for the composition — compilation, anthologization — of other

works.[33] But more fundamentally, the existence of private libraries and the increase in private

book ownership also meant that there was a newly-formed reading public with heterogeneous

tastes that could understand and desire such books. Sylvia Huot reads the *Rose* as a tissue of

citations, as 'an extensive and intricate tour of Latin authors, both ancient and medieval'.[34]

Because the text contains citations of ancient authors but does not mark them as such, she

argues that it 'presupposes, rather than provides, knowledge of these texts'.[35] The medieval

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[32] *Reading the World*, p. 217.

[33] Sarah Kay casts Christine de Pizan's *Livre du Chemin de longue estude* as 'a creative

rereading of Christine's own library': *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late*

Medieval French Didactic Poetry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.

158.

[34] *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets* (London: Legenda, 2010), p. 100. Armstrong and Kay

call the *Rose* 'a disorderly double of an encyclopedia' (*Knowing Poetry*, p. 85).

[35] *Dreams*, p. 100.

library is a creative space of possibility: the existence of libraries drove the production and consumption of heterotopic books. Many late medieval works are both books and interfaces between traditions. They show the desire to cross the boundaries of knowledge, but also the fear of disorder, the anxiety that knowledge might remain hopelessly elusive, polyvocal, or contradictory.

Returning to Foucault, we might see such works, and the libraries that contain them, as examples of the limited or composite forms of universality that substitute for the impossible, perfect encyclopaedia. In *Les Mots et les choses*, Foucault speaks of the eighteenth-century scholar Charles Bonnet, who imagined a huge library of the universe or the true universal encyclopaedia, and saw all actual libraries and encyclopaedias as necessarily pale imitations: 'sur ce fond d'une Encyclopédie absolue, les humains constituent des formes intermédiaires d'universalité composée et limitée'.[36] Library collections contained some texts offering mastery of worldly knowledge in face of discordant discourses, and others revealing the impossibility of a complete grasp on what can be known. If we remain transfixed by the stories of where individual texts or physical books originated or what their dissemination was — and those are the foci of both History of the Book and much literary scholarship — then we lose sight of which texts were gathered together in libraries and thus made sense together, as different ways of coping with the imperfections and complications of human knowledge. Each medieval library must be grasped as a project — fleeting, heterogeneous, and incomplete — that reaches out in its own more or less systematic way towards the limits of the knowable.

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[36] *Les Mots et les choses*, p. 100

The heterotopic medieval library

Through their analysis of particular texts and collections, the pieces offered here open up ways of examining the medieval idea of the library which both concord with and contest Foucault's analysis. Libraries are sets of knowledge in various states of completion, partially realized utopias, special spaces to which access is reserved, personal projects, systems juxtaposing incompatible discourses and historically-layered modes of knowing; they at once represent, contest, and invert the values of the culture around them. The pieces of this special issue move chronologically, from the twelfth century, which saw an acceleration of manuscript production, through the late Middle Ages, where texts entered into increasingly intense interdisciplinary dialogue, to the early modern period, when a vibrant manuscript culture survived alongside print. First, Thomas Hinton looks at the metaphors of the garden (also dear to Foucault) and the forest as alternative models for knowledge and as responses to the diversity of books, suggesting an oscillation between order and chaos: book collecting parallels cultivation and both are opposed to the wild forest, as Hinton demonstrates through readings of Reginald of Durham and Richard de Fournival. But the field of History of the Book has focused too greatly on monasteries and universities, argues Hinton, and there remains an urgent need to move towards private libraries, where cultural historians can help form a new approach. Hinton attempts to sketch one here by adopting a margins and centre methodology. Outside the centre of institutional libraries, the city, as site of the production of books for private ownership, especially in the vernacular, appears as particularly active. The forest is of course another margin: associated with unsorted knowledge and language in Dante and du Bellay, it also provides a metaphor in medieval romances by Wace, Chaucer and Benoît de Saint-Maure for the marvel, the surprise encounter and the unexpected power of books. The idea that reading could potentially lead in unexpected directions is a recurrent concern of vernacular authors, suggesting that the forest could ultimately prove more

productive than the kempt garden. This is far from the imposed order of the modern library, and close to Foucault's vision of Flaubert's *Tentation*.

Like Foucault, Emma Campbell uses literary texts to formulate an idea of the library. References to real or imaginary sources in medieval vernacular literature are relatively conventional, but some writers locate their sources more precisely, mentioning a work in a library or book collection. Drawing on Benoît de Saint-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie*, Adgar's *Le Gracial*, and Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès*, Campbell explores how such references to libraries frame the composition of French texts, and considers the particularities of these references. Medieval book collections significantly predate the conceptions of rational totalization which inform many modern notions of the library, including Foucault's thinking in *Les Mots et les choses*; the ordering of knowledge with which they are associated consequently looks substantially different from that of the present day. Campbell argues that the library as it appears in medieval French literature is connected to hierarchies of knowledge rather than to systems of classification or notions of ordered space; she therefore moves away from the thematics of order and disorder to envisage the library as a set of relationships between writers, readers, and texts. Indeed Campbell's final example, Adenet le Roi's *Berte as grans pies*, locates its source to the library of Saint-Denis, a site for intellectual activity with royal and monastic associations, and a contact point between different historical periods. This allows Campbell to argue that the medieval library connotes textual and epistemological genealogies, offering a site for the transmission of knowledge through books, and a geographical and historical link in the movements of *translatio* between disparate cultures and peoples.

Miranda Griffin also picks up on the heterochronic dimension of the library, by casting the *Ovide moralisé* as a microcosm of the book collection. Like the *Rose*, the *Ovide moralisé* is an interface with classical traditions, a book that helped readers deal with the

diversity of discourses by suggesting a model for their integration, whilst also playing on

their discordance. In a similar way to *La Tentation*, the *Ovide moralisé* creatively rewrites

other books, offering the medieval reader both a translation of Ovid's tales of transformation

from Latin to French, and a digest moralizing them to bring out their value in transmitting

divine truths. It forges links between diverse sets of material by absorbing and rewriting other

books in a reading practice involving commentary and translation, all the while overtly

conscious of its dependence on, and re-evaluation of, previous instances of authority. Griffin

focuses on the encounter between two *auctores* cited in the *Ovide moralisé*: Ovid and an

author referred to as 'Crestien'. Evidence from *Ovide moralisé* codices belonging to the

libraries of King Philippe VI, his wife, Jeanne de Bourgogne and their three grandsons —

King Charles V; Jean, duc de Berry; and Philippe le Hardi, duc de Bourgogne — suggests

that the name Crestien, today likely to be identified with Chrétien de Troyes, would in the

fourteenth century likely have connoted the author responsible for a twelfth-century

translation and adaptation of the Philomela section of Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an

œuvre which is itself interpolated into the *Ovide moralisé*. The author function of 'Ovide' is

for Griffin multifaceted and multiform, and the *Ovide moralisé* both a book resulting from an

imaginative approach to a library, and a library itself. The medieval library can, in turn, be

viewed as a fantastic encounter with a book collection, as a space where texts refigure,

reshape, re-evaluate, and toy with one another.

This focus on book users continues in Philippe Frieden's examination of the book

collection of Charles d'Orléans, which demonstrates how particular libraries can be seen as

sets of alternative histories, varying with the manufacture, provenance, and ownership of

each volume. In Foucault's terms, the collection is a particular, limited universality, an

individual, idiosyncratic, or personalized form of completeness. It is heterotopic in marking

exclusivity and socio-political distinction, with books as valuable objects and markers of

status, and heterochronic because manuscripts passed through different hands, taking on layers of meaning from the collections around them, and also from being annotated palimpsestically. All the same, mastery of knowledge is also expressed. More specifically, the figure of the duke as owner or collector appears in a variety of forms within the collection, and the library can be considered as the reflection of the collector himself, and the embodiment of a series of events and relationships in his life. It offers an unusually rich opportunity to gain a better understanding of the intimate links connecting manuscripts, medieval libraries, and their owners and family. Through study of the surviving catalogues of the collection, details held within books made for him, and his own book of poetry, Frieden sheds light on the portrait of Charles d'Orléans as a collector that is provided by these various pieces of evidence.

John O'Brien's 'Response' closes the collection with consideration of the early modern period, arguing that what changes in the library is not so much the knowledge-conception of the space as the sort of works that are allowed access to that space — which remains a heterotopia with selective access — and the place they have in it. O'Brien distinguishes courtly libraries, where medieval romances and epics remained popular, and libraries like the Royal Library which might include them alongside the New Learning, from scholars' libraries which normally would not contain that vernacular medieval literature, but might easily have theological or philosophical or historical works drawing on the medieval heritage. O'Brien shows that the early modern library is not the same entity at every temporal or spatial point in the period, and its relationship to the past, especially the medieval era, is diverse, rich, and many-sided.

If History of the Book believes that the medieval library is knowable by its codices, then we want to reveal what medievalists might better understand by close reading of its texts, and especially literary texts, because of their capacity to dramatize human encounters

with books, in their perplexing variety, to bring divergent discourses into contact, and to reveal the interplay between order and chaos that shaped libraries. It is literary texts that best show the workings of libraries as heterotopias, holding together texts that vary synchronically (by vehicling different modes of knowing, ordering, and writing) and diachronically (by encapsulating different histories of ownership, composition, rewriting, and transmission). This special issue will give a glimpse of the potential for literary texts to provide insight into the cultural work performed by medieval libraries.