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The Contribution of Manuscript Catalogues to Identifying Medieval Latin Texts

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As an editor of medieval library catalogues, and as a student of the circulation of Latin texts in the middle ages, I am a consumer of catalogues rather than a creator, but I have given some thought to the problem of identifying medieval Latin texts, a problem which must confront the cataloguer of manuscripts as much as it confronts the editor of medieval library catalogues. It is given short shrift in the *Richtlinien Handschriftenkatalogisierung*, which appear to make the assumption that the authorship and title of a work are (as Donald Rumsfeld might say) Knowns. He spoke of ‘known Knowns’ and ‘known Unknowns’, and he was apprehensive about the extent of ‘unknown Unknowns’.¹ In the business of identifying medieval Latin texts, there are an awful lot of Unknowns, many of them unrecognized, and we should make it one of our objectives to reduce their number.

The *Richtlinien* prescribe for dealing with the content of a medieval manuscript ‘Verfasser in der gängigen Namensform’, allowing only ‘in Ausnahmefällen abweichende Namengebung der Handschrift’.² As for the title, ‘Titelfassung in der üblichen Form’. When it comes to a decision on whether to include Initium or Textschluß in a catalogue, the *Richtlinien* recognize degrees of Knownness. Incipit and explicit are considered unnecessary for familiar categories of text, the Bible, the *Corpus iuris ciuilis* and *Corpus iuris canonici*, Classical authors, Patristic texts, texts by medieval authors that are printed in *Patrologia Latina* or *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* or comparable collections. Nothing is said about the

¹ ‘As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don’t know we don’t know’, said Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense in a Department of Defense news briefing, 12 February 2003.

² DFG, *Richtlinien Handschriftenkatalogisierung* (1970, ²1974, ³1983, ⁴1985, ⁵1992), guidance for describing medieval manuscripts, pp. 9–14

tituli or colophons that identify texts in the manuscripts, some of which might have been transmitted with the text from its author's hand.

I understand that these rules stem from the notion that indexes will make the copies of these texts retrievable chiefly through consistency in the way they are entered under a particular author and title, but that practical need cannot mask the real difficulty of [52] establishing who was the author and what is the best-attested title of the work. There is a danger that the imperative of practicality fosters an attitude to the real questions about the identification of texts that will obstruct our path toward well-founded answers. I am myself of the view that the incipit is a far better identifier for many texts than author or title, and when searching for relatively unfamiliar works or for works that I know present real difficulties of identification I rely more on incipit indexes than on any other kind of index.

Usual forms are not necessarily correct forms—it is sadly the case rather often that they are not—but it is not a primary responsibility of the cataloguer to establish the best basis for assigning a text to its author or settling on a correct, or at least well-founded, title. Where then do usual forms come from? They come from the Handapparat of reference books that has been built up over the years to assist in identifying medieval Latin texts. Where do the compilers of these reference books get them? I should like to be able to say they get them from the evidence of the manuscripts, but I know that that is rarely the case. Usual forms often means the forms in old printed editions; *Patrologia Latina* for example will often reprint sixteenth-century editions. Reference books such as Stegmüller's *Repertorium Biblicum* or Thorndike and Kibre's *Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin* do not base either authorship or title on an informed assessment of the manuscript evidence, though they may take it from the first manuscript catalogue that has given rise to a particular entry, or they may take divergent titles, different authors, from more than one manuscript catalogue without seeking to resolve the discrepancy.³ I have spent a great deal of time using these reference books, and I have found them deficient whenever the question of identification became difficult. I should find it hard to believe if the cataloguers among you had not had the same, disheartening, experience.

Identification can be difficult at many levels. First, at an elementary level, one cannot always find the incipit in repertories, and the text is accompanied by the name of an author who is not readily found in the reference literature. Second, one may find the text in the reference literature,

³ This point is amply illustrated in my book *Titulus. Identifying Medieval Latin Texts: an evidence-based approach* (Turnhout, 2003).

but different handbooks give it different authors, different titles, and provide no basis for making a choice between them. Third, one may find that a work is given an apparent identification, but it proves impossible to discover on what evidence, if any, it is founded.

In a different way, identification must serve as a means of communication, so that the reader can grasp exactly what text the writer wishes to refer to: inconsistency or ambiguity can be a real difficulty here. It sometimes takes more than a few words to explain the variety in the literature and in the manuscript evidence. [53]

In a third way, my approach to these questions was unintentionally but emphatically off-piste, because what drew me into the problems of medieval bibliography was the desire to understand library catalogues drawn up in the middle ages. Here one has the added difficulty of trying to identify a medieval text from its medieval title, unless the catalogue was an especially good one that included incipits, or, by happy accident, the book described by the medieval cataloguer has survived and can be matched. Why should it be difficult to trace a medieval text from its medieval title? Far too often the catalogues from medieval England consistently use titles for works, sometimes even attributions, that cannot be found in the reference literature or even in the printed editions. This is not just a problem with obscure texts: ‘Augustinus de uidentio Deo’ is mentioned as a treatise by Augustine in his *Retractationes*, yet it is unfortunately one of six treatises not listed as such in standard repertories because, since at least the seventeenth century they have been treated, not as a treatises with their own titles, but as letters in the letter collection.⁴ The bibliographer recognizing the work and communicating the identification will need also to say that *De uidentio Deo* is the usual ancient and medieval title of what the editions call *Epistula* 147. So the ‘usual form of title’ in modern scholarship is completely disconnected from what was the usual title in the middle ages and, in this case, what was the author’s title. The descriptive cataloguer, faced with a copy of ‘Augustinus de uidentio Deo’ will, I hope, put that in majuscules at the top of the description and relegate mention of *Ep.* 147 to the reference to its status in print. The usual point of reference for Patristic texts in Latin, *Clavis patrum Latinorum* (*CPL*), has followed the printed tradition rather than the consensus of the

⁴ Six works defined by Augustine as treatises have been obscured in this way by modern scholarship: *Retractationes* II 20 (46) *Ad inquisitiones Ianuarii* (now *epp.* 54–5), II 31 (57) *Sexaginta quaestiones contra paganos* (*ep.* 102), II 41 (67) *De uidentio Deo* (*ep.* 147), II 45 (71) *De origine animae hominis* (*ep.* 166), II 48 (74) *De correctione donatistarum* (*ep.* 185), and II 49 (75) *De praesentia Dei* (*ep.* 187).

author and the manuscript tradition.⁵ What is ‘Augustinus de se ipso ad se ipsum’? I can show from several ninth-century copies, as well as later ones, that it is the work listed among the Augustinian Pseudepigrapha as *CPL* 379 under the title *De unitate sanctae Trinitatis*. To do so depended on drawing together examples from different catalogue sources—not always the descriptive catalogues of the collections but in the case of a manuscript now in Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6382, on Kurz’s volumes in the Austrian Academy series *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der Werke des heiligen Augustinus*, a series which does not cover pseudo-Augustine, does not usually record the titles found in the manuscripts and makes little or no effort to bridge the gap between modern scholarship and the medieval reality in the manuscript tradition.⁶ If a descriptive catalogue follows the Richtlinien to the letter, only the ‘usual’ title from *CPL* will be recorded and the ‘usual’ medieval title will be ignored. This work of the very long-lived [54] author Pseudo-Augustine may not be a patristic text, but it has long been printed among Augustine’s works, it is in *Patrologia Latina*, and therefore the cataloguer is instructed not to record the incipit in the description.

My experience of catalogues edited under the auspices of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft is that cataloguers are more pragmatic than the Richtlinien. Many of them would record the *titulus* at the head of the text and the incipit to the text itself, the explicit of the text, and the colophon that corresponds to the *titulus*, so making accessible the evidence of the manuscript to bibliographers. Unless catalogues record *tituli* and colophons, we shall not be able to improve our capacity to identify medieval Latin texts in ways that are true to the medieval evidence. Cataloguers will continue to rely on a defective Handapparat unless catalogues harvest the primary evidence that will allow bibliographers to improve their identifications. In my little book *Titulus* I illustrated at great length the problems of using the reference literature and its lack of continuity with, even its failure to make serious use of, the medieval evidence.

On the positive side, I provided two extended examples of how one might bring under review the manuscript evidence for identifying a text.

The two examples were Iohannes de Toletto, *De conseruanda sanitate*, and Malachias (sometimes given the surname Hibernicus in the reference literature), whose work was initially called *Venenum Malachiae*, later *De*

⁵ E. Dekkers & E. Gaar, *Clavis patrum latinorum* (Turnhout, ³1995), identifies only one of the six treatises mentioned in the previous note by its title among the notes on the entry for the letters, *CPL* 262, p. 103.

⁶ Sharpe, *Titulus*, 60–61.

ueneno. Both are moderately common works—though not so common as to be generally available—surviving in, or known from, respectively 48 copies or 115 copies (so far counted).⁷ They present opposite pictures: the manuscript evidence for Iohannes de Toleto is largely consistent in using his name in this form, and there is no great variation in title; whereas the manuscript evidence for the work of Malachias includes ascriptions to some half a dozen authors, while more than half of the known copies are anonymous, and there is a great variation in title. Modern scholarship presents a reverse contrast: the hugely varied evidence for Malachias—and its late medieval reception—is ignored or suppressed, because the reference literature successfully captured the text from its only printed edition (Paris 1518). This was based on a good text. If the work had been printed more often, and from various different copies, confusion would surely have prevailed. Iohannes de Toleto has been almost consistently misunderstood and misidentified, even though in 1893 Moritz Steinschneider printed the crucial evidence to identify him and in 1901 Hermann von Grauert published an excellent monograph on the bibliographical problems associated with his name.⁸ Since Valentin Rose’s account of the text in 1905, however, [55] this good scholarship has been ignored, and guesswork has taken over. Rose, in Berlin, missed Grauert’s Munich monograph, though it appeared just when he was working on his catalogue.⁹ He also missed a third copy in Berlin, from which the text was published in 1907 by Julius Pagel in an edition that is now very hard to find.¹⁰ That copy included a short preface, not authorial, and when Ludwig Schuba found a similar copy in the Bibliotheca Palatina he was unable to recognize its incipit.¹¹

What is needed is a review of the bibliographical evidence of the manuscripts, which I have presented in *Titulus*. With both these works the older reference literature had made it quite easy to put together lists of copies, though in both cases wider search nearly doubled the number of copies counted. One must then consider how the different copies identify the

⁷ *ibid.* 197–218, 218–45.

⁸ M. Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters, und die Juden als Dolmetscher. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen Quellen* (Berlin 1893 / repr. Graz 1956), 255–6n; H. Grauert, *Meister Iohannes von Toledo*, *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie, phil.-philol.-hist. Kl.* (1901), 111–325

⁹ V. Rose, *Verzeichniss der lateinischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 3 vols, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* 12–14 (Berlin 1893–1919), 2/3. 1079–80

¹⁰ J. L. Pagel, ‘Eine bisher unveröffentlichte mittelalterliche Diätetik’, *Pharmazeutische Post* 40 (1907), 591–3, 603–605, 615–18

¹¹ L. Schuba, *Die medizinischen Handschriften der Codices Palatini Latini in der Vatikanischen Bibliothek*, *Kataloge der Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg* 1 (Wiesbaden 1981), 273.

text through *tituli* or colophons. Although the reference books may list manuscripts, they do not record the evidence contained in them. Out of all the reference literature, only one tool has made a real attempt to do this, Adolar Zumkeller's *Manuskripte von Werken der Autoren des Augustiner-Eremitenordens in mitteleuropäischen Bibliotheken* (Würzburg 1966). Unless one has the time and resources to see the manuscripts themselves—in order to spend a few minutes in transcribing the *titulus* and colophon—this kind of investigation depends on the descriptive catalogues made and published over the last two or three hundred years.

Now, in the case of Iohannes de Toletō, the crucial information came from one colophon in one manuscript, first recorded in Albrecht von Heller's *Bibliotheca medicinae practicae* (Bern 1776).¹² This colophon in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 95/47, reads, 'Explicit summa de sanitate regenda et conseruanda edita a magistro Iohanne de Toletō nobili uiro albo cardinali'.¹³ The White Cardinal is easily identified, John de Toletō OCist, whose career in the papal curia can be followed from *c.* 1240 until his death in 1275.¹⁴ Grauert had the good fortune to work in Munich, and the copy he used, Clm 480, contains added notes about the cardinal's successful treatment of Pope Innocent IV's eye-disease.¹⁵ Others, who had not that good fortune and have not reviewed the evidence of *tituli*, have supposed him to be a Spaniard, John of Toledo, finding several alternative candidates from the twelfth, thirteenth, and even [56] fourteenth centuries, while Rose thought the name was merely an Ausschmückung—taken from astrological prophecy—to glamorize an anonymous text of the fourteenth-century. In medieval Spain, however, the work was misattributed to the Catalan medical writer Arnau de Vilanova.

Malachias is much much more complicated: out of 115 known copies, only two now extant have the true ascription. An English copy has the colophon, 'Explicit tractatus qui dicitur Venenum Malachie editus a fratre Malachia de ordine minorum et prouincia Ybernie'. This is London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C. xiv, and for Cotton manuscripts we still use catalogues dating from 1696 and 1802, which do not record *tituli* or colophons as such, though they often provided the cataloguers with titles. This important colophon was noted by the Franciscan historian A. G. Little

¹² A. von Haller, *Bibliotheca medicinae practicae* (Bern 1776–88), 1. 451.

¹³ Reported by M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the library of Gonville and Caius College*, 2 vols and supplement (Cambridge, 1907–14), i. 96.

¹⁴ A. Paravicini Bagliani, *Cardinali di curia e "familiae" cardinalizie : Dal 1227 al 1254*, Italia sacra 18–19 (Padua 1972), 228–55.

¹⁵ Grauert, 138.

and by the great authority on Latin texts from Ireland, Mario Esposito.¹⁶ The information is very similar to that in the lost manuscript from which the work was printed in Paris in 1518, which also had the title *Venenum Malachie*. One manuscript from Dublin, now in London, Lambeth Palace, MS 523 (s. xiv/xv), fols. 88r–113r, has the short colophon, ‘Explicit Malachias’, though M. R. James’s catalogue ignored this and reported the more usual attribution to Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln.¹⁷

Someone here in Munich may be able to help trace a third copy, offered for sale in this city by Julius Halle in 1899. His sale-catalogue reports the colophon, ‘Explicit tractatus de ueneno uiciorum traditus a fratre Malachia de prouincia Ybernie, scriptus per me dominum Matthiam Hueber monachum in Ochsenhausen anno domini 1459’.¹⁸ Search led by the provenance has not led me to this copy, though there is surely hope that the manuscript will have survived the twentieth century.

There is a hint of another copy with the true ascription in a book-list (1464–71) from Monte Cassino, ‘Tractatus de ueneno malicie incipit *Racio ueneni potissime*’.¹⁹ The *initium* proves the identification of the text, and I strongly suspect that ‘malicie’ is a deformation of ‘Malachie’, inspired by the subject-matter of the text.

From a text-critical point of view it is significant that we have evidence for this ascription in manuscripts from England, France, Ireland, Germany, and Italy, suggesting that it derives from an early stage in the dissemination of the text. Collecting the *tituli* and colophons from the manuscript catalogues allowed me to present a case-study in the changing attribution and the interpretative titling of this work right across Europe. In [57] England it quickly became anonymous before acquiring a secondary attribution to Robert Grosseteste; in Germany and Central Europe its title was much elaborated and it acquired secondary attributions among Dominicans to Thomas Aquinas and among Augustinian Hermits to Augustine. Reading the *tituli* and colophons collected and interpreted is both fascinating and revealing: the evidence of medieval bibliography is there in the manuscripts if only we take the trouble to collect it.

¹⁶ A. G. Little, ‘Malachy of Ireland’ (1893), in *Dictionary of National Biography*; M. Esposito, ‘Friar Malachy of Ireland’, *English Historical Review* 33 (1918), 359–66

¹⁷ M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the library of Lambeth Palace. The Mediaeval Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1932), 724.

¹⁸ Esposito, ‘Friar Malachy’, 365. [Note since publication: Birgit Ebersberger tells me that the book appeared in two catalogues, Catalogue 23 [not later than 1899], no. 165, and Catalogue 41 [1908], no. 16.]

¹⁹ M. Inguáñez, *Catalogi codicum Casinensium antiqui (VIII–XV)*, *Miscellanea Cassinese* 21 (Montecassino 1941), 38

This study was made possible because generations of cataloguers had recorded the *titulus*, incipit, and colophon in their descriptive catalogues. With some other text, chances have combined to obscure the bibliographical evidence. In *Titulus* I discuss the difficulty of authenticating even a work as widely known as the Postilla on the Bible by Hugh of Saint-Cher, Frater Hugo, as he occasionally appears in the manuscripts.²⁰ With some less well-known biblical works, basic questions cannot be answered from descriptive catalogues. I set out below the particulars relating to a late-thirteenth-century copy on Job:²¹

Commentary on Job, inc. ‘*Surgite, postquam sederitis &c.* [Ps 126:1]. In hiis uerbis primo et principaliter instruit spiritus sanctus per os Dauid accedentes ad doctrinam ipsius Iob audiendam’ (prol.), ‘*Cogor &c.* [Jerome’s preface to Job, De Bruyne 38] Duo prologi Hieronymi premittuntur huic operi’, ‘*Si autem fiscellam &c.* [Jerome’s second preface, De Bruyne 39] Hic est secundus prologus’, ‘*Vir erat &c.* [Job 1:1] Iste liber totalis, scilicet Iob, in duas partes primo diuidi potest. In quarum prima agitur de ipsius perfectione, in secunda de perfectionis remuneratione’ (text).

Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, MS B. III. 25 (s. xiii/xiv), fols. 1r–105r [anon., cat. has Simon Hinton (?)].

Madrid, Biblioteca nacional, MS 493 (s. xiii), fols. 6v–75r [cat. quotes neither incipits nor ascriptions; MS contains other works supposed to be by William of Alton, of which only one is ascribed, the commentary on Ecclesiastes, Kaeppli 1429, whose status is uncertain].

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 573 (s. xiv), fols. 199r–282r [added ascr. to William of Alton; four other works of his in the volume are accepted by Glorieux *Théologie* 18, though this one is not; cat. does not quote incipits or ascriptions].

Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 454 (s. xiii/xiv), fols. 1r–(79) [anon.; no published cat.].

Padua, Biblioteca universitaria, MS 665 (s.) [cited by Stegmüller as beginning, ‘*Cogor &c.* Duo prologi premittuntur’; no published cat.]. [58]

Toledo, Biblioteca capitular, MS 5–5 (s. xiv), fols. 3r–74r [anon.; K. Reinhardt & R. González Ruíz, *Catálogo de los códices bíblicos de la Catedral de Toledo* (Madrid 1990), 141, have William Alton (?)].

Two records of lost manuscripts are also relevant to the discussion, though neither is necessarily the same text:

Canterbury, St Augustine’s, ‘Postille super Iob fratris Willelmi de Hāton’ de ordine predicatorum’, given by Abbot Thomas, probably Thomas Findon (†1310) (BA1. 228).

London, St Paul’s, 1458, ‘postilla super Iob secundum fratrem Simonem de Henton 2^o fo. *quo Gregor’ libro moralium*’; seen by John Leland, c. 1535, ‘postillae Simonis de Hernton super Iob’ (J. Leland, *Collectanea* (Oxford, 1715), iv. 47); seen by John Bale, 1548 × 1552, ‘Simon de Henton siue Hernton scripsit ... Commentarios in Iobum, li. i, *Vsque in tempus sustinebit paciens et postea reditio* [Eccli 1:29]’ (*Index*, 413); seen by Patrick Young, 1622, ‘postilla in Iobum \Fr./ Symonis de Hernton, initium *Vsque in tempus sustinebit paciens et*

²⁰ Sharpe, *Titulus*, 107–115.

²¹ *ibid.* 177–82.

postea redditio iucunditatis [Eccli 1:29], &c. Verba ista bene congruunt beato Iob et quoad personam et quoad progressum libri sui &c. fol.' (MS).

Six copies so far recorded include two from libraries for which no printed catalogue exists (Padua and Rome), two from libraries whose catalogues do not record any *titulus*, colophon, or even incipit (Madrid and Paris), and two transmitted without any indication of authorship in the manuscripts (Basel and Toledo). It is possible that all six copies are anonymous, and the work may be seen as falling into the category of generic literature in which the search for identifications may easily appear futile. A reference to Stegmüller's *Repertorium biblicum* provides no identification: he knew five of these six copies, entering the work under two authors, Guillelmus de Altona and Simon de Henton, leaning towards the latter. He shows no evidence for either identification, and he quotes no *tituli* for any other work of either writer.

It is not possible to proceed further without manuscript evidence. The catalogues from both Madrid and Paris, unhelpful though they are, point towards William of Alton as author, an English Dominican, active in Paris, whose writings have never been studied. If the other works in these volumes had been better described in the catalogues with their *tituli*, we might have been able to make a start on building up a list of his works. The Toledo catalogue picked up this possible association from the Madrid catalogue, though no evidence is spelt out. The Basel catalogue offers a different attribution, based solely on the studies of Beryl Smalley, who argued that the anonymous commentary—she used only the copies in Basel and Rome—was by the English Dominican Simon Hinton.²² Her argument swayed Stegmüller, though he does not set out the basic evidence [59] that underlies her case. The 1458 library-catalogue of St Paul's cathedral, London, mentions a commentary on Job by Simon Hinton; the incipit is different from that in Basel, but Miss Smalley postulated a defective beginning in the London copy. Had she known the 1622 catalogue of the same library, she would have realised that Simon Hinton's lost commentary on Job was an entirely different text from that in Basel and Rome.

What was needed here was for the cataloguers to record such evidence as the manuscripts provide, not just for this one text, but for the others in the volume: association with ascribed copies might prove crucial to an identification. The greater fault, however, lies with bibliographers. Where many catalogues have provided the evidence, those compiling the works of

²² B. Smalley, 'Some more exegetical works of Simon of Hinton', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 15 (1948) 97–106.

reference have failed to use it, because they had no method of testing questions of identification against manuscript evidence. It has always been the case that cataloguers have often seen the value of recording the evidence of *tituli* and colophons that accompanies individual copies of texts. Cataloguing rules, however, have never attached importance to doing this. As early as 1884, Léopold Delisle recognized the value of recording this evidence: ‘On relèvera donc, en les mettant entre guillemets, les rubriques initiales et finales, avec les premiers et derniers mots de chaque traité’. But he then restricted the need for this by narrow constraints, ‘mais seulement toutes les fois que le manuscrit est important et que de telles précautions sont indispensables pour bien définir et caractériser la pièce dont il s’agit’.²³ It is much quicker and easier to record the evidence than to establish that it serves no purpose to do so. I should like to see rules modified, so that the good sense cataloguers have usually shown is given its due recognition for recording the evidence necessary if we are ever to be able to ascertain well-founded ascriptions and titles.

I should like to interpolate here a little plea about terminology. In my *Latin Writers* and in *Titulus*, I observe a distinction between the words ‘ascription’ and ‘attribution’, defined as terms: ‘ascribed’ in a medieval manuscript, ‘attributed’ by guesswork or scholarship (in the face of conflicting manuscript evidence or none).²⁴ This is not a distinction in everyday English, but to be clear in our discussion we must define our terms. Can this distinction not be defined in other languages too, for technical use, even where it may not fall within existing usage? In French, *ascription* and *attribution*, *ascrit* and *attribué*, in Italian *ascrizione* and *attribuzione*, *ascritto* and *attribuito* seem to me to be viable terms; in German *zuschreiben* and *zuweisen*, *geschrieben* and *zugewiesen*; in each [60] language one is helped to remember the definition by the etymological association of *ascribed*, *ascrit*, *ascritto*, *geschrieben* with the evidence of a medieval manuscript.

Ascriptions are often copy-specific, not always travelling consistently with the text, and that is why the evidence of each manuscript should be recorded for bibliographical investigation.

²³ L. Delisle & others, ‘Note sur la rédaction des catalogues de manuscrits’, *Bulletin des bibliothèques et des archives* 1 (1884), 94–109, at p. 95; L. Delisle, *Instructions pour la rédaction d’un catalogue de manuscrits* (Paris 1910), 2. These guidelines also make the vital point that ‘tous les titres suppléés par le rédacteur du catalogue ou empruntés par lui à des notices ou à des annotations modernes seront soigneusement distingués des mentions qui appartiennent au texte original et primitif’.

²⁴ Explained in R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout, 1997), xxv–xxvi.

When a cataloguer is faced with a text that does not belong to the higher levels in the hierarchy of Knownness, it is almost always the case that the manuscript to be catalogued has as much claim to be considered authoritative as anything that might be found by searching the reference literature. If such a search appears successful, it is highly unlikely to produce an answer based on a meaningful appraisal of the manuscript evidence. There is not a single one of the more extensive repertories or incipitaria that can offer that. Even a work as well-executed as Thomas Kaeppli's *Scriptores ordinis Praedicatorum medii aevi* depends in very large part on bibliographical tradition, to which he has added lists of manuscripts without ever recording the evidence they contain to confirm or refute bibliographical tradition. It is as if bibliography and manuscripts existed in parallel universes, yet the former must depend on the latter. The tendency of modern cataloguing rules is for all the primary evidence of manuscripts to be subordinated to identifications found in secondary reference works, whose reliability is open to serious challenge. The manuscript represents far more direct contact with the transmitted text than does the repertory.

It is the purpose of a descriptive catalogue to describe the manuscript. Modern cataloguing has seen a great increase in the sophistication with which codicological and palaeographical phenomena are described. There has been no comparable increase in the sophistication with which the content of a manuscript is treated.

Recording the bibliographical phenomena is the only way forward on that front, because without that harvesting of primary bibliographical data we shall not improve our understanding of bibliographical identifications. If the pressure to work quickly is so great as we hear, one short cut is to spend less time looking for usual authors and usual titles in unsound reference books : instead, just transcribe the evidence. This will become accessible through improved searchability and integration of electronic catalogues. Even a few recorded *tituli* findable through this route will help to correct undue reliance on old finding-aids and begin the process toward better identifications.