

Introduction

This volume of essays stems from an international conference held in Utrecht in 2013, which rounded off the three-year HERA-funded project ‘The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript: Text Collections from a European Perspective’.¹ The four principal investigators, Bart Besamusca (Middle Dutch), Matthias Meyer (Middle High German), Karen Pratt (Old French), and Ad Putter (Middle English) undertook to study collections of texts within their manuscript contexts,² inspired by the pioneering work of Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Busby 2002).³ Our premise was that, although modern scholars have tended to read medieval literary works in relatively fixed modern critical editions, medieval readers had a very different experience, for most works were available in multi-text codices, compiled and organised in a variety of different ways. This textual phenomenon proved to be an excellent example of cultural dynamics (one of the HERA research themes for 2010–13), which, when approached from a comparative, European perspective, enabled us to trace common cultural trends in book production and reception, while also uncovering specific regional and local characteristics. Multi-text codices were also fertile ground for analysing the mechanisms by which cultural identities were formed and shared, at community, ‘national’, and European levels.⁴

1 This publication has resulted from the project ‘The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript: Text Collections from a European Perspective’ (www.dynamicsofthemedievalmanuscript.eu), which was financially supported by the HERA Joint Research Programme (www.heranet.info) and the European Community FP7 2007–2013.

2 Our doctoral and post-doctoral researchers were Gerard Bouwmeester, Daniël Ermens, Gareth Griffith, Hannah Morcos, Rachel Sweet, and Nicola Zotz. We benefited hugely from the guidance of our project advisers Olivier Collet, Richard Trachsler, Florian Kragl, and Paul Wackers.

3 Also influential on our initial thinking was *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Nichols and Wenzel (eds) 1996).

4 We are using the term ‘national’ loosely to refer to people linked through a shared linguistic culture; see also note 9 below.

The focus of our research was medieval short verse narratives (works of up to 1,500 lines, including such genres as courtly lays, bawdy *fabliaux*, moral fables, brief romances, saints' lives, and proverbial material). These short texts, which before the advent of print were rarely copied in single-text manuscripts (or at least have rarely survived in them), are intrinsically dynamic, since they move easily *between* manuscripts, shift positions *within* different codices, and migrate from one linguistic context to another. This rich body of material was approached from two interrelated angles: that of the compiler and that of the reader. Although we acknowledge the risks of positing compilatorial intention (which would have been influenced, of course, by manuscript commissioners and scribes), we nevertheless paid much attention to the possible organisational principles which may underlie particular textual configurations.⁵ Indeed, 'authors' of multi-text codices can also be viewed as readers of texts, whose own interpretations are made visible by the selection and organisation of text collections. These compilations were in turn read and understood in a variety of ways by contemporary owners and readers of the manuscripts. For this reason, the possible reader experiences encouraged by textual arrangement and juxtapositions featured large in our investigations.

While most of our research consisted of the study of individual multi-text codices, combining codicological, palaeographical, and other forms of physical evidence with the literary interpretation of works in context, we also produced some studies of individual texts, whose transmission was traced across compilations and occasionally across European linguistic borders. Examples of this approach are Gerard Bouwmeester (2013) on Dutch literary treatments of the Nine Worthies and (2016) on the works of Augustijnken; Karen Pratt (2016) on *Beranger au long cul* and on vernacular versions of *Pyramus* and *Thisbe* discussed in this volume; Rachel Sweet's forthcoming thesis on the French *Chate-laine de Vergi*; and Nicola Zotz (2014a) on the German *Märe Das Almosen*.⁶

Our research covered both homogenetic codices and composite manuscripts compiled in the Middle Ages. The former were usually planned as a unit and executed in one go, even if items were copied by different scribes; often these production units contain catchwords and continuous folio numbering. Composite manuscripts are those produced over time, through addition, modification, and accretion, as separate production units were bound together,

5 Needless to say, serendipity and exemplar availability were also factors in the construction of text collections. However, this does not mean that compilers were totally devoid of choice.

6 A full list of publications arising from the project can be found on the project website: www.dynamicsofthemedievalmanuscript.eu. Another useful project output offering additional information is our Virtual Exhibition: <http://everycodextellsastory.eu>.

forming new kinds of usage units.⁷ While all medieval books are susceptible to synchronic analyses (of their physical composition and literary content), many provide evidence for the dynamic evolution of texts and compilations. The contents of medieval books were often subject to change, as items were added to them or existing booklets were bound together and configured anew, but also the texts themselves were modified for novel contexts, and their reception conditioned by innovative juxtapositions. As compilers produced collections for specific readerships and purposes, so texts and their meanings evolved, fashioning new reading communities. In fact, medieval multi-text codices not only reflected cultural needs and identities, they also created networks and cemented new groupings, which could even reach across European linguistic borders.⁸

Our Utrecht conference in 2013 comprised sessions on textual communities, geographic and linguistic variety, author and authorisation, genre, textual dissemination, readership, manuscript typologies, textual affiliations and clusters, and the genesis of compilations. The resulting volume of essays widens the scope of our research to include lyric poetry and prose texts alongside short verse narratives, and adds Icelandic, Italian, and Latin to our French, German, English, and Dutch material.⁹ Our deliberations have also been enriched by recent publications on the medieval miscellany (Doležalová and Rivers (eds) 2013; Eckhardt and Starza Smith (eds) 2014; and Connolly and Radulescu (eds) 2015).

We have chosen to use the neutral term multi-text codex to refer to our manuscript compilations because the terms miscellany and anthology have too many negative and positive connotations associated with perceived hetero- or homogeneity respectively (see Boffey and Thompson 1989). Another problem with the word ‘miscellany’ in particular is that, while some scholars use it narrowly to describe homogenetic manuscripts with varied contents, others use it to describe any manuscript of miscellaneous content, whether homogenetic or composite. Moreover, our primary interest in the short verse narrative means that some truly miscellaneous books, which often contained ‘factual’, practical ma-

7 For precise codicological vocabulary, see Gumbert 2004 and 2005; Kwakkel 2012; and Denis Muzerelle’s *Vocabulaire codicologique* at <http://codicologia.irht.cnrs.fr/accueil/vocabulaire>.

8 Although we found no evidence for identical texts being transmitted together from one European language to another, we did notice similar types of texts and thematic groupings in Francophone, German, Dutch, and English manuscripts.

9 When we refer in this introduction to German and Dutch material, we mean texts in those medieval languages and/or manuscripts produced in those geographical areas. The situation is more complicated for French and English material, however, for the Francophone texts analysed here may have survived in books produced in Britain or on the continent; in other words, French material was not necessarily produced in France. Nor do ‘English’ manuscripts contain exclusively English material, for the insular manuscripts studied by Ad Putter and Gareth Griffith frequently contain works in Anglo-Norman and other languages, alongside texts in Middle English.

terial alongside works of religious devotion, fell outside the scope of our research. What all recent scholars working on the medieval multi-text codex have shown, though, is how quickly academic interest has moved away from the manuscript as a repository of information about a particular text and its author, to the medieval book as a cultural artefact which is worthy of study in its own right and enables us to investigate reading communities and interest groups (Woudhuysen 2014: xi).¹⁰

In the rest of this introduction, we focus on a series of topics illustrated by the contributors to this volume, supplementing their findings with our own research and those of others in the field.

I. The Dynamics of Manuscript Compilation

In many cases the manuscript compilation formed a vital, sometimes transitional, phase in the transmission of short texts. Individual texts or series of texts may well have begun life in booklet form, were then copied into larger, often personal compilations, which were later susceptible to piecemeal copying and reorganisation.¹¹ The process of composition, collecting, editing, and arrangement is discussed in this volume by Dieuwke van der Poel and Cécile de Morrée. They apply a scholarly methodology for the study of sermon collections to their corpus of devotional lyrics, and in so doing draw conclusions which are valid for the genesis of other types of short work, including verse narratives, arising in different cultural circles. The survival of individual booklets is rare, but examples include Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Marshall 127, produced *c.* 1375, which contains a Middle Dutch translation of Martinus Braga's *Formula honeste vitae* in an eight-leaf booklet (Kwakkel 2012) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 111 (second half of the fifteenth century), which contains the French *fabliau* known as 'la robe d'ecarlate' or 'chevalier a la robe vermeille', whose 318 lines are copied on eight folios protected by two leaves as covers. Similarly, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. oct. 1430 is a late thirteenth-century booklet containing three Middle High German verse narratives (Meyer 2015: 46–48).

Another potential source of evidence for booklet production is the recurrence of clusters of works which may have circulated independently as booklets and been copied together from one manuscript to another. Paolo Divizia argues in this volume for a contextualised, historically aware reading of individual texts,

10 For excellent recent research on the dynamics of the medieval book and the social lives of manuscripts, see Johnston and Van Dussen (eds) 2015, reviewed by Scase (2016).

11 This process continued well into the early modern period, as demonstrated by Daniel Starza Smith (2014: 17).

and states that the presence or absence of works in a recurring series is important for identifying textual genealogies. Not only is a sequence of works a textual unit, but it can also evolve, and an understanding of this evolution can enhance the construction of stemmata and improve our editorial decisions. Taking as his main example Brunetto Latini's vernacular translations of Cicero's *Orationes Caesarianae – Pro Ligario, Pro Marcello, and Pro rege Deiotaro* – Divizia extends the scope of this volume into Italian prose works. Of more general significance, though, is his list of conclusions, which are applicable to the study of any sequence of short works copied together. English examples of clusters that could well imply distribution in booklets are the triad *Bevis of Hampton, Seven Sages of Rome, and Guy of Warwick* in Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38 and the Auchinleck manuscript (Putter and Gilbert 2000: 5, note 10). Nina Hable (2014) demonstrates that in German manuscripts texts by Freidank, Cato, Der Stricker, Der Teichner, and parables from the Barlaam-tradition tend to travel together too, although there is no evidence for a direct relationship between their manuscript transmission.¹²

The importance of the fact that in many medieval books the basic unit of production was not the bound codex but rather the booklet is now well recognised (Robinson 1980; Gillespie 2011) and in analysing manuscripts critics have become more alert to warning signs that what superficially presents itself as a unified book may actually consist of multiple codicological units, sometimes from different places and different periods: a quire or a set of quires may be of a different size; the parchment may be of different quality or the paper from a different stock; the illustrations or hands may vary; the outer folios of a booklet may show signs of wear and tear; the last leaves of the original booklet may be blank (or may have been blank before being enriched with later additions); texts may not be copied across quire boundaries, and so on (Robinson 2008: 51). This phenomenon of individual booklets bound together in a larger volume is illustrated by Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. poet. et phil. fol. 22, known as the Comburg manuscript, in which six unrelated manuscripts, written in the first two decades of the fifteenth century, were collected together (Bouwmeester 2013: 352). There is earlier evidence of booklet production concerning French texts in England (Robinson 1980). Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Douce 132 and 137 once formed a collection of booklets with Latin and French texts, as is suggested by the owner's table of contents. One of these booklets

12 Although evidence for copying in clusters is difficult to find, this may well be because so many medieval manuscripts have been lost and our stemmata are not reliable enough to enable us to trace the transmission of groupings.

consists entirely of Francophone material (three items), including Marie de France's *Fables*, believed to have been copied in Oxford in the 1260s.¹³

A striking piece of evidence from the German tradition is the survival of a manuscript composed of smaller booklets which in two cases still have their individual price marks on them. Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. germ. 13 clearly binds together eleven distinct booklets written by an unnamed Nuremberg scribe and containing texts by Nuremberg authors. Each booklet has individual covers providing titles, sometimes in rhymed couplets, at the front, and nothing at the back; on pages 69 and 153 the price of the individual booklet is noted on the cover as 'iij creytzer' [three Kreuzer] (Horváth and Stork (eds) 2002: 122 ff. and 148).

German literature thus provides direct evidence for the commercial book production argued for, in an English context, by Tamara Pérez-Fernández, who in her contribution to this volume considers the output of the prolific professional scribe Richard Osborn, focusing on two manuscripts containing copies of Chaucer's *Troilus*: San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS HM 114, and London, British Library, MS Harley 3943. Despite the obvious differences between these manuscripts – the latter being a homogeneous one-text manuscript containing only *Troilus*, the former consisting of three booklets, the first containing *Piers Plowman*, the second *Mandeville's Travels* and other texts, and the third *Troilus* – the versions of *Troilus* in these two manuscripts show such close similarities with regard to both text and glosses that they must go back to a common exemplar, possibly a copy that was once available as an independent booklet from a commercial bookdealer.

The Middle English miscellanies compiled by the fifteenth-century scribe John Shirley similarly consist of individual booklets, and there is good evidence that these booklets led independent lives before being eventually bound together (Connolly 1998). This is important for our interpretation of late medieval narrative verse. When, for example, in *The Court of Love* (c. 1460, 1442 lines long), the anonymous poet (who describes himself as a Cambridge clerk) calls his poem a 'book' in his opening address to his lady: 'To her be all the pleasure of this boke, / That when her like, she may it rede and loke' (ll. 41–42),¹⁴ we need to consider the possibility that 'this boke' refers self-reflexively to the booklet that once contained the item. Indeed, the single surviving copy of the text is part of an independent codicological unit, datable to c. 1475, though its original independence is now obscured by the fact that the booklet was bound, in the early

13 The copy of Marie's *Fables* (and *Lais*) in the famous trilingual multi-text codex, London, British Library, MS Harley 978, has been linked to booklet production in Oxford during the same period (see Taylor 2002: 94–99).

14 See Forni (ed.) 2005 for the text.

sixteenth century, with thirteen other booklets in a manuscript that is now Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.19 (see Mooney 2001 and 2011).

The type of booklet production that we see in the Trinity manuscript and in San Marino, HM 114 may give the misleading impression that composite 'booklet' manuscripts are typically associated with commercialised production involving a professional or semi-professional scribe or a 'team' of scribes, but composite manuscripts come in very different types. A comprehensive typology of composite manuscripts is provided by J. P. Gumbert (2004) in his 'Codicological Units'. One of the most fundamental distinctions he draws is that between composite manuscripts with codicological units that are *monogenetic* (written by the same scribe) or *homogenetic* (originating within the same circle) and composites containing units that are *allogenetetic* (imported from elsewhere). The usefulness of these distinctions is exemplified by a number of manuscripts discussed in this volume. Kate Koppy considers the mid-fifteenth century Findern manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Ff.1.6, named after the Findern family that is known to have owned the manuscript in the sixteenth century. This manuscript was the collective effort of over forty scribes, most of them members of the local gentry of fifteenth-century Derbyshire; some of them wrote their names in the manuscript. The term homogenetic describes their home-produced work well, and, because most of its scribes came from the same circle, the Findern manuscript and others like it provide valuable insights into the social world of a very particular milieu. For instance, British Library, MS Harley 913 (c. 1330, discussed by Scattergood below), which was compiled by scribes in and around a Franciscan house in Waterford (Ireland), opens a window onto the multilingual culture of this time and place. In the case of Findern, however, the complicating factor is that one of its booklets seems to have been 'outsourced' and to have been copied by a professional scribe outside the inner circle of 'bloggers' (to use Koppy's analogy). The hand that copied *Sir Degrevant* in quire H is noticeably more professional, and this quire appears to have been part of a booklet acquired from a commercial producer: it is 'allogenetetic'. A further complication is that the empty space of allogenetetic units could become the site of guest texts, and guest texts, like codicological units, can also be either homogenetic (that is, originating from within the same circle) or allogenetetic, as in the case of the uninspiring list of the 'parcelys of clothys at fyndyrn' (fol. 70^{r-v}) that someone wrote in the Findern manuscript a hundred years or so later.

The diversity of a multi-text collection is thus not simply a matter of its content but also of its strata. Karl G. Johansson illustrates the point with reference to a multi-text manuscript that is now broken up into three parts: AM 371 4to (in Reykjavik), AM 544 4to and AM 675 4to (both in Copenhagen). Even while recognising the diversity of texts in this codex, scholars have been tempted to impose a unifying logic on it, for example, by calling it an 'encyclopedia'. Sim-

ilarly the name given to the original manuscript, *Hauksbók*, implies that the book had its origins in the mind of a single person, the Icelandic aristocrat Haukr Erlendsson, who was also one of its scribes. As Johansson argues, however, the first three quires of AM 544 4to are probably allogenetic, and there are indications that they were only bound in with the ‘homogenetic’ collection copied by Haukr and his associates at a later stage.

II. Material Evidence: *Mise en page* and Paratext

The multi-text codex is the ‘natural habitat’ of the short verse narrative. Yet multi-text codices preserving these narratives vary considerably one from another. One differentiating factor is the number of short works they contain and the way in which they are transmitted in these books: as filler texts on blank pages at the end of a quire or of a whole manuscript, on its margins (literally the margins of a page or the margins of a manuscript, for example on its flyleaves), at the end of a codicological unit – or as an integral part of a collection of shorter works.

The study of multi-text codices has been greatly enriched by the availability first of facsimiles, and more recently of digitised manuscripts, although the quality and usability of available images differ greatly from library to library, ranging from high-resolution colour images easily accessible by folio number to poor black-and-white microfilm-based images which are difficult to access and not downloadable. Even so, they are an invaluable resource, complementing the information provided by existing printed catalogues and many online databases. Unfortunately, the latter tend to be highly inaccurate regarding the contents of multi-text codices: short verse narratives are often barely mentioned, if at all, and the identification of individual texts is often sketchy. Sometimes the existence of short works can only be glimpsed from lacunae in the catalogue descriptions.

For this reason, the study of the transmission of short verse narratives within text collections involves the analysis of individual codices; and in most cases it is not sufficient to investigate manuscripts online, as the actual composition of the original quires gives important clues as to the history and conception of a codex. A thorough codicological study can yield detailed information about the evolution of a medieval book, and it plays a vital role when reconstructing a fragmentary multi-text codex, as Daniël Ermens demonstrates in his analysis of the Oudenaarde Verse Book below (see also Ermens 2015: 53–141). Indeed, in order to be sure that what we are studying is a medieval book rather than a more recent artefact (clearly a danger with composite manuscripts), a codicological examination is a prerequisite for the literary analysis of individual works and textual groupings in their manuscript contexts.

Codicological analyses also make possible the recognition of different hands, the identification of scribes and workshops, and the reconstruction of the production history of individual manuscripts (see Johansson in this volume). The detailed description of *mise en page* can also reveal different historical layers of a composite manuscript. Immediately noticeable is one basic function of the *mise en page*: it can create subsections of a manuscript, influencing the reader through the hierarchical arrangement of text and paratext. It can also give the impression of a complete and unified whole, as is the case in many a large-scale collection, where the uniform use of rubrics, illustrations or a programme of initials can create a visual coherence that certainly impacts on the reception of its texts. One such ‘miscellaneous collection’ is found in the early sixteenth-century *Ambraser Heldenbuch* (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. nova 2663), whose Arthurian romances, heroic epics, and short verse narratives are unified by the same *mise en page* throughout. Another is the English compilation found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch Selden B. 24, which, despite growing over time, possesses thematic and formal unity (Besamusca et al. 2016: 113). Likewise in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 12581, which includes the *Queste del Saint Graal*, Brunetto Latini’s *Livres dou Tresor*, the *Quatre Evangiles*, and *Fables Pierre Aufons*, a consistent *mise en page* (to the point that a lyric song is written out as prose) emphasises the overriding didactic function of the works (see Morcos in this volume).

For the larger multi-text codices containing, or consisting solely of, short verse narratives, the study of paratexts is extremely fruitful. When these collections reach a critical number of individual texts, they call for a new system of information retrieval that develops quickly, following established scribal practices from the Latin tradition,¹⁵ but also leading to new ways of presenting vernacular texts. In collections of short verse narratives paratexts quickly become important.¹⁶

Methods for articulating blocks of text in multi-text codices include blank spaces, paragraph signs, and *litterae notabiliores*: simple initials, rubricated, pen-

15 See Wendy Scase on *ordinatio* in this volume. For the influence of scholastic *lectio* on manuscript production from the thirteenth century onwards, and in particular the copying of related texts together, see Parkes 1976 and Pearse 2015.

16 The following discussion is also relevant to the presentation of story collections whose individual narratives are often marked as separate entities, but subordinated to the whole collective work. For instance, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 23111 has a historiated initial at the beginning of the Old French verse *Vie des Pères*, then red and blue puzzle initials at the start of each tale. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 3527, on the other hand, has a historiated initial to introduce each individual tale of the *Vie des Pères* and the other items in the codex (including each miracle of Gautier de Coinci’s collection), thus breaking down the boundaries of the story collections and placing as much importance on each tale as on the other texts in the manuscript (Morcos 2014).

flourished or puzzle initials and, most lavishly, historiated initials. Textual hierarchies can be created through the size and / or richness of these initials, which, when used systematically to indicate the beginning of a new text, can serve important paratextual purposes. Rubricated first lines or, more often, rubricated headings are a form of paratext that can be more specifically related to the actual content of the following text (but not necessarily so, as Matthias Meyer and Nicola Zotz show in this volume). Their primary function still remains the separation of individual texts. Only when groupings grow larger or when whole manuscripts are made up of individual short texts, does the identification of individual texts become important: specific headings as well as specific illustrations can fulfil this function (see the contributions by Van der Poel and De Morée, and Krause in this volume). For example, in the thirteenth-century codex, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 837, each of its individual 250 plus items is followed by an explicit (see our Virtual Exhibition at <http://everycodextellsastory.eu/>) and a later fourteenth-century reader has added incipits, which further delineate the boundaries between texts and identify the following work more or less precisely, although not necessarily by the same title used in the explicit. Although there can be a strong correlation between paratexts as developed by scribes / compilers and paratextual elements within the individual texts (such as prologues and epilogues), these types of information do not always confirm each other. For instance, author attributions may vary with regard to the name given in the rubric and that in the text proper (Besamusca et al. 2016) and an author may use a different generic label for his / her work than that used in a scribal incipit.

Connected to the function of locating texts in manuscripts are codex-specific tables of contents (considered below by Scase and Meyer and Zotz), which either adopt rubricated headings from within the manuscript or contain different titles. Diverse systems of relating tables to texts exist, from simple lists to the numbering of items or the inclusion of actual folio numbers in the tables. These tables can be found either at the beginning or more rarely at the end of a manuscript, they can be produced before copying begins or after the completion of a book. Tables of contents can thus play an important role in the analysis of the evolution of individual manuscripts as well as in exemplar copying, as the relationship between Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 341 and Cologny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 72 shows (Zotz 2014b; Meyer and Zotz in this volume). For tables of contents not only functioned as a guide for readers; when present in an exemplar in a workshop, they could also provide a basis for a future manuscript, enabling commissioners to choose the items they wanted. Moreover, tables (along with text numbering, rubrication, the addition of incipits, explicits, etc.) may have been used to impose order retrospectively on a

collection of texts which had grown organically, thus giving the reader the impression that they were linked programmatically.

For the modern scholar, tables can provide information on texts that were once present in a manuscript but are now no longer extant due to the loss of folios or quires. Examples of such manuscripts are Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, MS 5204¹⁷ and Cologne, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cod. Bodmer 72 (see Zotz 2014a: 272, note 14). The table of contents in Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 25545, while post-medieval, presents an earlier order for the text collection than its present arrangement, as the old foliation confirms. This shows that the *Chatelaine de Vergi* (copied on a new quire) was not originally next to the risqué fabliau *Du chevalier qui fist les cons parler*, but was preceded by the proverbs of Seneca and *Li Proverbes au vilain*, which provided a very different context for the courtly narrative's reception. Finally, the table in BnF, f. fr. 24432 is accurate to the extent that it shows that the *Dit des planètes* has been copied twice in the manuscript, but does not contain a reference to the second *Lai d'amour* copied on folio 198^{va}. This is because the second *Lai d'amour* was included later, in folios added to complete the *Tournoiement d'Antecrist*. In this way, information from tables of contents can reveal the stages of composition of a compilation.

Our research, as well as the essays collected here, has shown that the European multi-text codex cannot be studied successfully without paying attention to codicology and the material aspects of manuscript culture, even as it is reductive to consider the physical evidence alone without recourse to literary historical interpretations of individual texts and their co-texts.

III. Organisational Principles Underlying Text Collections

An acceptance of miscellaneity as the norm rather than the exception in medieval books has made it possible for scholars to identify a number of alternative ways in which manuscript compilers perceived and articulated the relationships between texts. Of these, a text's formal characteristics are increasingly being recognised as a factor that influenced the decisions of medieval book producers just as much as content did. In Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.1.1, the large early-fourteenth-century trilingual miscellany discussed by Thea Summerfield, the organising principle that emerges most clearly is the distinction between prose and verse. The texts grouped together at the front of the manuscript are almost all in verse. There are some exceptions to this rule, but these exceptions exemplify the

17 In this case, the table has folios missing, but it does include reference to the final 37 saints' lives from the *Vie des saints* which once opened the codex.

kinds of pragmatic considerations that invariably played their part in medieval bookmaking. In Ralph Hanna's words (2013: 64), 'like nature, book producers abhor vacuums', and the scribe of CUL, Gg.1.1. set about filling the 'vacuums' between larger blocks of verse texts with short prose texts (see folios 16^v, 113^v, 120^f–121^v). By retaining the double-format column he used for copying verse for these prose passages (and for the longer prose texts gathered after the verse section), he nevertheless managed to give the manuscript a coherent appearance.¹⁸

Attention to form also clarifies the logic of distribution that lies behind another famous multilingual multi-text codex, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86.¹⁹ The received wisdom is that the manuscript was organised on the basis of subject matter, with the first section containing pieces 'with practical application' followed by a second section containing pieces for 'edification and entertainment' (Tschann and Parkes (eds) 1996: xlv). As Marilyn Corrie (1997) has shown, however, the distribution of texts frequently violates this principle, and criteria of form provide a better explanation. In Digby 86, a prose section (fols 1–74^f) is followed by a verse section (fol. 74^v ff.), and this verse section is in turn divided on the basis of the type of verse: poems in shorter lines come first (fols 74^v–168^v) and then come poems in longer lines (fols 169^f–201^v). Such attention to form came naturally to scribes for the simple reason that form impinged on practical questions about the format in which the text should be copied. Should the text be laid out in one or two (and sometimes three) columns? How many lines per page were needed? The Digby scribe coped with these questions by writing out the prose in long lines in a single column, the shorter verse lines in a double-column format, while for the longer lines he reverted to the single-column format.

In the manuscripts associated with the movement of spiritual reform known as *Devotio Moderna*, form also has a role to play, alongside various other principles. As Van der Poel and De Morrée show in their contribution, sometimes these principles were explicitly articulated by the manuscript producers. Thus in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. oct. 185, from the late-fifteenth century, the songs are subdivided into ones for Easter and ones for Christmas, with rubrics explicitly announcing the different parts. In some other manuscripts the songs are grouped according to language. Yet in song manu-

18 As noted by Theo Stemmler (2001: 113), in the case of the scribe of the Harley manuscript (British Library, MS Harley 2253), the 'overriding principle he considered for the arrangement of his material was the distinction between verse and prose'. A French example of a manuscript divided into prose and verse sections is Poitiers, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 251 (see Pratt 2015: 182).

19 For a facsimile, see Tschann and Parkes (eds) 1996. There is now also a digital facsimile at http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/all/what/MS.+Digby+86?sort=Shelfmark%252CShelfmark%252Csort_order%252Csort_order.

scripts, too, form mattered. Some compilers group lyric poetry together according to the melody they were to be sung to, and in these groupings similarity of form was a key consideration, since it was compatibility of form rather than of content that made it possible to perform songs to the same melody.²⁰

Two other contributions to this volume show that attention to the formal aspects of texts can illuminate the hidden logic of multi-text collections. Focusing on the rubrics used to introduce shorter verse narratives, Meyer and Zotz show that the format of these rubrics, too, can be responsive to the form of the texts they introduce. One of the earliest collections of German shorter verse narratives, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 341, dating from the first quarter of the fourteenth century, introduces all of its verse items with a rhyming couplet. This not only confers a degree of uniformity on this multi-text codex, it also highlights the fact that, like the rubrics, almost all the verse tales are themselves in rhymed couplets. As recent criticism has made clear (Cooper 2015), the kinds of distinctions which hold for modern books – whether something is a text or a paratext (title, heading, etc.) – are not always easy to make in medieval books; this is particularly so in the case of rubrics that themselves participate in the rhyme scheme of the narratives they announce.

Florian Kragl similarly shows how conscious medieval scribes were of formal criteria. His study of the *Dresdener Heldenbuch* (dated 1472) in this volume reveals the extraordinary lengths to which its two scribes went to ensure that the stories they collected were, at least formally, the same. All of the poems in this manuscript are not just in verse but in stanzaic verse, and in the case of *Laurin*, which in all other extant versions is written in couplets, it is probable that one (or both) of the scribes decided to rewrite the work in strophic verse. The scribes also wanted the poems to be around the same length, and remarkably they left direct evidence of their editorial abridgement work in the shape of rubrics such as ‘Der new 297, der alt 587 lied’ (fol. 43^r) [the new one 297, the old one 587 stanzas]. In the course of this HERA project, we have certainly found circumstantial evidence to suggest that works were abridged to provide a better fit for a manuscript,²¹ but hard evidence of the kind provided by the scribal annotations in the *Dresdener Heldenbuch* is rare. To our knowledge, no comparable evidence survives in Middle English, Dutch or Francophone codices, and one of the great benefits of studying multi-text manuscripts from a wider European perspective is that we

20 An example of this phenomenon is the *Carmina Burana* manuscript, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4660, which groups together Latin and German poems in the same stanza form, with the implication that they were to be sung to the same melody.

21 Examples are the Middle English Life of St Catherine and the chronicle account of King Arthur (*Arthur*) in Wiltshire, Longleat House, MS 55, on which see Griffith and Putter 2014. In Middle Dutch there is the abridged version of Augustijnken’s *Dryvoldicheit* in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 385 (see Bouwmeester 2015).

can become aware of relevant evidence that may not be available in our own linguistic disciplines.

Another possible organising principle underlying multi-text codices or parts thereof is the author (Besamusca et al. 2016). In the French tradition, a good example of an author anthology is the thirteenth-century compilation Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 837, which, though it contains works by a number of named poets, gives pride of place to Rutebeuf, who is the only author to be introduced in this manuscript with a dedicated rubric: 'Ci commencent li dit rustebeuf' (fol. 283^{vb}). In German and Dutch, examples of authors who conferred cultural capital on anthologies were Der Stricker and Willem of Hildegaersberch, while in England (and Scotland) an author name that counted was that of Geoffrey Chaucer: from the fifteenth century onwards scribes and later printers fathered many works on Chaucer which he did not in fact write.²²

While we have clear evidence that medieval compilers frequently organised their material according to form and in some cases attempted authorial anthologies, many other possible organising principles may be in the eye of the modern beholder. Nevertheless, it is worth investigating groups of works which recur in several manuscripts and which do not seem to be the result of copying in clusters. Reasons why scribes decided independently to copy the same texts together might be thematic or generic similarity, local interest,²³ and / or the formal characteristics already discussed. One such case is the grouping of four short narratives, *Constant du Hamel*, *Auberee*, *Cortois d'Arras*, and the *Lai de l'ombre*, found in reasonably close proximity in four French *recueils*: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 837, 1553, 12603, and 19152. Since these texts do not seem to share the same textual transmission, they must represent the polygenetic clustering of generically different texts, probably encouraged by their similar thematic content and playful questioning of *cortoisie* (Pratt 2017 forthcoming).

This type of polygenetic grouping in German manuscripts has been investigated in much detail by Sarah Westphal (1993: 7–12), who argues that texts were often copied in pairs (dyads), or in *Minne* constellations combining *Minnereden* (discourses on love) with both courtly and bawdy *Mären*. She sees this as a compositional technique that brings short narratives together to create larger

22 Similarly, works are falsely attributed to Jean de Meun as 'auctor' in Poitiers, MS 215 (Pratt 2015: 182).

23 Bouwmeester (2013: 358) suggests that some Middle Dutch Nine Worthies texts were combined with 'specific histories of the area in which the manuscripts were made', i.e. contemporary, locally relevant texts. Scattergood in this volume argues that some of the contents of British Library, MS Harley 913 deal with local issues of concern to its compiler. Westphal (1993: 118) suggests that *Minne* constellations often brought together texts by local authors.

configurations akin to the longer romances with which they often travel, and these *Minne* constellations frequently appear at the beginning of manuscripts. She interprets this phenomenon as an attempt to present various facets of love in different genres, and in particular to demonstrate the power of love and the empowerment of women. While some of her conclusions as to the intentions of the compiler may be speculative, she nevertheless appears to have identified a textual phenomenon which multi-text codices presented to the reader. Indeed, as we have seen in our own research, dissimilarity of genre or theme does not necessarily imply heterogeneity, for compilations can offer the reader contrasting views on a subject: positive and negative *exempla* both perceived as instructional. This seems to be the case, in particular, in collections of material on women, in which images of good wives can be juxtaposed with those of loose women (see Besamusca 2011a and 2011b; Sweet in this volume; and Zotz 2014a). Similarly, it was not uncommon to juxtapose serious and parodic works, which, though linked thematically, were very different in tone and likely reader response (Stemmler 2010: 118).

This latter point leads us neatly into the potential reader experiences produced by text collections. Clearly, it is important to reflect on both the production and reception of a manuscript: its makers (the scribes, workshops, commissioners), as well as its intended audience, its presumed and actual readers, their activities that are documented in the extant manuscripts as well as the acts of interpretation that these readers might have been introduced to by the ordering of works and the paratexts accompanying texts in medieval books.

IV. The Reception of Multi-Text Codices

It is of prime importance for our understanding of multi-item manuscripts that scholars acknowledge their status as evidence of reception. After all, the text collections they preserve consist, in whole or part, of texts which were composed earlier and circulated independently (sometimes in booklets) before they were copied into multi-text codices. The selection of these texts is, therefore, an act of reception, even though it is clear that the choice of works may have depended on socio-historical and material conditions, in particular the availability (or perhaps better poverty) of exemplars. As we have seen, the arrangement of texts in a compilation and accompanying paratexts is further evidence for the manner in which they were received by the compiler, revealing the way(s) in which he appreciated, classified, and interpreted the individual works.

But what do we know about the recipients of the compiler's efforts? Of course, we cannot know how individual readers responded to a codex; perhaps differently on successive occasions, perhaps depending on whether they encountered

its contents aurally or visually, whether the book was read continuously, or more likely dipped into in a fragmentary fashion (the latter approach aided by features like text-specific headings and tables of contents). Reading modes are treated in this volume by Sweet, who in her analysis of the *Chatelaine de Vergi* as exemplary narrative notes the shifting horizons of expectation created and then modified when text collections were read initially, then revisited by their medieval owners.

Physical evidence for the reception of texts by contemporary readers is quite scarce, though marginal annotations and glosses provide an indisputable sign of readership. Real historical readers are difficult to identify, but our Virtual Exhibition does offer some examples (<http://everycodextellsastory.eu/?cat=18>), such as the sixteenth-century readers / owners of Berlin, Staatsbibliothek – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. qu. 2370 (one of whom annotated the manuscript), the scribe / owner of the fifteenth-century Geraardsbergen manuscript (Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 837–45), who records the birth of his daughter Alyonore on folio 101^r, and Richard Woodville, an owner of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, who in a note in French inside the back cover of the manuscript mentions that he acquired the manuscript in London (<http://everycodextellsastory.eu/?p=977>).

Faced with the paucity of readerly traces, scholars have sometimes opted for an, admittedly troublesome, detour involving the concept of the implied / intended or ideal reader (cf. Iser 1974). They assume that the compiler of a text collection had a clear idea of his or her audience and geared the selection, arrangement, and copying of the texts towards the social status and interests of this readership.²⁴ Consequently, scholars look for the reading strategy that is thought to be embedded in the text collection. Applying this methodology, Bart Besamusca argues below that the Middle Dutch text collection in The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 76 E 5 addresses young members of the civic elite. Another Middle Dutch text collection, preserved in Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 15642–51, was also meant for young readers with an urban background, according to Bouwmeester.²⁵ Ermens in his essay similarly posits a lay (urban?) setting for the audience of the Oudenaarde Verse Book.

This reconstruction of communities of readers is a point of interest shared by other contributors to this volume. Kopyy suggests that the mid fifteenth-century Findern manuscript (Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.1.6) reflects the collaborative activities of an extensive community of readers, scribes, and authors.

24 Raluca Radelescu uses Pierre Bourdieu's term *habitus* to cover the socio-economic and cultural environment in which these compilations were produced and received (Connolly and Radelescu (eds) 2015: 23–24).

25 Similarly, on the basis of choice of texts and the predominance of a didactic voice throughout the collection, Pratt (2011b) concludes that Poitiers, MS 215 was a fifteenth-century French compilation produced for a young aristocratic male reader.

Van der Poel and De Morrée discuss the production of devotional song collections in *Devotio Moderna* circles. In a number of essays the possibility of the gendered readership of multi-text codices is addressed. Kopyy, for instance, suggests that the community that created the Findern manuscript consisted largely of women. The contents of the text collection studied by Bouwmeester, are, in his view, designed to include female readers. Similarly, Kathy Krause notes discrepancies between images and texts in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 378 that suggest that the illustrator intended the manuscript to appeal to women as well as men.

In Krause's case study we see the illustrator acting as reader / interpreter of texts. This particular form of reception is also attested in BnF, f. fr. 12581, a manuscript containing a text collection that includes the *Fables Pierre Aufons*. Hannah Morcos observes that the illustrations accompanying the didactic texts, including the historiated initial that introduces the *Fables Pierre Aufons*, stress the transfer of knowledge by a teacher, and, therefore, the instructional / didactic function of the text collection.

Two essays in this volume reflect on the assumed knowledge of the implied audiences of multi-text codices. Connolly shows that John Shirley, the scribe of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20, added additional information on the identity of Geoffrey Chaucer and Adam Pinkhurst to a heading ascribing the famous lyric 'Adam Scryveyn' to Chaucer. Although Shirley's author attributions have been dismissed as acts of salesmanship, the rubric in MS R.3.20, 'Chauciers wordes a Geoffrey vn to Adam his owen scryveyne' (p. 367), is credible precisely because it is not what Shirley originally wrote. What Shirley first wrote (as is indicated by the paler ink) is 'a Geoffrey vn to Adam'. Shirley evidently knew to whom he was referring, and did not write his original rubric to capitalise on Chaucer's reputation. He made the later addition 'Chauciers words ... his owen scryveyne' for the benefit of readers who did not have the personal knowledge of 'Geoffrey' and 'Adam' that Shirley seems to have had. The evidence thus indicates that Shirley revised the manuscript for circulation amongst a wider audience. For the same reason, he expanded the heading of a poem he copied in London, British Library, Additional MS 16165. As Scase notes, tables of contents can also shed light on the assumed knowledge of manuscript readers. She suggests that the needs of inexperienced readers probably led to the development and provision of tables of contents in English and multilingual multi-text codices.

The intellectual capacities of readers are evidently at stake in the case of multilingual text collections. Manuscripts of this kind are studied by Scase and two other contributors to this volume. John Scattergood discusses the trilingual text collection in London, British Library, MS Harley 913: the scribe copied English, French, and Latin texts. The presence of Latin suggests that its compiler, who seems to have had links with the Franciscan order, was assuming an edu-

cated readership. In the manuscript studied by Summerfield, Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.1.1, we find mostly Anglo-Norman texts, next to English and Latin works. The table of contents occasionally refers to the language of the texts, but omits to mention the Latin. This compilation seems to be targeted at a lay audience, which makes the presence of Latin, and in particular the presence of Latin texts copied in the spaces left blank after the French texts, difficult to explain.

There is no compelling reason why one should equate commissioners of multi-text manuscripts with the readers of the text collections they contain. But, of course, in several instances the first owner of a codex ordered the book or even produced the book himself because he wanted to have a particular text collection at his immediate disposal (see Johansson and Scattergood below). In such cases, the material characteristics of a codex may also point to an implied reader. However, we need to be cautious here. It may be reasonable to assume that, for example, a luxury codex, made with excellent parchment and containing a series of sumptuous illustrations, was designed for a readership one might locate in the higher echelons of society. However, it could well be that subsequent readers belonged to less privileged social groups. And, more importantly, this line of reasoning does not work for the great majority of ordinary multi-text manuscripts. These codices can be imagined in the hands of any medieval reader. Moreover, what was originally a personal text collection, designed for a particular reader, could also be expanded, thus modifying its intended readership.

V. Construction of Meaning – Modern and Medieval Readers

Anachronistic conceptions about the medieval book as a unified artefact are not easy to shake off.²⁶ As a number of contributors point out, such conceptions are often implicit in the names given to manuscripts. The ‘Beatrijs’ manuscript, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 76 E 5, is named after the best-known Middle Dutch poem in it, but *Beatrijs* is by no means central to the collection. The programme of decorated initials and the table of contents, as Besamusca shows in this volume, clearly implies a different textual hierarchy, one dominated by Boendale’s *Dietsche doctrinael*. If it is not the most famous poem that gives the compilation its name, it is often the longest text in it. The so-called ‘Lucidarius’ manuscript, Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 15642–51, is named after the lengthy Middle Dutch translation of Honorius of Autun’s *Elucidarium*. Yet Bouwmeester argues that the smaller texts in the codex should not be ne-

26 Matthew Fisher (2016), in his review of Connolly and Radulescu (eds) 2015, warns against apophenia, the tendency to perceive links between unrelated material.

glected and offer valuable clues as to the likely audience (lay, urban men and women) for which this book was intended. Similarly, according to Krause, the short texts which precede the *Roman de la rose* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 378 offer an interpretative framework for the longer text that follows. These cases underline the challenges offered by heterogeneous multi-text codices to modern readers wont to privilege length as well as unity over diversity.

Studying a text collection in search of an overall meaning has proven to be troublesome. As Derek Pearsall (2005) has argued, scholars have been tempted to over-emphasise the unifying purpose behind the composition of multi-text codices. In an attempt to avoid such overgeneralisation, medievalists sometimes characterise a text collection in very broad terms, such as courtly, religious, clerical, didactic, practical, and so on. Yet these terms rarely cover all items, although they may be valid for sections of a compilation. This is true of parts of *Hauksbók*, which, Johansson argues, may have been organised according to a Christian worldview of geography and history, and while Van der Poel and De Morrée find no overriding criteria for the arrangement of their devotional songs, they do find some material organised according to melody, theme, liturgical calendar, or language. Perhaps, therefore, it is better to focus on the readings encouraged by local manuscript configurations rather than by the book as a whole.

Factors which clearly influence modern critics, and probably also influenced medieval readers, are the length of the various texts and their place in the compilation. Does the first text in a manuscript (which may also be the longest text) establish an interpretative framework for the whole book, thus functioning as a matrix text?²⁷ Does the presence of a (very) long text amidst short(er) texts mean that readers were invited to focus on the longer work? As we have seen, Bouwmeester and Krause insist on the complementary contribution of the short texts to the meaning of a text collection, and Sweet's research shows that when the *Châtelaine de Vergi* is copied with the encyclopedic *Roman de la rose*, this dyad of texts may have been in a symbiotic relationship, each influencing the interpretation of the other.

27 In the case of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch Selden B. 24, the first and longest text, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, introduces themes and formal characteristics which probably influenced the second scribe / compiler's choice of texts as he strove to create an author anthology. However, in a third phase of composition this manuscript became less coherent and the influence of *Troilus* less keenly felt (Besamusca et al. 2016: 113). Yasmina Foehr-Janssens (2005) suggests that the first text in Paris, BnF, f. fr. 837, *Le Dit du Barisel*, establishes an implicit contract of reading, a *prologue-miroir*, and introduces elements of *conjointure* that unify the whole codex.

Another influential factor must have been a work's co-texts and for this reason, recent critical studies have focused on the possible meanings generated by the juxtaposition of texts (see Collet, Gingras, and Trachsler (eds) 2012). In this volume, the analysis of interrelations is carried out by Pratt on narratives of Pyramus and Thisbe in their manuscript contexts and Sweet on the *Chatelaine de Vergi*. These studies complement those of Besamusca (2011a and 2011b) on Middle Dutch *fabliaux* and *Vergi* narratives respectively; Bouwmeester (2013) on the Nine Worthies in Middle Dutch; Pratt (2016) on the two extant French versions of *Beranger au long cul*; and Zotz (2014a) on the German *Märe Das Almosen*. In all these cases meaning fluctuates according to context because a work's immediate co-texts highlight and reinforce the different messages present in these often ambiguous, polyvalent texts. One should not, however, rule out the influence also of other items copied further away in a compilation, with which a reader may have become familiar over many discontinuous reading sessions. For a person's recent reading material always conditions their response to the next text consumed (see Sweet in this volume). Reading a work in its manuscript context thus enhances scope for interpretation rather than necessarily pinning down meaning.

VI. The Dynamics of the Short Narrative and Story Collections – Mobility and *Variance*

While texts can acquire new meanings simply through their placement in manuscript contexts, alongside co-texts which can either reinforce certain themes or question, even undermine their overt message, works are also fashioned for reinterpretation by being adapted and rewritten, often in quite subtle ways.²⁸ In most cases, this process will have been invisible to the medieval reader – unless s/he had an intimate knowledge of the source text, of course – but for modern scholars it provides an insight into the production and reception of short narratives. Bouwmeester argues below for the importance of taking scribal *variance* into account when characterising the medieval compilation, in his case Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 15642–51 (MS Lu). Not only has the primary text, a Middle Dutch rhymed translation of the *Elucidarium*, been simplified for its target audience, but the short texts that follow it have also been adapted. For example, a discussion of greed containing a reference to the nobility is missing from MS Lu's version of De Weert's *Spiegel van sonden*, perhaps because this text collection was intended for an urban audience. Kragl similarly

28 Recontextualisation and revision are factors also discussed by Zotz (2014a).

demonstrates that the two scribes of the *Dresdener Heldenbuch* not only shortened their sources and provided a uniform structure for each of them, but even went so far as to modify the plot of some narratives. The scribe as editor is a subject also treated by Sweet in her study of three extant manuscript copies of the French courtly narrative *La Chastelaine de Vergi*. By taking into account scribal rewriting, choice of co-texts, and the content of paratext (prologues and epilogues), she demonstrates how different codices offer divergent interpretations of this work as an exemplary tale.

The *Chastelaine de Vergi* also exemplifies another feature of our project: the migration of tales from one linguistic culture to another. The original thirteenth-century French work was adapted into Middle Dutch twice, the Flemish and Brabantine versions probably both dating from the fourteenth century (Besamusca 2011b). The Brabantine poem, which is extant in the famous Van Hulthem manuscript (discussed by Bouwmeester and Pratt in this volume; see also Ermens 2013) preserves the courtly flavour of the French original and extols the virtues of secrecy in love. In this manuscript the *Vergi* is preceded by the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisbe and is followed by various texts which emphasise the evil behaviour of wicked wives, a probable allusion to the duchess in the *Chastelaine*. Although the exact context of the Flemish work is difficult to pin down given the fragmentary nature of its survival, Besamusca (2011b) argues that its religious contexts would encourage a different, strongly moral reading: courtly love is a sin.

A strong contender for the most popular pan-European subject-matter treated in short narratives is the Griselda story, which offers exemplary conduct for women in most European languages, but usually in prose.²⁹ The most widely disseminated *verse* narrative in the Middle Ages was the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. It began as a medieval Latin school exercise in imitation of Ovid, but was quickly adapted into various vernaculars. An influential twelfth-century French adaptation was followed by two stand-alone versions in Middle Dutch and one in Middle High German, although by the fourteenth century the tale is transmitted more frequently in story collections, including the *Ovide moralisé*, Dirc Potter's *Der minnen loep*, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*. A further stage in its dynamic evolution is marked by the extraction of the *Tale of Thisbe* from Chaucer's *Legend* and its inclusion in the Findern manuscript (Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.1.6, also studied by Koppy), a fifteenth-century compilation probably produced for and read by a gentry community that included women. As Pratt demonstrates, not only is the Ovidian material adapted for new readers and manuscript contexts, but it also acquires new meanings through its juxtaposition with a variety of co-texts.

29 An exception in French is the verse narrative in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 99; in English there is Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*.

The *Tale of Thisbe* is not the only short narrative that breaks free from a story collection, as is demonstrated by Morcos (2014). She studies the dynamics of multi-text codices in relation to three story collections: the *Fables Pierre Aufons*, the Old French verse *Vie des Pères*, and the *Fables* of Marie de France, identifying shared compilatory processes such as modification, interpolation, extension, continuation, and extraction. She examines their reconfiguration over time (thirteenth to fifteenth century) and space (insular and continental French manuscripts), noting in particular their ability to incorporate short verse narratives within their boundaries, or to export individual stories to other locations. The role of paratext and *mise en page* (initials, rubrics, illustrations, etc.) is shown to be very influential in conditioning reader responses to these manuscripts, in which the boundaries between individual items within the story collection, and between the story collection and additional items can either be emphasised or downplayed in line with the compiler's overall conception (cf. Divizia's point 11). In this volume she concentrates on the five extant witnesses of the *Fables Pierre Aufons* in their codicological contexts. In particular, the dialectical relationship between moral profit and pleasure, emblematised by the figures of Solomon and Marcoul, is reconfigured in each multi-text codex by the choice of co-texts and the *remaniement* of the story collection itself. Thus, whether we are dealing with individual short narratives or those assembled into larger story collections, the same processes of revision and rearrangement are visible across different European cultures throughout the Middle Ages.³⁰

VII. Medieval Text Collections and Modern Critical Categories

In many cases modern critical terminology is challenged by the evidence of medieval multi-text codices. In a culture where anonymous and collective authorship were quite common, the naming of an author covered a variety of functions. Sometimes an authorial name really did refer to a real person, perhaps known to the readership, and sometimes manuscript evidence helped to construct a writer's *oeuvre*.³¹ However, in some cases texts were falsely attributed to famous writers, and frequently there is no way of checking these scribal attributions against other forms of evidence. Moreover, an author's name could be used to signify generic or thematic material (e.g. 'Der Stricker' and *Ysopet*), often lending authority to a text which it might not otherwise possess (Besamusca et al. 2016: 118–20).

30 For stories that break free of their collections, see Hable 2014 and Meyer 2014.

31 See, for example, Bouwmeester 2014 on Augustijnken.

As Kragl demonstrates below, genre is another category we are forced to reassess in light of the evidence from multi-text codices. Texts which modern classification would identify as divergent are often juxtaposed and grouped together in manuscripts, as in the case of the constellations of *Minnereden* and *Mären* studied by Westphal (1993). Also, scribes give works generic labels in paratext and tables of contents which do not tally with our definitions. A case in point is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 1553, which refers to the fabliau *Auberee*, and the dramatic work *Cortois d'Arras* as *lais*, thus forcing us to reassess not only what the term *lai* might have meant to a contemporary compiler and reader, but also the evidence for our categorisation of *Cortois d'Arras* as a play (Pratt 2017 forthcoming). As Jauss (1970) argued, genres were not fixed in the Middle Ages and evolved constantly. Moreover, boundaries between genres were particularly blurred through the interplay of 'dominante' and 'interprétante'. It might be preferable, therefore, to think in terms of registers, discourses, and the intergeneric (i. e. generic intertextuality), rather than to attempt to label items generically in a multi-text codex.

In medieval compilations, even the integrity of a text is brought into question when boundaries between what we perceive as individual texts are blurred through the use of or absence of scribal paratext. Moreover, tables of contents may subsume several items under one title, or conversely present one text as many through the inclusion of subsection titles. This leads to some ambiguity over the exact number of items found within a codex, as scholars are at pains to define and identify individual texts, and also grapple with the shifting titles employed by modern critics and medieval rubricators.

The contents of medieval text collections reveal that the distinctions we habitually make between high and low, religious and profane, entertaining and didactic literature are anachronistic, since cultural products of all kinds sit happily together in multi-text codices. This situation is clearly in conflict with our polarised definitions of miscellany and anthology. Certainly, neither modern miscellanies nor anthologies would contain more than one version of a given text, yet this is the case with BnF, f. fr. 24432 (mentioned above), and the two versions of *Trois morts et trois vifs* in BnF, f. fr. 378, treated by Krause. Is this to allow the comparison of versions? Or are these mistakes, since elsewhere we find evidence of scribes not repeating the same material twice when copying from an identifiable exemplar (Besamusca et al. 2016: 109)? We cannot be sure, and must constantly be ready to reassess our taxonomies.

VIII. The European Multi-Text Codex

The multi-text codex transmitting one or more short narrative is clearly a European phenomenon in the Middle Ages. Moreover, it is a multi-faceted phenomenon. One might argue that each codex is a unique artefact, with its text collection providing a unique set of possible readings. However, it is possible to make some generalisations about these manuscripts, both within linguistic and cultural areas, and across them, although the evolution of these books from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries must also be taken into account. Indeed, the surviving evidence suggests that the heyday of the huge French *recueils* was the second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth (Foehr-Janssens and Collet 2010), whereas the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the flourishing of these compilations in England, Germany, and the Low Countries. Similarly, author collections were already appearing in Francophone manuscripts by the end of the thirteenth century, but were not common in England until the fifteenth. Manuscript illumination produced throughout the Middle Ages also tends to be richer and more sophisticated in the extant French examples than in the German and Dutch ones.

It seems that the transmission of short narratives in booklets played an important role throughout Western Europe, although surviving individual booklets are rare and evidence varies between countries. We have found examples of multi-text codices produced in workshops, religious institutions, more rarely in courts (though perhaps some of the sumptuous French examples with unidentified provenance were produced in aristocratic *milieux*?) for a variety of different readerships: lay, religious, noble, bourgeois, male, female, young, old.

Similar types of short narrative and other genres were collected in compilations in all four languages, thus suggesting that these books conveyed a shared Western European culture to their readers, one based on Christian morality, but accompanied by secular, courtly values and tempered with bawdy humour. In the case of narratives about Pyramus and Thisbe, the Chatelaine of Vergi, Griselda, and some comic tales (*fabliaux*), the same material circulated across Europe. We have also found similar compilatory strategies at work in the French, English, German, and Dutch speaking regions, which, of course, overlapped. Texts are often arranged according to similarity of form, author, length, thematic content, and local interest. While some contrasting material seems to have been deliberately juxtaposed in order to encourage debate and reflection, texts which modern critics would place anachronistically in different generic categories seem to have been viewed as unproblematic bedfellows by medieval copyists. Scribes and compilers throughout Western Europe had at their disposal the same mechanisms for imposing a degree of coherence on their text collections, through the consistent use of *mise en page*, initials, rubrics, explicits and incipits, and

illustrations, and the inclusion of tables of contents; these features no doubt also influenced the reception of their works. Yet, while we find these characteristics in all the languages we have studied, multilingualism mostly characterises manuscripts produced in the British Isles (in addition to contributions by Scattergood and Summerfield below, see Putter 2015). We are very aware that our investigations did not cover the whole of medieval Europe and therefore any general findings would need to be tested against the study of compilations produced in Eastern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, complemented by further analyses of Scandinavian manuscripts. The inclusion of short *prose* narratives would in fact automatically extend research into these areas. Until such studies have been carried out, our conclusions must remain provisional.³²

Reading a multi-text codex is an on-going game of interpretation. Even clear-cut cases, where we have information about the producer / commissioner and his intended audience, still leave room for surprise. And these compilations offer rich challenges to modern scholars: the search for meaning in what is perhaps only the product of happenstance provides great opportunities for recreating the medieval experience of reading. The best way to gain a deeper understanding of the idiosyncrasies and interpretative difficulties posed by the medieval book is therefore to analyse as many codices as possible – and not to shrink from the difficult, non-standard cases which challenge our categories of analysis. We are in a better position than ever to do this work, with the proliferation of digitised manuscripts and published codicological descriptions.³³ However, nothing beats holding one of these wonderful books in one's hands, thereby sharing with its contemporary medieval owners and readers the excitement of the multi-text codex.

32 It would also be fruitful to continue our interdisciplinary research into the early modern period, during which many of the practices outlined above persisted (see Starza Smith 2016), forming the basis for printed collections of short narratives in prose.

33 Some useful starting points and resources for manuscript research are Les Archives de littérature du Moyen Âge (ARLIMA) (<http://www.arlima.net>) with their convenient links to digital reproductions, including those available on Gallica; the IRHT's JONAS database (<http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr>); Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta (<https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl>); Handschriftencensus (<http://handschriftencensus.de>); DMMmaps (<http://digitizedmedievalmanuscripts.org>); Consulting Medieval Manuscripts Online (<http://www.utm.edu/staff/bobp/vlibrary/mdmss.shtml>); Digitized Manuscripts Containing Middle English (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mec/digitMSS.html>).

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