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Written Culture at Ten Duinen: Cistercian Monks and Their Books, c. 1125-c. 1250

Janzen, J.P.C.

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Author: Janzen J.P.C.

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THIS STUDY'S IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Founded as a hermitage in the dunes of the Flemish coast in 1107, Ten Duinen grew into a house of the Benedictine offshoot Order of Savigny in 1120, and together with the rest of Savigny's houses joined the dynamic Cistercian Order in 1139. Within a fruitful century of that conversion, the abbey's humble beginnings were left behind; it flourished into one of the wealthiest and largest Cistercian houses, with spiritual, political, and economic ties to centres both regional and further abroad in France and England. Ten Duinen unquestionably developed into vital hub of activity. Using the manuscript units of c. 1125 to c. 1250 surviving from the abbey's scriptorium and library, this study sought to uncover how this spirit of activity extended into the practices of the abbey's scribes and readers in this vibrant period.

6.1 New Methods, Insights, and Hypotheses

As demonstrated in the Introduction, this is not the first study to explore Ten Duinen's early books held in the Bruges Openbare Bibliotheek's Historisch Fonds. Rather than a dearth of literature, previous research has stimulated my study, either by recommending a second look with the aid of new methodologies (as does Lieftinck 1953's monograph), or by laying a nearly water-tight foundation on which to build (as, for example, does Derolez 2004's article). In my study I aimed to improve upon assessments of Ten Duinen's reading culture and manuscripts by looking more closely at their physical features. I considered these features individually and together using both traditional and quantitative codicology methods, and strove to increase precision with regard to the dating of manuscripts, reading aids, and bindings. Thorough studies have investigated the abbey's late medieval and early modern book collection and library practices; my study drew the curtain further back, complementing previous research with a clearer view of the abbey's reading culture in its initial years, and adding to earlier findings. My own findings will hopefully benefit future scholars interested in the material features of Ten Duinen's books, of other contemporary manuscripts, and of other relevant fields of study.

The value of my study of Ten Duinen's earliest manuscripts lies in its breadth and depth; it queries aspects of each of my corpus manuscripts from the first stages of production, through customization by readers, to bindings and what they tell us about how Ten Duinen's monks stored and consulted their books. I also took an up-close approach to each different section, here identified as 'manuscript units', of non-homogenous and miscellany manuscripts, allowing me to identify both their unique and shared traits. My method of considering features added at various stages of production and use, and of differentiating between the non-homogenous parts of manuscripts, has resulted in a number of new findings; for example, the texts which

have tonic accents for reading aloud enabled me to demonstrate here, for the first time, that tracts about heresy were probably read or listened to as a community more than those on other theological topics. My collective analysis of individual features also spurred me to make compelling conclusions about the practical aspects of book production. Among other theories I conclude, for the first time, that inner margin pricking was quite possibly carried out to permit the steady ruling of especially large bifolia. Moreover, I argue that the switch from dry point to plummet ruling may have been driven by the desire to vary the ruling patterns of each recto and verso, allowing scribes to customize layout to best present the new glossed texts which multiplied unabatedly from the mid-twelfth century.

Another of my study's unique strengths is its reliance on detailed material data, consistently collected for all 133 manuscript units in my corpus. This enabled the quantitative analysis of numerous physical features, such as folio size and marginal space, which in turn demonstrate that Ten Duinen's scriptorium produced relatively large manuscripts with proportionally larger margins than those that the monks had acquired from other monasteries. Ten Duinen's readers seem, however, to have annotated their texts less than expected in comparison to other centres from which they collected books; the potential reasons for this deserve deeper exploration in future research, as is discussed below.

Using a combination of methodological approaches revealed meaningful trends in the techniques of production and habitual use of books at the abbey which were overlooked by — or inaccessible to — previous studies. By utilizing multifaceted and data-based strategies, my research produced new hypotheses and findings that not only modify what was already known about Ten Duinen's library and scriptorium, but may have broader implications for studies of contemporary manuscripts or of other material objects for which data can be mined and analyzed in a comparable way.

6.2 Broader Implications and Opportunities

In the narrowest sense, the findings of my study increase knowledge about book culture at Ten Duinen, provide deeper nuance to the present understanding of the abbey's early scriptorium and library, and offer new insights into elements of specific manuscripts surviving today. In terms of the wider contexts of manuscript studies and Cistercian studies, some of the trends seen in manuscript production and use at Ten Duinen may have occurred at other contemporary communities, whether in the abbey's proximity (such as the priory of St Walburga's in Veurne that supported the hermitage at its beginnings), within its filial network (daughter houses Ter Doest and Clairmarais), or elsewhere in the Cistercian Order. Surely, Ten Duinen did not operate in a vacuum; to what extent can the findings of this study be witnessed elsewhere? Or, following a comparable study, in what key ways do abbey practices differ from place to place? More importantly, how are similarities and differences accounted for?

Examples of worthy areas for future research related to my findings are numerous, and cannot be discussed exhaustively here; indeed, the interpretation of my results by other scholars, combined with their own expertise and methods, would perhaps result in research opportunities I cannot even fathom. I can, however, offer some initial paths worth pursuit. For example, Saenger's 1999 chapter tells us that other Cistercian abbeys, including Beaupré and Signy, were early adopters of foliation; in the context of my dating (see Chapter 4.7), and Rouse's discussion of foliation's use in sermon writing, a comprehensive study of this phenomenon would benefit book historians, as well as scholars focused on Cistercian reading culture or on thirteenth-century sermon writing. Another opportunity, which I plan to pursue myself, can be found in my analysis of inner margin pricking; I propose in Chapter 1 that it may be particularly common in larger-than-average books because it offered the most efficient means of ruling long lines on parchment, again and again, without wobbling. Moreover, I suspect — at this juncture only anecdotally — that inner margin pricking may be more common in Cistercian books. Jones's ambitious investigations into pricking methods in the 1940s relied heavily on catalogues and photographs and, while inspiring, consequently returned inaccurate results. I intend to exploit the high-definition manuscript digitizations in online depositories, as well as the collaborative nature of manuscript studies and the ease of today's instantaneous communication, to revisit Jones's pricking study and meanwhile test the hypotheses about inner margin pricking that I developed in the course of this study.

Beyond codicological and palaeographical perspectives, some of the findings of my study can be incorporated into research in other medievalist fields. For example, in Chapter 3.3 I argue that the addition of tonic accents suggests that a text was, or at least was intended to be, read aloud. In Ten Duinen's books, accents point to heresy being a popular topic for non-liturgical readings. Delving deeper than my study allowed, I am currently undertaking research focused more towards monasticism or Cistercian studies to explore how the apparent preference for heresy-focused readings fits into, or stands out from, twelfth-century theological teaching and interests. From a regional perspective, I will query whether the monks' apparent attention to the topic of heresy was linked to specific trends and events in West Flanders, or more broadly, perhaps to the late twelfth-century rhetoric of the Crusades.

The theme of textual purity has arisen in several instances in my study, in the discussion of a twelfth-century Cistercian statute governing appropriate decoration, contemporary Cistercian commentary about annotation and textual criticism, and a demonstrated concern with correct pronunciation and annunciation. While we cannot know if ideas about textual purity were intentionally and meaningfully observed by Ten Duinen's monks, some of their practices with regard to making and using manuscripts seem to support an active preoccupation with it, as I discussed in several chapters. Stronger connections can probably be made between the theme of textual purity and Cistercian book culture; further research along these lines could be fruitful. The role of

the abovementioned statute has been explored by art historians in the context of Cistercian decoration, but a multi-disciplinary approach, by which other texts and practices concerning the concept of textual purity are considered together, is worth investigation.

Turning more generally to methodology, it is becoming increasingly common in our era of Digital Humanities that researchers employ databases to collect, manipulate, and analyze large amounts of information. Databases are being used more than ever in the study of material objects; they are ideal for corpora with features that can be classified consistently, or which are measurable along objective criteria. While experts at the largest and most advantaged cultural institutions and universities continue to collaborate on vast database projects — there is a remarkable number of successful international projects with medieval roots undertaken each year — my study demonstrates that even a corpus too small to produce statistical findings can produce database-supported, quantitative, and comparative results, and can present new avenues of inquiry previously hidden from even the most adept powers of observation. As part of the movement towards both digitization and open access in the Humanities, after publication of my findings I intend to store and share my own data according to Leiden University's data management principles, should another scholar find it useful now or in the future.

Returning, in conclusion, to this study: it is, at its core, an investigation into the development and adaption of book and reading technologies. It looks closely at the specific community of bookmakers and readers at Ten Duinen, and not only tracks many of their choices and habits in interacting with their books, but also compares them, on a small scale, to those of other communities with whom they shared a cultural, spiritual, or intellectual connection through the manuscripts they had acquired for their library. Where possible, I also explored adaptations in these book and reading technologies over time. I believe that studying the development and adjustment of any technology or commodity within a specific community is valuable; it promotes understanding of cultural behaviours, perceptions, and needs, and how and why these change. In dealing with the past, evidence of changing needs is rarely voiced or recorded explicitly, but can be witnessed retrospectively through the characteristics of material objects. As vehicles for the transmission of knowledge, the communication of which is a defining facet of human nature, books give us insight into the culture of any community that makes and uses them. While long abandoned and sometimes obscured, the reading culture of Ten Duinen's earliest community continues to speak through their books.