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STYLISTIC CHOICE IN A REBORN GENRE. THE NATIONAL HISTORIES OF WIDUKIND OF CORVEY AND DUDO OF ST. QUENTIN

Introduction

The nineteenth and early twentieth century historians of the Middle Ages lived in an exciting age of discovery. Like Vasco da Gama they established a much better route to the desired goods through studies and editions, and like Columbus they hit upon a new continent without knowing it: the *terra incognita* of Medieval Latin literature. True, there had been a few outsiders there before, but not with the vast resources now available. In the process of securing their objectives it was convenient to regard the native population as almost unbelievably primitive, witness similar views on the Indians expressed by Amerigo Vespucci in his famous letter of 1502-1503: they have, he explains, no rule, no king, no trade, no possessions, no military organisation, in all respects they live *sine ordine*.[1] And in like manner medieval historians appeared to the 19th century, at least intellectually, to have lived an entirely disorganised life: they did not choose their sources systematically, they misrepresented earlier and better material (often without references), they bowed to their lay and clerical masters, they embellished their prose with unnecessary and confusing rhetoric, they mindlessly

[1] A. Vespucci, *Mundus Novus. Lateinische Texte zur Eroberung Amerikas*, ed. by J. Klowski - E. Schäfer, Berlin 1991, pp. 8-9.

quoted classical and Biblical phrases when they should, of course, have used their own words, and they believed in prophecies and miracles.

In the twentieth century we have — in line with our ethnographical colleagues — gradually found some method in the madness of our research objects; indeed new disciplines have been established to do just that. The Indians and the medieval historians now appear to have been living highly organized lives, even if we still do not understand them as fully as we would like. Much is obviously still left to be done, and I think it is safe to say that one of the larger and most enduring white spots on the map is the question of Latin style.

How are we to assess the enormous range of Latin styles employed by medieval historians? If one turns to recent overviews of Medieval historiography, the question of style is treated very briefly, if at all.[2] Most helpful is Bernard Guenée who offers about 10 pages (out of more than 400) on the subject, but that paragraph includes material on vernacular authors as well; on Latin style he does not goes beyond an historical sketch of the ups and downs of *Kunstprosa*.[3] The same tendency can be found in comprehensive and otherwise excellent monographs on single historians such as Peter W. Edbury and John Gordon Rowe's on William of Tyre and Marjorie Chibnall's on Orderic Vitalis: there one finds hardly a word about language.[4] Two happy and inspiring exceptions in this genre are Nancy

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[2] F.-J. Schmale, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung,* Darmstadt 1985, pp. 99-104 gives little; the same is true of H. Hofmann, *Artikulationsformen historischen Wissens in der lateinischen Historiographie des hohen und späten Mittelaters,* vol. 2 of *La litterature historiographique des origines à 1500,* Heidelberg 1987 (Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters, XI, 1).

[3] B. Guenée, *Histoire et Culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval,* Paris 1980, pp. 214-26; B. Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages,* London 1974, pp. 12-13 and *passim* offers some fine general observations, especially on classicizing historians.

[4] P. W. Edbury - J. G. Rowe, *William of Tyre. Historian of the Latin East,* Cambridge 1988; M. Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis,* Oxford 1984; a thorough chapter on Orderic's style is found in Chibnall's introduction to her edition, pp. 100-10 (*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis,* vol. I Cambridge 1980).

Partner's book on Henry of Huntingdon, William of Newburgh, and Richard of Devizes and, of course, Helmut Beumann's trend-setting study of Widukind.[5] I shall return to their insights later on.

Now, style is not necessarily *the* key to a full understanding of an historical work, but it is certainly often a key to more than simply literary fashion and the level of learning — as has been amply demonstrated by Beumann, Partner and others in more specialized studies.[6] In the present paper I want to suggest that we must escape a simple and automatic ranking of historical works into *Kunstprosa* and «natural» prose, or into high, middle, and low styles. In addition we should also question too easy distinctions between written, Latin, clerical on the one side and oral, vernacular, aristocratic on the other. If we go beyond these concepts in studying Dudo, I think we may be able to see the contours of his purpose and his audience a little more clearly than before.

National history

Let me, however, first explain why I think a comparison of Dudo and Widukind is interesting, and in what sense their endeavours lie within what I have ventured to call a reborn genre. In recent years scholarly literature has occasionally been

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[5] N. Partner, *Serious Entertainments. The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England*, Chicago-London 1977, ch. 8: *The Question of Literary Form*, pp. 194-211; H. Beumann, *Widukind von Korvei*, Weimar 1950.

[6] In the first volume on *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1986 (Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters Band 8), pp. 29-30 Walter Berschin diagnoses the present lack of guidelines for assessing medieval Latin prose styles. Among numerous examples of specialized studies in which stylistic analysis leads to conclusions beyond the sphere of mere language and style, one could also mention K. Friis-Jensen, *Saxo Grammaticus as Latin Poet. Studies in the verse passages of the Gesta Danorum*, Roma 1987 (Analecta Romana Instituti Danici, Supplementa 14), and the article by Werner referred to below in note 16.

using the term «origo gentis» as a name of a genre.[7] The idea is challengeable on several counts: the actual wording «origo gentis» rarely occurs in medieval titles and often describes only the opening part of a work; one is also increasingly aware of medieval historians' disregard for neat borders between genres: works were often abbreviated, rewritten, updated, partly re-used in a different context etc.[8] Even so, I think there is consensus about which type of literature we are talking about: *Historical surveys of a secular political entity which begin with a tale of origins and often bring the story up to the present dynasty, thus covering the entire known past of the nation (or other entity) in question.* Whether we label such works «origo gentis» or «national histories» is no great matter as long as we can identify our objects with certainty. This is no problem in the eleventh and twelfth centuries where such histories abound. We have the Norman histories of Dudo and of William of Jumièges, the Frankish histories of Aimoin and Hugh of Fleury, the British history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Bohemian history of Cosmas of Prague, the Norwegian history of Theodricus monachus, the Danish history of Saxo Grammaticus, and the Polish history of Anonymus Gallus — to name just a few.

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[7] H. Grundmann, *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter,* Göttingen 1965, pp. 12-17; I. Skovgaard-Petersen, *Da Tidernes Herre var nær. Studier i Saxos historiesyn,* København 1987, pp. 89-90 (on Saxo Grammaticus's use of the genre); S. Reynolds, *Medieval "Origines gentium" and the community of the realm,* «History. The Journal of the Historical Association», 68 (1983), pp. 375-90; H. Wolfram, *Le genre de l'Origo gentis,* «Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire», 68 (1990), pp. 789-801. The two latter articles give fine discussions and further references on the medieval view of ethnic origin and entity, but do not go much into the literary aspects of the problem. The same can be said about the recent interesting contribution by A. Angenendt, *Der eine Adam und die vielen Stammväter. Idee und Wirblichkeit der Origo gentis im Mittelater,* in *Herkunft und Ursprung. Historische und mythische Formen der Legimitation,* ed. P. Wunderli, Sigmaringen 1994, pp. 27-52.

[8] Cfr. L. B. Mortensen, *Change of Style and Content as an Aspect of the Copying Process. A Recent Trend in the Study of Medieval Latin Historiography,* to appear in the Acts of the First European Congress of Medieval Studies organized by F.I.D.E.M., Spoleto 1993.

I favour a functional definition of the genre — such as the above — rather than a strictly literary one even though this may lead to difficulties in drawing a line between nation (or dynasty) and other secular political entities such as city-states or, e.g., the new crusading states. The early twelfth century History of Trier and the comprehensive crusading history by William of Tyre from the end of the century both display obvious *origo gentis* features; and both do it for exactly the same reason as the national histories proper: to explain at length the legitimacy of a present secular power.[9] But we probably have to accept such blurred lines because a literary definition would be even less satisfactory. We are not dealing here with a genre like epic where certain elements invariably occur, or biography where the authors always had one or more Roman or early medieval classics in mind. Indeed, the genre of national history has a very thin and confused record to show before the turn of the millenium.[10]

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[9] Or as Reynolds, *Medieval origines...*, p. 390 puts it «Collective descent myths fortified existing situations or claims».

[10] It is symptomatic that the major study of the early developments of the genre consists of four separate essays on Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon: W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, Princeton 1988. In spite of its vast learning, the book can not be used without caution. This is chiefly due to its excessive *licentia commentatoris* — the barbarian histories are decoded for hidden messages much like modern novels. The method can be exemplified by a quotation (p. 367): «Paul's obscurity urges the reader to keep asking himself what the story is, and rewards him by not blurring its edges to such an extent that the focus cannot be regained. Once the pattern of long story segments and transitional paragraphs is grasped, it is a comparatively simple task, but still a task, to transpose indirection into continuity. On a smaller scale, the reader is invited to hunt for significant juxtapositions and running subplots». These are found at will, and many such readings do not carry conviction, especially when one takes into account that Paul's book was to be enjoyed mainly by listening and not by any modern technique of handling the book physically (cf. the remarks below on audience). Furthermore, Goffart advocates what is essentially a false continuity between late antique and early medieval historiographical literature, ignoring, as he does, the fundamental changes in the literary cultures from a fifth/sixth-century Roman world of classical libraries and public readings to a seventh/eighth-century one of ecclesiastical scholars working on their own at local centres with little mutual contact; for this see

Traditionally one traces the genre back to the fifth and sixth centuries, when the so-called Germanic successor states began to assert themselves and their historical identity. The first fully-fledged example we know of is the lost *Historia Gothica* by Cassiodorus from ca. 525 and its extant abbreviation by Jordanes some 25 years later. The next specimens are from the 620s, namely Isidore's brief *Historia Gothorum*, and from the 660s, the very jejune introduction to Lombardic law called *Origo gentis Langobardorum*. The slightly more elaborated *Liber Historiae Francorum* can be dated to 727. The only known work since Cassiodorus' which was composed with literary ambitions is Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* from the 790s.

Some scholars will probably object to this list and point to Gregory of Tours' *Libri historiarum* from the 590s (and his seventh century editor and continuator, «Fredegar») and to Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* from the 730s. There is no denying that they deal to some extent with secular history, or that later historians used this material and sometimes referred to their works as «Historia Francorum» and «Historia Anglorum». But in the final analysis they wrote ecclesiastical history. Their task was not to provide legitimization for a specific secular power but for certain ecclesiastical institutions, views, and policies. They do not fit into the functional definition of the genre, nor could they provide later national historians with a literary or argumentative recipe.[11] Medieval historians, moreover, were very lavish with titles, and were equally prepared to call Carolingian annals «Historia Francorum».[12] This does not preclude, of course, that

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further below and, for scholars who have any Scandinavian, my Ph.D. thesis *Civiliserede barbarer. Historikeren Paulus Diaconus og hans forgængere [Civilized barbarians. The historian Paul the Deacon and his predecessors]*, København 1991 (Studier fra sprog- og oldtidsforskning 315).

[11] This also seems to be Beumann's opinion, *Widukind...*, pp. 46-48.

[12] E.g. Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae Pontificum* I, 28; I, 32.

especially Bede's attractive prose and narrative inspired later historians who were dealing with secular history.

The really interesting thing about the genre is that we have no evidence of its existence between Paul the Deacon in the 790s and Widukind who wrote around 960: 170 years of brilliant Carolingian scholarship saw no fresh attempts, not even to formulate a coherent story of the Franks and the Carolingians.[13] This is even more remarkable when one considers the innovations in official historiography such as the Paderborn epic, the imperial biographies and the Royal Frankish Annals. The Carolingians seem to have been content with Gregory of Tours' unsatisfactory work combined with the other confused bits and pieces of Merovingian historiography, and it was only Dudo's contemporary, Aimoin of Fleury, who achieved a partial rewriting of the whole tradition in his unfinished *Gesta Francorum* (before 1004).

If we accept that the primary task of national histories was to explain at length the legitimacy of a given secular power, then we must go on to ask: explain to whom? and: in which literary tradition and medium? both these questions entail the notion of an audience, but not quite in the same way. This will become clear, I hope, if we go through the list of national histories before Widukind again, with those questions in mind.

Cassiodorus' task was to explain historically the power of Theoderic the Great in Italy, to provide his Amal dynasty and his Gothic people with a glorious past that justified his position

[13] A systematic *tour d'horizon* of Frankish historiography up to the end of the ninth century is offered by F. L. Ganshof, *L'Historiographie dans la monarchie franque sous les Mérovingiens et les Carolingiens. Monarchie franque unitaire et France Occidentale* in *La storiografia altomedievale*, Spoleto 1970 (Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 17), pp. 631-85. The tenth and eleventh centuries are covered in the same volume by E.-R. Labande, *L'Historiographie de la France de l'Ouest aux X^e^ et XI^e^ siècles*, pp. 751-91, and by R.-H. Bautier, *L'Historiographie en France aux X^e^ et XI^e^ siècles (France du Nord et de l'Est)*, pp. 793-850. More up-to-date and thematic, but less comprehensive, is M. Innes - R. McKitterick, *The Writing of History*, Ch. 7 in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. McKitterick, Cambridge 1994, pp. 193-220.

as lord of Italy within the larger framework of the Roman empire. He did this by composing in Latin a traditional historical piece of rhetoric, with set speeches, battles and so on. That is the meaning of his famous but misunderstood phrase «originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam» — he turned stories of Gothic origin into a history composed in Latin.[14] Both he and, at least to some extent, his abbreviator Jordanes lived and worked as servants of the Roman empire and in the still extant literary milieu of statesmen who enjoyed literature on the side. Especially Cassiodorus' work must be seen against this late Roman world of leisured senators, public readings, and large private libraries. To whom, then, did Cassiodorus and Jordanes explain themselves? The need for an explanation no doubt arose from the awkward and ill-defined status of Theoderic within the Roman empire. The Roman establishment, i.e. Cassiodorus' own class and colleagues, needed reassuring that nothing was, after all, wrong. And they got it in a thoroughly traditional and reassuring medium: the high-flown rhetorical history with a host of classical antecedents.

When we jump to the next item on the list, Isidore's History of the Goths from the 620s, we enter a different world. First of all, for the Visigothic kingdom of Spain, Rome was at that time the enemy. Actually the final ousting of Byzantine troops from the Iberian peninsula took place in the 620s, and Isidore's almost aggressive language about the immense courage of the Goths throughout history cannot be accidental. Secondly, the

[14] Arguments for this interpretation are presented in my *Goternes historie på romersk [The history of the Goths in Roman]*, »Museum Tusculanum« 57 (1987) pp. 169-82. The traditional interpretation — that Cassiodorus turned Gothic origins into Roman history — is untenable for three reasons: 1. Cassiodorus would hardly have said directly that he had turned Gothic origins into something they clearly were not, a part of Roman history. 2. In Jordanes' abbreviation of the work, *Getica*, Gothic origins do not appear in any obvious way to be »Roman history«. 3. *Historia* means historical writing, not history. That *Romana* here refers to Latin is supported by other passages from Cassiodorus and contemporary writers, e.g. »Matthei nihilominus evangelium ex Hebraeo fecit esse Romanum« (Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon* 392 about Jerome) and »...ut Graecorum dogmata doctrinam feceris esse Romanam« (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 1,45,3 on Boethius' translations).

literary medium is a terse chronicle with a few flowery words as introduction. There is no attempt to vie with the grand rhetorical tradition. It seems to be a book of reference for the episcopal and royal library. The age of declamations and literary salons was irrevocably gone. In spite of these immense differences, Cassiodorus and Isidore share what I think is a basic feature of the genre: the need to explain and define oneself will typically be elicited by the very presence of a mighty neighbouring power, but the explanation is not put into writing primarily to convince that power, be it friend or foe, but to convince oneself, one's own group, and perhaps a rival dynasty within that group. It is hard to see how Isidore could hope to convince the by now Greek-speaking Romans with his unimpressive book, but its very presence in Toledo might have propped up the assurance of Gothic kings, nobles, and not least, ecclesiastial leaders like the author himself.

The circumstances and immediate purposes underlying the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* and the *Liber historiae Francorum* are obscure. The first work is certainly bound up with claims of legitimacy, inasmuch as it introduces a collection of Lombard law. The second one commands interest as the first national history to come up with a Trojan origin for its people; this need to define one's people in relation to the past glory of Rome becomes almost self-evident later on.[15]

The literary masterpiece of the early period of the genre, Paul the Deacon's Lombard History, remains something of a mystery. This is largely due to its incomplete state. Paul never got around to writing the preface, nor did he reach his own time in the narrative. A certain glorification of Charlemagne, his dynasty and people is present; but the work may also have had a purpose in staking the claims of the Beneventan Langobards whom Charlemagne never subdued. Paul's loyalties to Montecassino, to the Beneventan court, and to the Frankish court deserve even

[15] The Trojan origin of the Franks was already mentioned in the seventh century by «Fredegar» in additions to Gregory of Tours. A recent thorough discussion is given by R. A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum*, Oxford 1987; he argues that the author was a Merovingian legitimist probably from Soissons.

closer study than has already been carried out. But concerns for the legitimacy of Lombard as well as Frankish rule in Italy must have been at the root of his history.

The Carolingian gap in the genre can perhaps be explained in similar categories. The successful dynasty in the superpower of Western Europe experienced no foreign cultural pressure to explain its dominance and expansion by way of a coherent national history. No neighbouring powers were strong or articulate enough to make Carolingian scholars feel a need for lengthy self-justification. And the rulers were apparently self-assured enough not to promote such a work. Significantly, when Aimoin of Fleury around the year 1000 finally made up for the Carolingian negligence, the purpose was to link the new Capetian dynasty to the glorious Merovingian and Carolingian past. With a new dynasty legitimacy had become precarious again.[16]

Contemporary with this, the neighbours of the Franks, the Saxons and the Normans, emerge with a national identity, the former in Widukind's work *Res gestae Saxonicae* written in various versions between ca 965 and 975 and the latter in Dudo's history from the first years of the eleventh century. They were two independent pioneers with the same task in hand: to justify by way of a lengthy history the rise to power of a people on the fringes of the Carolingian world. They were both imbued with classical learning of a Carolingian stamp,[17] and they both chose

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[16] A very illuminating study in Aimoin's purpose, style and models is offered by K. F. Werner, *Die literarischen Vorbilder des Aimoin von Fleury und die Entstehung seiner Gesta Francorum'*, in *Medium Aevum Vivum. Festschrift für Walther Bulst* ed. H. R. Jauss - D. Schaller, Heidelberg 1960, pp. 69-103; it is shown that Aimoin (and probably an entire team) worked for Abbo of Fleury (ca 940-1004) when his connections with the new dynasty were intimate, and that the project was shelved when relations with Robert 2. (996-1031) cooled (giving a date of composition between 997 and 999, cf. p. 95). Furthermore, Werner shows how the choice of style in this case was clearly influenced by the purpose formulated by the chief ideologue of the Capetians, Abbo: Hegesippus' Latin translation of Josephus was highflown enough to act as model text, and it evoked the right associations of a chosen people led by anointed rulers.

[17] L. Shopkow, *The Carolingian World of Dudo of Saint-Quentin*, ·Journal of Medieval History·, 15 (1989), pp. 19-37 convincingly

to tell the full story of their people from an alleged Trojan or Greek beginning to their own day. Among their predecessors in the genre both seem to have known Jordanes, and Bede and Paul the Deacon were also quoted by Widukind, though none of these authors acted as a literary model. It is therefore justified, I think, to talk about the rebirth of the genre at this time. After Dudo's and Widukind's accomplishments, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a wealth of writings in the genre emerges, and then only can one begin to look for some literary continuity, in which Dudo and Widukind themselves figure alongside the old master, Paul the Deacon, and to some extent Bede and Jordanes.

Style

Given these similarities between the pioneers, one becomes curious about where and why they differed. Let us consider a passage from each author. In the third and last book of the Saxon History Widukind deals mainly with king, and emperor, Otto the Great. In chapter 18 a filial insurrection against Otto is described:

Rex autem circa Kalendas Iulii moto exercitu armis filium generumque quaerere temptavit; obvias urbes partis adversae aut armis cepit aut in deditionem accepit, quousque Mogontiam perveniret, quam filius cum

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emphasizes the Carolingian flavour of Dudo's learning, not least by demonstrating his literary debt to several Carolingian saints' lives; the pointing to Liège as the place of Dudo's formation (rather than Reims) can not be taken as more than a suggestion. Shopkow's belief that Dudo's scholastic training and his choice of literary models shapes his purpose, narration and style entirely, is contrary to the one presented here; in line with Werner (see previous note) and Searle (note 25 below) I view the national histories primarily as important statements about self-identification and territorial/dynastic claims; I would therefore turn a phrase such as the following upside down (Shopkow, *The Carolingian...*, p. 30): «If Dudo chose to show his dukes as saints, it was in part because the models he had for historical writing were hagiographies and episcopal biographies [...]».

exercitu intravit, patremque, dictu miserabilius! armatus expectavit. Ibi plus quam civile et omni calamitate acerbius bellum coeptum. Multae machinae muris admotae, sed ab urbanis destructae vel incensae. Crebrae ante portas pugnae, raro forinsecus stationes fusae. Cunctando enim res universae variavere, dum dominatorem regni foris, intus successorem metuebant.[18]

Here we have specimens of some of the stylistic features so well analyzed by Beumann.[19] There is variation between hypotaxis and parataxis, and there is an allusion to a well-known description of a well-known Roman civil war (*plus quam civile ... bellum*). In the two periods beginning with *Multae machinae* the Sallustian *brevitas* is unmistakable; and in the final period we note the pointed parallelism with different subjects and objects hinged on the same verb, *metuebant*: people feared the present lord outside of the town and his successor inside. This is a good, even if somewhat concentrated, example of Widukind's artful and classicizing prose.

When we turn to Dudo we must be aware that his prose does not give the same uniform impression. The internal stylistic differences between lively dialogue, poetic descriptions, lengthy moralizing etc. are greater than in Widukind. The passage chosen here is one of the many panegyrics on duke Richard I:

Sacros ordines graduum Ecclesiarum mirifice præ omnibus honorabat, atque monastica quæque adornabat. Attentus, benevolus et docilis in omni opere existebat, accusantiumque et accusatorum æquali lance querelas discutiens trutinabat. Non personas pauperum vel potentium in judicio ullo culto reverentiæ respiciebat; verum expugnantium querimonias, dempta scrupulosæ rei ambiguitate, recensens, dijudicabat. Meritis et factis præcellebat in omni negotio cunctis, eratque omnibus mirabilis respectu bonitatis et honoris. Floccipendebat arrogantes et improbos; puniebat contumaces et reos; exaltabat humiles et benevolos; conculcabat raptores

[18] Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae* III,18 (edd. H. E. Lohmann - P. Hirsch, *MGH in usum scholarum* 60, Hannover 1935).

[19] Beumann *Widukind...*, p. 155ff.

et injustos. Tirones suæ domus præmiis et muneribus ad serviendum incitabat; majores natu beneficiis affluenter ditabat.[20]

This is perhaps more representative of the panegyrical parts of his work than the narrative ones. But it serves well enough to illustrate some major points. One is vocabulary. Dudo has diligently chosen rare words to express something ordinary. Here one is struck by verbs such as *trutinabat* (weighed), *Floccipendebat* (counted for nothing), and *conculcabat* (despised). Another typical feature is the addition of one or two extra adjectives or substantives in genitive or ablative; here there is only one modest example (*dempta scrupulosæ rei ambiguitate*) but it is a pervasive feature of his style. He certainly used every possibility to display a copious vocabulary. In contrast, his syntax is quite simple and very paratactic. It is particularly striking in this passage, but I would contend that this simplicity marks his style in general. In one concept, what Dudo is doing with words as well as periods is heaping, or technically speaking, making *congeries*.

If we move to a larger textual entity, the episode, Dudo also seems to be out of the ordinary. Nancy Partner gives an interesting discussion of the episodic nature of Medieval narrative in general. She points to our differing modern taste, and to the slight embarassment we feel when reading episode after episode in medieval historians. We get the impression of a mindless «one-after-another» structure.[21] Independently, Beumann also describes Widukind's narrative technique as a series of episodes.[22] Dudo is not so embarassingly easy to read, often because his style tends to be overloaded but also because his text is not episodic in the sense that small units are readily identified or extractable. If Widukind's (and many others') narrative can be likened to a neat brick wall with each brick clearly visible, Dudo's texture is more like that of a rebuilt ruin

[20] *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniæ ducum* IV, 106, ed. J. Lair, Caen 1865 (Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de Normandie, vol. 23), p. 269.

[21] Partner, *Serious Entertainments...*, p. 194ff.

[22] Beumann *Widukind...*, pp. 85-87.

with all kinds of elements, overlappings, and distractions that make it difficult to orientate oneself.

Let me give an example. The first book paints the picture of the villain Hastingus, the brutal viking with whom the Franks in the end are forced to make peace. Book two then focuses on the key figure of Rollo. But in chapter 13 Hastingus suddenly reappears in the pay of the Franks against his fellow countryman. Shortly after Hastingus is defeated in battle and escapes. We hear nothing further of his destiny. Now this is certainly an awkward arrangement. It is unlikely that Dudo thought this was another Hastingus, but if he did he should have said so. Hastingus of the second book *is* almost certainly meant to be the same person who was introduced as the Scourge of God in the first book, but it is worrying for any reader that his reentry into the action and his final disappearance is left completely uncommented. Actually we know that it also troubled at least one eleventh-century reader, namely William of Jumièges who rewrote and updated Dudo's history in the decades from ca 1050 to 1070. The recent editor of William, Elisabeth van Houts, makes a special point in her introduction about what she calls his «method of segmentation»: each chapter deals with only one story, and at the end of chapters one often has a major protagonist leaving the scene of action and returning home.[23] William was, in other words, a very episodic narrator. In the instance of Hastingus' strange reappearence and disappearence in the second book, he gives exactly the kind of information we want. At the end of the first book he adds that Hastingus was given the city of Chartres as tribute. *Now* we know that he was in the pay of the Franks. When he emerges as the opponent of Rollo, we are reassured that he had been staying all along in Chartres, and when he is mentioned for the last time, William tells us that he sold Chartres, collected his possessions and disappeared. We are left with no loose ends and can go happily on to the next episode. In this technique I would say that Widukind and

[23] E. Van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*. Vol. I, *Introduction and books I-IV*, Oxford 1992, pp. liv-lv.

William represent a main stream in narrative Medieval historiography whereas Dudo is the more odd phenomenon that calls for further explanation.

I would like to suggest that these stylistic observations may be useful for the interpretation of Dudo in two ways: they indicate something about the special difficulties in legitimizing the Norman dukes, and they point to the particular audience Dudo had in mind.

Compared to Widukind, Dudo was in a much more precarious situation. The conversion of the Normans had happened recently, and their neighbours were probably not really convinced of it, even at the beginning of the eleventh century. The dukes in Rouen still had direct connection with the not very christianized Scandinavia, some kind of Danish could probably still be heard among Normans (though it was quickly disappearing at this time). Dudo's contemporary and colleague historian in the neighbouring see of Reims, Richer of St. Remi, often calls the Normans pirates, and this is doubtlessly the way they were still seen by the turn of the century.[24] Dudo could hardly pretend that they had been a Christian and peace-loving people all along, and therefore he cast Hastingus in the role of arch-villain only to make Rollo a divinely inspired convert. He also insisted strongly on the just and saintly natures of both William Longsword and Richard I in the third and fourth books. The number of oaths sworn to Richard in course of the fourth book is also striking; bishops, abbots, Norman noblemen, various foreign powers — not least the Frankish king — all declare Richard the legitimate ruler of Normandy. Dudo obviously felt an urge to stress again and again the Christianity and the legitimacy both of the Normans and of the ruling family, and his repetitive and almost sermon-like style helped to hammer home the message. He could not afford to be subtle about those matters. His excessive panegyrical style may also reveal the author's social standing: his intimate conversations with dukes and arch-

[24] On connections to Scandinavia and on Richer's usage: D. Bates, *Normandy before 1066*, London-New York 1982, p. 36.

bishops were held in a position as servant and foreigner rather than as an equal.[25]

Widukind could approach his task with a more comfortable background. Though he was a monk in Corvey, he was writing about his peers. I refer to the first passage of the History:

> Post operum nostrorum primordia, quibus summi imperatoris militum triumphos declaravi, nemo me miretur principum nostrorum res gestas litteris velle commendare; quia in illo opere professioni meae, ut potui, quod debui exolvi, modo generis gentisque meae devotioni, ut queo, elaborare non effugio.[26]

The intricacies of this period have been solved by Beumann: Widukind explains that he has done his duty as a monastic writer, and now wants to do justice to the loyalty of his social group and his people (Beumann convincingly interprets the genetive before *devotioni* as subjective rather than objective and the meaning of the word *genus* as social group).[27] Widukind wrote two slightly differing versions of his history, a so-called monastic version (*Klosterfassung*) and a version dedicated to the young

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[25] E. Searle, *Fact and Pattern in Heroic History: Dudo of Saint-Quentin*, «Viator», 15 (1984), pp. 119-37 rightly emphasizes that Dudo must have worked closely together with the ducal court at Rouen and that his purpose was identical to that of the court (p. 137): «That the chieftains of Upper Normandy are legitimate holders of their lands by virtue of their fathers' acceptance of Richard's God and Richard's chieftainship. And that Richard's legitimacy, as against other chieftains, lay in the Christian God's choice of Rollo and his line».

Lair interpreted the poem *Apostropha* IV, 124, (Lair p. 288, 10-12, with note [a]) as an explicit demand for a ducal gift in return of the *History*: «Sed mea mens tenui meditans conatur avena, / Si poterit munus quoddam captare bonorum, / Exiguæ modico mercis de fenore sumptum». This interpretation is accepted by Prentout (quoted by Guenée, *Histoire et culture...*, p. 59), and by the Danish translation of Dudo by E. Albrectsen, *Normandiets historie under de første hertuger*, Odense 1979, p. 169; as Bernhard Pabst pointed out at the seminar in Trento, however, the passage is better taken as a wish for divine recompensation; it would also be strangely at odds with the modest conventions of Latin historiographical rhetoric.

[26] Widukind, *Res Gestae...*, I,1

[27] Beumann, *Widukind...*, p. 11ff.

Ottonian princess Mathilde, and thus indirectly to the court of Otto the Great and his successor Otto II. The subject of his history is, cf. the quotation above, *principum nostrorum res gestas*, a deliberate ambiguity which means both the Saxon nobility, and the Saxon kings.[28] That promise actually comes true in the text. Even if Widukind praises the Liudolfings (the family of the Ottonians), other members of the nobility — even rebels — are described at length and not cast as utter villains. Thus neither the ethnic nor the dynastic chauvinism is of Dudo's calibre. This is also plain in the way the conversion of the Saxons is described in the first book. Very briefly and in a matter-of-fact style Widukind explains how Charlemagne could not tolerate a pagan people as neighbour and how he forced Christianity upon them. This had happened more than 150 years earlier, and Widukind was not at pains to establish the *Christianity* of the Saxon kings; what *he* was worried about was what see, what abbeys, and what saints were favoured by the kings.[29] In other words, Widukind had a more self-assured and subtle story to tell than Dudo, and his Sallustian style could bring out military actions as well as characterizations of individuals while at the same time applying a pervasive *interpretatio Romana* to his subject: the Saxons emerge as a political as well as a cultural superpower (the idea of continuity between the German empire and the ancient Roman one had not yet been formulated in so many words). Even in Dudo there are sporadic signs of a Roman backdrop — Rollo has, rightly I think, been perceived as an Aeneas finding his new home country, and Duke Richard and count Rudolf are compared favourably to Scipio, Pompeius, and Cato in one of the introductory poems.[30] But such occasional allu-

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[28] Beumann, *Widukind...*, p. 22ff.

[29] This aspect has been analysed in a masterly fashion by Beumann in a later paper: *Historiographische Konzeption und politische Ziele Widukinds von Corvey*, in *La storiografia altomedievale...*, pp. 857-94.

[30] On Aeneas as a pattern for Rollo: Searle, *Fact and Pattern...*, and the fuller discussion by K. Friis-Jensen, *Dudo of St. Quentin and Saxo Grammaticus* in the present volume. Introductory poem: *Versus ad comitem Rodulfum, hujus operis relatorem* (Lair p. 125).

sions are a far cry from Widukind's recurrent *senatus, imperium, pax, consules, legiones, templa* etc.

Audience

Having now suggested how one may see a link between the ideology and the style of each of these two national histories, the final problem to be addressed is that of literary medium, or more precisely put, the interaction between text and audience. In what circumstances can we imagine a Latin historical text being put to use in this period? This is a difficult subject and not well studied. One can perhaps hope for research along the lines done for middle high German literature by Manfred Günther Scholz, in his book on primary literary reception in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[31]

What may be termed a traditional view is put forward by Franz-Josef Schmale in his overview of medieval historiography: Historical works from the earlier Middle Ages were used and understood only by the literate part of society, i.e. — with very few exceptions — the clerical part.[32] Schmale's view is based on an exclusively literate (and modern) assumption that texts are read by individuals, book in hand; books were apparently not talked about, paraphrased, or read aloud.

On a general level, however, and not specifically within the realm of historical literature, I think that most scholars today would agree that the workings of speech and writing (and of

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[31] M. G. Scholz, *Hören und Lesen. Studien zur primären Rezeption der Literatur im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert,* Wiesbaden 1980. Now there is also D. H. Green, *Medieval listening and reading. The primary reception of German literature 800-1300,* Cambridge 1994, which I have not seen.

[32] Schmale, *Funktionen und Formen*..., ch. 11 'Funktionen mittelalterlicher Historiographie und Publikum', especially p. 146: «Der Kreis, in dem und für den auch in erster Linie während der meisten Zeit des Mittelalters Geschichte beschrieben wurde, ist also von vornherein auf eine fest umrissene Gruppe der alphabetisierten Mönche und Geistlichen beschränkt und dringt nur selten und begrenzt über diese hinaus. [...] So gesehen ist die Funktion der Historiographie im früheren Mittelalter so gut wie ausschliesslich auf den Kreis der Mönche und Kleriker, auf die *literati* selbst beschränkt». Guenée, *Histoire et culture*..., does not go into this question explicitly.

Latin) were a much more complex affair, as has been argued so convincingly by Michael Clanchy in *From Memory to Written Record*.[33] For historical literature Beryl Smalley, in *her* survey of medieval historiography, strongly emphasizes that compositions in Latin were intended to be read aloud, but she does not discuss in detail how that might have worked.[34]

One form of group reading would be the monastic *lectio*, and here we should imagine the actual Latin wording being read aloud, something which is well attested for Orderic Vitalis who supplied his text with careful interpunction to guide the reader's voice.[35] It is also in this milieu, of course, that much of the rhymed and rythmic prose would have been cultivated and enjoyed by listeners. The twelfth century English historian, Richard of Devizes, who certainly had a monastic audience in mind, wrote a fine classicizing contemporary history, and Nancy Partner describes very well how classical allusions would work in such a context: «The cultivation of verbal memory was an integral part of traditional monastic education. The immersion of one's mind in the divine page was a spiritual exercise, and although the pagans did not merit the same attention, men trained in the memorizing techniques of the *lectio divina* could hardly have refrained from applying the same methods to both. The interweavings of classical quotation in the *Cronicon*, such as [...] the comic description of London incorporating Horace's lines on Rome, give the impression of a cultivated memory, not a reference library. The author assumes the same of his audience».[36]

What happens if we move from cloister to court? Did historians have a court audience in mind? If they did, what did they assume about them? In his late twelfth century History of the Counts of Guînes (close to Calais) Lambert of Ardres paints a fascinating picture of nobles, clerics and the exchange of the li-

[33] M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307*, first ed. Oxford 1979, second ed. 1993.

[34] Smalley, *Historians...*, pp. 12-13.

[35] Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History...*, vol. I, pp. 108-10.

[36] Partner, *Serious Entertainments...*, pp. 151-52.

terature.[37] In chapters 80-81 he describes count Baudouin, the father of Lambert's dedicatee, Arnaud. He was a man of learning even if he was a *laicus* and stayed *illiteratus*. He was so curious in matters of theology and science that he constantly entertained clerics, having them explaining the Scriptures, asking them questions, even outdoing them in discussions. In return he told them romances (*gentilium neniae*) which he knew from professional story-tellers (*fabulatores*). When people heard about Baudouin's abilities they exclaimed «how does he know letters when he has never learnt them» — obviously punning on the ambiguity of *litterae*.[38] Baudouin went even further and had some of this scriptural and classical learning translated into French; books were lying around in every little chapel. That was not, however, intended to make him less dependent on his clerical entourage because he was still not interested in learning to read on his own. The written translations may rather have standardized and eased the clerics' work; they did not have to improvise a paraphrase from the Latin page all the time now.

Into his history of the counts Lambert inserted — *quodam artificiali ordine*[39] — the history of the town Ardres, as told by the nobleman Gauthier of l'Ecluse (chapters 97-147); once Arnaud was shut up for two days in his castle because of terrible weather; with him were several younger and older nobles as well as clerics (among whom no doubt Lambert himself). Robert of Coutances told stories about Roman emperors and about king Arthur; a certain Phillipe revived his memories of Jerusalem and Antioch, and Gauthier of l'Ecluse — who was also well versed in the history of England, and in stories about Merlin and about Tristan and Isolde — this time gave a long version of the early history of Ardres. Lambert probably took his notes on this occasion, at least that is what he leads us to assume. One of the many interesting features in these chapters are two

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[37] Lambertus Ardensis, *Historia comitum Ghisnensium*, ed. J. Heller, *MGH Scriptores* 24, Hannover 1879, pp. 550-642.

[38] *Ibidem*, p. 598,19: «Sed quomodo scit litteras, cum non didicerit?».

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 606, 42; the reference is probably to the literary technique of the Aeneid which is narrated «artificially», and not in the order of events.

instances of quotation from Latin documentary material. Both times Gauthier excuses his vernacular paraphrase (chs 116 & 137) — and his apology is directed specifically to the poor *capellani et clerici* who have to strain themselves to reconstruct mentally the real, and legally important, wording of the documents. It is not clear whether Gauthier is able to read or whether he simply draws on a fine memory informed by clerics. The important thing here, of course, is the entire ambience that Lamberts depicts, which is, in many of its distinct features, transferable to the eleventh century. This goes at least, I think, for the constant communication about contents of books between those with literate training and those without, regardless whether information was about to be put in writing or to be «released» from writing.

One can not therefore accept a model for literary life that divides medieval society sharply into two spheres, one of the clergy, the other of the nobility;[40] in many ways the secular

[40] An ambitious attempt to do this for historiographical literature is found in W. J. Brandt, *The Shape of Medieval History. Studies in Modes of Perception*, New Haven-London 1966. The study is based on this distinction (p.xviii): «Medieval chronicles are readily divided into two classes having little relationship to each other: the great number of chronicles written in Latin and ordinarily written by monks, and the smaller body of chronicles written in Old French or Anglo-Norman by laymen or members of the secular clergy. [...] These obvious differences readily distinguish two classes of chronicles which, upon further scrutiny, also prove to be different in almost every other respect». Two other passages give the essence of Brandt's ideas (p. 42): «The writer of the Middle Ages [...] could list, narrate, or explain. [...] The clerical chronicler of the early Middle Ages listed; the aristocratic chronicler always narrated. But the clerical chronicler of the High Middle Ages, from about the middle of the twelfth, was often engaged in explaining the human happenings that came before his eyes»; and (pp. 85-86): «In this characteristic [being narrative], aristocratic chronicles differ sharply from clerical ones, which were not, properly speaking, narrative at all. They were written as collections of incidents or events, and the clerical chronicler simply did not see a basic continuity of action». Where does the early medieval monk, Widukind, — and a host of 11th and 12th century Latin historians — fit into all this? Brandt's account is not only splendidly insular in its choice of sources and modern studies, it also ignores basic features of the development of literary languages (Latin being the natural choice for almost any writer before the 13th century) and traditions

clergy — not least chaplains who were employed directly by a lord — and even regular canons and monks must have been natural elements in the social life of the gentry.

Significant development in the status of Latin had of course taken place between the eleventh and the late twelfth century. Most important perhaps, and directly illustrated by Lambert, was the rise of the vernacular as a possible vehicle for written translations and independent compositions. If we turn to one of Dudo's successors as Norman historian, Geoffrey of Malaterra, from around 1100, we get another clue about court connections of historical works written in Latin. Geoffrey was fetched from Normandy in order to write the history of the Normans in Southern Italy, especially of Count Roger I of Sicily (1072-1101). In his dedication to the bishop of Catania and the clergy of Sicily he describes how Roger was historically erudite — he liked to have old history books read aloud — and how he had given Geoffrey the task of writing this particular work.[41] The count had asked for a piece written in an easy idiom (*plano sermone et facili ad intelligendum*) so that it could be understood by everyone.[42] But Geoffrey had a worry:

Sciendum tamen vobis est, sive alteri, quicumque libri huius recitator vel certe interpres accesserit, si seriatim minus ordinate, secundum tempora, quibus facta sunt quae adnotentur, vel certe aliqua oblivione praetergressa repereritis, non haec tam mihi, quam relatoribus culpando adscri-

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(imitation and other literary devices were as important for the shaping of narrative as «perception») and of institutional history (most authors were prompted to write in order to stake claims for abbeys, sees, princes etc., not to satisfy any personal «scientific» curiousity about the past).

[41] Gaufredus Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae Comitis et Roberti Guiscardi Ducis fratris eius*, ed. E. Pontieri, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* V, 1, Bologna 1927, p. 4, 10-14: «Pluribus edoctus auctoribus, sibi veterum historias recitantibus, famosissimus princeps Rogerius laboriosos et non sine magno discrimine triumphos suos, qualiter videlicet primo Calabriam, deinde vero Siciliam armata manu subjugaverit, posteris consilio suorum mandare decernens, mihi, ut ad huius operis laborem dictandum accingar, injunxit».

[42] *ibidem*, pp. 3, 18.

bantur, praesertim cum de ipsis temporibus, quibus fiebant, presentialiter non interfuissem, sed a transmontanis partibus venientem, noviter Apulum factum, vel certe Siculum ad plenum cognoscatis.

What he envisages is that someone will use his book and recite from it (*recitator*) or paraphrase from it in the vernacular (*interpres*); This is all well and good, but such users of his book are likely to be locals with their own knowledge of local events, whereas Geoffrey, being a foreigner, commands only second-hand knowledge. He therefore hastens to apologize for any shortcomings in chronology etc. The activity of the *interpres* must be thought of as an oral one and not as a written translation, both because the *interpres* is clearly comparable to the *recitator* — here Geoffrey may in fact be thinking of monastic *lectio* and court performance respectively — and not least because the vernaculars had not yet emerged as written standards available for such translations. What Geoffrey offers, then, is a good piece of evidence for a Latin history which the author himself thinks will be used either directly for a recitation in Latin (probably with appropriate local pronunciation) or as a memory aid for a vernacular storyteller. In fact Geoffrey's work falls within the main stream of episodic narrative with a Sallustian flavour and would therefore fit both purposes. The storyteller may be thought of as doing one of two things: rehearsing some episodes by using the book before the performance, or using it directly as he spoke. It is very likely that there was a combination of the two approaches in which, perhaps, the book had a more symbolic than practical purpose: It is really the official version I am telling!

Even if the monastic *lectio* and the court performance may seem worlds apart, they would tend to have one thing in common, namely preference for a text which is well organized into separate episodes. Widukind's History of the Saxons was actually intended for both ambiences, which, in his case, were not so far apart because the abbey of Corvey was the aristocratic monastery par excellence. If we think of a court performance by a vernacular storyteller, episodic history is even more imperative.

It is difficult to imagine Dudo's text coming alive in any of these contexts, especially as a basis for a court reading. When Eleanor Searle seems to indicate as much, she is ignoring Dudo's extravagant Latinity.[43] To use his text as a memory aid would not have been easy. And even if he occasionally rhymed his Latin it is still too farfetched in vocabulary and too monotonous in syntax to be of much pleasure for erudite monks. Its weak narrative structure is also a stumbling block, not to speak of the poetic insertions. These were exactly the weaknesses — and weaknesses they were seen to be from a user's perspective — that William of Jumièges remedied in his rewritten version.

I think many of the extraordinary features of Dudo's style are best explained if we put them in a school context. The idea would then be that the book was constantly accessible for teachers and pupils, it was not a matter simply of reading aloud. The pupils of monastic or cathedral schools should study again and again the strange words, the difficult metres in the poetry etc. History was not common as school reading, but Dudo offers much more than history. The work was an encyclopædia, a reference book of synonyms, of prosody, metres, rhetorical devices, geography, and even theology — a comprehensive school-book which one did not need to read from A to Z, but which might give one a good grounding in basic subjects and at the same time convince of the legitimacy of one's present rulers. A few statements on the part of Dudo point in the same direction. In his introductory pangyrical letter the commonplace of modesty takes an unusual form:

> [...] opus exsecutus sum quod, licet *dialecticis syllogismis*, nec *rhetoricis argumentis* non glorietur, tuæ majestati mittere disposui [...].[44]

I can think of no other Latin history where the author is at pains to explain his deficiency in dialectical syllogisms and rhe-

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[43] Searle, *Fact and Pattern...*, p. 122. Her insights into Dudo's sources at the court do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that he wrote for the same persons (he is seen as an entertainer of a «Norse warrior-class»).

[44] [*Epistula panegerica*], Lair p. 120.

torical arguments. Usually historians admit to their failing to write a flowery high style in the ancient tradition. In a poetic apostrophe to the reader, scholastic terms surface again:

> Profusis precibus, lector, supplex tibi dico,
> *Artis septifluæ* gnare, capaxque bene:
> Deficit eloquium: non hunc sustollere possum
> Quantum opporteret laudibus innumeris.[45]

The reader obviously commands the seven liberal arts and is — at least in this passage — to be identified rather with a school master or advanced student than a member of the Norman court. Finally there is a telling address to the book itself:

> Aut pergas *Northmannica* nunc *gymnasia* præpes
> Aut *scholis* clausus *Franciscis* jam moruleris.[46]

The *History* is here clearly thought of as a school book for Normans and Franks. I think it makes sense that Dudo's elaborate panegyric history was not intended to impress the dukes themselves, but rather to make the Norman — and the northern Frankish[47] — clergy accept the dynasty which still seemed somewhat barbaric.

Naturally these observations on connections between ideology, style, and audience are far from exhaustive. I hope, however, to have thrown some light on the stylistic choice made by Widukind and Dudo. It was not guided by literary models within the genre of national history, because such hardly existed; it was

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[45] IV, 106 [*Apostropha ad lectorem*], Lair p. 269, 1-4.

[46] [*Allocutio ad librum*], Lair p. 120, 11-12.

[47] Following this hint, an unprovable afterthought on Dudo's motives for writing may be added. Considering the possible connections between the version of Frankish history presented by Richer of Reims in his annals in 995 and the one worked out by Abbo and Aimoin of Fleury (cf. Werner *Die literarischen Vorbilder...*, pp. 95-98), one can not help thinking that Dudo's literary composition of the Norman version of the recent Frankish past — including all the Frankish oaths sworn to the Norman dukes — was spurred on by a knowledge in Rouen of the historiographical activity in Reims and Fleury.

influenced by writings in other genres, but first and foremost by the message they wanted to convey and by the audience they had in mind.