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THEME

Latin's Material Presences

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Contents

Editorial Note iv

Dialogue

KLAZINA STAAT
Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces 7

BARBARA BAERT
The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John 44

HAN LAMERS
Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy 69

SIMON SMETS
Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019: An Ancient Language in Modern Art 103

Response piece

VINCENT DEBIAIS
Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin 139

Editorial Note

Language is read—and it is seen. Latin is no exception: the language of ancient Rome has been one of the most visually prominent languages across generations. Latin words appear on multifarious surfaces throughout the world, including walls, medals, artworks, and postage stamps, visible to many different people, including those who cannot read the language. Such 'writings on display' vary in length from single words to a few lines or even entire texts such as, most famously, Augustus' *Res Gestae*, returned to public view through a copy inscribed on the exterior wall of the Ara Pacis Museum under Mussolini. With the declining literacy in Rome's language, Latin words have morphed into things that are seen before they are deciphered, assuming they are read at all. However, both for those who understand Latin and those who do not, the materiality of these words may possess a significance that transcends textual interpretation.

While Latin inscriptions have been studied intensively, and there has been considerable research on the handwritings and typefaces in which the language has appeared on the page for generations of readers, the material embodiment of the language throughout its long and complex history has not received sufficient attention in mainstream histories of Latin language and literature. A visual and material semiotics of Latin has yet to be established.

The articles offered in this issue of the *Journal of Latin Cosmopolitanism and European Literatures* suggest that exploring Latin beyond the mere forms and shapes of its letters and considering the complete material embodiment of its words, including their supports, materials, and techniques, may yield valuable insights into how Latin was used beyond the confines of the literary work. At the same time, none of these papers ignores the importance of textual meaning, literary significance, and the symbolic resonance of the language, acknowledging the potential for multiple layers of semiosis. Each article, in its own way, paves the way for future research that embraces a comprehensive understanding of Latin's material nature.

The articles by Klazina Staat and Barbara Baert remain close to the page but show how its material surfaces shape Latin's ability to carry significance beyond textual meanings. Taking its cue from New Philology, Klazina Staat's essay ("Between Reading and

Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces") examines the *mise-en-page* of the Carolingian *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, preserved in the Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln, and compares it to the famous Plan of St. Gall and a diagram of the Holy Sepulcher. Recognizing the texts' materiality as key to the meaning-making process, Staat shows how the manuscripts' layouts, including the shapes of the words and their positions on the page, enable readers to traverse the text in unconventional ways and to approach it both as text and as image. Barbara Baert ("The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John") further illuminates the significance of the materiality of medieval book culture from the distinct perspective of iconology. By exploring an initial letter on fol. 157r of the Morgan Gospels, written and illuminated in Westphalia around the mid-tenth century, she unravels the profound symbolical significance that the letter, when considered in its specific locus within the manuscript, can bestow upon users of the book, imbuing their experience of the book's pages with heightened meaning.

With the articles by Han Lamers and Simon Smets we leave the world of the medieval book to see how the ancient language of Rome also left its mark on modern and contemporary material cultures. Han Lamers ("Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy") explores the tangible presence of Latin within the material culture of Fascist Italy, providing novel insights into the political significance of the language. Lamers, besides paving the way for future research, explores specific cases in graphic design, architecture, sculpture, and landscape design that demonstrate how Latin was transformed into an instrument for political messaging, even for those lacking comprehension of the language. On the other hand, Simon Smets ("Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019: An Ancient Language in Modern Art") investigates the versatile presences of Latin in modern and contemporary art, discussing a range of examples from the work of, among others, Giorgio de Chirico, Joseph Kosuth, Giulio Paolini, Ian Hamilton Finlay, and William Kentridge. In contrast to the self-reaffirming usage of Latin explored by Lamers, Smets focuses on situations where Latin emerges as a symbol of lost, or vanishing, world views. He explores how Latin can also be employed to disrupt established discourses and elicit surprise and uncanny experiences.

The issue is crowned by an engaging response by Vincent Debiais ("Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin"), which brings forth some of the shared concerns that run through the articles. Debiais highlights the dynamic interplay between language and medium, asking how the interpretation of Latin is not only shaped by its material embedding but also how it, in turn, transforms the objects to which it is applied. Additionally, Debiais wonders about the role of the act of writing and the significance of its remembrance in the process of meaning-making. How is the effort of writing echoed in a text's appreciation? These are just some of the questions raised by the articles presented here, which we hope will inspire more work on Latin's material presences throughout its long history.

This is the first thematic issue of JOLCEL, and we look forward to featuring similar initiatives in the future. We therefore welcome readers to reach out to the editorial teams' coordinators with any ideas or proposals in this regard.

HAN LAMERS, GUEST EDITOR
THE JOLCEL EDITORIAL BOARD
JULY 2023

J O L C E L

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Current Contribution

Klazina Staat, "Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces," JOLCEL 8 (2023): pp. 7–42. DOI: 10.21825/jolcel.84800.

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Note

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of four articles and one response piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John" by Barbara Baert (pp. 44-67), "Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy" by Han Lamers (pp. 69–101), and "Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019: An Ancient Language in Modern Art" by Simon Smets (pp. 103–37). The response piece is "Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin" by Vincent Debiais (pp. 139–47).

*

Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces*

KLAZINA STAAT

VU University Amsterdam

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on a Carolingian manuscript now kept in the Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln (Codex 326 (1076)), containing a collection of mostly Rome-centred writings, among others, a series of walking routes through the city (the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*). The theoretical concepts of 'affordances' and 'ergodic' reading are employed to explore the meanings and functions of the *Itinerarium* in its original context of use (i.e., the Carolingian monastery). After an analysis of the particular form of the written text on the parchment folio, the article contextualises the form and affordance of the *Itinerarium* by comparing the text with two other Carolingian artworks from roughly the same time and geographical context: the *Plan of St. Gall* and a diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from an illustrated manuscript of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*. These sources resemble the *Itinerarium* through their ergodic approach to writing and reading, as well as their visual and meditational affordances. Subsequently, the *Itinerarium* is read in the wider context of the Einsiedeln collection, to explore how the 'ergodic' dimensions of the manuscript adds to the understanding of the meaning and function of the *Itinerarium*. Thus, the article highlights the importance to pay attention to the physical form of Latin script and the place of texts in the larger manuscript, in order to understand the meanings and functions of texts in particular contexts.

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1 Towards an 'ergodic' reading of a medieval manuscript

For several decades, there has been a growing awareness that a proper understanding of medieval texts requires attention to the material form in which they were handed down. In the famous 'New Philology' issue of *Speculum* in 1990, scholars advocate the design of a methodology that does justice to the 'variance' of texts throughout time.[1] In this new form of philology, the ideal is no longer to reconstruct the hypothetical primordial text independently of any manuscript context. As Stephen G. Nichols indicates in the introduction to the issue, the approach inevitably involves a focus on the material form of texts:

> It is that manuscript culture that the "new" philology sets out to explore in a postmodern return to the origins of medieval studies. If one considers only the dimensions of the medieval illuminated manuscript, it is evident that philological practices that have treated the manuscript from the perspective of text and language alone have seriously neglected the important supplements that were part and parcel of medieval text production: visual images and annotation of various forms (rubrics, "captions," glosses, and interpolations).[2]

In other words, new philology promoted attention and a new approach to what Jerome McGann calls the bibliographic code of texts, denoting all its material elements (page layout, letter forms, colours of ink, images, glosses, etc.), as distinguished from the "linguistic code," pertaining to the content and interpretation of texts.[3] The call for a new philology resulted in a rise of studies focusing on the physicality of manuscripts, its implications for the interpretation of texts in their variety of forms, and its impact on the human senses.[4] Whereas in the late 1990s it was still practically difficult to carry out large-scale manuscript research, the emergence of digital approaches in the humanities was another watershed moment.[5] It facilitated the making of digital catalogues and repositories of manuscripts (by library, country, work, genre, or other classifier),[6] comparative analysis of manuscripts from very different places and times (brought together in multiple versions on a single screen), and the zooming-in on those elements that did not matter in earlier philology: images, annotations, rubrics, glosses, interpolations, etc.[7]

The various digitisation projects and other digital humanities initiatives have led to a boom of surveys in manuscript studies that, in a paradoxical manner, can

[1] Nichols, "Introduction," 1, following Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante*, 111. See also Nichols, *From Parchment to Cyberspace*, 107–42.

[2] Nichols, "Introduction," 7. See also, by the same author, *From Parchment to Cyberspace*, 97–105.

[3] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 57–68; see also Bornstein and Tinkle, "Introduction," 1.

[4] For a critical review of the effect of the call for a new philology in medieval studies, see Nichols, "Dynamic Reading." See Camille, "Sensations of the Page" and Segler, "Touched for the Very First Time" for the bodily sensation of reading manuscripts in their material form.

[5] See Nichols, *From Parchment to Cyberspace*, 5–6, 97–105.

[6] For an overview of various digital resources (including catalogues and repositories), see the "Medieval Manuscript Research" page of the University of Chicago Library, `https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=813534&p=5805534` (accessed on November 30, 2022). See Albritton and Treharne, "Introduction," 1–6 for an overview of various digital projects in the manuscript studies.

[7] For the functional advantages of digitization of manuscripts, see Robertson, "A Note on Technology."

be carried out without even touching a manuscript, thus increasing the risk of visual distortion of the page layout and of losing the sense of the materiality and three-dimensionality of the manuscript.[8] As Michael Camille points out, reading was a multisensory experience in the Middle Ages, involving all senses: hearing as texts when spoken out loud, smelling and touching of fleshy parchment folios and even taste, for instance, when kissing images of the Crucifix.[9] The central question of this thematic issue is linked to the appeal of the physical manuscript to the sense of sight: what is the value and meaning of the visual and material form of text, in our specific case Latin text, in the particular way it is written in medieval manuscripts?

This article is based on the idea that the material form of text matters when one wants to get a deeper understanding of the various meanings and functions ('affordances') of texts in particular contexts. Aligning with the focus of the thematic issue, it concentrates on a particular aspect of the materiality of texts, namely the forms in which words are written down on the parchment folio. Even if theorists and scholars—among others, Nichols[10]—have highlighted the importance of the aspect of the physical form of writing for the understanding of medieval texts, it is still often overlooked in scholarship. Scholars often take the edition as their starting point for the analysis of texts, focusing on the 'linguistic code' without paying much attention to the 'bibliographic code': the physical form of texts in the manuscript and its meanings, functions, and effects on the audience. However, as the theorist Espen Aarseth already indicated some decades ago in his book *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, texts are more than a sequence of linguistic signifiers as recorded and reconstructed in a modern scholarly edition. As he argues, the material form or 'medium' of a text is "an integral part of the literary exchange." Hence, a full understanding of the medium and its effect on the audience also implies attention for what Aarseth calls the 'intricacies' of the written text, which he means the non-traditional ways in which words can be written down in the physical medium.[11]

One of these intricacies highlighted by Aarseth, which will also be of central importance in this article, is the use of non-traditional or "heterolinear" types of writing.[12] As Aarseth indicates, heterolinear types of writing require a different type of reader engagement than "homolinear" ones (which are usually from left to right in Western sources). Aarseth uses the term 'ergodic' to describe the kind of reading experience that results from types of non-homolinear writing:

> This phenomenon I call *ergodic,* using a term appropriated from physics that derives from the Greek words *ergon* and *hodos,* meaning "work" and "path." In ergodic

[8] See Bornstein and Tinkle, "Introduction," 2–3. For the methodological questions and problems that digital humanities approaches posit to manuscript studies, see, for instance, Nichols, *From Parchment to Cyberspace*, 43–53; Warren, *Holy Digital Grail*, 31–32; Thomas, "What Is It to Be a Digitization Specialist"; van Lit, *Among Digitized Manuscripts*, 51–68; Whearty, *Digital Codicology* (especially the introduction); Treharne, "Fleshing Out the Text."

[9] Camille, "Sensations of the Page."

[10] Nichols, "Mind, Materiality."

[11] Aarseth, *Cybertext*, 1.

[12] Ibid., 79.

> literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be nonergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages.[13]

As Aarseth highlights, ergodic reading is particularly relevant for describing the reading experience of works in the digital age, usually called 'cybertexts,' in which hyperlinks allow the reader to move back and forth between texts on different webpages. But even if the term 'cybertext' has been mostly employed to digital texts, Aarseth indicates that non-homolinear types of writing occurred already in premodern times, mentioning the example of inscriptions on walls in Egyptian temples, which run from one wall to another and from room to room.[14] One could also think about Sumerian cuneiform texts written from top to bottom instead of horizontally, ancient Greek and Latin boustrophedon, or mirror writing in late medieval and renaissance in Latin Europe.[15] Moreover, as Aarseth argues, the idea of ergodic reading is also helpful to understand the construction and functioning of medieval codices, which often contain texts of different origins and invite the reader to go back and forth between the different writings.[16]

This article focuses on illustrative example of such an ergodic piece of medieval literature, namely a set of writings, collected in a composite manuscript from the ninth or tenth century now preserved in the Stiftsbibliothek of Einsiedeln in Switzerland.[17] It contains texts that to a greater or lesser extent focus on the city of Rome: an anthology of inscriptions in and around Rome (the so-called *Sylloge Einsidlensis*, fols. 67r–79v), a collection of walking routes through the city (the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, fols. 79v–85r) immediately followed by a description of the Aurelian walls (fols. 85r–86r), a description of the rites and stational processions in and between the S. Giovanni in Laterano and the S. Croce in Gerusalemme during the final three days of the Holy Week (also known as *Ordo Romanus* 23, fols. 86v–88r), and an anthology of mostly poetic texts, which are more loosely connected to Rome (fols. 88v–97v).[18] The writings form one codicological unit, being written in a fine Carolingian minuscule of the same hand.

Although the precise provenance of the codicological unit is unclear, there are indications that the collection originated from one of the Carolingian monasteries in current Southern-Bavaria or Switzerland. The book contains an ownership

[13] Ibid., 1–2, original emphasis.

[14] Ibid., 9.

[15] For more information on the three examples, see Fitzgerald, "Pisan dub-ba" (on cuneiform script); Baert's contribution in this thematic volume (on boustrophedon); and Airaksinen-Monier, "Mirror Writing" (on mirror writing in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance).

[16] Aarseth, *Cybertext*, 8–9.

[17] Codex 326/1076, fols. 67r–97v, accessible via e-codices, "Codex 326(1076)," accessed May 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/searchresult/list/one/sbe/0326. The codex is described by Meier, *Catalogus codicum*, 297–300; and Lang, "Beschreibung für e-codices," in the link just cited (see there for the dating of the manuscript). The most up-to-date codicological description can be found in Allen, "Pilgrims on Earth," 46–47.

[18] For editions of the texts, see Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung* (the *Sylloge, Itinerarium* and *Wall Description*); Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 263–73 (*Ordo Romanus* 23, including commentary); and Mommsen, "Zur lateinischen Anthologie," 296–304 (the anthology of mostly poetic texts).

inscription of Ulrich of Marsöl, deacon and *rector ecclesiae* in Felsberg near Chur (d. ca. 1341), *Liber domini Vlrici de Murtzuls* (fol. 1r).[19] Another inscription is in the hand of Heinrich of Ligerz, librarian of Einsiedeln (1324–1356), identifying the book as part of the library of the abbey of Pfäfers, located not far from Felsberg, *Iste liber est monasterii Fabariensis* (fol. 104v).[20] The abbey of Pfäfers was founded by monks from Reichenau, one of the most important Carolingian monasteries, located on an island in the Bodensee. The anthology at the end of the collection contains two funerary epigrams dedicated to men with ties to the abbey of Reichenau: Gerold (d. 799), the prefect of Bavaria and brother of Charlemagne's wife Hildegard, who was a benefactor of the abbey of Reichenau and buried there,[21] and Bernald (d. 840), the bishop of Fulda who was trained in Reichenau and mentioned in the list of benefactors of the abbey in the *Confraternity Book of St. Gall*, *Reichenau and Pfäfers.*[22] Even if the epigrams cannot be seen as unassailable proof that the collection originated from Reichenau—as scholars have proposed—, they suggest that the manuscript was originally aimed at an audience in one of the monasteries in the Eastern part of the Carolingian territory.[23] Probably during the time of Heinrich of Ligerz, under whose administration there was a lot of loan traffic with other libraries and collectors, the collection entered the

19 For Ulrich of Marsöl, see von Mohr, *Archiv für die Geschichte*, 255.

20 See Meier, *Catalogus codicum*, 300; Jurot and Gamper, *Katalog der Handschriften*, 17. Gabriel Meier (*Catalogus codicum*, 298) attributes the *manicula* appearing here and there in the codex to Heinrich of Ligerz as well. For information about Heinrich of Ligerz, see Jäggi, "Ligerz, Heinrich von."

21 *Epitaphium Geroldi*, fol. 97v, Mommsen, ed., "Zur lateinischen Anthologie," 299–300. According to Walahfrid Strabo, Gerold was an important benefactor of the abbey of Reichenau and buried there; see *Visio Wettini* 821–26, Traill, ed., *Walahfrid Strabo's Visio Wettini*, 204. Indeed, his name appears in the list of *comites* ("commanders") in the *Necrology of Reichenau* (second half ninth century, and updated until the thirteenth century), which records the deceased monks and patrons of the Reichenau abbey. Keller, ed., "Das alte Necrologium," 66; see 40–41 for the dating of the necrology. The necrology is preserved in Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rh. hist. 27, fols. 6r–13v. A digital reproduction and description of the manuscript can be found in the Database e-codices, accessed December 9, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027. The *Confraternity Book of St. Gall, Reichenau and Pfäfers* (*Libri confraternitatum sancti Galli Augensis Fabariensis*), written in the early ninth century in Reichenau and continuously updated in the Middle Ages, is preserved in the same codex as the Reichenau necrology: Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rh. hist. 27, fols. 14r/1–80r/134. For the dating, see the manuscript description at the 'e-codices' Database, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/description/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/. Gerold's name appears in the lists of benefactors of Reichenau (II 172.3 and 662.7) and Pfäfers (III 77.11); Piper, ed., *Libri confraternitatum*, 209, 346, and 375. If the references in the *Confraternity Book* are indeed to Charlemagne's brother-in-law, they confirm Gerold's links with both Reichenau and Pfäfers.

22 *Epitaphium Bernaldi*, fol. 97, see Mommsen, ed., "Zur lateinischen Anthologie," 300; see Piper, *Libri confraternitatum*, 160 and Blennow, "Wanderers and Wonders," 50–51. The funerary monument for which the epitaph was likely intended is now lost. Nevertheless, the name (Pernnoltus eps., "Bernald the bishop" is mentioned in the *Reichenau Necrology* (see previous footnote) on the date of his death (April 17); see Keller, "Das alte Necrologium," 58. Bernald is also mentioned in the list of benefactors of the abbey in the *Confraternity Book of St. Gall, Reichenau and Pfäfers*; see Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS Rh. hist. 27, fol. 16v/16; Piper, ed., *Libri confraternitatum*, 160 (II 25) (identification of Bernald in the footnote on the same page).

23 For Reichenau as the possible place of origin of the collection, see Santangeli Valenzani, "'Itinerarium Einsidlense,'" 36; and Blennow, "Wanderers and Wonders," 34. Other scholars (among others, Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 9; and Maskarinec, *The City*, 138–54) contribute it to a scribe trained in Fulda, following Bischoff's analysis of the script in *Katalog*, 242 (no. 1133). However, the fact that a scribe is trained in a certain place (e.g., Fulda) does not mean that the manuscript was written there.

library of the Monastery of Einsiedeln;[24] here, it was combined with other writings in the manuscript miscellany in which it still appears today.

As we will see below, the collection of mostly Rome-centred writings in the Einsiedeln miscellany is an ergodic piece of work, not just capitalising on different directions of writing and reading, but also including cues that allow to move freely between the different writings in the manuscript. In this article, I use the theoretical concept of the affordance to describe and better understand the possible effects and usages of the collection of writings. The aim is to demonstrate that the texts, through the particular way in which they are written down and brought together in one manuscript, call for various affordances in the monastic context in which the collection was most likely read originally. In what follows, I will first discuss in more detail the concept of the affordance (section 2). Subsequently, I will focus on one text in the Einsiedeln collection, the *Itinerarium*, and explore the affordances yielded by the ergodic way in which the Latin text is written down (section 3). In section 4, I will contextualise the findings by comparing the form and affordances of the *Itinerarium* with two other ninth-century works from the same area: the famous *Plan of St. Gall*, and a diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in an illuminated manuscript of the description of the Holy Land (*De locis sanctis*) by the Irish monk Adomnán of Iona. Both works carry the hand of Reginbert (d. 846), the famous scribe and librarian of Reichenau.[25] In section 5, I read the *Itinerarium* in connection with the other writings in the codicological unit to see how an ergodic reading of the wider unit helps to better understand the affordances of the individual texts in the manuscript. In the concluding section (6), I will make a number of additional remarks about the value of looking beyond the mere level of the linguistic code and to consider the material or bibliographic aspect of Latin writings in order to understand their significance.

2 Affordances

The term 'affordance' was introduced for the first time by the psychologist James J. Gibson, as a neologism derived from the verb *to afford* (in the meaning of "to provide"). Gibson defines it as follows: "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill."[26] Affordances relate to the possible usages and functions that objects get in the interaction with certain users in particular contexts. As Caroline Levine puts it, "*[a]ffordance* is a term used to describe the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs."[27] Terence Cave gives the example of a tree, which has the affordances of—among others—perching, nesting, nourishment for birds, a habitat for insects and animals, fruit-gathering and construction materials for living beings, and shade.[28]

24 See Helbling, "Die Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln," 31.
25 Tischler, "Reginbert Handschriften."
26 Gibson, *The Ecological Approach*, 119, original emphasis.
27 Levine, *Forms*, 6, original emphasis.
28 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, 48.

Affordances are no physical or phenomenological properties of the object, but relative properties.[29] On the one hand, affordances are dependent on the object itself: its medium, substance, surface, and layout, etc.[30] On the other hand, they are "part of an ecology," depending on the context and the capacities of the user engaging with the object.[31] Hence, affordances are both a "fact of the environment" and "a fact of behaviour."[32] Objects may have different affordances, depending on the context throughout time. This does not mean that affordances may change, in the sense that they are no longer valid if they are no longer observed in a given context.[33] All affordances contribute to the various possibilities of action of an object. Moreover, affordances may bring forth other affordances or relate to one another hierarchically, forming what Cave calls "'nests' of affordances."[34] For instance, a chair has seating as its primary affordance, but could also be used as a step to grab something that would otherwise be out of reach.

The concept of the affordance can be applied to any object in order to analyse its function and usage. The concept has also been applied to think about the functions and usages of literary texts.[35] According to Levine, literature implies a variety of formal constituents, which all have their affordances:

> Literature is not made of the material world it describes or invokes but of language, which lays claims to its own forms—syntactical, narrative, rhythmic, rhetorical—and its own materiality—the spoken word, the printed page. And indeed, each of these forms and materials lays claim to its own affordances—its own range of capabilities. Every literary form thus generates its own, separate logic.[36]

Scholars have drawn the attention to the affordances of literary forms such as genres and text types (e.g., literary lists, studied by Eva von Contzen), poetic conventions (rhyme, metre, etc.), commonplaces and plotlines.[37] As suggested already, Stephen Nichols highlights the fact that also the physical form of texts yields affordances, drawing particular attention to what he calls the "pluripotential aspect of the manuscript folio."[38] According to Nichols, the various constituents of the manuscript page—script in different colours of ink, miniature paintings, rubrics in red ink, decorated capitals, decorative patterns, glosses, and the like—have different affordances:

> Manuscript painting frequently illuminate such texts by way of providing a visual commentary on and counterpoint to the verbal text. (…) Rubrics, decorated initials, and miniature painting help the reader to navigate the different sections of these works,

[29] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach*, 119–20, 135; Von Contzen, "Die Affordanzen," 320.
[30] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach*, 122–28.
[31] Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, 48; Levine, *Forms*, 7.
[32] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach*, 121.
[33] Ibid., 139; Von Contzen, "Die Affordanzen," 320.
[34] Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, 49.
[35] Ibid.; Levine, *Forms*; Von Contzen, "Die Affordanzen" and "Experience."
[36] Levine, *Forms*, 10.
[37] Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, 46–62; Von Contzen, "Die Affordanzen" and "Experience."
[38] Nichols, "Mind, Materiality," 13, with more discussion on 9–13 of the same publication; see also Nichols, "Dynamic Reading," 27–28.

> while contributing yet another set of indexical signs bespeaking manuscript intentionality.[39]

As Nichols suggests, in addition to the affordances of the manuscript folio, also larger constituents of the medieval book (the codicological unit, and the codex as a whole) have their affordances.[40] As we will see in the next sections, these observations also apply to the Einsiedeln collection.

3 The *Itinerarium Einsidlense*: ergodicity and affordances

The *Itinerarium* is a good starting point for analysing the ergodic dimension of the Einsiedeln collection, because of the highly unique way the text is formatted on the parchment folio. The *Itinerarium* consists of a collection of twelve walking routes through Rome, often starting or ending at one of the main gates in the Aurelian walls and leading along all kinds of sites inside and outside the city, such as, churches, *diaconiae* ("deaconries" or lodges for pilgrims), martyrs' graves, ancient monuments, arches, columns, aqueducts, and squares. The *Itinerarium* was most likely written in the early ninth century, featuring many monuments that were restored during the building and restoration campaigns of the popes Hadrian I (d. 795) and Leo III (795–816).[41]

Since the early nineteenth century—which was also precisely the period in which the first modern travel guides came into being—the *Itinerarium* (in the physical form it has been handed down today) has been interpreted as a travel guide for a Frankish pilgrim, with routes along the most important monuments in the city, both Christian and secular.[42] The *Sylloge* and *Wall Description* were read in the same framework, as explanatory guides on the inscriptions encountered on the way and the Aurelian walls, while the *Ordo Romanus* text was seen as the pilgrim's report of liturgies performed in Rome. It had been surmised that the Einsiedeln collection was composed by and aimed at a Frankish pilgrim. The *Sylloge* contains inscriptions from Pavia (besides Roman ones), which is on the route to Rome for pilgrims coming north from the Alps.[43] Moreover, the liturgical terminology in the *Ordo Romanus* was more common in texts from north of the Alps.[44] But how plausible is the idea that the *Itinerarium* was meant as a travel guidebook for pilgrims to Rome?

To be sure, there is a long history of travelling in and to Rome. Already in Antiquity, the Romans designed a special infrastructure of roads and staging posts (the *cursus publicus*) that was used by officials, soldiers and messengers to move

39 Nichols, "Mind, Materiality," 16, with more discussion on 18–19 of the same publication.
40 See Nichols, "Dynamic Reading," 34.
41 Bauer, "Das Bild," 206–9.
42 See Hänel, "Der Regionar," 116–17; Hülsen, *La pianta*, 3–4; Jordan, *Topographie*, 329–56; Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 9–11 and 159–60; Del Lungo, *Roma in età carolingia*, 18–20; Blennow, "Wanders and Wonders," 33–87 (including an elaborate discussion of this interpretation, with further references).
43 See Blennow, "Wanderers and Wonders," 37–38.
44 Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 266.

between different parts of the empire.[45] The Peutinger Table, a thirteenth-century road map that probably goes back to a late antique model from the fourth of fifth century AD, is a visual representation of the *cursus publicus*, showing the important cities (*civitates*), lodgings (*mansiones*), and places where people could change horses (*mutationes*) at the main roads of the Roman empire. These gained renewed importance especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the rise of the cult of saints in Christianity brought a new impetus to travel. Travel was no longer primarily motivated by administrative and military reasons, but also by religious ones. People went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome and other places, in order to visit the tombs and sanctuaries of martyrs and saints or to see the important places of Biblical and Christian history with their own eyes. They went there for different reasons: in the hope of absolution of sins or healing, to earn access to heaven, or simply out of curiosity.[46] Pilgrims used the roads and the facilities of the *cursus publicus* and had guidebooks (*itineraria*) to navigate the empire. The guidebooks listed the most important *civitates*, *mansiones* and *mutationes* along the way and the shrines and other places that could be visited during the pilgrimage.[47] Examples include the *Itineraria* of the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux (333 AD) and the anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza (second half sixth c.), giving the most important halting posts on the way from the respective home towns to the Holy Land, and the *Notitia Ecclesiarum urbis Romae* and *De locis sanctis Martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae* (both from the seventh c.), describing walking tours along churches and martyr sanctuaries in Rome.[48] Providing descriptive lists of noteworthy places and monuments, these texts resemble the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* in form. This raises expectations about the latter's function. As I said, scholars argue that the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* should be seen in the same tradition, intended as a travel guidebook for a pilgrim and offering an overview of the most important sanctuaries in Rome.[49] It has been argued that the relatively small size of the codex (178 x 126 mm) facilitated its practical use as a guidebook by a traveller in Rome.[50]

However, it is the question whether the text in its present form was intended for such a practical use. In fact, several arguments can be brought in against the interpretation of the *Itinerarium* as a guidebook for pilgrims to Rome. As Franz Alto Bauer argues, the format does not say much about the possible function of the book: it is a common format in the Middle Ages, used for books of different

45 Dietz, *Wandering Monks*, 11–24.

46 Ibid., 27–35; Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 39–41; Aist, *Jerusalem Bound*, 47–63.

47 Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 41–43.

48 Bauer, "Das Bild," 217–19; and Blennow, "Wanders and Wonders," 66–68 (including further references).

49 In addition, scholars argue that the *Itinerarium* was based on an iconographic map, listing the toponyms of a map of Rome on which pilgrim routes were drawn. See de Rossi, *Piante iconografiche*, 70–71; Hülsen, *La pianta*, 6–44; Jordan, *Topographie*, 329–56, esp. 334. Christian Hülsen (*La pianta*, tav. 5) also provides a reconstruction of the map, showing Rome from above in the form of a perfect circle, with the Porta S. Petri at the top: a city gate originally located next to Hadrian's Mausoleum, which appears several times as a starting or ending point of a route in the *Itinerarium*. Hülsen's map is reproduced in Frutaz, *Le piante* 2, plate 63, tav. 135, and commented upon in Frutaz, *Le piante* 1, 106–7. Kai Brodersen in "Ein karolingischer Stadtplan" questions the idea that it was based on a map, arguing that no such iconographic maps have been transmitted from the Carolingian time. See also Bauer, "Das Bild," 209–16.

50 Hülsen, *La pianta*, 6–7; Jordan, *Topographie,* 334.

kinds, such as Bibles, prayer books or edifying writings.[51] Moreover, even if it is clear that pilgrims used written texts as guidebooks (*itineraria*) during their journey, the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* would have been of little practical use for a pilgrim. As Bauer points out, the directions in the *Itinerarium* are often too vague and inaccurate to be of use to a pilgrim on the road.[52] Moreover, a pilgrim would probably not have taken along a valuable document such as the Einsiedeln compilation, simply because parchment books were too expensive and precious for that. Travellers would rather have taken notes and left the book home. On a more general level, one has to ask the question what is precisely meant by 'traveling' in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Although there was much travelling in the 'physical' sense of the term, there was also a growing interest from late antiquity onwards in more metaphorical and imaginary forms of travelling. The idea arose that one could also go on an imaginary journey, for instance, by reading about the experience of pilgrims in texts. As Georgia Frank argues in *The Memory of the Eyes*, this form of travelling is already evident in the late antique stories of the Egyptian desert saints, which do not just record the experiences of real travellers but but also aimed at "armchair pilgrims, those who demanded and consumed stories of travels to the saints without ever making such journeys themselves."[53]

There were several reasons why such a form of imaginative travelling was preferable to the real journey. Travelling had great dangers and challenges: difficult weather conditions, the limitations of the seasons, theft and attacks by robbers, and disease—all of them factors that could even lead to death in extreme cases. Travelling was also very expensive and time-consuming.[54] In addition, already earlier in Christian history critique arose of religious travellers. This particularly pertained to monks who wandered from one monastery to another without having a fixed residence. These 'gyrovagues' were criticised and feared for the destabilising nature of their travelling: because they did not belong to a particular monastic community, they fell outside the authority of abbots in monasteries where they sought shelter during the journey (and sometimes stayed for a long time without working and being part of the community). Sixth-century monastic rules such as the *Regula Magistri* and *Regula Benedictina* reject this form of monastic wandering and promote *stabilitas* instead: the monk should stay in the monastery and decline from travel without the abbot's permission.[55] Moreover, the focus on *stabilitas* led to the promotion of a metaphorical type of travelling, in the imagination and by reading.[56]

These various arguments pose the question what the function or affordance was of the *Itinerarium* in its physical form as we know it from the Einsiedeln

[51] Bauer, "Das Bild," 216–17.

[52] Ibid., 210–17; see also Santangeli Valenzani, "'Itinerarium Einsidlense'," 34–36 for a critical assessment of the interpretation of the *Itinerarium* as guidebook.

[53] Frank, *Memory of the Eyes,* 4.

[54] For the various risks and dangers involved in early medieval pilgrimage, see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 55–71; and Aist, *Jerusalem Bound*, 126–38.

[55] For the critique on gyrovagues and their treatment in the two sixth-century monastic rules, see Dietz, *Wandering Monks*, 36–37, 69–70 and 88–105.

[56] Ibid., 39–42, 69–70; Aist, *Jerusalem Bound*, 62–63.

compilation. As I would like to argue, the *Itinerarium* is characterised by a nest of affordances, which cannot be seen apart from the monastic context of study and contemplation in which the book was mostly likely functioning. The affordances fit the wider tendency that texts could foster imaginary and spiritual travel experiences in readers. First of all, the content of the *Itinerarium* suggests that we have to do with something else than a list of noteworthy monuments interesting to a pilgrim, similar to the descriptive overviews we find in the late antique and early medieval itineraries (e.g., the *Notitia Ecclesiarum* and the *De locis sanctis Martyrum*). The older but often-overlooked study of the nineteenth-century Italian archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani provides an important key to understand the content of the *Itinerarium*. Lanciani compares the routes in the *Itinerarium* with descriptions of stational processions on feast days in the Roman liturgical calendar, as recorded in the *Liber Politicus*, written around 1140 by Benedict the Canon.[57] As Lanciani demonstrates, various routes in the *Itinerarium* follow the track of stational processions in the *Liber Politicus*.

For instance, route 12 in the *Itinerarium* corresponds—albeit in opposite direction—with Benedict's description of the stational procession on Christmas morning (*in vigilia nativitatis Domini*, 14), which led from the Sant'Anastasia, where a mass was traditionally held at dawn,[58] to the St. Peter's. The route in the *Itinerarium* is as follows (important monuments are numbered). Starting from the (1) Porta S. Petri near the pons Aelius (the present Pont'Angelo) it then takes off to the (2) San Lorenzo and Theatre of Pompey, passing by the site of the present Santo Stefano in Piscinula at the Via dei Bianchi Vecchi.[59] Subsequently, it continues via a portico to the (3) Sant'Angelo and the temple of Jupiter (i.e., the remnants of the ancient temple of Jupiter Stator), both in the (4) theatre of Marcellus (simply called *theatrum* in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*). The route then passes through a (5) *porticum* and arrives at the 'elephant,' most likely a statue near the vegetable market (Forum Holitorium). It then continues to the (6) Santa Maria in Cosmedin (*ecclesia Graecorum* in the *Itinerarium*) at the same forum, followed by various churches in the immediate vicinity. It stops at the (7) Sant'Anastasia, located close to the Santa Maria in Cosmedin. The procession in Benedict's description takes the opposite direction. The description runs as follows (with numbers indicating the corresponding topographical references in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*):

> In the morning [of Christmas] [the pope] says mass at Sant'Anastasia (7); when it is done, he goes down in procession by the street alongside the (6) Porticus Gallatorum[60] before the (4) Temple of the Sibyl, and between the Temple of Cicero[61] and the (5)

[57] For a discussion of Benedict's *Liber Politicus* and its focus on the papal liturgy, see Verbaal, "Making the Stones Speak," 221–32.

[58] Lanciani, "L'Itinerario," 88–90; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 235–52 further analyses the similarities between route 12 and the *Liber Politicus*. For an edition and commentary of route 12 of the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, see Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 205–11.

[59] See Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 239 and 248.

[60] The Porticus Gallatorum was located between the Forum Holitorium and the Forum Boarium; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 246.

[61] These temples were both located in the theatre of Marcellus, known now as the temples of Spes and Janus; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 246.

> Porticus Crinorum;[62] and continuing between the (3) Basilica of Jupiter and the Circus Flamineus, thence he goes next to the Porticus Severianus,[63] passing in front of the Templum Craticulae[64] and in front of the Insula Militena of the Standard-Bearers. And so on the left hand he descends to the main via Arenula, passing by the Theatre of Antoninus and by the (2) Palace of Chromatius, where the Olovitreum[65] was, and under the (1) arch of the emperors Gratian, Theodosius, and Valentinian; and entering [the Vatican] by the Bridge of Hadrian in front of his temple.[66]

Most of the topographical references in Benedict's description are medieval, different from the ancient names used in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*. Nevertheless, the routes outlined in both sources are more or less the same.[67] Starting from the Sant'Anastasia, it leads along various monuments in the area of the Theatre of Marcellus to the Theatre of Pompey and the San Lorenzo in Damaso, ending at the pons Aelius, which was the entrance to the Vatican. Similarly, as Lanciani indicates, Benedict's description of the processions on the day of the purification of the virgin on February 2 (from the Sant'Adriano at the Roman Forum to the Santa Maria Maggiore) resembles the track in the second half of route 1 and the part of route 7 in the *Itinerarium*: from the Sant'Adriano to the Santa Lucia in Orthea, in the direction of the Santa Maria Maggiore.[68]

Perhaps also route 4 in the *Itinerarium* (fig. 1) may reflect the track of a stational procession, namely that on the day of the Great Litany or the Major Rogation (April 25).[69] The observance of the Great Litany was originally instituted by Pope Gregory the Great as a rite of penance. In his letter of institution Gregory defines the San Lorenzo in Lucina as the starting point and the St. Peter's basilica as the destination of the route.[70] As Joseph Dyer indicates, the more precise route of the

[62] This porticus was located at the Forum Holitorium; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 246–47.

[63] The basilica is the temple of Jupiter Stator in the Theatre of Marcellus (not mentioned in the *Ordo*), which is located next to the Circus Flaminius and opposite the Porticus Octaviae (here called the Porticus Severianus); Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 247.

[64] The Templum Craticulae is probably the medieval name of a structure on the site of the present San Salvatore in Caccabariis on the Via di Santa Maria del Pianto, to the south-east of the Porticus Octaviae; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 247.

[65] The Palace of Chromatius and Olovitreum were located at the site of the present S. Stefano in Piscinula, between the pons Aelius and the S. Lorenzo and Theatre of Pompey; Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 248–49.

[66] Ed. Mabillon, *Museum Italicum*, 125–6 (§16), translation borrowed from Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 245.

[67] Kinney, "Fact and Fiction," 245.

[68] Lanciani, "L'Itinerario," 96. See Route 1, l. 7–12 and route 7, l. 9–12 in the edition of Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 162 and 182. Benedict's description can be found in *Liber Politicus* 29, Mabillon, ed., *Museum Italicum*, 131–32; and Jordan, *Topographie*, 664. Also the description of the second half of the procession on Easter Monday (*secunda feria*, §50), from the St. Peter's to the St. John of Lateran in the *Liber Politicus* corresponds to parts of the beginning of routes 1 and 8 in the *Itinerarium*, both following the track of the Via Papalis: departing from the pons Aelius in the direction of the Roman Forum and (in the case of route 8) ending at the Lateran. However, the precise tracks of the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* and the *Liber Politicus* differ, probably as a result of infrastructural changes throughout time, see Lanciani, "L'Itinerario," 108. See Route 1, l. 1–8 and route 8, l. 1–19 in the edition of Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 162 and 189; Benedict's description can be found in *Liber Politicus* 51, Mabillon, ed., *Museum Italicum*, 143–44 (§51) and Jordan, *Topographie*, 665–66.

[69] Route 4 is edited in Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 175.

[70] Gregory the Great, *Register of Epistles* 2.2, quoted in Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 239–40, n. 5 and Dyer, "Roman Processions," 114.

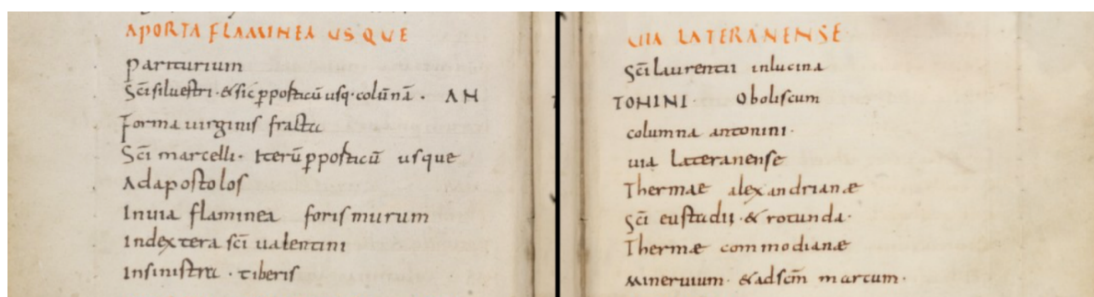

Figure 1: Route 4 in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, fols. 80v–81r.

procession can be derived from the Gregorian Sacramentary, which is considered as a representation from the first three decades of the seventh century of the Roman liturgy.[71] Later manuscripts of the sacramentary from the eleventh–thirteenth centuries provide topographical indications of the places where prayers and chants took place: the San Lorenzo in Lucina, the San Valentino at the Milvian Bridge (*Pons olibi* in the sources), a certain “cross” that was most likely located near the Villa Madama, and the atrium of the St. Peter’s.[72] From the San Lorenzo, the procession probably went via the Via Lata to the Porta Flaminia and then towards San Valentino. This reflected the route of the ancient Robigalia.[73] As can be derived from table 1, route 4 in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* starts in the area of the San Lorenzo in Lucina and the column of Antoninus Pius (located next to the column of Marcus Aurelius on the present Piazza Colonna in Antiquity and the Middle Ages).[74] It then turns to the San Marcello on the Via Lata back to the Santi Apostoli, before leading to the area around the Pantheon (“Rotunda” in the Middle Ages) in the direction of the Porta Flaminia and the Via Flaminia. It ends at the San Valentino, located at the Tiber near the Milvian Bridge.[75] Here the route in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* breaks off, thus only representing the first half of the processional route of the Great Litany.

Although it remains unclear to what extent all routes in the *Itinerarium* correspond with a stational procession, the similarities that can be observed suggest that the *Itinerarium* is more than merely a collection of walking routes leading a pilgrim around important places and deaconries of Rome. Some routes in the *Itinerarium*—and perhaps by extension perhaps all of them—may be understood as the schematic representation of processional routes. Although the *Itinerarium* and *Liber Politicus* are centuries apart, the locations and directions of at least some

71 Dyer, “Roman Processions,” 114–19.

72 See Wilson, *The Gregorian Sacramentary*, 70–71; and Lietzmann, *Das Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, 64–65 for the Latin text of the prayers at the various stations. As Dyer notes (“Roman Processions,” 119), the procession is also described in the eight-century Frankish *Ordo Romanus* 21, edited (including commentary) in Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 237–49. This text does not provide specific details about the locations of stations or directions of the route.

73 Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*, 304–305; Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 239; and Dyer, “Roman Processions,” 115–19.

74 Walser, *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung*, 171.

75 *Ordo Romanus* 23, edited (including commentary) in Andrieu, *Les* Ordines, 239–49. For further discussion of the text, see Dyer, “Roman Processions,” 119. In this description, the route continues from the San Valentino in the direction of the St. Peter’s in the Vatican.

Left column	**Middle column**	**Right column**	**Locations of the Great Litany (following the Robigalia and Gregorian Sacramentary)**
Pariturium		San Lorenzo in Lucina	San Lorenzo in Lucina
Monastery of San Silvestro in Capite and then to the Porticus [Vipsiana]	Until the column of Antoninus Pius	Obelisk [i.e., sun dial of Augustus]	
Remnant of the Virgo-aqueduct		[Again] the column of Antoninus Pius	
San Marcello. Again through the Porticus [Saeptorum Iuliorum] until ...		... the Via Lata	Via Lata
Santi Apostoli		The Baths of Alexander Severus Sant'Eustachio and the Rotunda [Pantheon] The baths of Agrippa Santa Maria sopra Minerva	
On the Via Flaminia, outside the walls			Porta Flaminia and Via Flaminia
To the right the San Valentino[76]			
To the left the Tiber			Milvian Bridge

Table 1: Route 4 in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*. Columns 1–3 represent the three-column structure of the text in the manuscript and provide a translation of the Latin text in three columns; column 4 gives the most important stations of the procession at the day of the Great Litany.

of the processional routes seem to have remained unchanged.[77] Some of the locations were the place of masses during processions; others should likely be understood as landmarks on the route. The ancient buildings mentioned in the itineraries—remnants of aqueducts, arches, the Roman Forum etc.—may be linked to the interest in antiquities that was typical of the Carolingian *renovatio*, according to which the Carolingian empire was seen as the renovation of the ancient Roman empire, and the literature, art and culture of the ancient Romans as the models of imitation and emulation for Carolingians.[78] Listing the various

[76] As the position of this legend demonstrates, sometimes the locations of monuments are inaccurate, or monuments are represented in the wrong column in the manuscript.

[77] It seems that routes and stations remained quite stable throughout the centuries in the early Middle Ages; see Willis, "Roman Stational Liturgy," 33–40.

[78] For the Carolingian idea of *renovatio*, see Garrison, "The Emergence," 129–31; and Bullough, "Roman Books." Bauer, "Die Stadt Rome," 110 also comments on the Carolingian interest in antiquities as an explanation of the occurrence of ancient monuments in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense.* Something similar seems to pertain to the *Liber Politicus*: according to Wim Verbaal ("Resurrecting Rome"), the occurrence

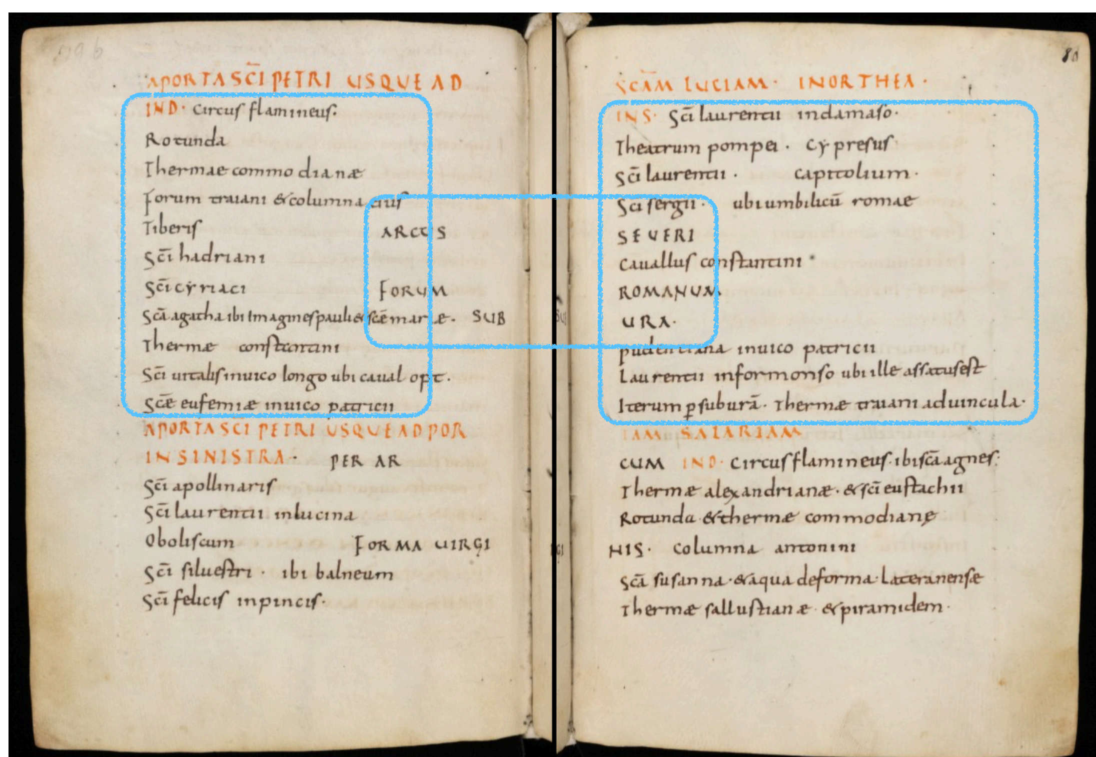
A PORTA SCI PETRI USQUE AD
IND · Circus flamineus.
Rotunda
Thermae commodianae
Forum traiani et columna eius
Tiberis ARCUS
Sci hadriani
Sci cyriaci FORUM
Sca agatha ibi imagines pauli et scae mariae. SUB
Thermae constantini
Sci uitalis in uico longo ubi caual opt.
Scae eufemiae in uico patricii
A PORTA SCI PETRI USQUE AD POR
IN SINISTRA · PER AR
Sci apollinaris
Sci laurentii in lucina
Oboliscum FORMA UIRGI
Sci siluestri · ibi balneum
Sci felicis in pincis ·
SCAM LUCIAM · IN ORTHEA ·
INS · Sci laurentii in damaso ·
Theatrum pompei · Cypresus
Sci laurentii · capitolium ·
Sci sergii · ubi umbilicum romae
SEUERI
Cauallus constantini
ROMANUM
URA ·
pudentiana in uico patricii
Laurentii in formonso ubi ille assatus est
Iterum per suburam · Thermae traiani ad uincula ·
IAM SALARIAM
CUM IND · Circus flamineus · ibi sca agnes ·
Thermae alexandrianae · et sci eustachii
Rotunda et thermae commodianae
HIS · Columna antonini
Sca susanna · et aqua de forma lateranense
Thermae sallustianae · et piramidem ·

Figure 2: Routes 1 and 2 in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, fols. 79v–80r, with the three columns marked in blue.

places, the *Itinerarium* provides the reader with a schematic overview or "geschriebene Rom-plan" ("written map of Rome"), as Bauer calls it, charting the most important sites on the route of some stational processions on feast days in the Roman liturgical calendar.[79]

Thus, the *Itinerarium* fits the wider interest of monks in the Carolingian world. As Arthur Westwell demonstrates on the basis of a study of manuscripts, Carolingian monks and scholars had a lively interest in the Roman rite or *Ordo Romanus*.[80] They were the active compilers, producers, and collectors of descriptions of the Roman liturgical forms and rituals, in texts which were also called 'Ordines Romani'. Some of these texts contain extensive descriptions of the rituals and directions of stational processions, thus forming the more elaborate, descriptive counterpart of the schematic overviews provided in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*. The *Ordo Romanus* text in the Einsiedeln collection is an example of such an elaborate description of Roman rites from the Carolingian era.[81] *Ordines Romani* were collected in larger manuscripts, which often included texts of different origins and in different hands, and sometimes also other texts relevant to the

of ancient monuments there should be explained as an indication of the pope's interest in the renewal of ancient Rome.

79 Bauer, "Das Bild," 225–26. See also Bauer, "Die Stadt Rom," 107–9.

80 Westwell, *The Dissemination*; and Westwell, "The *Ordines Romani*."

81 According to Andrieu (*Les* Ordines, 266), the text should be dated to the eighth century (perhaps the first half), noting that it does not refer to some common rites in later versions of the Roman rite, Ibid., 266.

liturgy, such as *laudes* (hymns for liturgical feast days) and sacramentaries.[82] The Carolingian monks and scholars used these texts as the model for their own liturgies, mirroring the wider tendency in the Carolingian world to imitate the Roman example in the own cultural forms.[83] If the *Itinerarium* can indeed be seen as a schematic *Ordo Romanus*, it was most likely not meant to be taken on a real journey to Rome, but to be read within the walls of the monastery by monks interested in the Roman liturgy.

The peculiar *mise-en-page* of the *Itinerarium* puts into further relief the text's aims and affordances. As can be seen on fig. 2, the text is written down in a highly remarkable manner, involving two writing systems that operate at the same time. They can be defined as ergodic, requiring from the reader a "non-trivial effort" when traversing the text. To be sure, the itineraries can be read in the traditional horizontal manner, from left to right, starting in the top left (the beginning of the route) and ending in the lower right (the final destination of the route). At the same time, however, a vertical system of writing applies, which asks for a different direction of reading. The descriptions of the walking routes do not consist of running sentences, but of separate terms denoting the monuments (which could also be called 'legends'). The legends are listed in three columns that take the full width of the bifolio: one on the left, one across the middle of the two pages, and one on the right. The columns correspond to the location of the monuments in relation to a person when walking through Rome and taking part in the procession. The monuments in the columns to the left and right are on the person's left and right when going through the city.[84] The monuments in the middle of the two pages correspond with the objects that the person must cross or pass through: squares such as the Roman Forum and triumphal arches such as the Arch of Septimius Severus. Sometimes indications such as "in sinistra" (*INS*) or "in dextra" (*IND*) are added to highlight the location of the monuments. The *mise-en-page* is unique to the *Itinerarium*; the preceding and subsequent texts (respectively the *Sylloge* and *Wall Description*) are written in the traditional manner, from left to right in one column on a single folio.[85]

The *mise-en-page* of the *Itinerarium* offers the reader a way to engage with the text in different ways. First of all, the reader gets an overview of the monuments that are encountered on the route, by reading the itineraries from beginning to end and following the horizontal direction of reading suggested by the manuscript. This type of reading invites the reader to approach the text *as a text*, which is *read* by deciphering the words and following the suggested reading from beginning to end. At the same time, the subdivision of the text in columns also invites the reader to take a step back, as it were, and to look at the text *as an image*. The

[82] Westwell, *The Dissemination* provides the most elaborate and important discussion of the manuscript context of *Ordines Romani* in the Carolingian time, including many overviews of the content of specific manuscripts.

[83] See Westwell, "The *Ordines Romani*."

[84] This was noted already by Hänel, "Der Regionar," 116–17.

[85] This is clearest on fol. 85r, where the *Wall Description* begins at the bottom of the page; the corresponding space on fol. 84v is left blank.

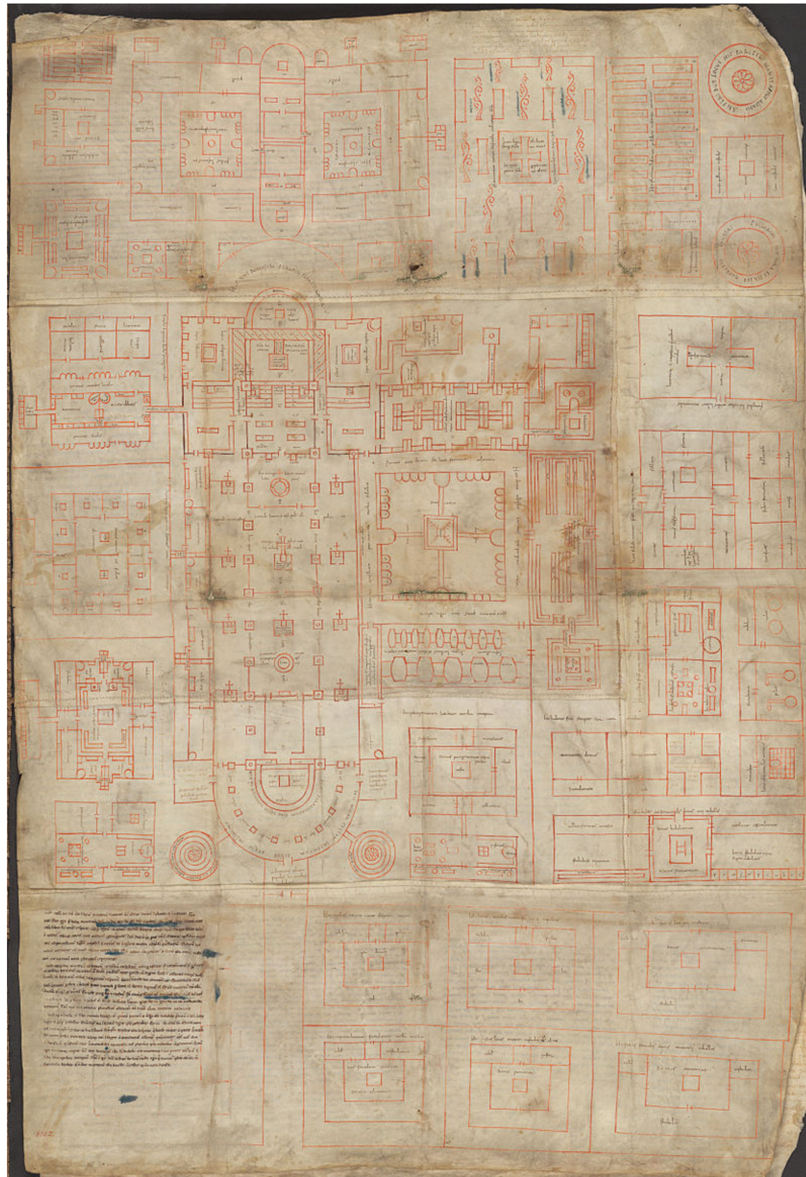

Figure 3: *Plan of St. Gall*, early ninth century. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092.

image is two-dimensional, consisting of rectangular blocks that extend in length and width on the flat sheet and can be viewed straight from above, without reading the text. Seen from the elevated standpoint, the text-as-diagram allows the user to get an overview and see at a glance where the various monuments are to be found in the real space.

The three-column *mise-en-page* of the text has also a second affordance, inviting the reader to make an image of the route in the three-dimensional space of the city and to 'walk,' as it were, the described route while reading. Consequently, reading becomes a form of imaginative travelling. As Bauer notes,

> [das *Itinerarium*] sollte dem Leser fern von Rom dienen, sollte ein Bild der Stadt Rom entwerfen, das gerade dem Romunkundigen eine Vorstellung von der Größe der Stadt,

> der Monumentenfülle, der dortigen antiken Bauten und christlichen Heiligtümer vermitteln konnte.[87]

The compiler did not want to provide a *vademecum*, but aimed at "der Vergegenwärtigung der Gesamtheit der Stadt Rome" ("the representation of the city of Rome in its entirety").[88]

4 The *Itinerarium* in context: other Carolingian examples of ergodic reading

The *Itinerarium* is not the only example of a Carolingian writing affording an ergodic reading experience. This is demonstrated by two works of art from roughly the same area and time. The first example is the *Plan of St. Gall*, commissioned by Heito abbot of Reichenau (806–823 AD) as a gift for abbot Gozbert of St. Gall (816–837 AD). It represents a monastery including standard elements such as the church, lodges and service spaces for monks and guests, the library, the abbot's house, the hospital, workshops and gardens (fig. 3). There has been much debate about the question what is represented, especially since the appearance of Walter Horn's and Ernest Born's seminal multi-volume study of the plan. Horn and Born interpret the *Plan of St. Gall* as a paradigmatic prototype for real monasteries—an interpretation which raised much objection by scholars, who suggested a more symbolic representation of the ideal monastery and monastic life.[89] The second example is the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (fig. 4), which comes from an illustrated version of *De locis sanctis*, a seventh-century description of the Holy Land by the Irish monk Adomnán from Iona. Several illustrated copies have been preserved from the Carolingian era, among others the one now kept in Zürich (Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73), which was produced in Reichenau.[90] Since both

[87] Bauer, "Das Bild," 225: "[The *Itinerarium*] should serve the reader far from Rome, should develop an image of the city of Rome, which could provide those who did not know the city an idea of its size, its pile of monuments, and the ancient and Christian sanctuaries there" (my translation).

[88] Bauer, "Das Bild," 226.

[89] For the plan as protoype, see Horn and Born, *The Plan of St. Gall* 1, 20–34; the idea was criticized by Sanderson, "The Plan of St. Gall Reconsidered"; Nees, "The Plan of St. Gall," and various other scholars. See Sullivan, "What was Carolingian Monasticism," 266–67 for an overview of the debate and bibliography. On 261–69 and 282–98, Sullivan sees the *Plan of St. Gall* as a more general source of inspiration for builders in the construction of monasteries, while also arguing that it is a more abstract articulation of the relationship between the sacred and profane in Carolingian monastic thinking. It has also been argued that the plan served was the representation of an 'ideal' monastery, meant for reflection on the meaning and order of monastic life; see Braunfels, *Abendländische Klosterbaukunst*, 52–65; Carruthers, *The Craft*, 228–31; and Collins, *The Carolingian Debt*, 70–81.

[90] The manuscript is accessible online via UCLA Digital Collections, "Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73," accessed on May 12, 2022, `https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz0028rnww`. For an analysis of this diagram and other images of Constantinian basilicas in the Holy Land in the manuscript, see Gorman, "Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*." For a discussion of the function of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* and its diagrams in the monastic context of Iona, see O'Loughlin, *Adomnán*, "Adomnán's Plans," "The View from Iona," "Perceiving Palestine"; and Blair Moore, "Adomnán's *On the Holy Places*." O'Loughlin, *Adomnán*, on 251–52, provides a list of manuscripts of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*.

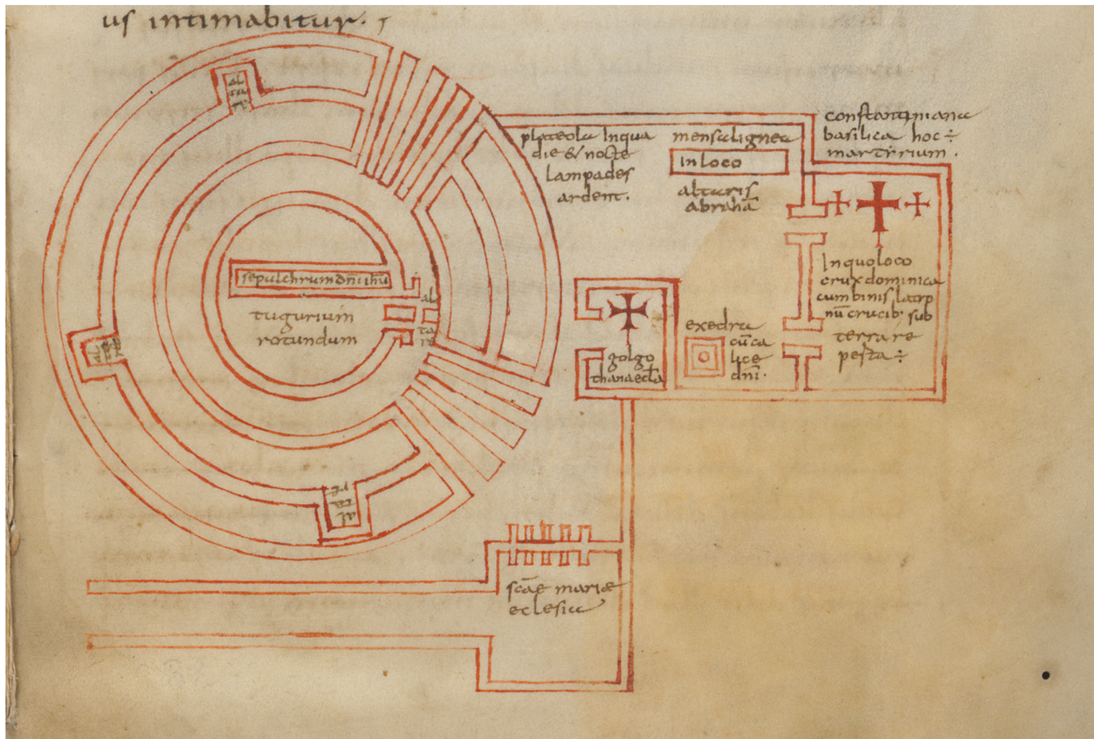

Figure 4: Diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. From Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73, fol. 5r.

sources originate from similar times and contexts as the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, they are interested sources of comparison to better understand the affordances of the latter's content and script. Obviously, the two examples differ from the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* in medium, being mostly pictural representations—even if they also contain textual elements, namely the inscriptions or 'legends' denoting the nature or function of the various represented spaces. Nevertheless, despite the generic differences, they convey some interesting similarities with the *Itinerarium* in terms of representation and approach.

First of all, the *Plan of St. Gall* and the image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre resemble the *Itinerarium* in simultaneously providing an overview and allowing the spectator to go on an imaginative journey. They can be defined as diagrams: two-dimensional, schematic drawings of spaces represented straight from above, in a 'kataskopic' perspective.[91] Viewed from this elevated standpoint, the diagrams allow the spectator to see the various constituents of the monastery and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at a glance and to visualise the represented spaces. At the same time, the spectator is invited to leave the elevated position and to 'enter' the image, as it were, becoming not just a *reader* but also a *viewer*.

[91] The term *kataskopos* was used to denote the heavenly journey and the accompanying view from above in ancient theory and philosophy. It could denote real views and metaphorical views, resulting from an imaginary, spiritual flight of the soul. See Hadot, *Philosophy*, 238–50; von Koppenfels, *Der andere Blick*, 31–50; and De Jong, "The View," and "From Oroskopia." Sanderson, "The Plan of St. Gall Reconsidered," 323–24 suggests that there are conceptual similarities in the way space is depicted in the *Plan of St. Gall* and the diagrams in Carolingian illuminated manuscripts of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*.

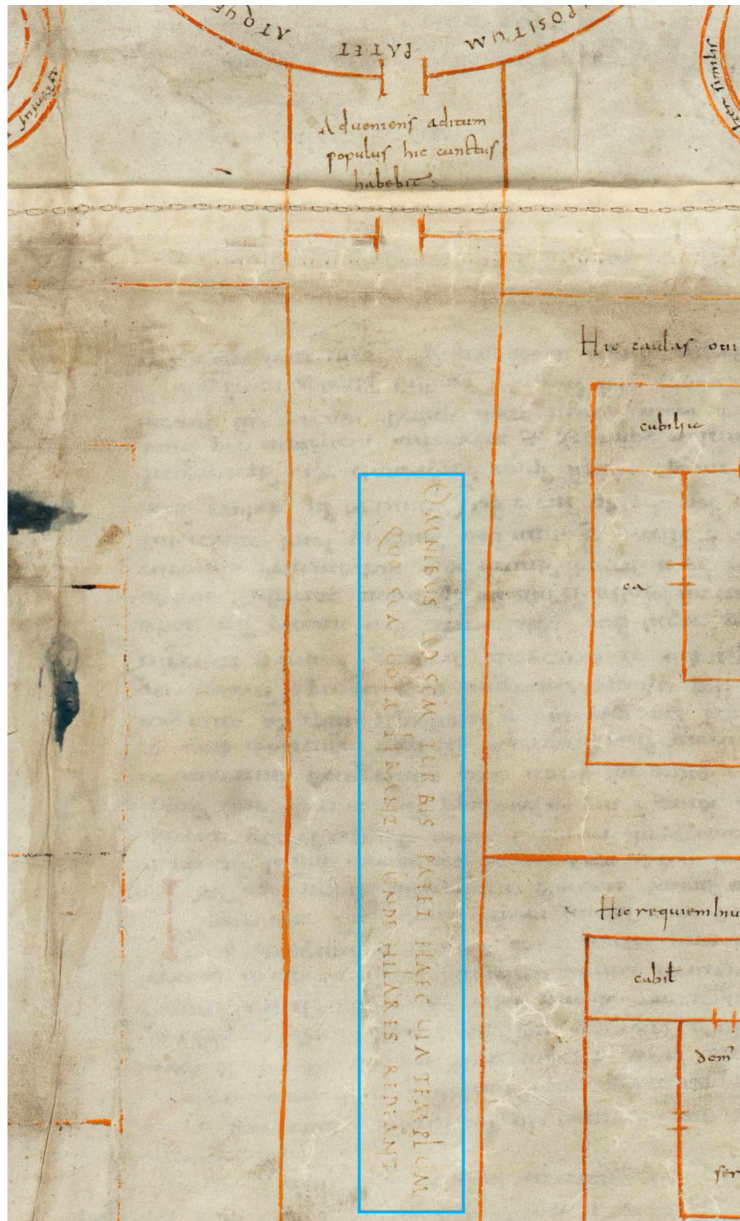

Figure 5: Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the entrance road to the Church (on the left), with the inscription (marked in blue): "Omnibus ad sanctum turbis patet haec via templum / quo sua vota ferant unde hilaris redeant."

A critical role is played by the legends that help the user to navigate through the depicted space. They give an overview of what can be seen, but simultaneously lead the reader through the represented space, as a result of which reading becomes a form of travelling.

In the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, there are two entrances in the lower left corner, one leading to a space identified as the "Church of S. Mary" and the other to a space connected to the circular Dome of the Holy Sepulchre. The inscriptions lead around various sacred places and objects, from the upper left in clockwise direction: "a small place where lamps are burning day and night," the "wooden table where the altar of Abraham was located," the place

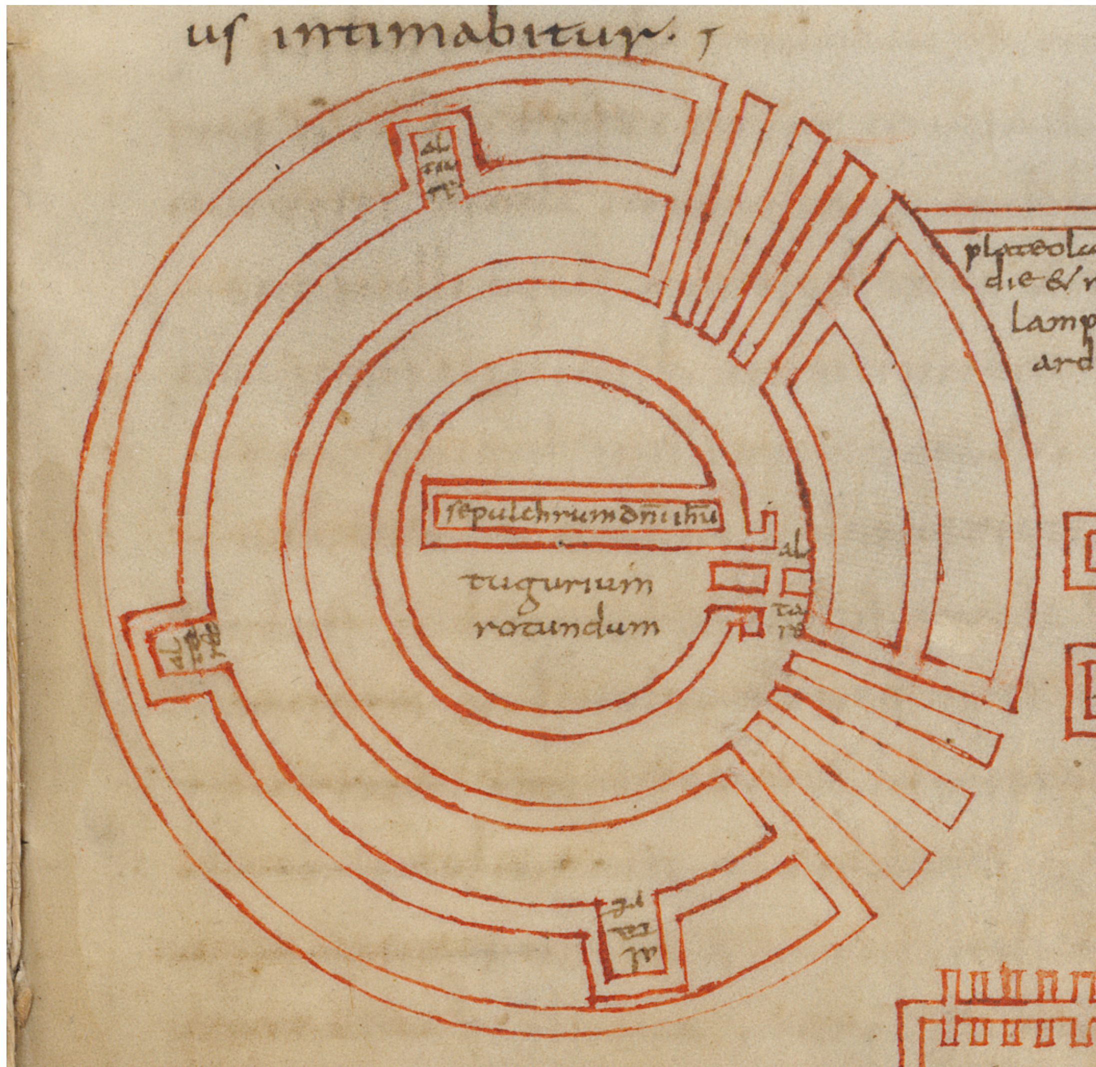

Figure 6: Detail of the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, showing the inscriptions of the altars (*altare*) in the dome's perambulatory. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73, fol. 5r.

where "the Lord's cross was discovered in the ground, together with the crosses of the two criminals," and the "exedra with the cup of the Lord." The small square space opposite the dome is identified as Golgotha Church (*Golgotha ecclesia*). Inscriptions in the middle of the dome identifies it as the "round shelter" *(tugurium rotundum*) with the "sepulchre of the Lord Jesus" (*sepulchrum Domini Iesu*). In the perambulatory, various altars (*altare*) can be found. By reading the inscriptions, the reader is led through the intricate building complex of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At the same time, the reader also gets an overview of the story of Jesus' passion: the last supper—symbolized by the cup of the Lord in the exedra—, the death on Golgotha, signified by the crosses, the burial and resurrection—both represented by the empty tomb. Thus, like what happens in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, the inscriptions have the important function of guiding the reader's eye through the image and providing the overview.

The link between reading and travelling also applies to the *Plan of St. Gall*. Here, the reader's attention is immediately drawn by the metrical inscription on the road to the church in the lower left corner, longer than most other

inscriptions and written in a larger script. It reads "Omnibus ad sanctum turbis patet haec via templum / quo sua vota ferant unde hilaris redeant" ("The way to the holy church is open to all; to which they may offer their prayers and return in joy," my translation) (fig. 5). The inscription implicitly links the acts of reading and going, suggesting that by reading the inscriptions, the reader moves through the represented space. It offers the reader two directions: either to enter the church and from there explore the other parts of the plan, following the route suggested by the other inscriptions through corridors and doorways, or to pray and "return in joy."

The inscriptions in both sources can be defined as ergodic, being written in all sorts of ways: linear, curved and interrupted. This requires from the reader a non-trivial way of reading. Sometimes the reading direction takes on a symbolic meaning, in the sense that it expresses the movement that the walker is supposed to make in the depicted space. For example, the legends denoting the altars (*altare*) in the dome of the Holy Sepulchre are written in such a way that the reader has to turn his or her head to read them (fig. 6); by reading, therefore, one makes a circular movement that corresponds to the movement that must be made if one wants to visit the altars in physical space. A similar example is the inscription in the abbot's house in the *Plan of St. Gall* (fig. 7), where the passage between the bedroom (*dormitorium*) and the abbot's sitting room (*mansio abbatis*) is marked with the legend "entrance" (*ingressus*), which very figuratively follows the movement someone makes to get from one room to another. Likewise, the inscription in the left belltower, "ascensus per c<l>ocleam ad universa super inspicienda" ("ascent through the round tower, to see the universe from above," fig. 8), follows

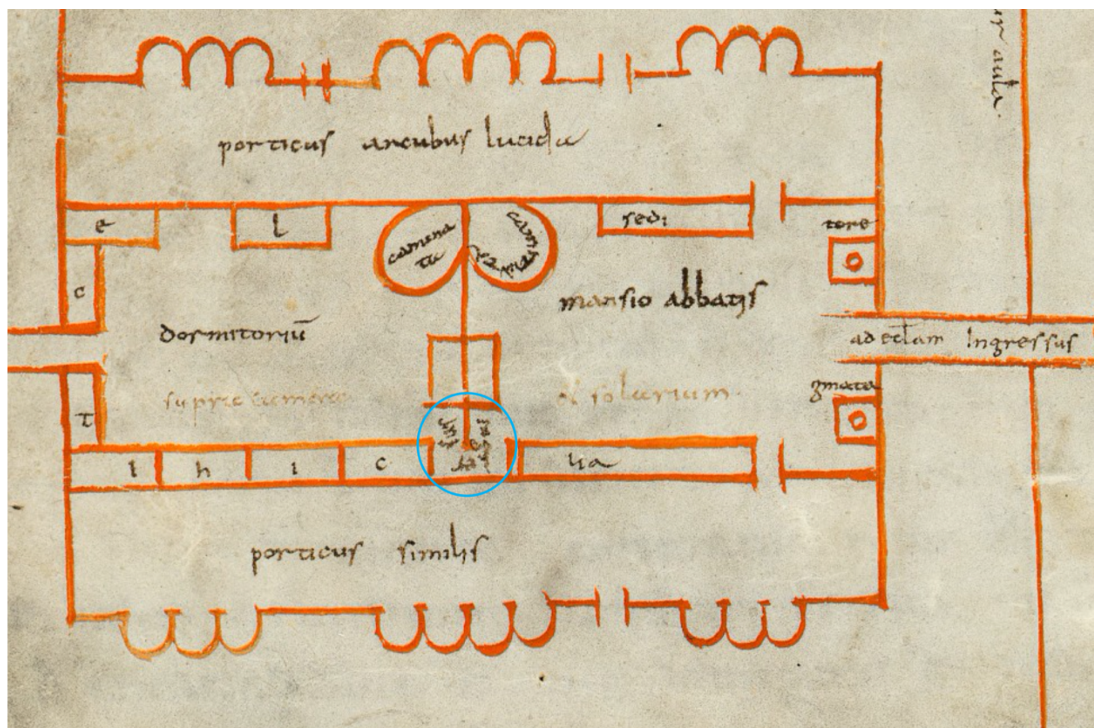

Figure 7: Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the Abbot's House and the inscription *ingressus* (marked in blue) in the doorway between the *dormitorium* and *mansio abbatis*.

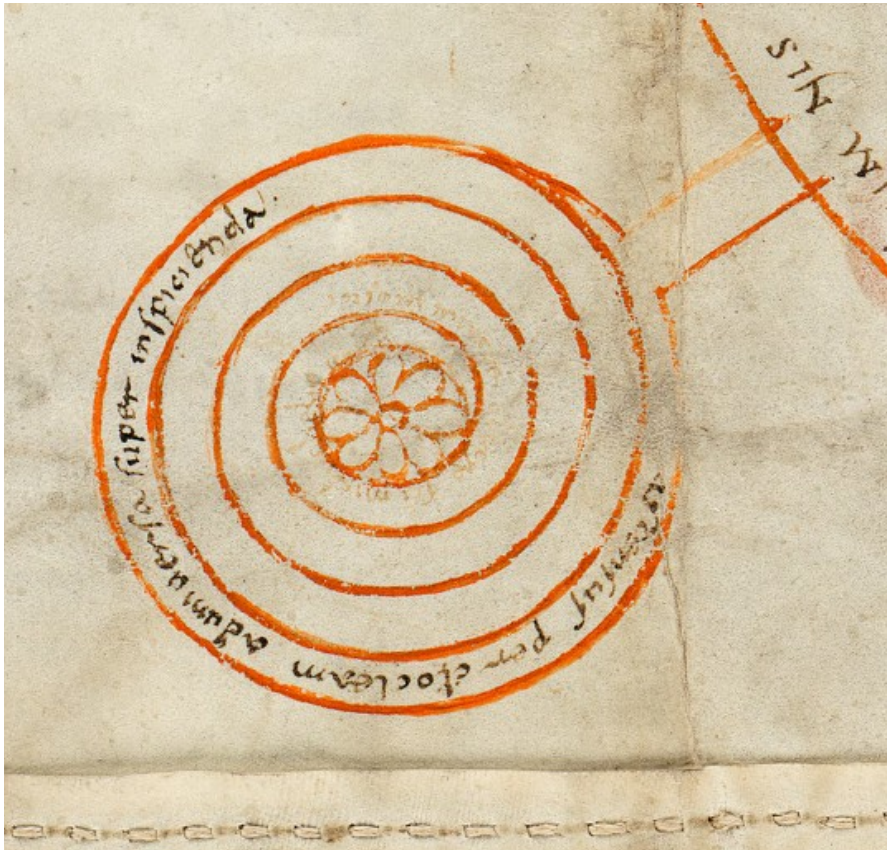

Figure 8: Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the left bell tower. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092.

the course of the spiral staircase (also called *coclea* in Latin), allowing the reader to make the movement when climbing the tower.

The *Plan of St. Gall* and the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre thus resemble the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* in having a double affordance, on the one hand allowing the user to take a step back, as it were, and to view things from above, getting an overview of the represented world—be it the city of Rome, the monastery, or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At the same time, they offer the user an imaginative travel experience through reading. The legends play a crucial role in this, guiding the reader through the represented space and having a symbolic meaning that support the imaginative travel experience, giving a sense of the location of the monuments in the case of the *Itinerarium*, or, in the two pictural diagrams, expressing the movement a traveller would make in the real world.

As I said already, theorists argue that affordances may bring forth other affordances and connect to one another in a hierarchal relation, forming a ‘nest’ of affordances. This also applies to the sources discussed here. In her book *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Mary Carruthers argues that images such as the *Plan of St. Gall* had a mnemotechnic function within medieval monastic meditation.[92] As Carruthers indicates, monastic meditation was inextricably linked to memory (*memoria*), involving the training

[92] Carruthers, *The Craft*, 228–31.

of monks to collect and store thoughts in an orderly way, so as to be able to return to them at a later time and use them to produce new thoughts about God and the world. Focusing on a range of examples, among others the *Plan of St. Gall*, Carruthers demonstrates that images (*picturae*) played a crucial role in monastic meditation, providing a structure in which to store previous knowledge and thus serving as a means to arrive at new thoughts. According to Carruthers, the *Plan of St. Gall* invited the monk to reflect on the main components of the monastery and the form of monastic life, including dichotomies such as the outside and inside, and sacred and profane.[93] The *Itinerarium Einsidlense* and the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre may have had a similar mnemotechnic affordance, encouraging meditation and reflection on religious topics such as respectively Rome and Roman liturgical rites, or the form of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the story of Jesus' death and resurrection remembered there.[94] They also stimulated armchair pilgrimage, allowing someone to visit places far abroad while reading.[95] The double affordance of the works—providing an overview from above and an imaginative travel experience from within—may have supported such a function. As Carruthers suggests with the example of the *Plan of St. Gall*, they work together in the monastic meditation: the kataskopic view from above or "aerial view" as she calls it, allows the viewer to also see the paths outlined in the image, leading along the separate constituents which together form the world of the monastery. Hence, the aerial view showed "a chart for a 'way' of meditation."[96]

If meditation is also a means to develop new ideas and thoughts, as Carruthers suggests, it is not unlikely that sources such as the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* or the two diagrams also inspired further affordances in the real world. Even if scholars now agree that the *Plan of St. Gall* was not meant as a model for a real monastery (instead of providing an image of an ideal one), one cannot be sure that it was never used as a source of inspiration for the design of monastic ground plans—it definitely had the potential for such an affordance.[97] Moreover, following Westwell's claim that the Carolingian interest in the descriptions of the *Ordo Romanus* might have been motivated and simultaneously inspired by the desire to re-enact Roman rite (or at least, what Carolingians thought that were Roman rites) in the Carolingian, local context, one could argue that the *Itinerarium Einsdidlense* may have served as model for new liturgical forms in the Carolingian world. As Kathryn Blair Moore argues, the diagrams of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the other Constantinian basilicas in the Holy Land in illustrated manuscripts of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* were likely used as architectural models for sanctuaries

93 Ibid.; Braunfels, *Abendländische Klosterbaukunst*, 52–65.

94 See O'Loughlin, *Adomnán*, 16–41 and 83–110 and "Adomnán's Plans," arguing that the diagrams in Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* should be understood in the monastic context: not so much as maps of realities in the physical world, but rather images that were employed by monks for exegetical aims, for instance, removing contradictions in textual descriptions of monuments in the Holy Land.

95 See Blair Moore, "Adomnán's *On the Holy Places*," 11–22.

96 Carruthers, *The Craft*, 79.

97 For overviews of the debate about the function of the *Plan of St. Gall*, see Carruthers, *The Craft*, 229, n. 12 and Collins, *The Debate*, 70–71.

in Europe, facilitating the transfer of the architectural form from Jerusalem to other places.[98]

As these examples suggest, texts and image—through the particular form they get on the parchment folio—have a range of affordances. They offer the audience the opportunity to get an overview of places elsewhere and simultaneously allowing them to experience the represented space from within and to go on an imaginative journey, visiting as it were the represented space while reading or viewing. This renders the works a meditational function. They may also have served as models for religious and architectural recreation by the user in the Carolingian realm. The 'nest' of affordances depends to a large extent on the peculiar, ergodic form of the written text on the parchment folio, suggesting a certain order of things (for instance, in the three-column presentation in the *Itinerarium*) or guiding the audiences' eyes when imaginatively navigating the represented space. In the next section, we focus again on the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, now also considering the wider material context in which the *Itinerarium* appears, namely, that of the parchment book or codex. As we will see, particularly the Rome-centred writings in the Einsiedeln compilation contain various elements encouraging or 'affording' an ergodic reading of the codex. The ergodic movement between the various elements in the codex in turn supports the affordances we have already outlined above.

5 The *Itinerarium Einsidlense* in the codex: ergodicity again

As Aarseth suggests, codices (with which he means both the medieval and the modern book) afford two types of reading: "homolinear reading (with the line) and heterolinear reading (tmesis)."[99] Aarseth here expands the notion of tmesis, which traditionally denotes the breaking down of a sentence into separate elements, between which additional components are added.[100] According to Aarseth, tmesis also occurs when larger units such as text fragments or entire texts are separated from one another by intermittent elements. Whereas the homolinear reading implies non-ergodic reading, the heterolinear reading or 'tmesis' can be defined as ergodic, requiring a non-trivial effort of the reader in traversing the text. To put it differently: one could read the book from the beginning to the end in a homolinear fashion. However, it is also possible to read elements in a different order or to go back and forth between different parts.

As indicated already, various elements can be detected in the Rome-centred writings of the Einsiedeln compilation that encourage or afford such an ergodic reading of the codex. In fact, the *Itinerarium* has links with all other Rome-centred writings. The fourth text is closely connected to the *Itinerarium* in terms of genre and content, being one of the many *Ordines Romani* texts produced in the Carolingian era, and providing a description of the stational processions held on the final three days of the Holy Week by the bishop of Rome and his retinue in

[98] Blair Moore, "The Architecture."
[99] Aarseth, *Cybertext*, 79.
[100] See Lausberg, *Handbuch*, §718.

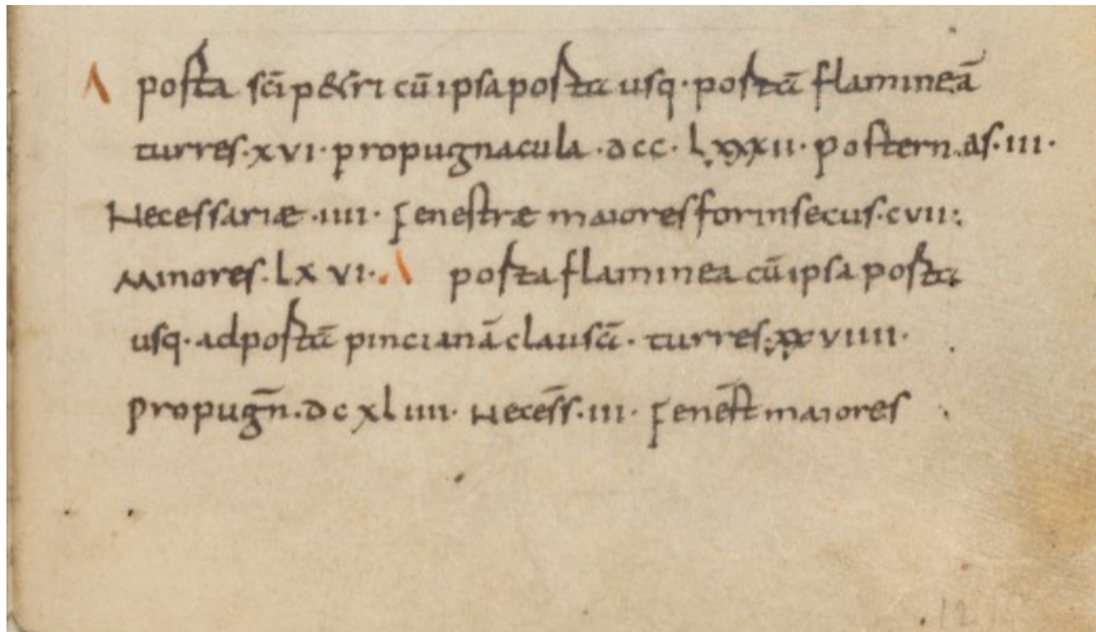

Figure 9: Detail of the *Wall Description*, in Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 326 (1076), fol. 85r.

and around the Lateran palace and the S. John of Lateran and the Jerusalem-church (the current S. Croce in Gerusalemme). As I suggested above, the text can be considered as the more descriptive counterpart of the rather schematic overview of stational processions in the *Itinerarium.* The two main churches in the *Ordo Romanus* also appear in the *Itinerarium*, which invites the reader to make cross connections between the texts on the basis of their shared content.

The two other Rome-centred writings not only contain overlapping elements on the level of content, but also certain cues in the written text that invite the reader to connect elements at different places within the codicological unit. An example is the *Wall Description*, which immediately follows on the *Itinerarium* and provides a list-like enumeration of the amounts of towers, battlements, windows, and latrines between the various main city gates of the Aurelian wall. Each new section is marked by the formula "A porta ..." ("from the gate ..."), which is then followed by the amounts of towers, battlements, windows and latrines on the track before the next important gate (fig. 9). The capital-A of "A porta" is usually written in red. Many of the gates occur also in the *Itinerarium*, often as the beginning or end point of the routes. In the *Itinerarium*, the start and end points are visually marked in rubrics in red capital uncial letters preceding each of the individual routes (see figs. 1 and 2). The visual cues in both texts—the rubrics, the recurring formula and the red, capitalised "A"—allow the reader to quickly recognise the marked elements. Moreover, they invite the reader to make an ergodic movement across the manuscript: to identify recurring elements in the *Itinerarium* and the *Wall Description* and to connect the dots, so as to come to a deeper understanding of the information provided about certain places in the two writings.

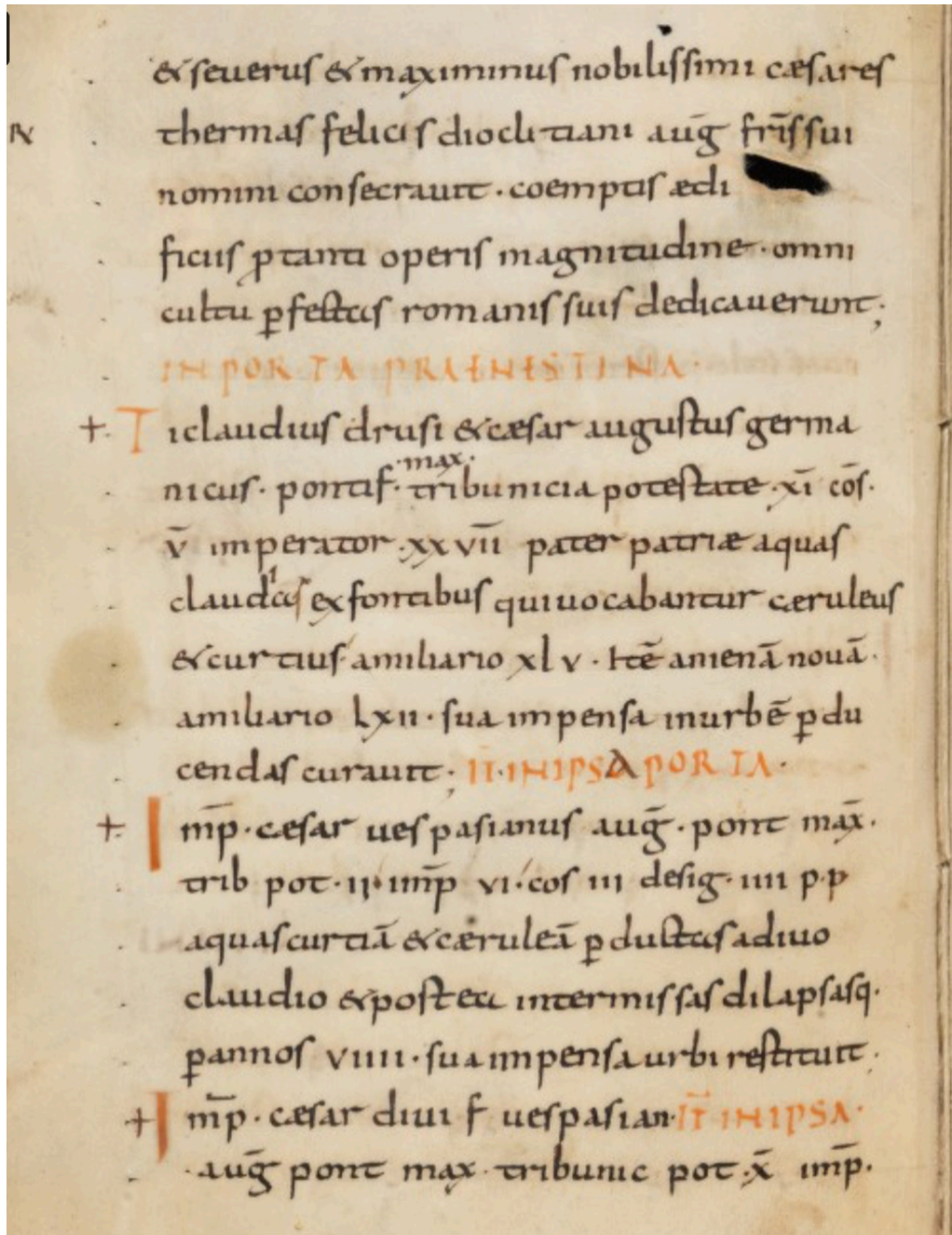

Figure 10: Detail of the *Sylloge Einsidlense*, showing inscriptions on the Porta Praenestina, with red rubrics denoting the location. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 326 (1076), fol. 69v.

Something similar pertains to places mentioned in the *Sylloge* of inscriptions. The inscriptions are usually preceded by rubrics in red capitals, denoting the location of the inscriptions in the real space. Various locations correspond with elements mentioned in the *Itinerarium*. An example is the Porta Praenestina, which is the end point of route 7 in the *Itinerarium* and the location of some inscriptions in the *Sylloge* (fig. 10). The rubrics have a double function, allowing the reader to

see at once where the epigrams are to be located in the real space, while simultaneously functioning as cross-references to the *Itinerarium*, in which many of the monuments and places occur as well.

The ergodic movement that is stimulated by the marked capital letters and rubrics contributes to the two affordances identified above. On the one hand, a reading of the texts together enhances the readers' understanding of the overview of processional routes in the *Itinerarium*, giving background information to places mentioned. On the other hand, the reading of the other Rome-centred writings offers other possible imaginative travel experiences. Significantly, all three writings describe movements through and around the city. The *Sylloge* offers a tour of the inscriptions found in the city and along Rome's main roads outside the walls. The *Wall Description* describes a tour along the Aurelian walls, starting from the Porta S. Petri and then turning in clockwise direction around the city. As I said already, the *Ordo Romanus* text in the codicological unit focuses on the stational processions held in and around two of Rome's main churches in the final three days of the Holy Week. Reading the texts, the reader 'far away' can get an idea of the different routes and processions that can be made in the city and meditate upon the question how they are interconnected. In this way, the writings offer the opportunity to develop an image of Rome, without going there physically.

6 Writing and the significance of material form: concluding remarks

In this article, I employed the notion of the ergodic to demonstrate and highlight the multiple affordances of writing on different levels, ranging from the form of individual words to compilation of writings in the larger unit of the manuscript. Words are invested with significance or symbolic meaning when written in different colours or in heterolinear ways of writing. Rubrics allow the reader to make cross connections and connect elements in different parts of the manuscript. Works (*erga*) offer the reader the opportunity to go on a journey (*hodos*) of the imaginative kind through the particular ergodic form of the text in manuscript, while simultaneously providing an overview of the represented space—be it Rome, the monastery, or a Church such as the one of the Holy Sepulchre. As such, they can be used as instruments of meditation by the monastic audience.

Evidently, the material form of a writing matters when one wants to get a deeper understanding of the various affordances of texts in particular contexts. In this article, I only focused on the affordances of works in their most original context of use, namely, the Carolingian monastery in which sources such as the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, the *Plan of St. Gall* and the manuscript of Adomnán were most likely read and studied. Further research may elucidate other affordances of the sources in later times, thus opening up other new worlds that may not have been explored so far, but yield new insights in the affordances of script in the Latin tradition.

List of figures

Figure 1. Route 4 in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, codex 326 (1076), fols. 80v–81r, ninth or tenth century. Parchment, ca. 178 x 126 mm. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek. Photograph from e-codices, "Codex 326(1076)," accessed May 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/sbe/0326/80v/. License CC-BY-3.0.

Figure 2. Routes 1 and 2 (with the three columns marked in blue) in the *Itinerarium Einsidlense*, codex 326 (1076), fols. 79v–80r, ninth or tenth century. Parchment, ca. 178 x 126 mm. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek. Photograph from e-codices, "Codex 326(1076)," accessed May 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/sbe/0326/79v/. License CC-BY-3.0.

Figure 3. *Plan of St. Gall*, early ninth century. Parchment, ca. 1120 x 750 mm. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092. Photograph from Wikimedia Commons, accessed May 13, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_of_Saint_Gall#/media/File:Codex_Sangallensis_1092_recto.jpg. License CC-PD-1.0.

Figure 4. Diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. From Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*. Parchment, ninth century. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73, fol. 5r. Reproduced by permission of Zürich, Zentralbibliothek.

Figure 5. Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the entrance road the Church (on the left), with the inscription (marked in blue): "Omnibus ad sanctum turbis patet haec via templum / quo sua vota ferant unde hilaris redeant." Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092. Photograph from e-codices, accessed June 29, 2023, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/1092/recto. License CC-BY-NC-4.0.

Figure 6. Detail of the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, showing the inscriptions of the altars (*altare*) in the dome's perambulatory. Parchment, ninth century. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh. 73, fol. 5r. Reproduced by permission of Zürich, Zentralbibliothek.

Figure 7. Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the Abbot's House and the inscription *ingressus* (marked in blue) in the doorway between the *dormitorium* and *mansio abbatis*. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092. Photograph from e-codices, accessed June 29, 2023, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/1092/recto. License CC-BY-NC-4.0.

Figure 8. Detail of the *Plan of St. Gall*, showing the left bell tower. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, codex Sang. 1092. Photograph from e-codices, accessed June

29, 2023, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/1092/recto. License CC-BY-NC-4.0.

Figure 9. Detail from the *Wall Description*. Ninth or tenth century. Parchment, ca. 178 x 126 mm. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 326(1076), fol. 85r. Photograph from e-codices, "Codex 326(1076)," accessed May 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/sbe/0326/85r/. License CC-BY-3.0.

Figure 10. Detail of the *Sylloge Einsidlense*, showing inscriptions on the Porta Praenestina, with red rubrics denoting the location. Ninth or tenth century. Parchment, ca. 178 x 126 mm. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 326(1076), fol. 69v. Photograph from e-codices, "Codex 326(1076)," accessed May 12, 2022, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/sbe/0326/69v/. License CC-BY-3.0.

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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of four articles and one response piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces" by Klazina Staat (pp. 7–42), "Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy" by Han Lamers (pp. 69–101), and "Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019: An Ancient Language in Modern Art" by Simon Smets (pp. 103–37). The response piece is "Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin" by Vincent Debiais (pp. 139–47).

*

The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John*

BARBARA BAERT

Catholic University of Leuven

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the iconographical relationship between the letters and the support on fol. 157r of the Morgan Gospels, written and illuminated in Westphalia, Germany during the mid-tenth century. On the basis of its formal properties and the iconographic meaning it takes, I will give particular attention to the materiality of the Latin text and its cultural and symbolic significance. The folio under study develops a form of 'agency'. With this perspective, I hope not only to contribute to the important line of argument Joshua O'Driscoll develops in his iconic article, but also to explore the meaning of Latin as an iconological statement and hence to contribute with new methodological developments in the field of art history.

***

> Erst wenn die Dinge in die Welt kommen, wenn die Welt Bild geworden IST [sic], kann sie auch abgebildet werden.[1]

This paper discusses a remarkable ninth-century Ottonian full-page miniature (fol. 157r) in the so-called Morgan Gospels. It intended to introduce John's Gospel.[2] The Latin Morgan Gospel Book was written and illuminated in Westphalia, Germany, probably at the Abbey of Corvey, during the mid-tenth century.[3] The manuscript counts 201 parchment leaves, among which five decorated title pages,

* With special thanks to Professor Han Lamers (University of Oslo) and Dr Maxim Rigaux (Ghent University). This paper builds on previous insights, in: Baert, "Marble and the Sea or Echo Emerging"; Baert, "New Iconological Perspectives on Marble as Divinus Spiritus"; Baert, *Pneuma and the Visual Arts in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity*, 108–17.

1 Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*, 155.

2 *Incipit* page of the Gospel of John, MS M. 755, fol. 157r; O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex."

3 Boeckler, *Abendländische Miniaturen bis zum Ausgang der romanischen Zeit*, 51; Swarzenski, "Die deutschen Miniaturen des frühen Mittelalters in amerikanischem Besitz."

Figure 1: *Incipit* page of the Gospel of John, Morgan Gospels, tenth century, New York, The Morgan Library, MS M. 755, fol. 157r.

Figure 2: Inscription from the Carolingian exterior of the church in Corvey, west façade. Taken from O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 315, fig. 6.

four decorated *incipit* pages, eight decorated text pages and sixteen canon tables.[4] The gospel book was purchased in 1929 from the German bookdealer Jacques Rosenthal (1854–1937), and has since then been kept at The Morgan Library in New York.[5]

The fol. 157r that is of our interest here, is adorned with a framed, abstract image of purple pigment with light blue shivering veins that pulsate from a central point—a vortex—just outside the compositional centre of the miniature. Upon this peculiar background, golden squared capitals are shimmering. The epigraph reads: *In christi nomine inicium sancti evangelii secundum Johannem* ('In the name of Christ. The Beginning of the Sacred Gospel according to John') (fig. 1). The script has been shaped, dimensioned, and coloured to create the effects of a text on marble.

In this specific miniature of the Morgan Gospels, an interesting tension arises between its actual parchment support, the miniature featuring the marble vortex, and the golden Latin text added in the final phase in the illumination of the page. The reader looks at the visual evocation of a material, of an object—marble—, but at the same time steps into the scope of marble as an iconographic motif. The *incipit* refers both to ancient epigraphy from the monastic environment outside the manuscript, and to the richly decorated title pages in gold, typical of the workshops of the time.

In his article "Visual Vortex," Joshua O'Driscoll develops the hypothesis that the miniaturist may have wished to copy the epigraphs carved into stone and

4 See also the following exhibitions: Harrsen, ed., *Central European Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, no. 6, plates 15, 16, 17, and 18; Sporbeck, ed., *Vor dem Jahr 1000*, 59–61, cat. no. 10, figures 43 and 44.

5 The Morgan Library & Museum, "Gospel Book," accessed January 16, 2023, https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/131052.

marble *spolia* on the exteriors of churches, as can still be seen, for example, on the abbey church of Corvey (fig. 2).[6] Within the manuscript, a transitive dynamic between exterior (*incipit*) and interior (the actual text of the gospel) arises, between material and spiritual, between temporal and eternal, between chaos and order, between the diffuse abstract vibrations and the delineated figurative iconography of the initial, between the Roman exogenous capital in marble and the contemporary insular scripts.

The next section explores how the relationship between the letters and the support on fol. 157r of the Morgan Gospels unfolds for a reader or beholder of the gospel book. In other words, the miniature under study develops a form of 'agency': on the basis of its formal properties and the iconographic position it takes, the miniature has the capacity to convey a specific message.[7] Particular attention goes to the suggested materiality of the Latin text and its cultural and symbolical significance in the context of the Morgan Gospels. With this additional perspective, this paper not only contributes to the important line of argument Joshua O'Driscoll develops in his article, but also to further explore the meaning of Latin as an iconological statement, relating an important contribution to new methodological developments in the field of art history.

Recently, medievalists have started to pay more attention to the interpretation of non-figurative colour and line surfaces in painting and miniature art, whereas these features of the image have for a very long time been regarded as purely decorative.[8] Form languages that lack depictions of nature and show far-reaching abstraction, as well as proto-Christian ornamentation, such as wickerwork, are currently explored against the backdrop of alternative systems of meaning. This paper partakes in an emergent field of study that embraces the effects of colours and lines on the viewer, as well as their symbolic functions, as valuable objects of study. Specifically, it will offer a reinterpretation of the relationship between abstract design and Latin script from an iconographical perspective, which shows that these features should not be regarded as empty formalism, nor thoughtless compliance with artistic conventions.

1 *Incipit*

The *incipit* ('it begins') or *initium* ('beginning') denotes the first few words of the text and, before the development of formal titles, sometimes served as a text's title. Some of the Psalms, for instance, are known by their incipits. The phenomenon of *incipit* is not restricted to the Latin Middle Ages and is in evidence earlier in Sumerian, Hebrew, and Ancient Greek literary practice as well. Incipits are usually given special artistic attention in the manuscripts of the texts they denote. While they are sometimes just written in red or larger letters, they may also be

[6] O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 315.

[7] Gell, *Art and Agency*, 83–90.

[8] Debiais, "Colour as Subject."

Figure 3: *Pericope for Christmas*, Mass Lectionary, Reichenau or Schaffhausen, late tenth century, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, Ms. 1492, fol. 5v.

elaborately decorated and fill a full page in a manuscript. Their marked prominence suggests their special role in readers’ experience of the book as a visual and material object.

Some Ottonian manuscripts distinguish between the folio with the *incipit* announcing the start of a new volume, book or chapter, and a second folio (often verso) recording the initials or first words of the text. “The incipit being a short introductory statement, and the initials being the opening words of the gospel text.”[9] As we shall see, the creator of the Morgan Gospel of John also opted for this de-duplication of recto and verso. The manuscript thus unfolds a dynamic

[9] O’Driscoll, “Visual Vortex,” 313, note 17. Selected literature from the same note: Elbern,“Zierseiten in Handschriften des frühen Mittelalters”; Farr, “The Incipit Pages of the Macregol Gospels”; Jakobi-Mirwald, *Text-Buchstabe-Bild,* 96–98; see also: Bonne, “De l’ornemental dans l’art médiéval,” 234.

between two essential forms of 'beginning' in John's Gospel. The difference in meaning is explored through iconography and the layout of the folios, whereby the Latin script itself, too, will be shown to be an essential carrier of meaning.

In Carolingian and Ottonian art, *incipit* miniatures were often exceptionally richly decorated, with abstract decorative shapes being combined with the opening sentence of the gospel in question.[10] These highly complex decorative forms with knot and braid works were influenced and adapted from the so called insular art, this is the Hiberno-Saxon art, produced in the post-Roman era. From the ninth century onwards, the *incipit* of a gospel acquired the status of a full-fledged miniature, usually between the author's portrait and the initial. Incipits, such as the one in the *Pericope for Christmas* of the tenth century (Reichenau or Schaffhausen) were often inspired by the copious motifs of Byzantine silk (fig. 3).[11] This relationship with textiles is particularly relevant, as they are natural carriers of the metaphor of the veil.[12] By simulating textile, the *incipit* becomes a visual prelude appropriate to the theological rhetoric of the unveiling of the word.[13]

The *incipit* of the Morgan Gospel of John, however, diverges from these carpet pages—because of its monochrome vibration—and from the *incipit* miniatures elsewhere in the evangeliary. The 'prelude' of John's *incipit* does not simulate silk, but marble. "As if making a conscious effort to minimize the presence of any decorative elements whatsoever, the artist has allowed no room for distraction and thus makes a strong claim for the image's own centrality."[14]

The marble appears as a support for the Latin text, which as it were 'floats' on the marble surface due to the letters with raised gold leaf. At the same time, the capital letterform of the Latin evokes inscriptions chiselled into stone, which were also recovered as *spolia* in the Ottonian period, and to which we will return. There is, in short, an ambiguity between the miniature of the *incipit*, in which the text and the marble are united in a unique, iconic formulation, and the mimetic illusion of an *incipit* chiselled in marble. In other words, on the one hand, the miniature is a splendidly depicted title folio with its purple and gold accents, and on the other hand, it suggests a depiction of a material situation, namely Latin text immortalised in stone.

This paper attempts to explore and explain the layered iconography in the manuscript in more detail than has been done before. The following section sheds light on sources that suggest a particular symbolic experience of marble which feeds into the interpretation of the *incipit* miniature proposed here. More specifically, folio 157r—with its *paragone* between matter and pigment, between image and text, between abstraction and letters—is charged with associations of marble as a cosmogonic principle.

10 Further elaborations on *incipit* pages in the Ottonian manuscript tradition, O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 313.

11 Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 25, fig. 14; Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, Ms. 1492, fol. 5v.

12 Wagner, "Silken Parchments," 12–37.

13 Ganz, "Clothing Sacred Scriptures," 12; Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages*, 116; O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 314.

14 Ibid., 312.

2 Marble

The *incipit* miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John explores the symbolic place that marble occupies within the sacredness of Scripture and, more specifically, as an access point to the Latin text of the Gospel of John.

The medieval fascination with marble in the East and West is richly documented. The precarious material was regarded as a primeval stone, and its spotty motifs as a phantasmatic idiom that takes the viewer to elements of creation. Marble, it was felt, made the ritual space pregnant with creation and with the sensory experience of it through its visual and acoustic effects.

The exceptional associative affordances of marble have been described with praise since ancient times and in the early Church Fathers. Pliny the Elder (23/34–79), in his *Natural History*, included descriptions of marble due to its fancied qualities. Marbles are veined; they are spotted; they have *maculae*.[15] Augustine (354–430) sees in marble the vortices and the waves of water. Isidore of Seville (560–636), in the entry *De marmoribus* in his *Etymologiae*, speaks of an exceptional stone with colours that have no equal:[16]

> Nam marmora dicuntur eximii lapides, qui maculis et coloribus commendantur. (...) Marmorum colores et genera innumerabilia sunt. (...) Augusteum et Tiberium in Aegypto Augusti ac Tiberii primum principatu reperta sunt. (...) Nam Augusteum undatim est crispum in vertices; Tiberium sparsa, non convoluta, canitie.[17]

The fascination with marble and its symbolical potential goes back to Antiquity. In the first century, for example, Statius (40–96) wrote that the green marble of Laconia imitated the fields.[18] In the fifth century, Sidonius Apollinaris (431–489) wrote in his letters that the marble from Thessaly represents not only the fields but also forests with immobile trees.[19] Around 550, Choricius of Gaza described the church of Saint Stephen in Gaza, comparing the marbles to paintings:

> *ζῶναι γὰρ οὕτω μαρμάρων καλύπτουσιν εὐαρμόστως τὸν τοῖχον οὕτω μὲν ἔχουσαι τῆς ἁρμονίας ὡς ἔργον νομίζεσθαι φύσεως, οὕτω δὲ πεποικιλμέναι χρόαις ἐμφύτοις ὡς μηδὲν ἀπᾴδειν χειροποιήτου γραφῆς.*[20]

[15] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXVII.

[16] O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 315.

[17] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* XVI, 5; English translation, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 321: "Exceptional stones that are prized for their markings and colors are called 'marble' (...) the colors and kinds of marble are beyond counting. (...) Augustean and Tiberian marble were first found in Egypt during the reigns of August and Tiberius (...) Augustean markings are undulating and curled into whorls [*vertices*], while Tiberian are of grey that is spotty and not swirled."

[18] Statius, *Silvae* II, 90–91, 128.

[19] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* II, X, 14, 20–21; English translation from *Poems. Letters. Books 1–2*, 466.

[20] "(...) bands of well-fitting marble cover the wall. They are so joined together as to appear to be a work of nature, and so variegated with their natural colours as to resemble altogether a hand-painted picture," Choricius of Gaza, *Laudatio Marciani* II, 40 (*Opera*, 38); Fobelli, "Descrizione e percezione delle immagini acheropite sui marmi bizantini," 29; English translation from Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," 8.

The marbles of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople were particularly famous. In her book chapter "Descrizione e percezione delle immagini acheropite sui marmi bizantini," Maria Luigia Fobelli opens with a discussion of literary sources describing the magnificence of the marble plates in the Hagia Sophia in Byzantium (fig. 4).[21] These sources partially belong to the genre of *ekphrasis* writings, and partially to the 'touristic' appreciations of the time. In 563, for instance, Paul the Silentiary famously described the marble stones of the Hagia Sophia:[22]

> *λαοτόρον δ᾽ἀνὰ τοῖχον ἐΰγραφα δαίδαλα τέχνης*
> *πάντοθεν ἀστράπτουσιν. ἁλιστεφέος Προκοννήσου*
> *ταῦτα φάραγξ ἐλόχευσε. πολυτμήτων δὲ μετάλλων*
> *ἁρμονίη γραφίδεσσιν ἰσάζεται· ἐν γὰρ ἐκείνῃ*
> *τετρατόμοις λάεσσι καὶ ὀκτατόμοισι νοήσεις*
> *ζευγνυμένας κατὰ κόσμον ὁμοῦ φλέβας· ἀγλαΐην δὲ*
> *ζωοτύπων λάϊγγες ἐμιμήσαντο δεθεῖσαι.*[23]

Figure 4: Details from the marble decorations in the Hagia Sophia, sixth century, Proconnesian marble, Istanbul, Hagia Sophia.

21 Fobelli, "Descrizione e percezione delle immagini acheropite sui marmi bizantini."

22 Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity"; Vandenbroeck, "Matrix Marmorea" (2010), 60.

23 "Upon the carved stone wall curious designs glitter everywhere. These have been produced by the quarries of seagirt Proconnesus. The joining of the cut marbles resembles the art of painting, for you may see the [natural] veins of the square and octagonal stones meeting so as to form devices: connected in this way,

Recognising images, animals, landscapes, and even people became a *Leitmotiv* in accounts of travels to Constantinople, Ravenna, and Venice. Fobelli explains the success of this 'visual rhetoric' from Byzantine definitions of the image.[24] For the Byzantines at that time, the difference between a representation and the suggestion of an image was less fixed than it is for modern beholders. For them the materiality of the marble was itself an *acheiropoietos*. Marble was a visual marvel, it contained 'living images'.[25]

Where does the idea that marble is a (coagulated) liquid come from? The science of stones, as developed by Avicenna (980–1037) in his treatise on the congelation and conglutination of stones dating to 1021–1023, shows the conviction that conglutination and congelation (such as stalactites) had a petrifying effect on water; in brief that water 'rigidifies,' 'freezes' and petrifies on the basis of a mineral power.[26] The etymology of 'marble,' namely *mar/marmor/marmora* illuminates this phenomenon. The Greek *μαρμαίρειν* means to glisten, to shine like the surface of the water, as Homer sings in *Iliad* XIV, 273: *ἅλα μαρμαρέην*, the shining sea. Virgil associates *marmor* with *mare*,[27] and suggests that marble is the hard surface of the sea. Deeper in the etymology we find in Sanskrit the root *mar* for movement (of waves) and *mar-mar* for the less tranquil movements of the sea, still to be heard in our own speech as the 'murmuring' sea.[28] The sixth-century marble used in the Hagia Sophia is Proconnesian marble, which replaced the earlier marble from Carystus because of its greater affinity to the symbolism of water.

In his article "Walking on Water," Fabio Barry reinterprets the phenomenon of marble floors in early medieval churches from the perspective of the primal substance, water.[29] He shows that in sources from that time the marble blocks in the Hagia Sophia were not only admired as living natural paintings and landscapes (at its dedication in 537, Emperor Justinian compared the Hagia Sophia to the glittering of the Temple of Solomon), but also because of their effects as a 'frozen sea'. A ninth-century source, the *Diegesis* or *Narratio*, comments on the marble of the Hagia Sophia as a "sea, or the swelling water of a river."[30] The *ekphrasis* of Michael, the deacon of Hagia Sophia (ca. 1140–1150), sees the church as a sea with the ambo as an island.[31] The *Narratio* says that Thessaly marble is the closest

the stones imitate the glories of painting" (Paul the Silentiary, *Descriptio S. Sophiae et ambonis*, ll. 605–11). Note that the recent edition of the Greek text by Claudio De Stefani (Teubner, 2011) reads *χαλκότορον* ("bronze-pierced") instead of the more traditional *λαοτόρον* ("stone-carved"), which is preferred here and reflected in the translation.

24 Fobelli, "Descrizione e percezione delle immagini acheropite sui marmi bizantini," 31.

25 Ibid., 30; Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," 12–13; Trilling, "Medieval Art without Style?," 60.

26 Avicenna, *De congelatione et conglutinatione lapidum*, 46.

27 Virgil, *Aeneid* VII, 27: *In lento luctantor marmore tonsae*. Virgil often uses the expression *marmoreum aequor*; Barry, "Walking on Water," 631 and 650–51, notes 43 and 44.

28 Schwarzenberg, "Colour, Light and Transparency in the Greek World," 22.

29 Barry, "Walking on Water."

30 See Scheja, "Hagia Sophia und Templum Salomonis," 51; Constantine Porphyrogenitos calls the altar a "little sea." See Barry, "Walking on Water," 637 and 653, note 79.

31 Mango and Parker, "A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia," 234; Mjeska, "Notes on the Archaeology of St. Sophia at Constantinople," 299.

to the rivers of Paradise.[32] In brief, the relationship between the qualities of marble and the association with the sea appears to be a *topos* in the early Byzantine period. This *topos* also resonates in medieval responses to marble from the Latin West. When, for example, the German pilgrim William of Oldenburg visited Beirut in 1211, he described the marble he saw in the churches of the city as follows:

> Pauimentum habet subtile marmoreum, simulans aquam leui uento agitatam, ita ut, qui super illud incesserit, uadare putetur, cum tamen arene illic depicte summa uestigia non impresserit.[33]

With these associations in mind, we are able to understand that the suggestion of marble in the *incipit* folio of the Morgan Gospel of John was a clear artistic choice. The *incipit*, associated with the artistic suggestion of marble, should be seen against this long tradition of appreciating marble symbolically in artistic contexts. We have seen how the geological materiality of marble was associated with a frozen sea, and how marble houses of worship, because of their splendour, were traced to the biblical house of prayer: the temple of Solomon. The aesthetic experience of marble relates to the not-yet-unveiled image, an image that lives in potentiality and thus is contained in the suggestive, formative beauty of the marble material itself. The condition of images that have yet to manifest themselves figuratively is close to the phenomenon of the *acheiropoietos* or the image as *non-manufactum*.[34] Images not made by human hands are the 'images' by and in God's creation. These can be hidden images in rocks or in organic materials. This type of sculpture, *non-manufactum*, requires an additional effort from the viewer to search for, and recognise, form and figuration in abstraction. In this active contemplation, the viewer touches upon the secret of the 'visual in process'. The viewer activates, as it were, the images that have traditionally been solidified in matter. In his book *Spiritual Seeing* (2000), Herbert Kessler has shown how this principle of perception was particularly strongly upheld at the time of the Morgan Gospels.[35] In the fourth section the paper returns to this image-theoretic principle of the Ottonian period.

3 *In principio*

The aesthetics of the marbles on the walls and the floors of Byzantine and Ottonian churches connect the liturgical space to cosmogonic meanings, and hence to the primordial waters in the Book of Genesis.[36]

In the Vulgate version, which was the primary point of reference for artists in the Latin West, Genesis 1:1–5 reads as follows:

> in principio creavit Deus caelum et terram.

[32] Barry, "Walking on Water," 628.

[33] *Peregrinatores medii aevi quator*, 167; English translation by Barry, "Walking on Water," 630: "A fine marble pavement that so well feigns water stirred by a light wind that, whoever steps over it, seems to be wading, since they leave no footprints above the sand depicted here."

[34] Trilling, "The Image not Made by Hands and the Byzantine Way of Seeing."

[35] Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 153.

[36] Barry, "Walking on Water," 634.

> terra autem erat inanis et vacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas
> dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux
> et vidit Deus lucem quod esset bona et divisit lucem ac tenebras
> appellavitque lucem diem et tenebras noctem factumque est vespere et mane dies unus.[37]

"The spirit [*spiritus*, after the Hebrew *ruach*] of God moved over the waters." Even before creation, in a cosmogonic state, the earth was covered with a 'primal flood' and there was chaos and darkness. The primal flood is here negative: it is a threatening force that stands in opposition to the power—the *ruach*—of God.[38] And God sweeps over the waters. He is the principle of air that must obtain power over the principle of water. The Hebrew story of creation is thus not one of creation *ex nihilo*. There is a cosmic pre-existence, albeit a chaotic one, and God is shown as the sovereign power that drives out the chaos of the waters.

The primeval ocean was, in the Semitic tradition, a chaotic principle that had to be combated by God's *ruach*.[39] It was the first principle of creation, already present, and hostile to *ruach*. The waters had to be 'tamed'. The marbles are similarly "ideogram[s] of the mythical Ocean encircling the inhabitable world (*oikoumene*). (...) the nave floor (representing the *oikoumene*) is often bounded by a decorative border. (...) a watery floor in the image of an entire sea, as presented by Proconnesian marble, promised to be alpha and omega of such premonitory materiality."[40]

The action of ordering/creation is carried out not only by God as wind but also through his voice. It is through his speech that what is to happen is brought about. Some exegetes see the *ruach* principle as a foreign element redacted into Genesis.[41] The concept is too specific and is at odds with all the further creative action being through speech. Nevertheless, the relationship between *ruach* and speech is no anomaly, for wind and voice have the same root meaning in Hebrew.[42]

In his book *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram analyses the complex of air, breath, wind and *ruach* in terms of the transition from oral culture to literacy.

37 "In the beginning (*in principio*) when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." Here and in what follows the neo-vulgata was used: Katholieke Bijbelstichting, "Willibordvertaling (1975)," accessed January 16, 2023, https://rkbijbel.nl/kbs/bijbel/willibrord1975/neovulgaat; and for English the NRSV version on Bible Study Tools, "Home Page," accessed January 16, 2023, www.biblestudytools.com. With special thanks to Prof. dr. Reimund Bieringer, KU Leuven – Department of Exegesis.

38 This negative power may seem curious, given that in the West we spontaneously associate water with fertility and regeneration. Nevertheless, in the Babylonian mythography that influenced the Book of Genesis, the pre-cosmogonic state was a watery chaos, a primordial ocean. Only after this state, in the creation and order brought about by God, could water be considered a positive and regenerative principle. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 191.

39 Eissfeldt, "Gott und das Meer in der Bibel."

40 Barry, "Walking on Water," 634.

41 Sevrin, "Spiritus dans les versions latines de la bible."

42 Luyster, "Wind and Water," 8.

In principle air is invisible and for an oral cultural system air/wind is the archetype of the secret, of what is unknown but nonetheless 'there'.[43] Abram writes:

> Is it possible that a volatile power once propitiated as a local storm god came to be generalized, by one tribe of nomadic herders, into the capricious power of the encompassing atmosphere itself? That it was experienced not as an abstract power entirely outside of sensuous nature, but as the unseen medium, the *ruach*, the ubiquitous wind or spirit that enlivens the visible world.[44]

Abram shows that the word enunciated is conceived as 'structured breath,' giving air and wind a linguistic-semantic potential. The principle of air/wind communicates and breath structures this in speech in the communication between humans, between humanity and nature, and between humanity and God.[45]

This brings us back to the Morgan Gospels. The effect of the vortex on fol. 157r on the viewer is diffuse, vibrant, kinetic, and engulfing, in contrast to the epigraph with its symmetrical order, squared capitals, and solemn golden script.[46] The abstraction of a world in formation is the soil, the material of what is here formed as the epigraph. Thus, this particular iconography, which 'includes' the Latin words, resonates with a primordial state of potentiality, when from the dark waters matter was formed by God's voice.

In the miniature, God's voice is thus imagined to rise from the primordial mass. It speaks loud and clear of the imminent creation of form and language, and literally 'floats' over the veined vortex. The Latin epigraphy on the folio from the Morgan Gospel of John evokes the ordering principle from the primordial chaos of the frozen sea; God's voice expresses itself naturally through the noblest plastic means: purple pigment, gold leaf, and the classically chiselled capital. They are, so to speak, natural to His colour of voice. The miniaturist of the Morgan Gospel of John thus visualised the birth of form through divine speech in a highly original way, that is, by associating still wild matter to the ordering principle of letters and words. In this web of associations and meaning, the Latin capital possesses the aura, the script-charisma, of a primordial language.[47] Its marble-chiselled effect points to its durability, the word surviving the ravages of time. In combination with the gold, as the highest material and shining pigment, the epigraph additionally refers to the divine character of this eternal word that floats bodiless in the aural dimension of the *vox*. In this context, Latin is both the only capital script and the only language that can handle the status of divine speech. And the veined marble is both the only material and the only abstract iconography that expresses this ancient monotheistic status without figuration. Abstract pictoriality meets language, meets speech, meets epigraphy. This is a carefully designed visual

43 Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 225–60, esp. 226: "(...) the air, for oral peoples, is the archetype of all that is ineffable, unknowable, yet undeniably real and efficacious."

44 Ibid., 249.

45 Ibid., 227.

46 In the Indo-European lexical field, the word for vortex is related to wind on the basis of turning, wobbling, confusing, disorder, tumbling, for example in *disturbare*, to make chaotic; Gambling History, "De geschiedenis van het gokken in Indo-Europese landen," accessed January 16, 2023, http://www.indo-european.nl/Root /lemma Proto-IE.

47 Aytürk, "Script Charisma in Hebrew and Turkish."

statement about an act of creation that structures itself through the rhythm of classically aligned letters. That is why this folio is also the ultimate *ekphrasis*, namely the visual translation of what seems almost impossible: the 'something out of nothing,' with the divine word as its only mediation.

Thus, the *incipit* folio of the manuscript metamorphoses into something more and more significant than 'just' the beginning of a book. This *incipit* is the beginning of a coming of the Voice, a word so powerful that it could transform the chaos of the waters into linguistic order; so essential, that it needs the durability of epigraphy in stone. As a portal welcomes the visitor to the liturgical space, so this full-page miniature welcomes the fourth evangelical space of the manuscript.

Now the actual text of John can come.
The voice is ready for the flesh.

At this stage of iconological analysis (the miniature as a plastic mirror of the creative voice, supported by simulated marble that is itself charged with cosmogonic symbolism), we reach the right moment to elaborate on the principle of 'spiritual seeing,' mentioned previously.

4 Spiritual seeing

What does the image do? What can it do? What does it lack? These questions were asked in the West at the time of a deep crisis that was mainly played out in Byzantium. When the legitimacy of figurative art underwent a profound crisis during the eighth-century iconoclastic struggle, the mystery of the Incarnation there emerged as a fully-fledged theory of images.[48] In this context, fits a remarkable *passus* from the iconophile John of Damascus (675–749):

> *Εἰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ἀοράτου Θεοῦ εἰκόνα ἐποιοῦμεν, ὄντως ἡμαρτάνομεν. Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τὸ ἀσώματον, καὶ ἀόρατον, καὶ ἀπερίγραπτον, καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον εἰκονισθῆναι. (...) Θεοῦ γὰρ σαρκωθέντος, καὶ ὀφθέντος ἐπὶ γῆς σαρκί, καὶ ἀνθρώποις συναναστραφέντος, δι' ἄφατον ἀγαθότητα καὶ φύσιν, καὶ πάχος, καὶ σχῆμα, καὶ χρῶμα σαρκὸς ἀναλαβόντος, τούτου τὴν εἰκόνα ποιοῦντες, οὐ σφαλλόμεθα.*[49]

From the words of John of Damascus, it seems the Incarnation becomes the key argument in a theologically grounded defence of the representation of Christ. The Christian God humbled himself in flesh for the benefit of mankind and thus offered visibility as salvation. This principle is called the *oikonomia*. This key concept of *oikonomia* (that is, the image as service and salvation) was developed in the

48 See still as the most important work: Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*.

49 John of Damascus, *Pro sacris imaginibus orationes tres*, PG 94:1288. English translation cited from Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 35: "If we attempt to make an image of the invisible God, that would be a sin indeed. It is impossible to portray what has no body: invisible, indescribable, and without form (...). But we are not erring when we make an image of the incarnated deity, who has been seen in flesh on earth, has been in contact with man, and in his ineffable goodness has taken on nature, feeling, form, colour and flesh."

iconographic manifesto of Patriarch Nicephorus (758–828).[50] If God has revealed Himself in physical materiality, then any image of anything—even of the order of physical materiality—is logically permissible *a fortiori*. This reasoning was intended to undermine the main argument of the iconoclasts, namely Exodus 20:5:

> Non adorabis ea neque coles, quia ego sum Dominus Deus tuus, Deus zelotes, visitans iniquitatem patrum in filiis in tertiam et quartam generationem eorum, qui oderunt me.[51]

After all, the Christian God was no longer the jealous God. He was the humbled God who did not shun the paint as He had not shunned the flesh.

The debate between iconophiles and iconoclasts also became an issue at Charlemagne's court in the Latin West. There, scriptoria flourished; in manuscripts they produced, images and words were interwoven. Under the influence of Byzantine iconoclasm, however, the figurative image became problematic in Western Europe as well (Second Council of Nicaea, 787). The question at that time was no longer the legitimacy of the figurative image—which it had found in the image-theoretic and salvation-historical *oikonomia*—but the power of the image. What can the image achieve? What can it not do? According to the *Libri Carolini* (ca. 790), the image cannot reveal the underlying meaning of salvation history.[52] The image, therefore, is not the medium of the *interpretatio*. Interpretation is reserved for the word. Looking is a physical act, a sensory activity, suitable for the pagan who is not yet able to contemplate God and the sacred in the mind, the author of the *Libri Carolini* adds.[53]

Under the influence of the iconophile position at the beginning of the ninth century, Pope Hadrian I (772–795) defended 'spiritual vision' (Council of Paris, 825).[54] On his view, the image transcends narrativity and can become the vehicle for a higher seeing. That higher seeing is accompanied by the artist's hand itself, which is able to weave levels of interpretation into the image.

The image was seen to appeal to a threefold 'seeing' and became the subject of debate on the spiritual seeing of Hadrian I, which influenced the Ottonian manuscripts and their iconography. This perspective joins three levels of interpretation already formulated by Augustine.[55] First, there is the reading of words without understanding them. This kind of reading is tantamount to physical seeing. Secondly, there is spiritual seeing, where the words can be interpreted by an intellectual mediator. Often this mediator is a scholar who explains the text. Thirdly, and finally, there is true intellectual seeing. This seeing occurs deeply in

[50] Nicephorus, *Antirrhetici tres adversus Constantinum Copronymum*. Translated into French as *Discours contre les iconoclastes* by Mondzain-Baudinet; see also Alloa and Falk, eds., *BildÖkonomie*.

[51] "You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me."

[52] *Opus Caroli Regis Contra Synodum (Libri Carolini)*. Mentioned in the *Libri Carolini* 3.23, and cited in: Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300–1150*, 103. See also Freeman, "Scripture and Images in the Libri Carolini," 163.

[53] Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 153.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXII, 29 (CCSL 48, 856). See also, classically, de Lubac, *Exégèse médièvale*, passim.

the mind and independently of elements only the senses would register, such as line, colour, sound, smell, or taste. It is there where God can be seen. According to Augustine, this seeing requires an intellectual power to detach things from their material nature into the virtue of the purely spiritual. This is the seeing that takes place immediately in the mind. In spiritual seeing, the visual medium is eschatological. In spiritual seeing, the image gets the last word.

With this digression on spiritual vision in the background, this paper returns to the role of the *incipit* in the Morgan Gospel of John, and we approach the conclusion of this iconological exploration.

5 *Et Verbum caro factum est*

The *incipit* chiselled in (simulated) stone makes a new beginning possible. Now that the inscription has been installed indestructibly in the manuscript as a potentiality, another time can begin, the time of the New Covenant and the road to figurative visibility. *In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum hoc erat in principio apud Deum* ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God") (John 1:1–2). *Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis et vidimus gloriam eius gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis* ("And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth") (John 1:14).

This 'marble' *incipit* may show pictorial strategies at work that put the Gospel according to John in a particular theological light and provide a reflection upon the relationship between the art of miniatures and the word as part of its visual and material field of signification. Augustine, among others, regarded John's Gospel as the most important gospel due to the reference to the Incarnation (the word becoming flesh) in the opening verses.[56] John Scotus Eriugena (ninth century) goes furthest in this valuation: the Apostle John has a visionary knowledge that surpasses the senses. Like his symbol, the eagle, he flies above things, in an unsurpassed flight of the spirit.[57] Eriugena sees John's visionary quality as a model for reading and interpretation that rises from darkness to light.[58]

Here the paradigm of the Incarnation, the transition from darkness to light, also touches on the essence of the artistic creative process. Thus, the material manipulation and pictorial integration of (marble) stains forces us to think about the relationship between prefiguration and figuration. Let loose between these two realms or 'visual fields' is an energy that constantly moves between them, as

[56] *Tituli* often read "In the manner of an eagle, John reaches the heavens through the word." *More volans aquilae verbo petit astra Johannes*, see Sedulius, *Carmen paschale* I, 358, PL 19:591.

[57] Eriugena, *Hom. XV*, 283b–283c: "Supervolat itaque beatus theologus Iohannes non solum quae intelligi ac dici possunt, verum etiam in ea quae superant omnem intellectum et significationem supervehitur, extraque omnia ineffabili mentis volatu," SC 151, 206.

[58] Referring to Romans 1:20, Eriugena contemplates whether the only way to divine knowledge is the Word or sensible things: "Learn the divine words and understand them with your spirit: there you will recognize the Word. Look with the bodily sense at the forms and beauty of sensible things: in them you will perceive the Word of God." From Dutton, ed., *Carolingian Civilization*, 458. See also O'Meara, *Eriugena*, 165–66.

if between the promise that a figure will appear out of nothing, and the consolidated figure/figuration itself. According to the Neoplatonist Pseudo-Dionysius (fifth-sixth century), this is in fact the primordial binomial relationship on which every visual creation is based. It is experienced in the realms of *plattomenos* (πλαττόμενος, being modelled) and *mimesis* (representing) respectively.[59] The energetic abstraction of the *plattomenos*—the dizzying sinuosities of polished marble slabs (a cosmogonic congelation of the murmuring sea)—testifies to a deeper anthropological split between a-figurative, prefigurative, abstract and symbolic, communicable, figurative, legible, mimetic.

The reader will now exchange the iconic gaze for a diachronic look. Slowly, he will notice how the letter 'I' attaches itself like an *axis mundi* to the letter 'N': *In principio erat Verbum*. And finally, the reader will understand that in this full-sheet miniature, letters grow and resonate into the symbol of the cross, which replaces the abstract trembling vortex. The text *In principio erat Verbum* opens a world in which God moves from word to flesh, from invisibility to visibility. The incarnate word has become real in the Son, and at the same time it conceals what cannot be seen without the mediation of the Son of Man. The abundant and complex interlacing or rotating motifs orchestrate the process of the unveiling of the sacred word made flesh in a "iconicity of script."[60] The Incarnation, which John the Evangelist upholds as the first principle of his book needs another visual grammar. The full-page miniature on folio verso celebrates the dynamics of simultaneous concealment and revelation of letters that playfully flow into each other, expressed in the medium of the book and its actual and true support: parchment.[61]

Paul clarifies this in his Second Letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 3:7, 11–14, 18:

> Quod si ministratio mortis, litteris deformata in lapidibus, fuit in gloria, ita ut non possent intendere filii Israel in faciem Moysis propter gloriam vultus eius, quae evacuatur. (…) Si enim, quod evacuatur, per gloriam est, multo magis, quod manet, in gloria est. Habentes igitur talem spem multa fiducia utimur, et non sicut Moyses: ponebat velamen super faciem suam, ut non intenderent filii Israel in finem illius quod evacuatur. Sed obtusi sunt sensus eorum. Usque in hodiernum enim diem idipsum velamen in lectione Veteris Testamenti manet non revelatum, quoniam in Christo evacuatur; (…) Nos vero omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini Spiritu.[62]

59 See also Vandenbroeck, "Matrix Marmorea" (2012), 193.

60 Hamburger, "The Iconicity of Script," 251: "this term encompasses more than signification, let alone symbolism, to include the presence and persuasiveness of lettering, at times independent of its meaning (hardly insignificant in light of widespread illiteracy)."

61 Pirotte, "La Parole est aux images."

62 "Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside. (…) for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory! Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. (…) And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a

Figure 5: *In principio* page of the Gospel of John, Morgan Gospels, tenth century, New York, The Morgan Library, MS M. 755, fol. 157v.

Whereas the veil of Moses had to cover the divine reflection (Exodus 33:20: *Rursumque ait: Non poteris videre faciem meam; non enim videbit me homo et vivet*),[63] so Paul says, the imperfection of the Old Testament, like the temple curtain, will be lifted in the unveiled truth of Christ. The Church Fathers, like the aforementioned John of Damascus, recognised in the veil the bearer of the face as the revelation of the New Covenant. To conceal and to reveal, that is what the 'image veil' does. That is also what the *mandylion* does. The *mandylion*, the image of images, has caught the divine rays of light, made the face of God in the Son bearable, and transferred that glory to humanity.

mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

63 "'But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live'."

Back to the Morgan Gospel of John. Both sides of the page thus represent a beginning based on their own type and function, but how do recto and verso relate to each other?

On the recto, the reader wanders over the pictorial, prefigurative abstraction of marble, and then clings to the shapely letters of the *incipit*. In the movement of a hand that turns recto to verso, the ultimate contrast appears: a scripture of lines and shapes, an endogenous letter miniature that weaves writing into image (fig. 5).[64] The *incipit* functions in the tightness of the chiselled Latin letters. Here, the Hebrew invisible God is still at work, ordering, while the word sounded loud and commanding, and while the form was still enclosed, waiting, in geological primordial matter, for His human form and a new voice: the voice of the Logos, the incarnate word.

The *In principio*-miniature is active in the incarnate word, in the softness of a voice muffled by textiles. A voice that no longer shows itself in the iconoclastic purity of Roman letters, but forces its way towards awakening figuration, towards the imminent unveiling of the Son of Man. The New Covenant prefers the medium of the textile as its visual idiom: contemporary with the typical insular art decorations. The page with the abstract vortex is turned. The invisible God of the Old Covenant, who owed his greatness to the medium of the uncompromisingly chiselled Latin, and spoke with a golden tongue, must make way for the soft flesh.

6 Post-scriptum. A synthesis

This research was grafted upon the assumption that the vortex with script on fol. 157r was an iconographic 'subject'. The marble with the Roman lettering in gold leaf can be explained from its function of the folio. The *incipit* miniature expresses the essence of 'what begins,' or rather, of 'what is beginning'. To this end, the paper explored the meaning and aesthetic experience of marble in conjunction with the Latin text. This exploration demonstrated the sensorial symbolism behind the miniature: the image plays on the sense of touch, speech as well as sight.

Firstly, the letters refer to texts chiselled into stone. They give the folio the suggestion of ancient *spolia*, like the example from Corvey. *Spolia* were not only integrated into churches and façades for pragmatic reasons, but also conveyed the grandeur of the past. They articulate the glorious foundations on which Christianity continued to build. In the Morgan Gospel of John, the depiction of stone and script refers to classical antiquity, which the Ottonians took as their starting point to create their artistic cosmos. The Roman letters of the *incipit* speak the language of the Romans and of the Bible through Church and State, through Popes and the successors of Constantine the Great (ca. 273–337).

The Roman Catholic Church clothed itself with marble. The glittering stone which the earth pushes up from its deepest core was honoured as an image of creation itself because of its aesthetic qualities. But also the letters of the *incipit* glisten; they shine in the most valuable material of gold leaf. Ephemeral, sensitive

64 Arnulf, *Versus ad Picturas*, 236.

and fragile, added as a last movement in the artistic process of a humble human hand, the text raises itself anagogically and eschatologically to the Creator Himself.

The Latin epigraphy is in and above the image. As mentioned, the form of the text may refer to stone fragments that can be found *in situ* outside the manuscript, but at the same time the Latin floats over the marble pigments, liberating itself from mimesis, from *realia*, from the human hand. The *incipit* of the Morgan Gospel of John expresses the initial ability to form something out of nothing within the manuscript by purely plastic means. The folio carries the miniature as *mise-en-abîme*, as self-reflection of the creative act, and in doing so touches again the cosmogonic principle which was so deeply associated with marble.

Thus, the meaning of Latin changes again. The language that this script represents—both durable and heavenly—is the language of the creating God; a God who uses His voice to 'call' form out of liquid primordial seas. A voice like *ruach*, like spirit, that rules over the plastic universe of form and colour with His golden breath. This God of the Old Covenant hides in the speech and solitude of the word. God knows no physical revelation. This Creator enters into His archetypal *incipit* covenant in the medium of stone and tablet: ancient, polished, and durable.

In the *incipit* folio, the Gospel of John has its primordial beginning. Before folio 157 recto nothing can exist. On the folio's verso, the book can pass to its first words: *In principio*. This new beginning, not of the verb *incipere*, but of the noun *principium*, does not constitute a cosmogonic act, but a principle unveiling to visibility. The voice becomes word, and the word becomes flesh. This basic progress towards the New Covenant, towards the 'now' of the manuscript, requires the contemporary language and form. The now continues in the symbol of the cross; the now is a graphic growth, overcoming the distinction between word and image. In the New Covenant word is image, image is text, text is script, script is image.

Both sides of the page use their appropriate decorum to guide the gaze. The user's gaze first hooks onto the elegant, Roman capital, a lifebelt of reason on this tumbling primordial sea, and then turns away from it in rampant proliferation. The *incipit* remaining archaic and classical in inorganic and indestructible matter. The *In principio* being new and exuberant in organic, fragile life itself. In one turn of a page, the path from past to present is revealed.

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Such a reading, as valid as it might seem, does not exhaust the visual devices implemented in the manuscript, and it must be considered, at least as a hypothesis, that the display of colour works here as a subject in itself, as an iconographic motif, and that it does not constitute a temporary state of visuality. Colour would be the real subject of the image and would refer to nothing but to itself. The painter would have figured colour precisely because it is at the core of the copy and illumination of the manuscript and allows for the very possibility of the book. Such a use of colour would be a creative gesture showing a profound reflexivity about the material ways of producing visuality,

as deep as what can be seen in the calligraphic manipulation of letterforms, in the use of ornament, in the painting of portraits and narrative images.[65]

List of figures

Figure 1: *Incipit* page of the Gospel of John, Morgan Gospels, tenth century. New York, The Morgan Library, MS M. 755, fol. 157r.

Figure 2: Inscription from the Carolingian exterior of the church in Corvey, west façade. Taken from O'Driscoll, "Visual Vortex," 315, fig. 6.

Figure 3: *Pericope for Christmas*, Mass Lectionary, Reichenau or Schaffhausen, late tenth century. Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 1492, fol. 5v.

Figure 4: Details from the marble decorations in the Hagia Sophia, sixth century. Proconnesian marble. Istanbul, Hagia Sophia.

Figure 5: *In principio* page of the Gospel of John, Morgan Gospels, tenth century. New York, The Morgan Library, MS M. 755, fol. 157v.

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[65] Debiais, "Colour as Subject," 46.

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NOTE

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Language on Display Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy[*]

HAN LAMERS

University of Oslo

ABSTRACT

This article explores the various uses and functions of the Latin language in the material culture of Fascist Italy. It shows that Latin words and phrases were used across diverse media and artistic styles, served several communicative purposes, and went beyond elitist literary circles. The analysis pays special attention to the material aspects and symbolic implications of the ways in which Latin words were showcased in specific locations and settings. Through brief case studies from graphic design, architecture, monumental sculpture, and landscape design, it demonstrates how Latin could become a means of political messaging, also for those with limited knowledge of the language. Offering a more encompassing discussion of the subject than currently available, the article sets the stage for future research and presents some avenues for further exploration.

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1 Introduction

Italian Fascism has been described as "the most self-consciously visual of all political forms."[1] One of its defining features was its extensive use of signs, symbols,

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[1] Paxton, *The Anatomy*, 9.

and imagery associated with ancient Rome to communicate its views, advance its objectives, and engage as many Italians as possible in the vision of life it sought to create. While scholars have studied the role of language in Fascist propaganda, less attention has been paid to the embodied presence of language, including the use of Latin, in the visual culture of the *ventennio fascista*. This article builds upon recent investigations into Fascist Latinity by offering a preliminary exploration of the use of the language of ancient Rome in the material culture of the era. Rather than presenting a single, unified argument, it aims to outline some relevant aspects of the topic and raise various questions inherent to its study. By examining the physical features of Latin writing such as its visual characteristics, the surfaces on which it appears, its physical settings, and the symbolism attached to it, we can significantly broaden our understanding of how Latin was used as a means of political messaging in Fascist Italy.

The first two sections of the article briefly explain the current state of affairs (section 1) and propose a way to advance the scholarship by exploring the phenomenon more broadly, encompassing more aspects of the physical presence of Latin in Fascist Italy (section 2). The subsequent sections (3–6) provide examples of the diverse material contexts in which Latin was used and the issues raised by their analysis. These 'vignettes' demonstrate that Latin writing was employed in various styles and media, including in contexts outside elite culture and official state propaganda. Although the examples are limited and cannot be discussed in depth, they provide insight into the range of ways in which Latin was used in the material and visual culture of Italian Fascism, as well as the intricate relationships between language, visual and material culture, and ideology that emerge from examination of these uses. [2]

2 Latin beyond words: state of the question

The topic of Latin's use in Fascist Italy has been examined from different perspectives over the last few years. The regime's promotion of Latin in schools is well documented, and in recent years interest has grown in exploring the language's role as a medium of literary expression during the *ventennio*.[3] In conjunction with this, increasingly more detailed case studies of Latin texts of this period

[2] Offering some examples of Latin's usage in Fascist visual culture, the article raises questions and opens avenues for further research that also inspire the project "New Signs of Antiquity: The Uses of Latin in the Public Culture of Fascist Italy," currently underway at the University of Oslo (2021–2025). Most of it was written in the initial phases of the project, and some of its tenets will be reviewed in subsequent publications.

[3] On Latin in the Fascist schools, see esp. Fedeli, "Studio e uso"; Klein, *La politica linguistica*, 61–62; Klein "Language Policy"; Bruni, *Greco e latino*, 77–100; Charnitzky, *Die Schulpolitik*, 32–37; and Bordoni and Contessa, "Latino." Early hints at the active use of Latin during the *ventennio fascista* can be found in Perry, *The Roman Collegia*, 129–32; Gionta, "I certamina"; Aicher, "Mussolini's Forum"; Canfora, *Ideologie*, 96, 101–3; and esp. Fedeli, "Studio e uso." More extensive treatments of the subject of Fascist Latinity are Lamers, Reitz-Joosse and Sacré, "Neo-Latin Literature"; and Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "*Lingua Lictoria*." More complete bibliography can be found in Lamers, Reitz-Joosse, and Sanzotta, eds., *Studies*, 1–3, with notes 1–6, to which can be added Ghilardi, "*La lingua di Roma*."

have recently been published.[4] Scholars have demonstrated that, within the framework of the Fascist 'cult of Rome,' Latin acquired a distinct ideological connotation and a national importance that, although not entirely novel, was effectively appropriated by the regime.[5] As the focus has been on texts produced by, and for, trained Latinists, the use of Latin under Fascism has sometimes been understood as distinct from more popular and mass manifestations of *romanità*.[6]

However, there is ample evidence to suggest that the lure of Latin was not restricted to learned literary circles. Despite the limited impact of the 'Latin-for-all' movement (pan-Latinism), Latin continued to be part of the daily experience of many Italians under Mussolini. Examples are legion. Members of the Fascist youth organization were distinguished with medals featuring Latin texts such as "Sorti devota futurae" ("Devoted to coming destiny") (fig. 1).[7] The barracks of the workers engaged in the construction of the town of Pontinia (Lazio) reportedly featured the Latin motto "Dux docet, docuit" ("The Leader teaches and has thought").[8] In processions, people carried banners with the slogan "Civis Romanus sum" ("I am a Roman citizen"), a phrase also favoured by Mussolini himself.[9] Larger audiences encountered Latin words and phrases in regime-organized mass spectacles. A tapestry bearing the Horatian phrase "Stet Capitolium fulgens" ("May the Capitol stand shining"), for instance, served as a backdrop during significant events, including the commemoration of Rome's anniversary at the Capitol Hill on April 21, 1923 and the ostentatious celebration of the fourteenth anniversary of the Fascist Revolution held in front of Palazzo Venezia in Rome in November 1936.[10]

These few examples show the multifaceted uses of Latin in various contexts to serve diverse purposes and reach different audiences. This phenomenon has yet to receive sustained scholarly attention, even though the role of writing and lettering in Fascist propaganda more generally has been discussed.[11] Two areas of scholarship have paid at least some attention to the embodied uses of Latin beyond the printed text during the *ventennio fascista*: epigraphists and philatelists have drawn attention to the use of Latin on buildings and postage stamps, respectively.

4 See, in addition to the contributions in Lamers, Reitz-Joosse and Sanzotta, eds., *Studies*; also Bettegazzi, Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "Viewing Rome"; Bragantini "Il 'latinista fascista'"; Fera, "Microcosmo letterario"; Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, *The Codex*; Scriba "Mussolini-Panegyrik." Latin texts engaging with Fascism and written under Mussolini's regime are currently being made available in the online repository *Fascist Latin Texts*. See Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, eds., *Fascist Latin Texts*.

5 See Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "*Lingua Lictoria*"; Lamers and Reitz-Joose, *The Codex*, 16–22; and, most extensively, Bettegazzi, "Ideologies."

6 Roche, "Distant Models," 7. See also n. 49.

7 Casolari, *25 anni*, 155 (VII-40).

8 On this, see Ciammaruconi, "Tra estetica del potere," 18.

9 A banner with the inscription "Civis Romanus sum" is, for example, shown in a newsreel of produced by Istituto Luce, preserved at the same institute, cod. M016903, from 01:16:24. The same newsreel shows an intertitle with the text "... alme sol ... possis nihil Urbe Roma visere maius!" ("Oh nourishing Sun, may you never witness anything greater than the City of Rome") (Hor. *Carm. saec.* 9–12), superimposed on a bundle of *fasces* encircled by a laurel wreath (at 01:16:05). On Mussolini's use of the slogan "Civis Romanus sum," see Lamers, "Mussolini's Latin," 216–18.

10 See Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "Spectacular Latin."

11 See esp. the insightful discussion in Petrucci, *Jeux de lettres*, 199–211.

Modern epigraphists (and, to a lesser extent, architectural historians) have shown how Latin inscriptions were interwoven into the fabric of public spaces in Fascist Italy, even though the regime generally favoured Italian as its primary epigraphic language.[12] The focus has been on Latin inscriptions used as *scritture esposte*, which are writings intended for display in highly visible areas, often to indicate their particular significance.[13] For the Fascist regime, inscriptions served as an important tool for asserting presence within Italy’s public sphere. By leveraging the age-old tradition of Latin epigraphy, the regime inscribed itself in a long lineage of rulers and governing bodies, reaching back to ancient Rome. In this manner, it left its mark on the urban landscapes of Italian towns and cities, not least Rome.[14]

While we are well informed about the Fascist Latin inscriptions of Rome,[15] the use of Latin was not restricted to the capital. Latin inscriptions can also be found in other places, both in Italy and in the colonies. While some excellent work has recently been carried out on Latin inscriptions in Tyrolian Bozen (the Victory Monument) and Libya (the Arco dei Fileni),[16] many more texts remain

Figure 1: Bronze medal of the O.N.B. (Fascist Youth Organization), obverse, 1928.

12 Nastasi, *Le iscrizioni*, xviii–xix.

13 For a critical discussion of various definitions of *scritture esposte*, see Fraenkel, “Les écritures exposées.”

14 Benton, “Epigraphy,” 163; Nastasi, “L’epigrafia,” 175.

15 See esp. Nastasi, *Le iscrizioni* and, specifically about Fascism; Nastasi, “L’epigrafia.” Previous discussions include Addamiano, “Le iscrizioni”; Aicher, “Mussolini’s Forum,” 57–58; Benton, “Epigraphy”; Gamberale, “Iscrizioni in latino”; Marcello and Gwynne, “Speaking from the Walls”; and Rannem, *Bokstavene*, 330–57. The Latin inscription on Fascist Rome have been collected in a special section, curated by Antonino Nastasi, Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, eds., *Fascist Latin Texts*, https://flt.hf.uio.no/inscriptions.

16 For Tyrolian Bozen, see Strobl, “‘In honorem…’” and Strobl, “‘Tu regere…’.” For Libya, see Munzi, “Italian Archaeology,” 86; and, most extensively now, Agbamu, “The Arco dei Fileni.”

unrecorded and have not yet received scholarly discussion.[17] Some of them can be found in special places on the symbolic map of the Fascist movement, including Predappio (Mussolini's birthplace) and Milan (birthplace of the National Fascist Party). Studies have so far shown that inscriptions came in many shapes and forms, from quotations to original compositions, and from single words to short texts. It has also become clear that some quotes from ancient Latin authors, including passages from Horace, Vergil, and Livy, enjoyed special popularity, and scholars have examined how they were used and reused in various epigraphical contexts.[18] While scholars have mainly focused on inscriptions in stone and other durable materials, there have also been occasional discussions of the use of Latin in more temporary or 'ephemeral' inscriptions. This includes, for example, the Latin *X* (10) and *DVX* (Leader) featured at the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista (1932) and the Latin quotations attached to walls of some of the exhibit rooms at the Mostra Augustea della Romanità in Rome (1937–1938), discussed by Tim Benton, Joshua Arthurs, and most recently, Nicolò Bettegazzi.[19]

In addition to Latin inscriptions, the Latin mottos on several series of postage stamps issued under the regime have attracted the attention of philatelists and cultural historians. Stamps with Latin texts issued under Fascism are included in the series produced for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Fascist Revolution (1932), designed by Corrado Mezzana (1890–1952), and for the bimillenaries of Vergil (1930), again by Mezzana, Horace (1936), by Giuseppe Rondini (1885–1955), and Augustus (1937–1938) and Livy (1941), both by Mezzana.[20] These stamp series were carefully designed, and most of them carry quotes from ancient Latin authors, including Vergil, Horace, Livy, and Augustus. The Latin quotes on these stamps were sometimes tweaked and manipulated to bring out the political messages imposed on them.[21] Importantly, and just like at least some of the Latin inscriptions, the stamps not only circulated through daily use, but were also showcased in both national and international publications.[22]

Although Latin inscriptions and legends on stamps have received expert attention, there has been limited exploration of their interconnections within the

[17] Nastasi, "L'epigrafia," 197.

[18] See esp. Nastasi, "L'epigrafia," discussing the repeated uses of Vitr. *De arch.* 6.1.11, Hor. *Carm. saec.* 9–12, Verg. *Aen.* 6.851–853, Liv. 1.12.9, as well as the phrase *Have Roma*, in various epigraphical contexts in the city of Rome.

[19] Benton, "Epigraphy," 175–80; Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 160–61; Bettegazzi, "Ideologies," 219–44, 332–34. On the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, see Stone, *The Patron State*, 128–76.

[20] The most complete discussion of these series is in Liberati, "La storia," 246–49 (Vergil), 250 (Fascist Revolution), 252–56 (Horace), 260–74 (Augustus), and 277–79 (Livy). A profound discussion with a focus on the series in celebration of Augustus, with due attention to the stamp's visual aspects and wider context, is Schumacher, "Augusteische Propaganda." Brief discussions with translations of the Latin mottos appear in Luceri, "Quando la filatelia" and Calvillo, "Entre difusión y propaganda," 193–200. The stamps are also briefly discussed in Foss, "Augustus," 314–15; and Falasca-Zamponi, *The Fascist Spectacle*, 92–93. For a more popular account, see Giuliani, "Latin and latinorum" (= Giuliani, "Latino e latonorum"), emphasizing the tension between the use of Latin and propaganda purposes.

[21] Liberati, "La storia," 262–63, 267–68; and Schumacher, "Augusteische Propaganda" for the Augustus series. Manipulations have sometimes been imprecisely referred to as "imprecisions" and "philological inaccuracies" (Luceri, "Quando la filatelia").

[22] For the main references, see Liberati, "La storia," 262n80. See also the interesting discussion of the 25-cent stamp in *Arte Cristiana*, with a large reproduction of the stamp (Lipinsky, "Cronaca").

broader context of Fascist visual and material culture and the use of Latin. Furthermore, Latin writing can be found on various objects that have been examined separately, but without due consideration of the role of the language in their material and artistic composition. One group of such items are coins and coin-like objects, such as medals and medallions, which have not received due analysis despite being collected and catalogued extensively by, mainly, Gianfranco Casolari.[23] Similarly, postcards have garnered attention from collectors and historians, particularly Enrico Sturani, but with limited emphasis on the Latin inscriptions often present on them.[24]

The widespread use of Latin on buildings and objects such as stamps and coins suggests that the significance of Latin went beyond the literal meaning of the words displayed. In what ways can we explore and understand the embodied uses of Latin writing in Fascist Italy from a more comprehensive perspective? How can we examine the interconnections between different instances of Latin usage, and how does it relate to the movement's propaganda and broader cultural discourse? What was the distinctive significance of employing Latin in these contexts, particularly in relation to Italian? While these questions cannot be answered comprehensively at this stage, we can suggest some avenues for further exploration. The next section will briefly contextualize the use of the language of Rome within the context of Fascist *romanità*, serving as a basis for re-evaluating the use of the language in Fascist material culture. Following that, we will analyse some specific examples (Sections 3–6).

3 Romanness, Latin, and material culture

The growing interest in the role of Latin in Fascist Italy reflects a broader trend among historians of Fascism to acknowledge the importance of culture and language in the formation and consolidation of the Fascist movement and state.[25] This cultural turn in the study of Italian Fascism has provided a deeper understanding of the cultural activities and artistic creations that sustained Mussolini's regime, especially the role of *romanità* or 'Romanness,' a term used by Fascists themselves to convey the idea of restoring the quality of 'being Roman' to the Italians. Historians have highlighted the "symbolic reconnection to Rome" as a core component of Fascist ideology.[26] More specifically, they have argued that this symbolic reconnection enabled the Fascists to legitimize their viewpoints and political actions, engender consensus among different strata of Italian society, and

[23] See, mainly, Casolari, *25 anni* and Casolari, *Il fulgore*. Together with Erlend Østrem Myklebust (University of Oslo), I am preparing an exploratory study of the subject.

[24] See Sturani, *Le cartoline*; Sturani, *Otto milioni di cartoline* for a collection of postcards featuring Mussolini; and Sturani, "Analysing Mussolini Postcards" for an analysis in English.

[25] Literature on this topic is vast. For a recent discussion of the scholarship on Fascist culture and its cultural and ideological background, see Tarquini, *Storia della cultura fascista*, 11–47.

[26] Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 92. The work of Roger Griffin, in particular, has made this *palingenetic* tendency into a defining feature not only of Italian Fascism, but fascisms in general: see Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.

give a sense of purpose to Italians who felt disoriented by the experience of the First World War and the rapid changes of modernity. The regime leveraged significant sectors of Italy's cultural life to promote the experience of 'being Roman' for the Italians, from education to archaeological excavations and art exhibitions, from architecture and urban planning to the production of films and grand-scale political spectacles.

While Italian Fascism created a totalitarian state, Fascist notions of 'Romanness' did not constitute a fixed or immutable set of ideas and practices. Emphases in Romanness shifted over the course of the regime's twenty-year tenure in response to changing ideological and political priorities.[27] While cultural policies were formulated by government ministries and disseminated through state-supported institutions like the Istituto di Studi Romani in Rome, *romanità* had to be negotiated with groups representing diverse cultural and intellectual perspectives.[28] As Tim Benton noted, more generally, the regime's attempt to combine modernist elements with a veneration for Roman antiquity resulted in "continual uncertainties and ambiguities in the framing of cultural policy."[29] These frictions are reflected in the wide range of artistic and architectural styles endorsed by the regime, which exhibited a diversity of responses to the sometimes competing cultural impulses emanating from the government.[30]

The regime utilized visual forms and objects associated with ancient Rome to promote the ideals of *romanità* and foster a sense of Romanness among the Italian population. Symbols such as the *fasces*, the *lupa* or she-wolf, imperial eagle, Roman salute, and imperial-style standards served as a daily reminder of the regime's presence and dominance. They moreover made Italians feel connected to a present modelled by Fascism after a past they had learned to admire as a shared national heritage.[31] Roman signs and symbols were part of Fascism's "historic imaginary" and sustained Fascism's emphasis on its own "historic-ness" as the successor of ancient Rome.[32] As the language of Roman antiquity, Latin was an integral part of this historic imaginary.

Even if Latin was not universally understood by Italians, its presence had a symbolical value of its own. It was "an unknown tongue, and a familiar idiom."[33] While most Italians knew it primarily as the language of the Church, Fascism recast it as a symbol of its self-proclaimed "reconnection" with imperial Rome.[34] As Antonino Nastasi has pointed out, the use of Latin in the inscriptions of

[27] After Marla Stone, the main legitimizing work of Fascist uses of Rome is usually understood as falling into three main phases: Rome as a model for the legitimation of revolutionary action, the organization of combat, and Italian unity (1922–1925); for territorial expansion in the Mediterranean, aggressive foreign policy, and imperial ambitions (1925–1936); and finally for exclusivist and racist social and demographic policies (from the late 1930s onwards) (Stone, "A Flexible Rome"). See also the discussion of Roche, "Distant Models," 5–6.

[28] Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 6.

[29] Benton, "Epigraphy," 168.

[30] This stylistic heterogeneity persisted at least until the late 1930s, as argued extensively by Stone, *The Patron State*.

[31] Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 95–99.

[32] Fogu, "Actualism," 201; Fogu, "To Make History Present," 34.

[33] Waquet, *Latin*, 103 (describing the Latin used in the Catholic liturgy).

[34] On the tension between Fascist and Catholic claims to Latin, see Bettegazzi, "Ideologies."

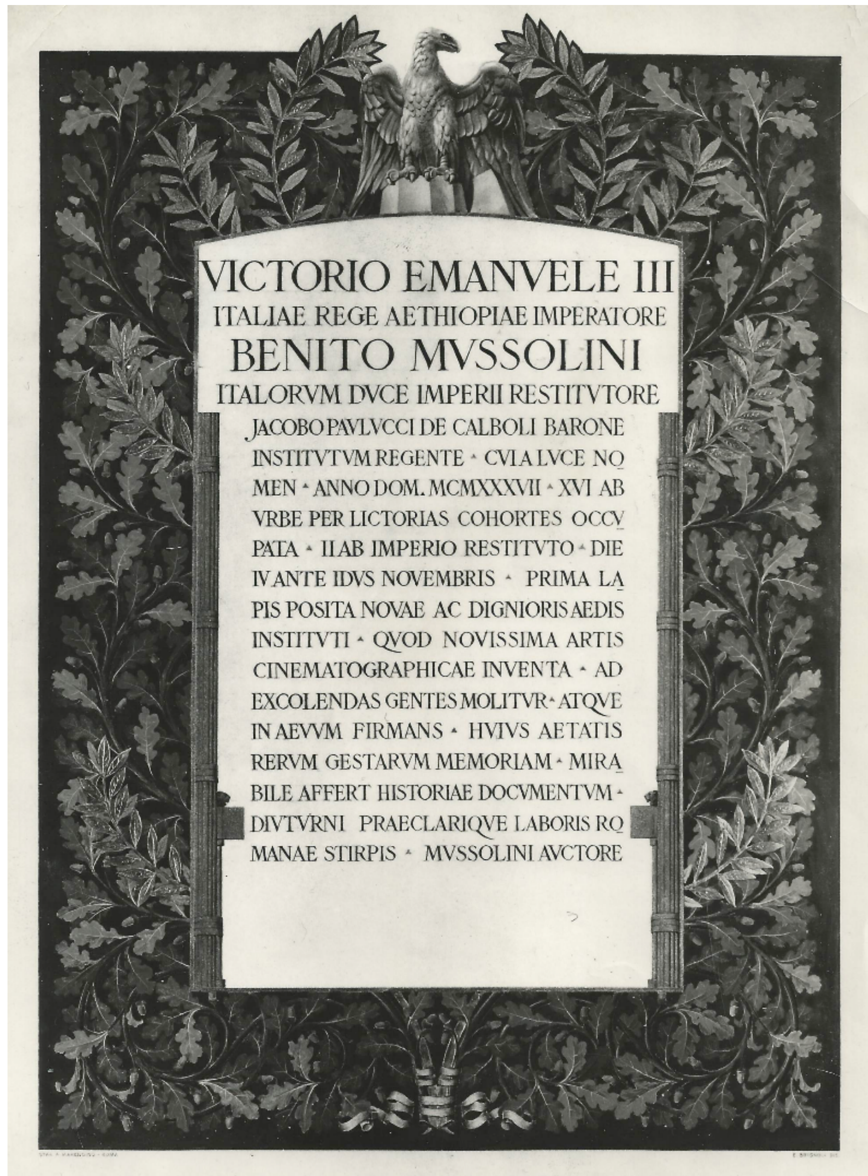

Figure 2. Parchment calligraphed by E. Brignoli for Istituto Luce, 1937.

Fascist Rome was a deliberate attempt to suggest political, military, and cultural continuity between Fascist Italy and imperial Rome.[35] Other scholars have equally highlighted the significance of the language itself. Discussing the iconographical representation of Fascist notions of justice in the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan, for instance, Lucy Maulsby emphasized the connection between the use of Latin inscriptions in the Palazzo and the tradition of Roman law, which may have resonated in this context even for those who could not read Latin.[36] Similar associations between Fascist Italy and Roman antiquity can be observed in other forms of visual media where Latin was employed. Even those who were unable to read

35 Nastasi, "L'epigrafia," 175. See also Nastasi, *Le iscrizioni*, xviii–xix.

36 Maulsby, "*Giustizia Fascista*," 316.

or understand Latin could be drawn to the general meanings associated with the language.

There is yet another way in which Latin writing could afford political meaning beyond the message it conveyed in words. Laura Malvano Bechelloni has observed that the omnipresent Latin tags of Fascism, such as *SPQR* and *DVX*, served as "signes visuels de reconnaissance" ("visual signs of recognition") that, according to her, signified the vigilant presence of Mussolini's regime.[37] The notion of Latin as a *visual sign* provides a valuable starting point for reconsidering the role of the language in Fascist visual and material culture, as it aligns with insights from the anthropology of writing that emphasize the physical features of writing beyond its textual content in the meaning-making process. Language is not only read but also *seen*. It has its own visual semiotics.

Studying Latin writing in Fascist Italy thus means considering its non-linguistic features, its material and visual aspects, as well as the cultural and ideological meanings often assigned to them. In the totalitarian context of Mussolini's Italy, even the seemingly most insignificant details could be imbued with ideological significance. Semiotic modes such as colours, graphological features, and typefaces could play an important part in creating meaning. Visual semiotics also highlights words' surfaces or 'screens' (e.g., parchment, marble, textile), their material substances (e.g., ink, gold, pigments), and even the tools and techniques of their production (e.g., chisel, pen, brush) as elements that can unlock meaning.[38] The document shown in fig. 2 provides a good example of how most of these physical characteristics reinforced the significance of the Latin text. For instance, the choice of parchment as the writing surface conveyed a sense of longevity and evoked associations with the *medioevo* and Renaissance, which were further reinforced by the humanist lettering style, calligraphic technique, and use of illumination. The selection of artistic techniques and materials, like the choice of Latin, reflected traditions that were viewed as part of a national heritage, 'revitalized' under Fascism, in which the Italians could take special pride.[39] In addition to the physical features of the writing and its immediate setting, the placement and location of Latin signs in space could also convey meanings that are not conveyed in words, and the same expression may have different connotations depending on its location. The symbolism of the word *DVX*, for instance, can vary greatly depending on its location and placement, whether it dominates a hillside just outside Rome, is affixed to an impromptu triumphal arch in Lucca erected in honour of Mussolini's visit to the city, or is mounted on a colossal 120-meter tower in Tripoli, Libya. Together, the physical and symbolic features of the Latin writing, as well as its techniques and media, both shape the visual appearance of the words and impact how they are understood and interpreted.[40]

[37] Malvano Bechelloni, "Le mythe," 116.

[38] See Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 216.

[39] Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, *The Codex*, 75–81.

[40] The rematerialization of the sign, which was advanced by, among others, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Louis Hjelmslev, has branched out in two main areas of scholarly investigation: visual semiotics, focusing on the role of visual modes in semiosis (fundamentally, Kess and Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*), and geosemiotics, with a distinct focus on the role of physical placement in signification (esp. Scollon and

Understanding the physical aspects of writing and the symbolic dimension of language is particularly important in comprehending how Latin texts could encode meaning for audiences unable to understand the words. But even if most casual observers were unable to read Latin, this does not diminish the significance of the texts’ literary meaning and rhetorical form. This is particularly true for Latin texts since their creation requires specialized knowledge of the language and its literary tradition. The investment of time and energy in the creation of Latin texts for buildings and objects suggests that the verbal message was regarded as significant. The point is not to argue against examining the literary content of these writings, but rather to avoid examining them in isolation from their physical context. By integrating non-linguistic features into the analysis, we can better understand how these Latin writings afforded meaning differently to multiple audiences with varying levels of familiarity with both the language and the Latin literary tradition.[41]

In the following sections, we will explore some examples of the embodied uses of Latin in Fascist Italy, building on the approach outlined above. We will examine various examples of Latin being employed in different contexts, including graphic design (section 3), architecture (section 4), monumental sculpture (section 5), and landscape design (section 6). Our analysis will cover a range of Latin expressions, from original compositions to quotations, and from one-word slogans to brief poems, highlighting how they interact differently with their particular physical surroundings. While each vignette takes a unique direction and does not necessarily contribute to a unified argument, a common thread throughout all of them is the presence of cultural ambiguities often associated with Italian Fascism. These include the tension between the ancient past and modernist present in Fascist ideology, as well as the oscillation between historicizing and modernist tendencies in Fascist visual culture.[42]

4 A postcard of October 30, 1922

While Latin is often associated with monumental inscriptions, to which we will return in the next section, it was also used to write on less prominent and imposing objects. Among the less studied items bearing Latin texts are postcards, which

Wong Scollon, *Discourse in Place*). Within literary studies, semiotic approaches are sometimes known as “multimodal stylistics,” usually applied to the visual aspects of printed verbal (literary) language (see Nørgaard, “The Semiotics of Typography,” with the useful references there).

41 This approach aligns with insights from affordance theory that have recently been applied in media and heritage studies (for its use in analyzing the role of Latin in Fascist spectacles, see Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, “Spectacular Latin”).

42 While the focus of this article is on Latin’s material presence in Fascism’s visual culture, the language was occasionally also used orally in political contexts. Examples include a Latin speech of Minister of Colonies Pietro Lanza di Scalea in Tripoli in 1925 (*I fasci italiani all’estero* 2, no. 19, May 9, 1925: 24) and the performance of the *Carmen saeculare* at the Augusteum in Rome in 1927 (see Strobl, “‘Possis nihil urbe…’”). For the inauguration of Ovid’s statue in Sulmona, the mayor invited Domenico Tinozzi to compose Latin verses for public recitation, but the plan did not materialize (see Senigagliesi, *Un* “*sogno secolare*,” 162–64).

Figure 3: Postcard of the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale.

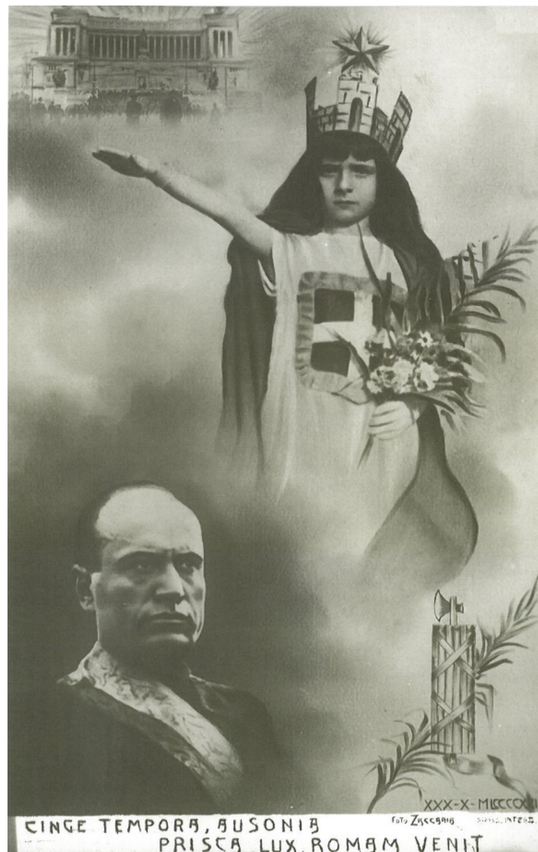

Figure 4: Postcard "Cinge tempora," October 30, 1922.

varied greatly in quality and style and served various purposes. Some of them were sent, while others were kept as personal mementos, almost "like holy images, stuck in the frame of a mirror alongside images of Christ and the pictures of family members living abroad, pinned on a bedroom wall or gathered in albums."[43] Some postcards were produced by official institutions or institutionalized groups, such as the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale (Voluntary Militia for National Security), which had postcards printed with Latin mottos like "Acta non agenda" ("Actions, not plans") and "Usque dum vivam et ultra" ("As long as I shall live, and beyond") (fig. 3).[44] Other postcards, however, were created by private parties.

The postcard shown here, for example, was apparently produced by a private citizen (fig. 4). While we know it was printed by "Foto Zaccaria" in Florence, little is currently known about its background.[45] We do not know, for instance, who was involved in its design, how many cards were produced, and whether it was offered for sale or not. Nevertheless, the postcard holds significant value as a remarkably early example of Latin being used to commemorate Mussolini and Fascism. The postcard is dated October 30, 1922, just days after the March on Rome,

43 Sturani, "Analysing Mussolini Postcards," 143.

44 This concerns postcards of the 95th legion (Marzocco) and the 4th legion (Santorre di Santarosa), respectively. They are in private collections.

45 For the postcard, see Sturani, *Otto milioni di cartoline*, 224 (no 12) and Sturani, *Le cartoline*, 56 (no 67). Enrico Sturani kindly notified me that the postcard's reverse side bears no postage stamp and that the exemplar depicted here was not sent (personal communication, May 2022).

which resulted in Mussolini's ascent to power and the establishment of his regime. It is also a striking example of how Latin could be utilized in visual media without reliance on the skill and expertise of the professional designers, printers, and Latinists on whom state propaganda could rely.

In the visual centre of the postcard, slightly to the right, is an image of a child, dressed up as *Italia turrita* (turreted Italy), a personification of Italy wearing a mural crown topped with the emblematic *Stella d'Italia* (Star of Italy). Her arm is raised in a Roman salute, then already associated with the Fascist movement. To the top left is a relatively small image of the Altar of the Fatherland, i.e., the Victor Emmanuel II Monument in Rome. The image's lower left corner shows a formal portrait of Benito Mussolini,[46] set against a darker background that fades around the edges. Mussolini is shown wearing the two-coloured scarf he supposedly wore during the March and that later became the honorary *sciarpa littorio*. To the right of the portrait is a drawing of a bundle of *fasces*, with a branch of the olive tree. The images on the postcard, comprising photographs and drawings, are arranged in a manner that evokes a sense of a homemade collage rather than a professional montage. The arrangement exudes a personal and handcrafted feel, rather than a polished commercial one.

The images assembled on the postcard would have been easily recognizable to any contemporary Italian, as they were already deeply embedded in the collective national imagery. Together, they served as powerful symbols of the ascendancy of Fascism, and Mussolini in particular, revitalizing Italian politics in a 'Roman' way.[47] The composition of the postcard, on the other hand, evokes a strong resemblance to religious-themed postcards of the Church, which typically depicted saints and popes, as opposed to the later state propaganda images commonly associated with Fascism. Devotional postcards could combine a portrait of the saint, a scene from their life or miracle, a significant building such as a shrine or church, symbols and attributes associated with the saint, and a short text such as an invocation. This postcard's composition closely follows this visual grammar, suggesting an overlap between religious and Fascist iconography.[48]

The inclusion of Latin on the postcard further reinforces this amalgamation of religious and Fascist imagery. The Latin text is positioned at the bottom of the image, against a blank background: "Cinge tempora, Ausonia / prisca lux, Romam venit" (for the interpretation, see n. 49). The Latin may be regarded to evoke the same devotional images which the overall composition suggests, with *lux venit* suggesting Biblical overtones (compare Jn. 3:19). The two lines are arranged one below the other, with the second line indented, creating an impression that the

[46] The portrait had been issued before, dated "Napoli 24-X-22" and signed "Foto Zaccaria Firenze," just like the postcard discussed here.

[47] Note that the monarchy is represented in the picture by the Savoy coat of arms (white cross on a red field) on the child's shirt and the small picture of the National Monument at the top left. There is no portrait of the king balancing that of Mussolini. The personification of Italy is fascisticized by the *saluto romano* (personifications of Italy would normally hold a victory wreath or scepter).

[48] For the convergence of political, popular, and religious imagery, particularly on postcards, see Sturani, *Le cartoline*, 189–98.

text forms an elegiac couplet. While the text thus appears as a caption of the overall collage, it does not provide any illuminating information. It is not as easily 'readable' as the other visual symbols on the card. The Latin does not feature a well-known phrase or quote that would be easily recognizable or understood, such as "Dux Lux" or "Civis Romanus sum," or the catchy mottos and proverbs printed on postcards of the Milizia, mentioned above. The Latin is riddled with linguistic idiosyncrasies and ambiguities, primarily caused by its confusing punctuation, which renders it difficult to decipher the meaning.[49] Even those who could not read Latin would likely recognize buzzwords such as *Roma* and *lux*. Those with some knowledge of Latin might recognize the Biblical reference. However, clarity of expression appears to be of secondary importance. The irregular handwriting on the postcard further highlights the text's gaucheness of expression. The text appears to have been written with an ordinary pen by someone lacking the calligraphic training seen in the above-mentioned parchment (fig. 2).

If we look at the Latin as a visual sign, the inclusion of Latin words on the card is more significant than their literal meaning. The Latin caption, loosely mimicking the shape of an elegiac distich, serves as a visual complement to the political images and symbols on the card, adding to the sense of Roman solemnity they seem eager to evoke. Its graphic and graphological features, such as the irregular handwriting, reinforce the postcard's personal and spontaneous character. Unresolved questions remain: should we interpret these features as intentional design decisions, strategically targeting the cultural tastes and preferences of common Italians? Or do they rather reflect less calculated expressions of personal enthusiasm for Mussolini? While these questions cannot be answered here, the example of the postcard serves as a reminder that such displays of allegiance, including the use of Latin, did not exclusively emanate from active engagement in propaganda initiatives supervised by the government or the National Fascist Party.

5 Inscriptions for two 'Houses of the Wounded'

While we do not know the intended audience and exact reach of the postcard discussed in the previous section, Latin inscriptions were ubiquitous in Fascist Italy and had the potential to appeal to diverse groups with varying degrees of familiarity with the language. As the regime consolidated its control over urban development projects across Italy and in its colonies, Latin inscriptions became

[49] If we accept the original punctuation, the line could be interpreted in two ways: "Gird your temples, ancient Ausonian light, [he?] has come [is coming?] to Rome" or "Gird your temples, Ausonia, ancient light, [he?] has come [is coming?] to Rome." The first option is unlikely as it would be odd to imagine *lux* girding its own temples. In both cases, the lack of a subject with *venit* is unusual. Against the background of the March on Rome, and given Mussolini's portrait on the card, Mussolini might be the implied subject. However, a vocative (*Ausonia*) following an imperative (*cinge*) should make sense, and *lux venit* is a known phrase from the Gospel (Jn. 3:19) (for *prisca lux* in a different context, see also Stat. *Silv.* 5.2.16). Therefore, it is possible that we should read: "Cinge tempora, Ausonia, prisca lux Romam venit" ("Gird your temples, Ausonia, ancient light has come [is coming?] to Rome"). *Tempora cinge* is usually joined with an ablative (Catull. 61.6, with *floribus*; Tib. 2.1.4, with *spicis*; Drac., *Rom.* 1.21, with *lauro*). The word *lux* resonates with *dux*, and the words were used together in Fascist decorations.

Figure 5: The Casa del Mutilato in Pordenone.
Situation of 2018.

an approved means of asserting the regime’s presence and authority. Contrary to some suggestions, Latin inscriptions were not exclusively reserved for structures associated with the cultural or intellectual elite, such as the campus of the Sapienza University in Rome.[50] Moreover, they were not limited to classicizing or historicizing styles, but were also utilized in boldly modernist buildings. The Case del Mutilato (Houses for the Wounded) in Pordenone (1934–1937) (fig. 5) and Catania (1933–1939) (fig. 6) are good examples of popular buildings in different architectural styles that prominently feature Latin inscriptions. These buildings moreover exemplify how Latin inscriptions could be carefully composed to convey a message, even when not everyone in the audience may have understood it.

The Casa del Mutilato was a new type of Fascist building that arose from the need to reintegrate wounded veterans into civil society after the First World War, as well as from the desire to glorify their sacrifice for the fatherland, a central tenet of Fascism. The buildings’ rhetoric of patriotic martyrdom and sacrifice, as Silvia Barisione has observed, was fully integrated into Fascist propaganda through pictorial and sculptural programs. This rhetoric often intertwined the glorification

[50] It has for example been suggested that Case del Fascio (local party headquarters) and Case del Balilla (local headquarters of the Fascist youth organization) often had Italian inscriptions “as these were buildings for the less educated classes” (Marcello and Gwynne, “Speaking from the Walls,” 325).

Figure 6: The Casa del Mutilato in Catania. Situation of 1939.

of the wounded with the commemoration of the dead, and it was not limited to the First World War. It frequently drew connections between fallen soldiers from various national struggles, including the Fascist March on Rome.[51] Because of the strong link between the Casa del Mutilato, Fascist propaganda, and Mussolini's regime, Latin inscriptions in these buildings gained political connotations, even if they did not explicitly mention Fascism. Antonino Nastasi's research has particularly shown how quotes from ancient authors, such as Livy and Horace, were "resemanticized" to align with Fascist political messages when they were integrated into urbanistic, architectural, and iconographical contexts controlled by the regime or its representatives.[52]

Despite being constructed for the same practical and symbolic purposes during the same period, the Houses of the Wounded in Catania and Pordenone present distinct styles that coexisted in Fascist Italy. The House in Pordenone, designed by Cesare Scoccimarro (1897–1953), is an outspokenly modernist structure, lacking sculptural and decorative ornament. The Catanian House, designed by Ercole Fischetti (1878–1959), more overtly references traditional 'Roman' architectural

[51] This specific type of building has yet to receive the level of scholarly attention it deserves but, see Barisione, "The Reception," 352–55, with the references there. The Houses of Pordenone and Catania are not discussed there. On the *casa* of Pordenone, see Bacchichet, "Urbanistica." On the *casa* of Catania, see Ciarmatori, Lorenzi, and Zaffini, "La Casa del Mutilato," 23 and Spina, "L'architettura a Catania."

[52] Nastasi, "L'epigrafia," 195–97. Nastasi also studied the Latin inscriptions of the Casa Madre dei Mutilati e degli Invalidi di Guerra in Rome: Nastasi, *Iscrizioni*, 333–37.

forms and decorations. While the building's structure features simplified modernist forms, its façade bears a striking resemblance to an ancient Roman triumphal arch, a resemblance further emphasized by the Latin inscription "in sacrificio triunphans" ("triumphant in sacrifice") carved on the pilaster at the entry's left.[53] Its design also includes Roman standards at the doorways, doors designed to evoke 'antiquity,' and, topping the entrance, a dramatic sculptural group of six life-sized human figures (ca. 190 cm) representing soldiers of various wars and milestone struggles in Italy's recent past, including the March on Rome and the imperial conquests.[54] The overall architectural style of each building can be seen to complement and reflect the character of its urban environment, with Pordenone's more modernist aesthetic contrasting with the Baroque-dominated architecture of Catania.

Notwithstanding the stylistic differences between the buildings, their façades have eye-catching Latin inscriptions. The inscription in Pordenone reads as follows:

> ... quo fata trahunt retrahuntque sequamur
> quicquid erit superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est.[55]

The one in Catania reads:

> Vulnera quae gerimus laeserunt corpora tantum
> spiritus at constans indomitusque viget.[56]

The use of Latin in these buildings could potentially amplify the solemn and quasi-religious atmosphere of the national cult of sacrifice, particularly for casual observers and passers-by who did not understand the language but could still perceive the weighty significance of the inscriptions. For them, the use of Latin may have evoked its use in religious settings such as churches and cemeteries, thereby invoking a similar sense of reverence and framing the cult of the fatherland as a secular religion. In Pordenone, even though the arrangement of the text does not replicate the display of hexameters familiar from modern editions, beholders with a classical education may have recognized a passage from Vergil's *Aeneid*. The text echoes Nautes' words to Aeneas, encouraging him to continue his fate-ordained

[53] The text "in sacrificio triumphans" was also used on the façades of other Houses of the Wounded, including the *casa* of Verona, where it serves as the main façade inscription. See Roverato, "L'architetto Francesco Maria Banterle," 179–81.

[54] The external sculptural decorations are the work of Salvatore Juvara, Giuseppe D'Angelo, and Salvo Giordano. The statues have been identified as the African War of 1896, the Libyan War of 1911, the First World War, the March on Rome, the conquest of Ethiopia in 1936, and the Spanish War of the same year.

[55] "Let us go where the fates, in their ebb and flow, draw us; come what may, endurance must master every fortune."

[56] "The wounds we carry only harmed our bodies, but our spirit thrives unwavering and unbroken."

Figure 7: The Casa del Mutilato in Pordenone, inscription (*Aen.* 5.709–710).

journey to Italy (*Aen.* 5.709–710). The passage is made to illustrate patriotic sacrifice and endurance for the fatherland, which aligns with the purpose of the Casa del Mutilato as a place of honour for wounded war veterans.[57]

The physical features of the inscription at Pordenone are striking (fig. 7). The Latin writing, composed of prominent block letters each measuring 45 x 10 cm, dominates the façade's overall design. The style of the lettering is distinctively modernist, following the building's style, and evokes the characteristic *bastone* letter type favoured by Fascist architects as signifying the abandonment of "outdated conventions and bourgeois snobbery."[58] The modernity of the letters is also emphasized by their high-relief form, rather than traditional carving. Interestingly, the interpuncts separating the words, though not a common feature in modern writing, recall the writing practice of ancient times, as interpuncts fell out of use in Latin in the course of the second century CE.[59] The use of Latin rather than Italian, the reference to Vergil, and the use of interpuncts reminiscent of antiquity associate the modern building with ancient Rome. Meanwhile, the boldly modernist design of the building and the modern lettering of the inscription provide a contemporary framework for the ancient words, visually linking them with the renewed civil life of Fascist Italy represented by the Casa del Mutilato.

The Latin inscription on the façade of the House of the Wounded in Catania (fig. 8) also connects the building and the cult it represents to the Roman past, but in a manner distinct from that of the building in Pordenone. Unlike the inscription in Pordenone, the one in Catania employs a more traditional lettering style in Roman capitals carved in the more conventional manner. While the dominant inscription in Pordenone turns the building into a "speaking stone,"[60] the inscription in Catania seems to give voice to the soldiers whose sacrifices the building honours, and who are made to seem present in the sculptural group on the façade. For those able to read the Latin, this effect is achieved by the use of the first-person plural ("the wounds *we* carry"), which is not commonly seen in inscriptions. Assigning a Latin statement to war veterans imbues them with a

57 The text of the inscription was selected by the House's president, Mario Pupin, replacing the earlier plan to inscribe the purpose of the building on its attic. See Bacchichet, "Urbanistica," 14.

58 Benton, "Epigraphy," 167. While often used as an umbrella term for sans-serif fonts, the *bastone* shows quite some variation. Some distinctive features of the letters employed in Pordenone include the use of U instead of V, an A with a low crossbar, E and F with equal-length crossbars, a perfectly round O, P and R with heavy bowls, and an asymmetrical S.

59 Wingo, *Latin Punctuation*, 16–17.

60 Bacchichet, "Urbanistica," 12.

Figure 8: Casa del Mutilato in Catania, inscriptions.

sense of elevated status as if it were ‘canonizing’ them. As in Pordenone, the use of Latin links the modern realities of national struggle with a time-hallowed ‘Roman’ tradition. But what ancient tradition is evoked here? The text, carefully composed by an unknown author,[61] blends various aspects of *romanità* through the different literary traditions it recalls.

For readers familiar with Vergil’s *Aeneid*, the first line of the inscription is reminiscent of the way in which Hector is imagined appearing to Aeneas in the second book: “bearing those many wounds (*vulneraque illa gerens*) he received around his native walls” (*Aen*. 2.278–279). The pentameter’s *spiritus viget*, on the other hand, calls to mind a line by the fourth-century Christian poet Iuvencus: “Spiritus iste viget, sed corpus debile labat,” put in the mouth of Christ addressing Peter (*Evangeliorum libri* 4.500). In addition to alluding to the theme of sacrifice, the two passages evoke two Latin epic traditions that were central to Italian *romanità* and coexisted in tension under Fascism: the tradition of Augustan-imperial Rome, represented by Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and the tradition of Christian-

[61] Sciacca, “23 maggio,” 59.

Apostolic Rome, evoked by the allusion to Iuvencus' Biblical epic. Given these allusions to epic poetry, the choice of an elegiac distich also gains significance. The elegiac couplet has traditionally been regarded as 'lame' due to the unequal length of its verses, with the pentameter 'missing one foot' compared to the *herous* (hexameter). Is the concept of the 'missing foot' emphasized in the façade's design? The pentameter is intriguingly split at the central caesura, with *spiritus at constans* displaced to the left and *indomitusque viget* to the right, creating an open space or gap in the middle. One could interpret this gap as a visualization of the 'missing foot' or *vulnus*, symbolizing the sacrifice the building and the institution it represents seek to commemorate and honour.

As noted earlier, most readers would not have been able to read the Latin text of the inscriptions or appreciate the literary allusions drawn out here. However, literary meaning and form were not neglected. The inscriptions were carefully selected (as in Pordenone) or composed (as in Catania), indicating they were intended to appeal to at least some readers. Moreover, these crafted inscriptions demonstrated to knowledgeable observers that the Fascist regime had the ability to recruit and utilize individuals with the specialized literary and linguistic skills required to produce them. The examples discussed here show that Latin was used in various styles in architectural inscriptions to establish connections with ancient Rome in different ways. Even though the inscriptions did not mention Fascism explicitly, their physical features and their connection with this specific type of building turned them into political statements associated with Fascism, a relationship which could dissolve as the purpose and symbolism of the buildings changed—as we shall see, in another context, in the next section.

6 *The Navigator* of Genoa

The previous sections have demonstrated how the physical context and presentation of Latin impacted the way it was incorporated into the political message being conveyed, whether through a postcard, building, or any other medium. While visual framing often afforded political interpretations of the Latin, additional factors of discursive framing also encouraged people to reinterpret the Latin in light of Fascism. Here, I would like to highlight two such factors. First, Fascist signification could be elicited by the presence of texts adjacent to the Latin. Secondly, political connotations could emerge from the use of specific Latin words and phrases in Fascist discourse. The Latin phrases that were used by Mussolini himself, including "Civis Romanus sum" and "Per aspera ad astra," would gain special political significance, as they were sometimes explicitly 'fascisticized'.[62] Although not as ubiquitous as Italian slogans like "Credere, obbedire, combattere" ("Believe, obey, fight") and "Mussolini ha sempre ragione" ("Mussolini is always right"),

[62] See the comparable observations in Benton, "Epigraphy," 187–89 concerning the Italian inscription of the so-called Colosseo Quadrato (the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana), which adapts Mussolini's declaration of war on Ethiopia (October 2, 1935). On the post-Fascist reinterpretation of the inscription, see Panico, "Questioning What Remains," 42–44. On Mussolini's use of Latin, see Lamers, "Mussolini's Latin," 211–21.

some Latin stock phrases circulated widely and served the purpose of propaganda.[63] Unlike the Latin texts discussed in the previous sections—such as the slightly obscure postcard inscription, the Vergilian quote at Pordenone, and the crafted elegiac distich in Catania—some of these Latin words and slogans were widely recognized and could be understood even by those unfamiliar with the language. The next section will delve into the analysis of a single buzzword, while in this section, our focus will be on a well-known Latin proverb.

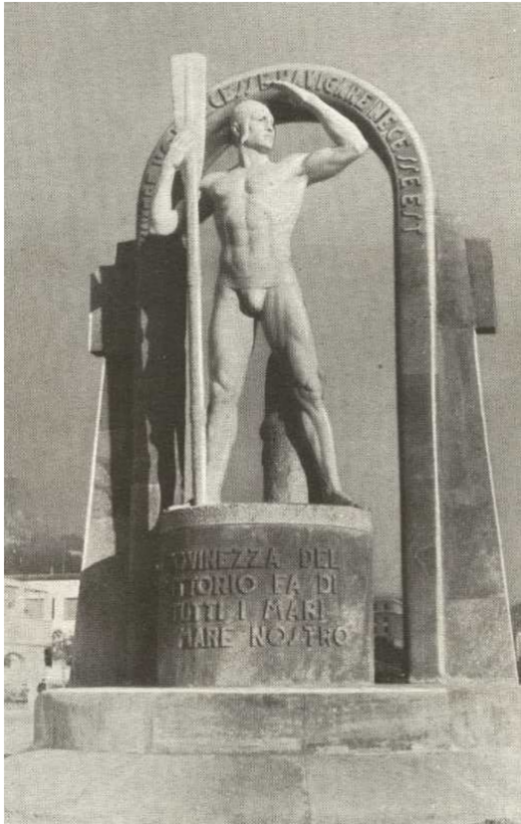

Figure 9: *Il Navigatore* in Genoa. Situation of 1941.

Figure 10: *Il Navigatore*. Situation of 2015.

An illuminating example of how visual framing and discursive connotation could work in tandem to invest a Latin phrase with Fascist significance is the line chosen to adorn a still-standing statue in Genoa, *Il Navigatore*, sculpted by Antonio Maria Morera (1888–1964), then secretary of the directorate of the Sindacato Fascista di Belle Arti (fig. 9). In 1938, a plaster cast of the statue was presented to Mussolini during his visit to Genoa. The final version of the statue was completed in 1940, with some alterations made to the original design. It was installed on the seafront of the city’s Foce district.[64] The large figure of Carrara marble, modelled after the Genoese athlete Nicolò Tronci, looks out over the sea, holding a rudder in his right hand. Placed on a granite base, the statue is framed by a rounded arch bearing

[63] The importance of such “detachable and repeatable” phrases for propaganda purposes was highlighted by Oddo, *The Discourse of Propaganda*, 12, 14–16.

[64] Fochessati, “1938: Mussolini’s Visit,” 430.

the following Latin text in distinctly modern, high-relief letters: "Vivere non necesse, navigare necesse est" ("Living is not necessary, sailing is"). This Latin phrase goes back to a Renaissance translation of Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*, in which Pompey the Great exhorted his hesitant sailors to set sail for Rome to make the necessary grain deliveries.[65] Detached from its traditional context, the phrase was popular during the *ventennio* and was recast as a Fascist slogan (also in its shortened form *Navigare necesse*).

Mussolini himself had a special predilection for the motto and used it repeatedly in essays and speeches. The leader of Fascism framed the Latin expression in a way that made it represent distinctively Fascist ideals. In a front-page article in *Il popolo d'Italia*, he declared that the proverb had been a motto of imperial Rome even before Hanseatic cities in Germany had taken it as their slogan. He used the phrase to express Fascist values, reclaiming it as a fittingly 'Roman' motto for the Italians under Fascism.[66] The Mussolinian connotations would have been obvious to many Italians seeing the inscription. The statue's base had an additional Italian inscription that reinforced the Fascist interpretation of the monument and, consequently, the Latin used on it: "Giovinezza del Littorio fa di tutti i mari il mare nostro" ("The Youth of the Lictor makes of all the seas our sea"). The Italian inscription articulates an explicit political ambition, while the Latin saying conveys a more general sense of determination. When read together, however, the Italian phrase becomes enshrined within the cultural aura of the Latin proverb, while the Latin motto seems to morph into an expansionist slogan for Fascism's imperialistic ambitions. The Fascist significance of the Latin was further underlined by its visual framing, as two stylized *fasces* originally flanked the statue. The presence of the *fasces* and the Italian inscription transformed the Latin proverb into an aggressive and imperialistic slogan, aligning with Mussolini's use of the Latin.[67] Morera's statue exemplifies how Latin phrases that did not overtly reference the regime could be imbued with its ideology by being anchored in Fascist symbolic discourse, both through Mussolini's own discursive interventions and the visual and verbal paratexts that surrounded the slogan.

After Fascism's fall, *Il Navigatore* was subjected to a form of "ideological restyling."[68] The *fasces* were removed, and the Italian inscription was erased (fig. 10). The Latin motto, however, remained. Through the removal of the most recognizable markers of Fascism, the Latin slogan could apparently be ideologically 'cleansed': the Latin was dissociated from the aggressive expansionism it had been made to represent under, and by, Mussolini. As the omnipresence of the dictator's words ebbed away, the Latin phrase could be reinterpreted to serve other ideological purposes. The situation is of course different for Latin signs that were more instantly intelligible as 'Fascist' because they referenced Mussolini or the

65 On the background story and reception of the Latin phrase, see González Vaquerizo, "*Nauigare necesse est*."

66 On Mussolini's usage of it, see Lamers, "Mussolini's Latin," 218–20.

67 Even the rudder was interpreted as a sign of "affermato dominio del mare" (cited in Fochessati, "La statua," 23).

68 Fochessati, "La statua," 25: "*restyling* 'ideologico,'"; yet compare Fochessati, "1938: Mussolini's Visit," 430, observing that the statue "lost its rhetorical message," which seems to imply something different from the idea of restyling.

regime: these were sometimes defaced or removed from public view after Mussolini's fall.[69] Overall, however, responses to Fascist relics were inconsistent, and responses to Latin on public surfaces are no exception.[70] Latin texts in public spaces sometimes remained in place, just like the many *fasces* and other Fascist signs remained visible in the streets of Rome and many other places in Italy. Some of them occasionally stir debate, such as the inscription *MVSSOLINI DVX* on the obelisk at the Foro Italico. Others remained unaddressed.[71]

7 Pine-tree *DVX*

The Latin word *DVX* inscribed into the Italian landscape, including hillslopes and rocks, stands out as one of the most remarkable inscriptions of Mussolini's regime that have endured since its downfall. The word was used in several so-called 'landscape inscriptions': place markings in a natural environment (here in the form of letters and words) which "signal a cultural presence and give the land social significance."[72] Together with the word *REX*, for instance, *DVX* was displayed in Hollywood-style letters on a hillslope in Piedmont, not far from Castello di Avigliana at Monte Pezzulano.[73] Some of these landscape inscriptions are still visible today in certain parts of Italy. At Villa Santa Maria (Chieti), for instance, the word (ca. 3 meters high) can still be observed on a rocky formation called "La Penna."[74] *DVX* could function as a kind of 'logo' for Mussolini's regime, similar to the letter *M* and the ubiquitous symbol of the *fasces*. The decision to use *dux* instead of the more prevalent Italian term *duce* may have been influenced by the visual and graphic advantages of the Latin word, but it was also intended to forge a more apparent link with ancient Rome, particularly with Augustus.[75] It was probably the most visible Latin word in Fascist Italy, as it was repeated in many different contexts and media, from inscriptions through neon letters to 'human mosaics'.[76] However, often its ideological significance arguably went beyond its use as a simple logo. The symbolic implications of *DVX* are shaped by both its physical placement and its materiality within a specific context.

69 The main targets of these acts of this feverish campaign of *damnatio memoriae* after Mussolini's deposition were portraits of the *Duce* and his name, images of *fasci*, indications of the Fascist year reckoning, and toponymy the regime had imposed. See Arthurs, "'Voleva essere Cesare...,'" 287.

70 Panico, "Questioning What Remains," 35.

71 Examples are legion. The most famous example is the inscription at the Piazza Augusto Imperatore, where Mussolini's name was restored. See Arthurs, "'Voleva essere Cesare...,'" 283–84. For an engaging analysis of various instances of epigraphic *damnatio memoriae* after Fascism, see Nastasi and Orlandi, "L'epigrafia."

72 Wilson and David, "Introduction," 1.

73 See the newsreel in Istituto Luce, Giornale Luce, cod. B156501, from 00:45:38.

74 The inscription was topped by an indication of the year: "A XVIII," i.e., the eighteenth year of the Fascist regime (1940).

75 The specific connotations of the term *Dux* warrant a separate treatment. For some observations, see Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "Spectacular Latin."

76 On the human mosaics, in particular, see ibid.

Figure 11: *Pineta Dux* at the Monte Giano (Rieti). Situation of 2014.

This can be illustrated by briefly examining one of the most prominent examples of a landscape inscription featuring the Latin word, known as the *pineta Dux*, located on the western hillslope of Monte Giano, approximately 80 kilometres northeast of Rome as the crow flies (fig. 11). In the late 1930s,[77] students at the forestry school in nearby Cittaducale, a fraction of the National Forest Militia, planted around 20,000 naturalized pine trees in the pattern of the word *DVX* as a logo of Fascism.[78] In this sense, the tree formation was a corollary of the usual Latin inscriptions in Italian towns and cities, marking Mussolini's (and Fascism's) presence in the cityscapes of Italy. According to contemporary witness reports, the students who planted the trees were assisted spontaneously by the local population. The emphasis on the spontaneous nature of the landscape inscription and the effort involved in its creation enhance its significance as a symbol of the

[77] Giusti reports 1936–1937 as the years of construction in Giusti, "La pineta," 4. VanderGoot dates the planting to 1939, see VanderGoot, "Fervor and a Forest"; VanderGoot, "Logging," 147.

[78] VanderGoot, "Logging," 147.

population’s loyalty to Mussolini. As such, the *pineta Dux* is not only a written message, but also carries significance as a communal *act* of writing.[79] In practical terms, the *DVX*-patterned forest of eight hectares served the purpose of protecting the village of Antrodoco from the effect of landslides caused by heavy winter rains. The political symbolism of the tree formation in the *pineta Dux* inscription is evident against this background. The word *DVX* evoked Mussolini’s ‘beneficial presence’ in the Italian landscape and could be seen to represent an almost apotropaic power, averting natural disasters from the area.[80]

Interestingly, the word’s material form, consisting entirely of pine trees, added to its symbolical significance. The use of this type of tree reinforced its association with both ancient and Fascist Rome. Pine trees evoked classical Rome and the Roman army, which had used them as a source of timber for shipbuilding and to stabilize coastal dunes. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, this kind of tree moreover became part of attempts to create urban environments and landscapes that would cement a common identity for the unified nation. As Kristi Cheramie and Antonella De Michelis observed, pine trees in this context “mediated newness, reframed Baroque opulence, and distracted from decay, injecting views of antiquity with a renewed appearance of timelessness and perseverance.”[81] The trees had the capacity to “look as old as the ruins but in fact be as young as the new nation.”[82] Fascism adopted the nationalist symbolism of this kind of tree and aligned it with its own symbolic order. The regime planted thousands of them at Via dell’Impero, along the Via Appia, on the premises of the Foro Italico, from the Circus Maximus to the Baths of Caracalla, as well as in the EUR district. Like the use of Latin, the choice of pine trees evoked a distinct sense of *romanità* radiating, as it were, directly from Fascist Rome to Monte Giano, and reinforcing the impression of the regime’s “vigilant presence” in the Italian landscape.[83]

The example of the *pineta* illustrates how the Roman symbolism and the ideological significance of the *DVX*-sign were shaped not only by the use of Latin, but also by material, location, and effort put into its actual construction, and how Fascism picked up existing symbols to convey its message.

[79] For the notion of the act of writing (*acte d’écriture*), see esp. Fraenkel, “Actes d’écriture.”

[80] It seems that records for the planning and construction of the project are far and few between, see Giusti, “La pineta,” 3; VanderGoot, “Fervor and a Forest,” 141. For some historical details, see, Giusti, “La pineta.” For photographic documentation and maps of the current situation, see VanderGoot “Logging” and “Fervor and a Forest”; see also Ciani, *Graffiti*, 61–62. On the Fascist domination of the natural landscape, see also Armiero and Graf von Hardenberg, “Green Rhetoric.”

[81] Cheramie and De Michelis, *Through Time*, 278.

[82] Ibid.

[83] The *pineta Dux* survives mostly intact, despite the wildfires of August 2017, and is still visible from Monte Mario and the Gianicolo in Rome when the air is clear (Giusti, “La pineta,” 3). The pine tree formation was restored by the right-wing group *CasaPound Italia* and sympathizers in early 2018. On this, see Bialasiewicz and Stallone, “Focalizing New-Fascism,” 434–35.

8 Closing reflections

This essay shed light on how the language of ancient Rome could be transformed into a versatile instrument of political messaging across diverse media, encompassing postcards, inscriptions, sculptures, and landscapes, and reaching a wide range of audiences. It scratched the surface of the topic and may have raised more questions than it answered. Drawing out some of them can help open up avenues for further reflection and research on this subject.

The examined examples reveal how the physical style and presentation of Latin writing contributed to its capacity to convey political messages aligned with Fascism. While physical features played a significant role, factors such as location and placement, adjacent texts, and the re-signification of the Latin words 'on display' could also affect its meaning. The question remains whether these factors contributed equally in each instance, and if not, how they could vary from context to context. While the article primarily examined the influence of the material features and physical settings of Latin writing on its significance, it also acknowledged the capacity of the language to shape the meaning of the objects and environments to which it was applied. For example, how do Latin words alter the significance of the landscape in which they are 'inscribed'? Furthermore, examples such as the *pineta Dux* draw attention to the very act of writing and its lasting significance. They prompt us to ask how the process of crafting Latin signs could reverberate in their interpretation and reception.

Additionally, the preceding pages demonstrated that a more inclusive examination of Latin's material presence reveals ambiguities that permeate Fascist culture more broadly. These ambiguities encompass a constant oscillation between the Roman past and the Fascist present, as well as diverse conceptions of Romanness that simultaneously evoke various Roman pasts, such as Augustan Rome and Christian Rome. However, understanding the specific responses to embodied Latin is a recurring challenge, as Latin signs often addressed diverse or amorphous groups. Furthermore, sources shedding light on how certain individuals and groups responded are usually lacking. Gaining insight into the perspectives of those involved in creating these texts can offer glimpses into at least the *intended* responses. The involvement of multiple agents, including commissioners, designers, producers, and writers, raises questions about collaboration and division of responsibilities, and how these might have impacted meaning-making. Who was responsible for the Latin texts in the process, and did those involved share the same expectations regarding their role and function?

Ancient Rome, along with its language, "assumed a rather specific and more systematic ideological role" under Fascism.[84] The exact features of Latin's use within the Fascist cult of Rome, such as the occasions and intensity of its use, the selection of vocabulary, stylistic features, and preferences for specific quotations or proverbs, require further investigation. Gaining a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Latin's material presence can also enhance our understanding of how its usage diverged from that of Italian, which, undoubtedly, continued to

[84] Liberati, "La storia," 233.

serve as the regime's primary language of propaganda and communication. It is worth remembering that the political use of Latin in Fascist Italy was by no means a novelty, nor was it unique to this particular time and place. Ever since antiquity, Latin had been employed in political inscriptions, as well as in other media such as medals, stamps, and postcards, including in the propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church. Latin mottos were also frequently used in heraldry, including in military contexts, prior to the rise of Fascism. The appeal of Latin to the Fascists was partly due to its pre-existing tradition of use in the political sphere, like other symbols they employed. However, even though Fascism did not introduce something entirely new, it is still not sufficiently clear how it transformed existing uses of Latin to suit its political purposes, and how the Fascist adoption of Latin differed from previous political uses, as well as how it responded to competing discourses, including the material culture of the Church. There is still much insight to be gained in this area.

List of figures

Figure 1. Medal of the Opera Nazionale Balilla, 1928. Obverse. Bronze, ⌀ 39.8. Design: Papi. Mint: Lorioli & Castelli. Private collection. Photograph by author. License CC-BY-NC-SA.

Figure 2. Original photograph of a parchment calligraphed by Enrico Brignoli, ca. 1937. Private collection. Photograph by author. License CC-BY-NC-SA.

Figure 3. Postcard of the fourth legion (Santorre di Santarosa) of the Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale of Alessandria. Private collection. Photograph by A. Rovida.

Figure 4. Postcard produced by Foto Zaccaria in Florence, 1922. Reproduced by permission from E. Sturani, *Otto milioni di cartoline*, 224.

Figure 5. Casa del Mutilato in Pordenone, 2018. Photograph by L. Laureati. Reproduced by permission of Comune di Pordenone. License CC-BY.

Figure 6. Casa del Mutilato in Catania. Date: March 23, 1939. Photograph by S. Consoli. Alinari Archives, Florence (archive no.: AVQ-A-002228-0001). Reproduced by permission of Alinari Archives, Florence.

Figure 7. Casa del Mutilato in Pordenone (inscription), 2018. Photograph by L. Laureati. Reproduced by permission of Comune di Pordenone. License CC-BY.

Figure 8. Casa del Mutilato in Catania (inscription), March 23, 1939. Photograph by S. Consoli. Alinari Archives, Florence (archive no.: AVQ-A-002228-0001). Reproduced by permission of Alinari Archives, Florence.

Figure 9. Antonio Maria Morera's *Il Navigatore*, Genoa, 1941. Reproduced from *Genova*, January 1, 1941, 28.

Figure 10. Antonio Maria Morera's *Il Navigatore*, Genoa, 2015. Photograph by L. Visconti. Reproduced by permission of Wolfsoniana – Palazzo Ducale Fondazione per la Cultura, Genoa.

Figure 11. The *pineta Dux* at Monte Giano (Rieti), August 7, 2014. Photograph by ROMAOSLO. Reproduced by permission of iStock by Getty Images.

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JOLCEL

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CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of four articles and one response piece that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces" by Klazina Staat (pp. 7–42), "The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John" by Barbara Baert (pp. 44–67), and "Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy" by Han Lamers (pp. 69–101). The response piece is "Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin" by Vincent Debiais (pp. 139–47).

Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019
An Ancient Language in Modern Art*

SIMON SMETS

University College London

ABSTRACT

This article considers the presence of Latin in art from the beginning of the twentieth century until today. It analyses works by Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Joseph Kosuth, Giulio Paolini, Rosemarie Trockel, Ian Hamilton Finlay and William Kentridge, and compares their engagement with the Latin language. The article is structured according to the different ways in which these artists unsettle the status of Latin, be it through semantic confusion, material recontextualisation or textual destabilising.

***

* I owe the joy of writing this article to Han Lamers' encouragement, to Koi Persyn's and Lina Vekeman's inspiring impulses, and to Johanna Dose's help with finding some of the works of art in Munich and Vienna. A first version of the article was presented during my time at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies, and, in a later stage, part of it was presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Surrealist Studies in 2022. The feedback of colleagues on both occasions greatly improved my arguments, as did the generous comments of the anonymous peer reviewers. Obtaining remote access to video installations is not easy nor was direct access during the pandemic; without the help of Philipp Selzer (Kunstmuseum Basel) I could not have written the section on William Kentridge. The auction houses of Lempertz, Strauss & Co., and Sprüth Magers, as well as Adam Reich, the Fondazione Paolini, the heirs of Ugo Mulas, and the Stuart Collection in San Diego, in addition to the studios of William Kentridge and Joseph Kosuth and The Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay magnanimously allowed me to reproduce images of the works under consideration. I thank Wim Smets for checking the English.

1 Introduction

I first thought about Latin in the context of modern art while exploring the Kunstareal in Munich. In the Brandhorst Museum I saw a quote from Roland Barthes' famous essay on Cy Twombly (1928–2011) that was lettered on the wall next to the American artist's *Untitled (New York City)* from 1968.[1] The passage in question dwells on the *ductus* of Twombly's lines and their playfulness. Later that day, in the Pinakothek der Moderne, I came across a self-portrait by Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) where he holds a Latin text in his hand. It struck me that in an environment largely dedicated to artistic innovation and radical departure from tradition, I had to rely on my knowledge of an ancient language twice. I was curious whether de Chirico represented the end of an era, or whether Latin continued to appear in art during the second half of the twentieth century and into our present millennium.

Before looking more closely at Latin in art after World War II, it is worth considering the backdrop against which the artists and their audience use(d) Latin. Common places of encounter, I imagine, would be the streets of a historical European city, Catholic churches, schools, classical music and printed text editions. The order in which they are mentioned reflects a decreasing number of people exposed to them. First, church dedications, university mottos or classically inspired memorials could be experienced by many without much effort and without paying attention to their Latinity at all. However, some special cases might have instilled a feeling of surprise in the attentive observer, such as the Latin inscriptions from fascist Italy that mark civic buildings by stressing duties of everyday life that contrast with the statelier phrases found elsewhere.[2] The second most common place to encounter Latin would have been the Catholic Church, where it was the usual language for prayers and reading until a few decades into the second half of the twentieth century. Whereas the cityscape and Mass both were a widely shared experience until the increasing secularisation of Europe, classical music, Latin education and text editions have been restricted to a much smaller group. Moreover, listeners of, say, Mozart's *Requiem* or Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* arguably pay more attention to the music than to the words.[3] Language-focused school curricula and textbooks are, in their own way, restricted too. They traditionally focus on ancient authors, with a special place reserved for canonical authors like Cicero and Vergil. The minority who read these authors at school often belonged to higher social classes. In fact, knowledge of an ancient language would have been a confirmation of this status and helped to preserve it by offering access to better schools, universities and jobs.[4] While working class people admittedly engaged with classical culture, the role of Latin language acquisition appears

1 Barthes, *Cy Twombly : deux textes*, 47.
2 Marcello, "Building the Image of Power," 332; I thank the author of this article for inspiring conversations during our stay at the British School at Rome.
3 Mostue, "*Carmina saecularia*: Latin som operaspråk."
4 Kitchell, "'Solitary Perfection?'"; Lister, "Exclusively for Everyone."

to have been rather limited as compared to art historical and philosophical participation in ancient culture by non-elite learners.[5]

These four areas in which Latin has recently operated, share durability as their common factor. Inscriptions may have different degrees of erosion, but are meant to exist for many decades and centuries. This goes for the ancient ones as well as for the twentieth-century bronze characters that spell out the *Res Gestae* of Augustus underneath the Ara Pacis museum in Rome. This is, tellingly, the only remaining feature of the original fascist construction around the ancient monument.[6] Larger texts, rendered on parchment or paper through handwriting, movable type or digital printing techniques, are more vulnerable to change. Nevertheless, the principle of immutability remains the same: A letter switch or word omission is to be avoided, and if harm is already done, to be reverted. When it comes to Latin liturgy, the correct wordings are even sacred. At last, in the period of societal change that were the 1960s, Latin lost the privileged status it had enjoyed for over two millennia. Françoise Waquet ends her history of the Latin language with the 1969 reforms that postponed the teaching of Latin at secondary schools in France with two years, from the sixth to the fourth grade.[7] Other countries also reduced Latin classes in secondary schools, and universities continued removing Latin as an admission requirement.[8] At the same time, a pivotal event in the history of Catholicism irreversibly weakened the position of Latin, which had been a symbol of tradition and a "bond of unity" for the Western Church.[9] Although the Second Vatican Council did not abolish Latin altogether, more room was given to vernacular languages and priests were encouraged to do "the readings and directives, and some of the prayers and chants" in any assembly's mother tongue.[10] During the 1970s, vernacular languages would generally take the upper hand over Latin.

The 1960s also saw the rise of conceptual art, the creation of digital tools, and a changing relationship between capitalism, colonialism, the inequality of the sexes and other societal issues on the one hand and artistic creation on the other hand. The role of language in art became more important to repurpose or deconstruct the aesthetics of advertising, to make political statements, to explore the possibilities of magnetic recordings, and so on.[11] I want to look at the role Latin played in these dynamics of artistic reconsideration and change. As mentioned before, its association with tradition and what could be called the conservative establishment, makes it an unlikely motor of rupture with the past. Because the language became incomprehensible for an increasingly larger group of people, it had little chance of once more becoming the medium of broad cultural innovation. For the same reasons, however, Latin emerged as a potent symbol for the worlds that were coming under scrutiny or had vanished already. Nevertheless, we

5 Goff, "The Greeks of the WEA," 220.
6 Nastasi, "Piazza Augusto Imperatore."
7 Waquet, *Latin, or the Empire of a Sign*, 271.
8 See, for example, Forrest, "The Abolition of Compulsory Latin and Its Consequences."
9 "De Sacra Liturgia," 52.
10 Pope Paul VI, "Sacrosanctum Concilium."
11 A general overview of language in visual art is Ross, *Language in the Visual Arts*.

will see that it can also act, surprisingly, as the language of modernity. The *symbolical* function—rather than a literary one—sets twentieth- and twenty-first-century usage of Latin apart from earlier centuries. Not the way Latin is composed, not the literary allusion, nor specific metres are of much importance anymore. Latin's *Latinity* is all that matters, for it is the connotations of the language itself, be it social, historical or religious, that need to be activated.

I will focus on the ways in which Latin was unsettled by post-1960 artists in a variety of ways, roughly corresponding to the modes of durability and decline described above. How did they put Latin's authority to question, and destabilise its claims to normativity in education, literature, and religion? We will consider a range of cases from Latin's semiotic and semantic confusion at the hands of Joseph Kosuth and William Kentridge, to its material recontextualization by Rosemarie Trockel and Giulio Paolini, to Ian Hamilton Finlay's play with textual stability. I selected these artists on the basis of several parameters. I aimed to include works that address issues important to their (and our) times, for example, the gender balance in Trockel's work. Secondly, the artists represent different regions from New York to Scotland, to Germany and Italy, all the way south to Johannesburg. Even if the works discussed in this article problematise some preconceptions about Latin, they certainly confirm its transnational reach. This geographic diversity allows to look at various takes on the Latin heritage determined in part by the national art scenes they stem from. As regards the media of the works of art, I spread the scope from oil on canvas to white cube installations to manifestations in the public space, and manipulated video. Most importantly, the works under consideration deal with language explicitly. Many other artists have employed Latin 'in the background'. Joseph Cornell, for example, glued a page from Bacon's 1623 *De augmentis scientiarum* (*Advancement of Learning*) on the walls of one of his boxes.[12] This choice is meaningful beyond doubt, but it does not inquire the logocentrism, physical durability and textual exactitude of the Latin tradition to the same extent as the works under consideration. In light of this, it is worth noting that Cornell, by using a printed page, physically recycled the text, rather than re-creating it with his own hands as the artists did whom I will discuss. My choice is not exhaustive, and I have had to leave out some fascinating works of art which I found in the galleries and museum or auction catalogues which I consulted. Of those, I would like to highlight a couple including a series of works by Anselm Kiefer, who evokes Latin's sacral connotations, and a work by Ceryth Evans, who brilliantly uses Latin to thematise the traps of capitalism by presenting a famous Latin palindrome in the markedly modern form of a circular neon light.[13]

2 Mystery and subversion: Giorgio de Chirico (1911/1920) and Max Ernst (1919)

First, I would like to sketch the prehistory of Latin's new role on the basis of three works from the early twentieth century. They not only set the tone for what

[12] Hoving, "The Surreal Science of Soap," 28.

[13] "Anselm Kiefer *Aperiatur Terra*"; Evans, "*In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*".

was to follow, but were even explicitly taken up by later artists. Let us, then, return to de Chirico's previously mentioned self-portrait from 1920, and consider it in relation to an earlier self-portrait from 1911 which likewise features a Latin phrase.[14] This 1911 painting depicts the profile of a young man with his head on his hand melancholically staring into the void against a blue-green background. It is modelled after an iconic photograph from 1882 of Friedrich Nietzsche.[15] De Chirico greatly admired the German philosopher, who strongly influenced his artistic philosophy and practice.[16] The composition is surrounded by a painted brown frame bearing a trompe l'oeil inscription reading "et.quid.amabo.nisi.quod.ænigma.est?" ("And what shall I love if not the enigma?"). The letterforms remind the viewer of ancient inscriptions, as does the replacement of spaces with subscript interpuncts. At the same time, the position of the feigned inscription implies its posteriority to the portrait, as if the painting was finished first, then the frame was put around it, and finally, the inscription was carved into the frame. Before turning to the literary evocations of the inscription, I want to look more closely at the other work.

In 1920, de Chirico portrayed himself turned halfway to the viewer, in a pose that consciously cites Renaissance portraits.[17] By this time, de Chirico had declared himself to be a classical painter who relied on earlier painting techniques—"Pictor classicus sum" ("I am a classical painter").[18] The colours as well as the Italianate palazzo against the background of a blue sky strengthen this impression.[19] In the painting, de Chirico holds a plaque between the fingers and palm of his right hand while showing it to the viewer. The inscription on the tablet reads "et.quid.amabo.nisi.quod.rerum.metaphysica.est?" ("And what shall I love if not the metaphysical side of the world?") in the same letterforms as on the self-portrait from 1911. Whereas the epigraphic text on the first painting shared the space with the viewer, this one belongs to the world of the painting, where it cannot be touched, but only looked at. De Chirico's pose is reminiscent of Botticelli's *Young Man Holding a Roundel* or Memling's *Portrait of a Man with a Roman Medal*, which reflect the antiquarian interests of quattrocento humanism.[20] Despite the invented inscription, the plaque successfully pretends to be an ancient artefact and calls to mind the keen separation felt by Renaissance intellectuals between themselves and the idealised world of antiquity. De Chirico's painting adds a second chasm to this, namely between the twentieth century and the Renaissance, which Nietzsche had called "die letzte große Zeit" ("the last great age").[21]

[14] De Chirico's *Self-portrait with Euripides* from 1922 also has a Latin phrase: "Nulla sine tragoedia gloria" ("No glory without tragedy").

[15] Schultze, *Nietzsche*.

[16] Merjian, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Metaphysical City*, chap. 1 in particular.

[17] Kaschek, "Giorgio de Chirico," 152.

[18] de Chirico, "The Return to the Craft," 237.

[19] "By 1920, it was Perugino's profound horizons and deep skies seen between arches and colonnades that embodied a "magnifico senso di solidità e di equilibrio"" and about a decade earlier, "de Chirico had taken notice of Raphael's painting, emphasizing the sky and temple as important elements of metaphysical revelation." Brazeau, "Building a Mystery," 26 and 37.

[20] McFarlane, *Hans Memling*, 14.

[21] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 138.

What are the implications of de Chirico's Latin usage in these paintings, apart from stressing the loss and revival of classical and early Renaissance aesthetics? André Breton's (1896–1966) opinion of them is quite clear from his essay *Le surréalisme et la peinture*: "tant de portraits à menton fuyant et à vaine devise latine ne peuvent être le fait que d'un méchant esprit."[22] In the same column, he reproaches de Chirico, whom he had once appreciated, for now making fascist art. The association of the *devises* with fascism is warranted by the ideology's strong investment in presenting itself as an heir to ancient Rome through Latin among other means.[23] However, it remains to be seen whether the Latin devises are as empty as Breton wants us to believe. In a way, de Chirico's inscriptions (as well as the *Pictor classicus* statement) function as heraldic mottos, traditionally composed in Latin. Around the same time, the Belgian painter James Ensor adopted one after he was named baron in 1929 by King Albert I. His maxim "Pro Luce" ("For the light") prominently featured in a recent exhibition at the Munich Kunsthalle as a self-commentary on his bright artworks displayed there.[24] *Et quid amabo...*, both of them, can be read as programmatic statements as well. The first one hints at the enigmatic character of de Chirico's works, the second one spells out the epithet he himself bestowed on his art: metaphysical.[25] The mottos express his unconditional and unavoidable love for "the enigma contained within the appearance of ordinary objects, [...] the transcendent essence of phenomenal reality."[26]

The choice for Latin fits into this bent for the enigmatic and inaccessible. Moreover, it makes a sharp distinction, whether intellectual, social or otherwise, between those with and without an understanding of it. De Chirico, who distinguished between the common aspect of objects and "the other, the spectral or metaphysical which can be seen only by rare individuals in moments of clairvoyance or metaphysical abstraction" would certainly have been sympathetic to such an idea of separation.[27] His use of Latin likely wants to stress the existence of "Rang, Grad, Ordnung zwischen Mensch und Mensch," to quote Nietzsche's latest work *Ecce homo*, which de Chirico was well-acquainted with.[28] The hieratic aura of Latin as the language of the Church adds another dimension to this, which resonates well with the later Nietzsche's return to and expropriation of religious ritual.[29] In various ways, then, de Chirico's linguistic choice attunes with the "magnificence" he perceived in the columns and blue skies of quattrocento art, and which he strove to revive on his own canvases as the expression of a philosophical idealism.

22 "So many portraits with receding chins and vain Latin mottos can only be the work of a wicked mind." Breton, *Le surréalisme et la peinture*, 16.

23 Lamers, Reitz-Joosse, and Sanzotta, eds., *Studies*; Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, "*Lingua Lictoria*"; Lamers and Reitz-Joosse, *The Codex Fori Mussolini*.

24 *Fantastisch real: Belgische Moderne von Ensor bis Magritte.* 15 Oct. 2021 - 6 Mar. 2022, Kunsthalle, Munich.

25 E.g., in de Chirico, "Arte metafisica."

26 Storchi, "Metaphysical Writing and the 'Return to Order.'"

27 de Chirico, "On Metaphysical Art," 450.

28 "Rank, degree, order between man and man." Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 362.

29 Ruin, "Saying Amen to the Light of Dawn."

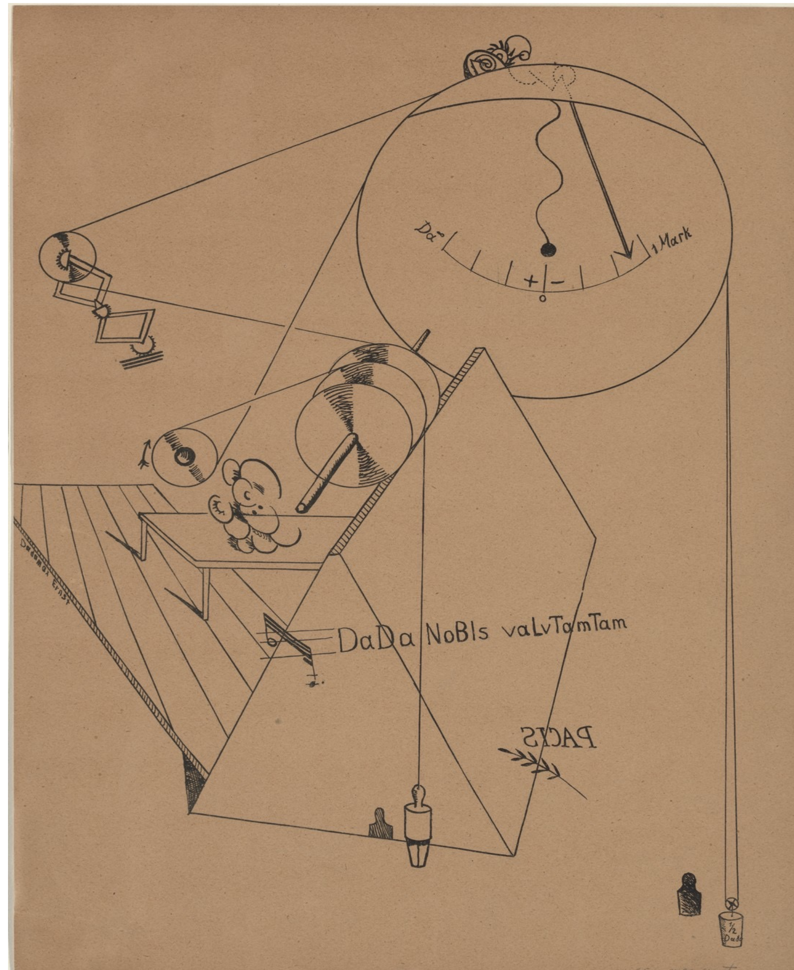

Figure 1: Max Ernst, *Fiat modes, pereat ars*, 1919.

More than is the case in de Chirico's self-portraits, but in a very different way, Latin as the language of ritual and religion is the backbone of *Fiat modes, pereat ars* (*Let there be fashion, down with art*, fig. 1) by the German Dadaist Max Ernst (1891–1976). The title is macaronic, mixing the French word *modes* ('fashions') into the phrase without putting the verb in the plural and thereby insinuating that *modes* is a Latin noun in the singular form. This sober lithograph on brownish paper contains a faceless tailor's dummy, inspired by de Chirico's *The Great Metaphysician*, surrounded by a mechanism of cables, weights and pullies that are connected without functional logic. The allusion to industrialisation, to "the anonymity of modern life and the way individuals can be manipulated in the modern world" bestows a striking modernism on the piece.[30] Amid all this stand Latin phrases in irregular type. What to make of this confrontation of the modern and the old? Where does the burlesque subversion, announced by the macaronic title, fully manifest itself? From top to bottom, one first reads "DaDa NoBIs vaLvTamTam" as the extension of a music staff, and, below that, "ƧIƆAꟼ". "Dada nobis valutamtam" is a corruption of the liturgical formula "dona nobis pacem" ("grant us peace"). It is part of the acclamation of the Lamb of God right before

30 Spies and Rewald, *Max Ernst*, 10.

Communion takes place. Similar punning on a liturgical formula was hailed four decades later in Mikhail Bakhtin's appraisal of medieval and Rabelaisian grotesque. Bakhtin recalls the example of "Venite, apotemus" ("O come, let's have a drink"), which plays on the hymnal line "Venite, adoremus" ("O come, let us adore").[31] Does the parallel between Ernst's linguistic travesty and Bakhtin's interpretation of medieval jest run deeper than the pleasure of a joke?[32] The Russian critic interprets the medieval humour sociologically and argues that in this period "not only does laughter make no exception for the *upper stratum*, but indeed it is usually directed toward it. [...] One might say that it builds its own world versus the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state."[33] Clearly, his analysis and its tacit sympathy for the *lower strata* is rooted in the class awareness that had developed at the end of the nineteenth century and eventually led to the Russian Revolution and the foundation of the Soviet Union, in which Bakhtin lived.[34] Should we also consider Ernst's play with Latin as an ideologically inspired attempt to criticise the powers that be?

To begin with, "dada" can be read as a repeated *da*, which would be a synonym of *dona* (imperative "give"). It is, of course, a humorous reference to Ernst's own artistic environment, which resonates with the signature "Dadamax Ernst" on the left side of the work. "Valutamtam," on the other hand, is more layered. The stem *valu-* reminds of words like *valitudo*, denoting physical well-being and hence not unexpected in the context of prayer. At the same time, *Valuta* is the German word for currency and, more specifically, for the value of one currency in relation to another—note that on the right of the curved axis in the circle, we read "1 Mark". Embedded within a prayer, it throws up the uneasy relationship of the Church with the accumulation of wealth and its take on social issues. Changing a prayer for peace with a request for financial support appears to be criticism of the Church's position towards the working classes in an industrialised society.[35] The allusion to moneymaking is especially trenchant because the Lamb of God is an image of the self-sacrificial nature of Jesus Christ and, by extension, His Church. Thirdly, *-tamtam*, formally a feminine singular accusative, satisfies the Dadaist's pleasure in the mere sound of language as exemplified by Hugo Ball's poetry. Its syllables visually jump out, as the alliterative t- is capitalised twice, somewhat reminiscent of early modern chronograms. Because of the loudness of drums called *Tamtam* in German and other languages, the word has come to signify 'fuss' from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards.[36] This new connotation could have been attractive to Ernst and might well pick at the pomp and circumstance sometimes associated with Roman Mass and at the financial costs of liturgical splendour.

31 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 86.
32 See the fourth issue of this journal for a consideration of playfulness and Latin.
33 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 88.
34 For the connection between Bakhtin and Marxism, see Brandist, "The Official and the Popular in Gramsci and Bakhtin"; Brandist, "Bakhtin, Marxism and Russian Populism."
35 Thirty years earlier, the Church had made its position on these matters known through the encyclic *Rerum Novarum*.
36 Kluge, "Tamtam."

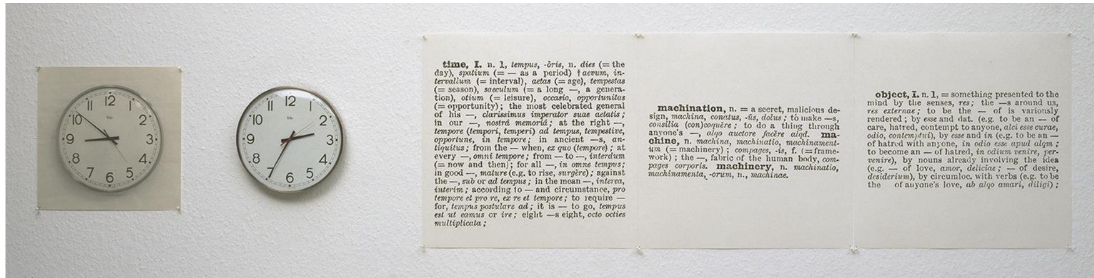

Figure 2: Joseph Kosuth*, Clock (One and Five), English/Latin Version*, 1965.

Finally, there is the word "pacis" ("of peace"), which visually stands out from the rest of the drawing. It is, moreover, underlined with an olive branch, the traditional symbol of peace. Given that *Fiat modes, pereat ars* was made in 1919, only one year after the cataclysm of World War I, the typographical inversion of the word is self-explanatory. *Pacis* is a genitive form, which links it grammatically to the previous three words. This addition narrows down the request for money to a request for the benefits of peace—and, perhaps cynically, of its disruption. In combination with the imaginary mechanisms occupying the rest of the lithograph, we might even hear a plea for giving the benefits of modernisation to the group denoted by "nobis" ("us"). Instead of exploiting Latin's loftiness, Ernst makes it an object of ridicule for picking at the established institutions of Church and State, and for raising problems that were distinctive of his own time.[37] We will now see how from the 1960s onwards, the incongruity between Latin and modernity that is apparent in Ernst, has become the general attitude.

3 Sign: Joseph Kosuth (1965)

Clock (One and Five), English/Latin Version (1965) (fig. 2, from here on referred to as *Clock*) is a creation by the self-proclaimed conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth (1945). It consists of a random clock, a life-size picture of that clock, and photostatic enlargements of three different entries from an English-Latin dictionary. The lemmas are 'time,' 'machination,' and 'object,' and their translations cover a wide semantic range from, in the first case, *tempus* ("time") to *aevum* ("era") to *occasio* ("right moment"). *Clock* belongs to a series of works, the so-called *Proto-Investigations*, which share the same setup of object, picture and dictionary lemma, a setup which is elsewhere repeated with a shovel, stool, saw and rake. Every object is itself the basis of a sub-series, which is differentiated through the language of the reproduced dictionary entry. There is an all-English version, but there are also versions where the dictionary entry translates from English into another language. The bilingual works come with a certificate and list of instructions stating that they can only be exhibited in countries where the language in question is spoken

[37] He is not the only one to do so: The concrete poetry of Dragan Aleksić, published in a Dada Tank number from 1922, is a good example. In a cacophonic poem, we read the following verse: "½ rebeka + OREMUS". The word in block letters means 'let us pray' and is the priest's call for prayer after which the congregation usually stands up. Aleksić, "Krozolit oax."

by a large number of the population. Thus, the German *Clock* can only be exhibited in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, whereas the Dutch version would be limited to Dutch or Flemish exhibition spaces. English, as both an international language and Kosuth's mother tongue, is exempt from this restriction, as is Latin. Clearly, *Clock* is "concerned with the relationship between words and objects (concepts and what they refer to)," a key theme in Kosuth's oeuvre which has its roots in Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *signifiant/signifié* ('signifier'/'signified') and Charles Peirce's ideas on the index/icon/symbol triad.[38] How does the concept of *Clock* respond to earlier philosophies of language, particularly of the Latin language? What does *Clock* say, more specifically, about the relation between Latin and our direct experience? Finally, what is the position of Latin with regard to the exhibition restrictions imposed on the works?

In a way, Kosuth is an offshoot of late antique language philosophy, mediated by modern reflections on Western logo-centrism. Jesús Hernández Lobato has pinpointed fourth- and fifth-century influences on the postmodern linguistic turn and its forerunners. For example, "Wittgenstein's obsession with Augustine's *Confessions* is well known, and it exerted a vast influence on his thinking."[39] Also Kosuth, whose thinking relies heavily on the Austrian thinker, has adopted St Augustine as an important source for his conceptual artworks.[40] His engagement with the bishop of Hippo is, however, in English. As indicated in the introduction, contemporary art incorporates Latin primarily as a symbol, and less as the medium of specific texts.[41] It is worth looking at the artist's own statements on the role of Latin within his exploration of words and their meaning. Fortunately, the archives of Tate Modern in London preserve a letter written in 1974 by Kosuth to Richard Morphet from the museum.[42] Morphet had asked for clarifications of the certificate, which was, apparently, written in an unclear hand. Kosuth's elaborate answer contains some interesting statements on his relationship with the Latin works and on the language itself, which we will now look at.

To begin with, he writes that Latin is dead. Whereas the vernacular versions interact on a more profound level with speakers of those languages, the Latin version "functions only operationally, not really. (As if ...)." Although the *Proto-Investigations* are mainly concerned with "the "trans-linguistic" aspect of European (Western) culture," as Kosuth wrote to Morphet, *Clock* appears to lay bare more fundamental questions of translatability.[43] Latin is the one language that is

[38] Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy," 30. It is in this context perhaps worth reminding that de Saussure's diagrams in his posthumously published *Cours de linguistique général* are mostly in Latin, although the entire text is in French.

[39] Lobato, "Late Antique Foundations of Postmodern Theory," 57.

[40] See Kosuth, *378 (+216., After Augustine's Confessions)* and *215 Twice (+216., After Augustine's Confessions)*.

[41] Kosuth has made at least one work with texts by a Latin author. For a large Ovid exhibition at the Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome, he provided neon quotes from the classical poet, with English translations in various degrees of accuracy. The occasional nature of the work sets it apart from the early inquiry that is *Clock* and its meaning does not appear to transcend the question of how Ovid's verse can function as pithy quotes on Instagram; see Jewell, "Ovidio at the Scuderie Del Quirinale [Review]."

[42] Kosuth, "Letter to Richard Morphet." I am grateful to the archivist who provided me with a scan of the letter, which is only partly reproduced in the online catalogue of Tate.

[43] Letter from Joseph Kosuth to Richard Morphet.

common to the entire European culture, and has been considered its "bond of unity," as I previously mentioned. It is, however, also locked in the past, so that a translation from English to Latin is not only transnational or trans-linguistic, but has to bridge time as well. Kosuth's *Clock* is about the mechanical time-measuring instrument, which became widespread in the fourteenth century only and thus has no name in classical Latin. As a consequence, our concept of 'clock' can never be really translated into Latin as new words cannot become operational in a past communicative context. This partly explains why our *Clock* does not contain a dictionary entry for 'clock,' in contrast to the modern-language versions.[44] Its Latin translation which Kosuth would have found in his copy of *Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin*, is 'horologium,' originally used for a water clock or sundial.[45] The juxtaposition of the lemmas 'time,' 'machination' and 'object' seemingly appears as an attempt to create a compound denoting the mechanical clock, something in the line of 'a time-mechanism-thing'. *Clock* points to the tension between an object and the irremediable lack of a word for that object in a given language. This tension is not only a linguistic issue; on a profounder level, *Clock* hints at the difference in world view inherent in languages. Kosuth wrote that "At the time of this work, and for several years after (roughly the "Proto-Investigations" through the Fifth Investigation) I was perhaps overly influenced by the Whorf-Sapier [*sic*] hypothesis."[46] Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941), a student of Edward Sapir (1884–1939) at Yale, had stated that "The forms of a person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systematizations of his own language."[47] Whoever understands a clock to be the object on display in the artwork, lives in a different world from that of antiquity and the Middle Ages, when time was more organic and bound to the experience of nature and oneself.[48] It must be said that the assumption behind this is rather classicist, as it excludes the Neo-Latin literature where *horologium* can mean exactly the object on display.

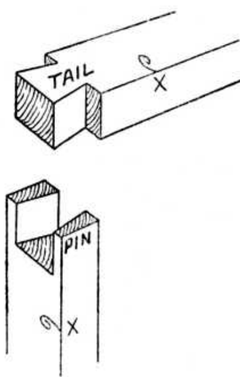

Figure 3: Dovetail joint.

An interesting afterthought on *Clock* are Kosuth's words that "this English/Latin version is the only one from this series which is not in my possession. I have made an effort to keep all of the English/Latin works."[49] He appears to consider them more private than the rest, possibly because their language really belongs to no one. Is his stance, then, comparable to de Chirico's esoteric celebration of the enigma, which

[44] For example, Kosuth, *Clock (one and five) English - Norwegian*. Another reason can be simply aesthetic: the lemma for 'clock' is only one word long (*horologium*).

[45] The typography of the photostats corresponds to the 1904 edition of the dictionary, or a reprint of it.

[46] Letter from Joseph Kosuth to Richard Morphet.

[47] Whorf, "Language, Mind, and Reality," 252.

[48] See Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time*.

[49] Kosuth cites a changed relationship between himself, Nigel [Lendon] and his gallerist Leo [Castelli] as the reason in his letter to Richard Morphet.

can only be reached by a few illuminated minds, including himself? I would not go as far as that, but the exceptionality of Latin does appear to be closely related to the artist’s ultimate control over his work. It is, so to say, the purest realisation of his concept. Kosuth speaks of “a decoding device for the whole system—the way my myths dovetail with our myths” (original underlining). The concept behind a work is the most important aspect of artistic production for Kosuth and his desire to keep the ‘key’ to *Clock* therefore appears natural. A Latin key, so to speak, is least likely to get stolen. At the same time, Kosuth has underlined “my” and “our” after the dash, thereby stressing that his works are ultimately about bringing world views into contact with each other rather than marking the boundaries. The metaphor of a dovetail, although not uncommon in English, is significant here. Figure 3 shows how the small trapezoidal pin sticks out from the entire wooden board and fits into a same-shape recess in the other board. If Latin is the dovetail, then what are the larger parts it joins? I believe that Kosuth’s metaphor hints at the open-endedness of Latin. Whereas vernaculars work automatically in a certain linguistic context, the Latin version needs one more step. If considered functionally dead, Latin needs another round of translation, building a possible bridge between English and all the other languages at once.

4 Material: Giulio Paolini (1969) and Rosemarie Trockel (1988)

Later conceptual art, including *arte povera*, made use of Latin in a very different way from Kosuth’s linguistic propositions. This may be due to the different receptions of Wittgenstein’s philosophy in the USA and on the European continent.[50] In any case, their recontextualization of Latin does not take place on the basis of meaning, but of its materiality. They abandon the typical association of

Figure 4: Giulio Paolini, *Et.quid.amabo.nisi.quod.ænigma.est?* 1969.

Figure 5: Giulio Paolini, *Quam raptim ad sublimia*, 1969.

[50] Buchmann, “Art after Wittgenstein,” 275.

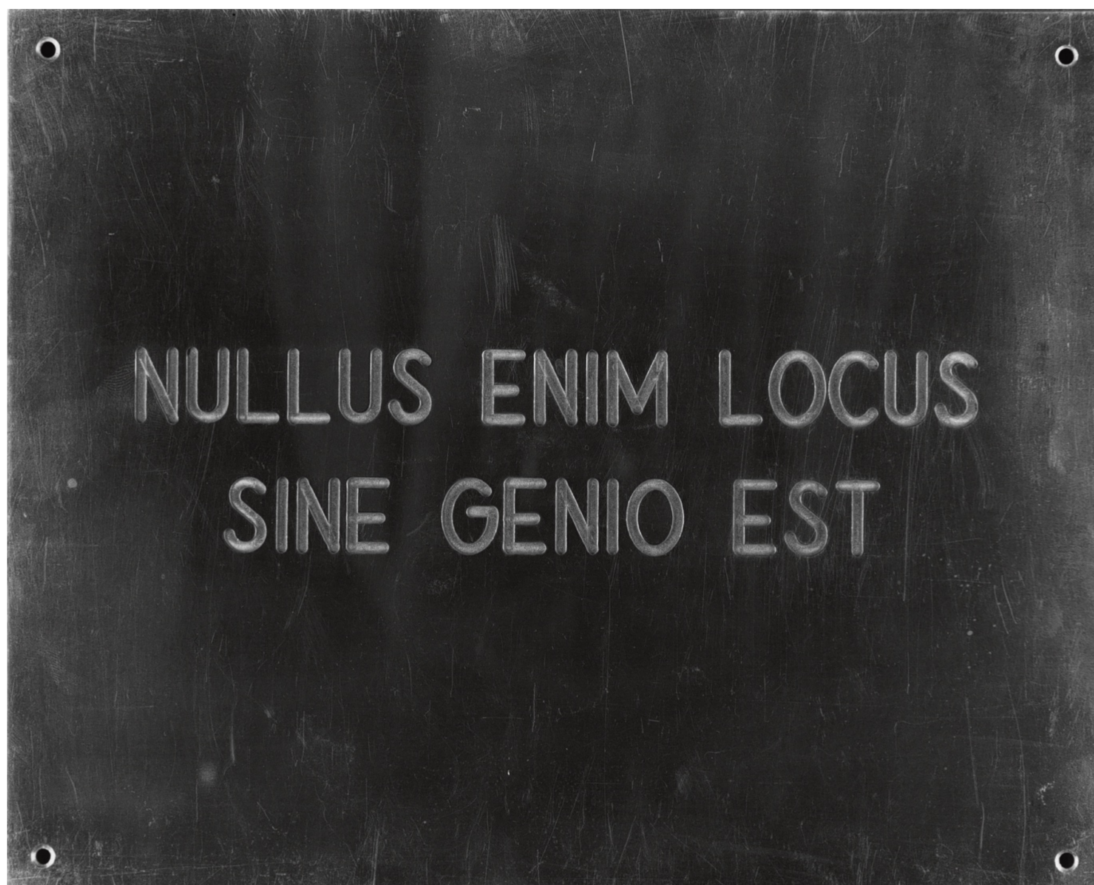

Figure 6: Giulio Paolini, *Nullus enim locus sine genio est*, 1969.

Latin with durable stone and well-produced reference works which we encountered in the works of de Chirico and Kosuth, and to which we will return below. Instead, they adopt transient means of public display such as business cards and improvised banners. Those are typical media of the post-war business world on the one hand and the culture of indignant protest often associated with the 1968 revolts on the other hand. Banner and business card are short outbursts of communicative energy, aimed at making an immediate impact, rather than slowly act on the recipient. When they have fulfilled their functions of initiating a possible collaboration or voicing one's opinion by means of a block lettered slogan, they are doomed to fade at the back of a drawer or in the corner of a storeroom. This completely goes against the slow reading usually associated with Latin.[51]

Several works by Giulio Paolini (1940) feature Latin on such objects as I described here. I will start with three banners, created in 1969, one of which refers to de Chirico's previously mentioned 1911 self-portrait, from which it borrows

[51] In Nietzsche's words, "tief, rück- und vorsichtig, mit Hintergedanken, mit offen gelassenen Thüren, mit zarten Fingern und Augen" ("deep, considerate, careful, with private interests, with open doors, with tender fingers and eyes"), see Nietzsche, "Morgenröthe," 17.

the Latin phrase "Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est."[52] The second banner reads "Quam raptim ad sublimia" ("As quick as possible to the highest place"), and in an interview from 1995, the artist remembers

> che completai la trilogia con una terza citazione: "Nullus enim locus sine genio est". Le tre frasi valevano come pronunciamento, professione di fede, ma anche consapevolezza della loro irripetibilità, confinate come sono in una lingua antica e lontane da ogni possibilità, verifica o riappropriazione.[53]

The conflation of the three quotes into a single way of expressing the idea of unrepeatability and, so to say, unverifiable dogmatism, obfuscates the varied origins of the quotations. The source of "Et quid amabo..." is indicated by the retained interpuncts and font, which makes the reference truly visual, rather than intertextual. The text has become all image, an art historical reference in the first place.[54] In contrast, Paolini found the second phrase written on the floor of the Vatican Museums, and keeps no visual trace of its origin.[55] The third one, which also features on a metal plate better corresponding to the paradigm of durability against which the banners gain significance (fig. 6), is drawn from the fourth-century commentary by Servius on Vergil's *Aeneid*.[56] What to make of these eclectic and idiosyncratic choices? As we have seen, Kosuth's *Clock* is not primarily concerned with time or mechanics, but with how we talk about them. In a similar way, Paolini is more interested in what is being said about art and literature than in the works themselves. His three quotes act on a comment level, from de Chirico's self-reflection to Servius' poetic interpretation. Interestingly, while looking for such material, he automatically ended up outside the Latin literary canon.
Apart from its reflexivity, Paolini's use of Latin willingly wrecks the usual modes of communication. Let us have a look at the context in which the works under consideration were created. Originally, the banners were put up as part of an installation in the public sphere. "Et quid amabo...," for example was stretched between two balconies on opposite sides of the street at the corner of Piazza del Duomo and Via Cinque Giornate in Como during the art manifestation *Campo Urbano* (fig. 4). Later, they featured in more traditional exhibition spaces, where their arrangement underlined their inherent ephemerality. As figure 5 shows, the banner was hung from its top left corner, so that the text became only partly legible. The short moment of announcing the message written on the cloth had

[52] *Et in Arcadia Ego* (*I am in Arcadia too*) by Ian Hamilton Finlay, another of whose works I discuss below, also uses a Latin phrase to refer to an earlier artwork. In that case, it is Nicolas Poussin's famous painting *Les bergers d'Arcadie*, where the same sentence features on a tomb.

[53] "I completed the trilogy with a third quotation: "Nullus enim locus sine genio est [Every place has a tutelary spirit]." The three statements acted as a pronouncement, a profession of faith, but also as an awareness of their unrepeatability, confined as they are to an ancient language and remote as they are from every possibility, verification or re-appropriation." Disch, "Interview with Giulio Paolini," 297.

[54] It is instances like this that made Italo Calvino conclude about Paolini that "La pittura per lui equivale alla storia della pittura." ("For him, painting is the equivalent of art history.") Calvino, "La squadratura," xii. Immediately after this foreword by Calvino, we find "Et quid amabo nisi quod ænigma est" as a traditional book motto to *Idem*. See Maria Francesca Pepi, "Italo Calvino e Giulio Paolini"; Soutif, "Filigranes," 80ff.

[55] Lageira, "Ni le soleil ni la mort," 132.

[56] Servius, *Servianorum in Vergilii carmina commentariorum*, vol. 3, v. 5.95.

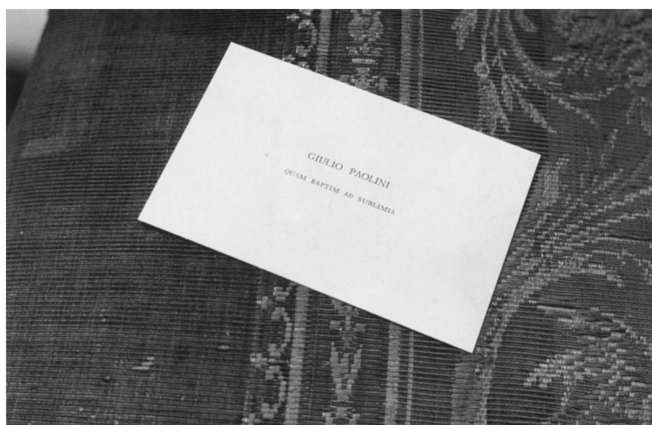

Figure 7: Giulio Paolini, *Quam raptim ad sublimia*, 1969.

Figure 8: Giulio Paolini, *Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est*, 1969.

passed forever. This is the unrepeatability which Paolini mentioned earlier. But to what extent was the Latinate banner ever capable of conveying its message? De Chirico's mottos heightened the mystery and elatedness of his painting; he wanted, I recall, to capture the hidden reality of the world. In 1920, he even withdrew the Latin text into his world, into the world of the self-portrait itself. Paolini stays true to this mysterious "remoteness" of the phrase by adhering to the use of an ancient language without further explanation. He adheres to the earnest sacredness that seemed at play in de Chirico as well, by insisting that his pronouncement is "a profession of faith". At the same time, however, he inflated the message to the dimensions of a slogan visible from afar and to a large group of people. Away with the intimate, tactile connection with an ideal past, whether antiquity or the Renaissance; instead comes the loudness of the (political) manifestation. Paolini mixes the unverifiable nature of a metaphysical Truth à la de Chirico with the unshakable conviction of demonstrators. Ironically, the traditional sign of protest and revolt appears rooted in an old cultural tradition as well as in the discourses of power to which Latin is ultimately tied. This is not to say that the banner corroborates the idea of Latin as a language of prestige and long-time durability. When its cloth hangs down in quiet fatigue, it intimates the finiteness and relativity of all ideas and words—vernacular or Latin.

More in line with de Chirico's employment of the Latin phrases as an ennobling device are the business cards which Paolini made around the same time when the banners were created. The same words as before are printed in gold ink underneath his name, where usually the occupation of the person is given. Specifically about "Quam raptim..." in this format, Paolini said that "j[e l]'ai pris presque comme un titre de noblesse et comme un défi."[57] I read these words only after connecting Ensor's motto "Pro Luce" with de Chirico's programmatic lines of Latin as discussed above. Indeed, I was surprised to find the same interpretation being made by Paolini for his own artistic practice. As with the banners, however, these physical carriers of the quotes destabilise the 'magnificence' of the mottos' original setting. The photo of fig. 8 rather evokes the sleek normativity of a business representative than the mystery of a clairvoyant philosopher. While de

[57] "I have taken it taken almost as a title of nobility and as a challenge." Lageira, "Ni le soleil ni la mort," 132.

Chirico's portrait self-consciously built on the self-fashioning of Renaissance humanists, Paolini moves away from the creation of a noble intellectual persona. Instead, he embeds the Latin quote in a parody of the corporate identity culture that rapidly expanded during the 1960s and after.

Almost all the artists in this article are male, because it proved not easy to find female representatives of Latin in art. In fact, a work by the German Rosemarie Trockel (1952) thematises this gender disparity. Figure 9 shows a scarf on which a Latin phrase is knitted in irregular letters: the over-famous "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") from René Descartes' *Principia Philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*).[58] In comparison with Paolini's banner, Trockel's textile work accentuates even more the question of a woman's field of action being at home as opposed to in society. However, the scarf could equally be interpreted as a banner, be it of a smaller size. Trockel's "knitted works are ironic comments on the traditionally feminine occupation of knitting," which usually took place in a domestic environment.[59] Throughout much of history, philosophical publications and Latin learning were, on the other hand, reserved for men on the public stage. *Cogito, ergo sum* visualises Trockel's liberation from such stereotypes, and conceiving of the scarf as a banner allows her subversion to work out. The statement "I think, therefore I am" is a claim to recognition as a being whose thoughts and voice count. Trockel's appropriation of perhaps the most normative language of male philosophy in western Europe fuels her assertion more than if she had adopted the earlier French version "Je pense, donc je suis" ("I think, therefore I am").[60]

Cogito, ergo sum questions the authority of the famous maxim through its own production process as well as through the association with mass communication in a more poignant way than Paolini adopted. Trockel did not do the knitting herself but programmed a machine to create the pattern. She considered the culturally inferior status of wool and knitting, and wanted to investigate "ob das negative Klischee überwunden werden kann, wenn der handwerkliche Aspekt aus dem ganzen Komplex herausfällt, wenn das Strickmuster vom Computer gesteuert

Figure 9: Rosemarie Trockel, *Cogito, ergo sum*, 1988.

[58] This is the version of which a copy was recently sold during Auction 1178 at Lempertz (Lot 432).
[59] Lübbren, "Trockel, Rosemarie."
[60] Descartes, *Discours*, 50.

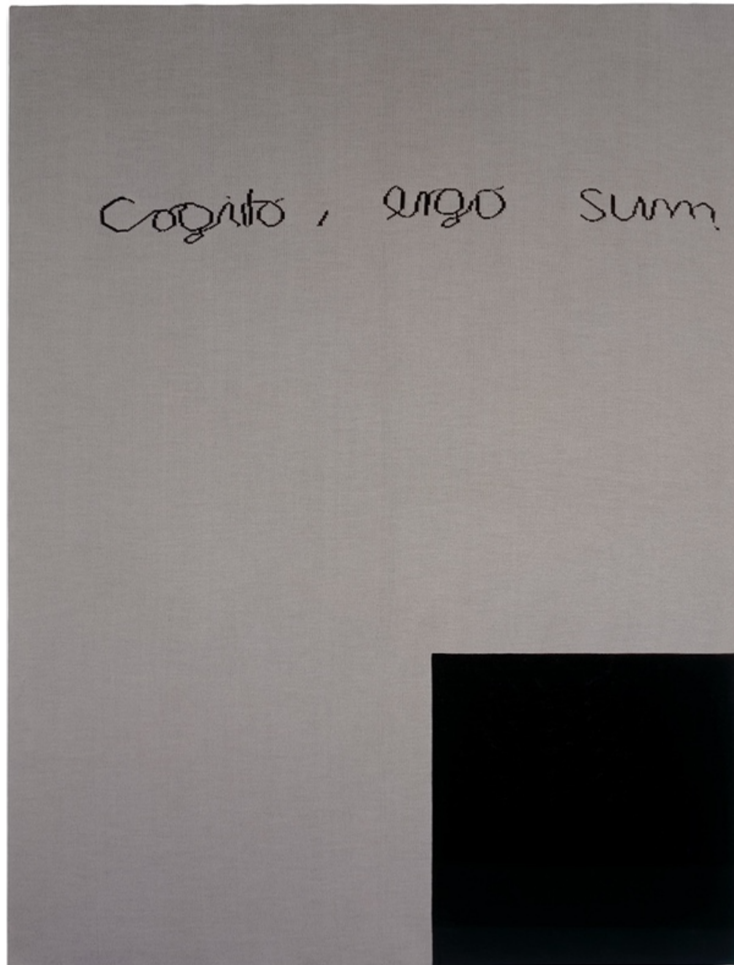

Figure 10: Rosemarie Trockel, *Cogito, ergo sum*, 1988.

entsteht."[61] On the language level, Descartes' words lose their original meaning when 'uttered' by modern technology, for its expression offers no proof of human existence anymore. While Kosuth stated that certainly "at least on one level a change of language can change the work quite significantly," Trockel manipulates the proposition's meaning by means of a different 'voice'.[62] The clash of the French philosopher's truism with our modernity is amplified through the use of Latin, which stresses the gap between his and our world. Moreover, Trockel creates a tension between Latin and mass communication. Unlike Paolini, she avoids the paradox between her medium and linguistic distance by using a very famous quote which many people will recognise. Nevertheless, the work's dialogue with Trockel's other knitted works casts it into an unexpected context. Some of these pieces repeat logos like the Playboy rabbit and the Woolmark symbol in a parody on repetitive fancy work patterns in women's magazines and the banality of certain iconography. She thereby joins *Cogito, ergo sum* to the league of broadly shared,

61 "Whether the negative stereotype can be overcome when the craft aspect is dropped from the whole complex, when the knitting pattern is created under the control of a computer." Trockel and Drathen, "Endlich ahnen, nicht nur wissen."

62 Letter from Joseph Kosuth to Richard Morphet.

but trite cultural references. The original work (fig. 10), of which the scarf is an edition with the same title and Latin phrase, has a black square in the corner, “so als sei Malewitschs „Schwarzes Quadrat“ bestenfalls noch als Flicken zu gebrauchen.”[63] Latin, here seemingly used as a symbol for the philosophy of the past, shares in this same mixture of commentary and plain mockery of cultural benchmarks.

5 Text: Ian Hamilton Finlay (1987)

Ian Hamilton Finlay’s (1925–2006) interest in the classical tradition is omnipresent in his poetic garden Little Sparta.[64] A recurrent theme is the passing of time, the loss of culture and the impossibility of reconstructing the past. They have often been explored in relation with the French Revolution, a point of radical rupture. For example, *The World has been empty since the Romans* pretends to be a restored ancient inscription on a broken marble frieze. Instead of the Latin or Ancient Greek text one would expect on such an object, we read the English title of the work chiselled in the stone. The same phrase appears on an unpolished plinth in Little Sparta. “While evoking notions of age and imperfection, the plinth heightens the sense of emptiness bemoaned in the quotation that it prominently presents to the visitor.”[65] “The World has been empty since the Romans” is a

Figure 11: Ian Hamilton Finlay, *UNDA*, 1987.

[63] “As if Malevich’s “Black Square” could only be used as a patch at best.” Hübl, “Spurenelement.”
[64] “Little Sparta.”
[65] Follo, “‘The World Has Been Empty since the Romans,’” 278.

translation from the revolutionary Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just's report from 1794 on the arrest of the more moderate Georges Danton.[66] Another example of such allusions to the French Revolution is *Quin morere* (*Die*), which consists of a guillotine blade, reminding the viewer of the decapitations during *la Terreur*. In the metal is written a verse from Vergil's *Aeneid* about Dido's suicide plans to escape the pain after Aeneas has left her: "Quin morere, ut merita es, ferroque averte dolorem" ("Die, as you deserve, and ward off your pain with the sword").[67] The irony here is baffling, and one is unsure what to make of this defective killing machine and the tragic lines of poetry.

The work that interests me here is titled *Unda* (*Wave*), and exists in several versions.[68] Some feature the Latin *Unda* only, while other ones add the French *vague*, English *wave* German *Woge* and Italian or Spanish *onda*. "The sound of the words contributes to the imagined effect of a wave's build up and resolution, as the vowels and consonants progress through sounds with more impetus to the softer and gentler sounds in the Latin *unda*."[69] It is interesting that Latin comes at the end of the series, where the outpour of sounds comes to an end, or perhaps stretches out infinitely. The most evocative execution of the work's concept, in my opinion, stands on the sports fields of University College San Diego (fig. 11). It was completed in 1987 and is, according to the university's web page, Finlay's "first permanent outdoor work in the United States."[70] It consists of one smaller and four equally large blocks, lying next to a sports field, with the symbol ˥ and four letters carved into them in different patterns. They appear unfinished, with long half cylindrical cavities still clearly visible along the edge. These are traces of holes drilled into the stone to split it off in the mine or later in the artist's workshop. Like the previously mentioned plinth carrying the citation of Saint-Just, *Unda* activates the spectator's memory of archaeological artefacts in which time has been paused. Additionally, the location with a view on the Pacific Ocean, and the materiality of the yellowish limestone render the work more evocative than earlier versions in concrete and glazed mosaics.

Barbara Baert has proposed "the sea/marble conflation as a model of creative potentiality."[71] Although chemically and physically a different material, Finlay's blocks take part in this artistic paradigm. The unpolished surface undulates on every side, thereby underlining its aquatic character. In addition to this, limestone bears a geological memory of the ocean waves, since it consists of organic deposits

66 "Le peuple français ne perdra jamais sa réputation : la trace de la liberté et du génie ne peut être effacée dans l'univers. Opprimé dans sa vie, il opprime après lui les préjugés et les tyrans. Le monde est vide depuis les Romains, et leur mémoire le remplit et prophétise encore la liberté." ("The French people will never lose its reputation: the trace of freedom and genius cannot be erased from the universe. Oppressed during their life, it oppresses in turn the prejudiced and the tyrants. The world has been empty since the Romans, and their remembrance fills it and still prophesies freedom.") de Saint-Just, "Rapport sur la conjuration," 331.

67 Vergil, *Aeneid,* 4.547.

68 One stands in Stuttgart, near the Max Planck institute, a second one is in Livingstone and yet another one is part of Little Sparta.

69 "Wave, Vague, Woge, Onda, Unda."

70 "Unda."

71 Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 39.

from the sea. As Adrian Stokes wrote, “all limestones [...] possess a substance that provokes from water.”[72] Moreover, the letters chiselled in the stone engage in what Baert calls the “dynamic between the not-yet-quite but already-becoming.”[73] They visualise the gradual development of the word *unda*. Read from left to right, the artwork starts with the single symbol ʅ, which proof-readers use to indicate that two adjacent letters need to be reversed. In the following three blocks, we see the word *unda* spelled incorrectly, but with the ʅ indicating the necessary change: unaʅd, udʅna, nʅuda. On the last block is written ʅunda, correctly and with the ʅ pushed to an insignificant position. The ʅ-symbol has the form of a wave, and as it rolls through the letters in a recessive movement, the word *unda* brings itself into shape. During this generative process, the word *nuda* appears, naturally evoking a naked woman (*nuda* is the feminine singular form of the Latin adjective *nudus*, *-a*, *-um* which means ‘naked’). The image of a naked woman on the waves conjures the Venus Anadyomene motive, the goddess depicted at the moment when she is born from the sea as an adult. At the hands of twentieth-century authors, it had become “a poetological figure of the origin of new artistic forms” and thus again refers to the previously mentioned creative potentiality.[74] The image had a long tradition before Botticelli famously used it in his painting *The Birth of Venus*, which reflects the intellectual and artistic climate of fifteenth-century Florence, looking back at antiquity with interest and admiration. Apparently, as in de Chirico’s 1920 self-portrait, Finlay’s use of Latin in *Unda* is as intricately connected with (Renaissance) classicism as with classical culture per se.

The allusion to Botticelli leads us into a period of linguistic standardisation, as well as textual criticism. Humanist scholars tried to restore ancient authors through comparison of manuscript witnesses, and aimed to purify Latin grammar and morphology.[75] The texts which humanists established were disseminated in unprecedented numbers by means of the newly invented printing press. The way Finlay treats the word ‘unda’ and its constituent letters as objects that can be dismantled and reassembled, strongly relies on the practice of textual emendation and the handling of moveable type, indeed.[76] The mechanical reproduction of texts from the Renaissance onwards necessitated a thorough correction of the printing proofs. Metathesis, the transposition of letters, is one such common error for which early modern printing houses developed the corrector’s signs to which ʅ belongs.[77] Did Finlay read Stokes, who writes that “limestone is the humanistic rock?”[78] *Unda* puns on the cultivation of textual stability by linking it to the shakiness and variability of the sea. Moreover, the artist lets the meaning of his work emerge from a seeming mistake, as we have seen. Like Ernst’s variation on a fixed liturgical formula, *Unda* points to the possible signification behind even the

72 On the same pages, Stokes writes that marble is “metamorphosed limestone. [...] marble shares with limestone all the qualities that concern us.” Stokes, *Stones of Rimini*, 31.

73 Baert, “Marble and the Sea,” 37.

74 Goth, “Venus Anadyomene,” 36; see also 23.

75 Reynolds, *Scribes and Scholars*, 207–41.

76 I borrow the notion of words as objects from Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At*, 2–3.

77 Grafton, *The Culture of Correction*, 28–29.

78 Stokes, *Stones of Rimini*, 32.

Figure 12: William Kentridge, *Staying Home*, 1999.

slightest diversion from standardised language. As noted above, Finlay also likes to disturb his textual ready-mades with surprising juxtapositions or physical carriers. *Unda*'s wit is increased, because correction signs evidently do not make sense in epigraphy. One cannot swap engraved letters like moveable type—they are forever set in stone. Correction must take place by reworking or completely erasing the already carved letters.[79] Instead of presenting a petrified truth or the final reconstruction of the past, Finlay celebrates associative thinking and mutability. While alluding to the ancient world by having a Latin inscription in stone, he stresses the past's ongoing realisation by means of proofreading marks. We cannot be sure anymore whether the plinths have eroded, or are not yet finished. In this way, Finlay's concrete poetry goes against the grain of a possible perception and reception of antiquity as unchanging and normative.

6 Meaning: William Kentridge (2019)

The South-African artist William Kentridge (1955) is best known for his politically inspired works, as well as for the foundational role of traditional drawing in

[79] See Cooley, "Epigraphic Culture in the Roman World," 310–11.

his artistic output.[80] Both aspects are connected—during his education, Kentridge had little access to the developments of European and American avant-garde art—and intersect with Kentridge's third characteristic, his questioning of (colonial) time.[81] In *The Refusal of Time*, for example, he examines "a subjective sense of time as operating at a different pace in different situations."[82] Some of his drawings have reappeared in animated films, while others served as decors for opera productions. One such production in particular, of Shostakovich's *The Nose* after a story by Nikolai Gogol, indicates Kentridge's interest in the subversive and satirical.[83] Another opera, *Waiting for the Sibyl* (2019), features drawings on dictionary pages and thereby demonstrates the importance of text and the fluidity of looking and reading for Kentridge.[84] Twenty years earlier, the artist had made a very similar series of etchings, entitled *Sleeping on Glass* (1999). One of these (fig. 12) represents four stone pines, mounted with the *chine collé* method on pages from a Latin edition of Vergil's *Aeneid*.[85] At first sight, the words remain on the background, but on closer inspection, the rubric "staying home" and the trees typical for Rome interact with the story of Aeneas' errands and his foundation of the city.

Drawing Lesson 50: Learning from the Old Masters (In Praise of Folly) picks up on many of those characteristics. The video installation constantly refers to perhaps the best-known satirical piece of literature from early modernity, Desiderius Erasmus' *Stultitiae laus* (*The Praise of Folly*). On top of that, it engages with historical theories of art and their application to modern draughtsmanship. Kentridge's usual way to make his animation films "is to have a sheet of paper stuck up on the studio wall and, halfway across the room, my camera."[86] In *Drawing Lesson 50* the paper is still stuck to a wall, but also put on the table. Furthermore, the only scene is filmed in two uninterrupted takes, which were edited to appear as one by superimposing the second take on the first one. The resulting palimpsest shows Kentridge sitting in front of himself, involved in a chaotic discussion. This encounter, which suspends our linear concept of time, can also be seen as an internal dialogue. Indeed, the most important event in the film is not Kentridge's drawing process, which is only mimicked anyway, but the conversation he has with his doubled self. A conversation is, perhaps, said too much, as the ludicrous exchange of words lacks any mutual understanding. The Kentridge on the left of the screen (LK) pedantically asks theoretical questions like "What is your view on the double logic of art? Or, to put it differently, on the double responsibilities of the artist?" When the Kentridge on the right side (RK) fails to answer promptly, LK proceeds by giving the answer himself.[87] In a judgemental tone, he asks: "How is it that you come to be in these rooms?" All this time RK shuffles through some

80 Glaves-Smith and Chilvers, "Kentridge, William."
81 Christov-Bakargiev and Kentridge, "In Conversation," 3.
82 Hughes, "The Temporality of Contemporaneity," 593; Agbamu, "Smash the Thing."
83 Gough, "Kentridge's Nose."
84 Christov-Bakargiev, "On Defectibility as a Resource."
85 Manchester, "Staying Home."
86 Kentridge, "Fortuna," 26.
87 "The first logic is the logic of the world and the responsibility of showing the world as it is or as it appears to be. The second responsibility is that of the form itself; what one owes to the tradition."

books until he starts to recite in Latin from Folly's first speech in *Stultitiae laus*.[88] LK does not appear to understand him, and continues his impromptu examination of RK, while the latter goes on citing from the same passage.[89] That RK also answers the questions about Erasmus' biography to the point and in English, does not seem to impress LK and it becomes clear that the real dispute here is about the value of contemporary art in comparison with the technical exigences of historical aesthetics. When LK asks, "Can you give me three reasons why your work should be in this room amongst these paintings," he means the Kunstmuseum in Basel, where *Drawing Lesson 50* made its debut. On the wall behind RK and LK are charcoal copies of Hans Holbein's portrait of Erasmus and of paintings by Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso that are on exhibition in the museum (fig. 13).[90] LK criticises an assumed smoke screen of difficult ideas that tries to hide the sham that, he implies, some (modern?) art is, and to which RK seems to belong.[91] He questions the artistic talent of RK and ridicules his ruminations on the art of drawing:

> This is an embarrassment. I apologise. And then you have him talking all about Paul Klee and his pet line and taking his line for a walk. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

LK's references to monochrome painting, and to the proximity of text and image are clearly puns on Kentridge's own work. Furthermore, the artist has used Paul Klee's saying that "drawing is taking a line for a walk" as the title for a video and at least once discussed it in a public conversation.[92] Or does LK really talk about RK taking his pet *lion* for a walk? The diction is ambiguous, and when we look in the left corner of the background, we discern a basic drawing of a maned feline. It is a silly word joke, of course, to add wit to the derision of this drawing metaphor. It is, however, also a joke with art historical implications: Klee was reportedly a great lover of cats and the left drawing strongly resembles one of his paintings of lions.[93]

[88] "At sane parum sit mihi vitae seminarium, ac fontem deberi, nisi quidquid in omni vita commodi est, id quoque totum ostendero mei muneris esse. Quid autem vita haec, num omnino vita videtur appellanda, si voluptatem detraxeris? Applausistis." ("But it would be little enough for me to assert my role as the fountain and nursery of life, if I did not also show that all the benefits of life depend completely on my good offices. After all, what is this life itself—can you even call it life if you take away pleasure? ... Your applause has answered for you.") Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 19.

[89] "Do you know when to use a sable brush or when to use a horse? ... Have you studied the golden mean? Have you studied the law of composition? ... Do you know anything about Erasmus and the city of Basel? Do you know the dates of Erasmus here in Basel? ... Do you respect the holy quartet of art making: the image, the idea, the surface, and the edge?"

[90] Starting from the third image on the left in clockwise direction: Picasso, *Homme, femme et enfant*; Holbein the Younger, *Erasmus*; Holbein the Younger, *Bildnis des schreibenden Erasmus von Rotterdam*; Klee, *Senecio (Baldgreis)*.

[91] "He is embarrassed about his painting. He failed at oil painting; at the arts school, the report was: "He must apply himself more diligently." His high school teacher said to his mother: "He is tender, but not talented." If you let him, he will go on and on about monochrome painting being like writing or printing, about drawing being halfway between looking and reading. This is all sophistry; these are words to shore up a limited ability. He would have been better advised to be a seller of soap or a mender of shoes. This is an embarrassment. I apologise. And then you have him talking all about Paul Klee and his pet line and taking his line for a walk. *Quod erat demonstrandum*."

[92] Kentridge, "Learning from the Absurd," 01:01:43.

[93] Kandinsky, *Kandinsky und ich*, 117 and Klee, *Löwen, man beachte sie!*

Figure 13: William Kentridge, video still from *Drawing Lesson 50*, 2018.

What does *Drawing Lesson 50* have in common with Erasmus' *Stultitiae laus* apart from its delicate wit? Through the personification of Folly, Erasmus repeatedly mocks the pretentiousness of the learned culture he himself was part of. It is therefore an apt model for Kentridge to joke about his own artistic statements. At the same time, Folly is a model of humorous self-praise, and when LK interrogates RK on matters of artistic skill, he really demonstrates his own expertise and, by extension, the competence of the real William Kentridge. The use of Latin specifically has the same mix of earnest and irony. On the one hand, Latin stresses the historical period that *Drawing Lesson 50* wants to pay tribute to, namely the sixteenth century of Hans Holbein. In several respects Erasmus' Latin is the equivalent in humanist literature for "the golden mean," "the law of composition," and "the holy quartet of art making" in the visual arts. At the same time, the Latin vocabulary and grammar are foremost "obstreperous obstacles to reading and understanding more than they are the signifiers of conceptual referents or the transparent media of meaning."[94] RK's theatrical performance of the *Laus* dramatises the communicative chasm between him and LK. But what does each side represent? True, LK's pedantry has little to do with modern notions of art and one feels slightly annoyed by his condescending tone. On the other hand, it is hard to side with RK's gibberish, and one wonders if answering an English question in Latin is not equally pretentious. The opposition between RK and LK seems almost nonsensical since both are so out of tune with our time. The Latin words only highlight that the sixteenth century has difficulties speaking to us. Simultaneously, Kentridge draws our attention to what a historically grounded art has on offer, and his way to do so is at once visual, theatrical, and textual. If we listen more carefully to what RK says, one better appreciates his position. He

[94] Morris, "Drawing the Line," 130.

clearly plays the role of the wise fool: confused and unintelligible, but for those who understand more to the point than his adversary. RK appears steeped in the culture of which LK can only hail the abstract principles. Against LK's dry argumentation, RK finds the right passage to stress the value of pleasure as a crucial ingredient for life.[95] Jouissance and contemplation, earnest and jest appear as connected through Latin in 2018 as they did a century earlier.

7 Conclusion

I want to conclude with some afterthoughts about looking at the works discussed without knowledge of Latin, and about the main sources for Latin in modern art. Having relied on my knowledge of Latin for analysing single art works, it is time to ask whether they must be read at all in this way.[96] Gary Breeze, a lettering artist who has worked together with Finlay, has said in an interview that "I've used Latin and Greek a lot mainly to set the viewer one step away from simply reading the text, and perhaps one step closer towards seeing an artefact; a thing of beauty, hopefully, and a mystery."[97] Breeze is, clearly, relying on most people's *inability* to read Latin. His aims are mystery (remember de Chirico and Paolini) and physical beauty (remember *Unda*'s transformation of a word into an object). The exploration of "the parochial versus the global" comes only second for Breeze, and, indeed, has not been prominently present in any of the works discussed above.[98] Do the modern artists under discussion require a knowledge of Latin from their public? In fact, do they themselves know Latin well enough to engage with it in a profound way? Kosuth has indicated in his letter to Morphet that he did *not* master the languages he used for his *Proto-Investigations*. Kentridge's *persona* makes so many reading mistakes in *Drawing Lesson 50* that one wonders if what he is reading makes any sense to him at all. While Ernst's variation on a hymnal verse presupposes familiarity with Latin Mass, the joke itself depends entirely on the vernacular words *Tamtam* and *Valuta*. Only de Chirico seems to require an understanding of his motto to participate in his self-portraits, but when Paolini cites it about half a century later, the symbolical value of Latin dominates. As I wrote in the introduction, Latin's Latinity is predominant, and its function is mostly alienating. Nevertheless, there are several levels at play, and the one I have analysed in this article requires at least the willingness to put some effort into understanding the Latin text—in most cases, a dictionary or the internet will suffice as auxiliary tool.

We have seen that Latin is primarily used to raise issues of our time and not as a means of historical reflection. This partly explains why there is so much post-classical material and comparatively little Vergil or Ovid—whom I had originally expected to dominate this article. Indeed, the texts sought out by the artists under

[95] "Quid autem vita haec, num omnino vita videtur appellanda, si voluptatem detraxeris?" ("After all, what is this life itself—can you even call it life if you take away pleasure?") Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 19.

[96] Mary Jacobus rightly decided to "not only [include] the question of 'reading' but also the arts of illegibility" in her book on the literary veins through Cy Twombly's art; Jacobus, *Reading Cy Twombly*, 21.

[97] Wood, "In Conversation with Gary Breeze," 216.

[98] Ibid., 218.

consideration share a level of proto-modernity. Servius, far from a canonical author, belongs to late antiquity, "the postmodernity of the ancient world."[99] While periodisation is often problematic, the figures of Erasmus and Descartes are representatives of what is broadly seen as (early) modernity. *Praise of Folly* specifically resonates with today's criticism of the Catholic Church and the questioning of established authority, although the historical reality might be more nuanced. Descartes' gives voice to the modern demand for rationality. Also Cornell's use of a scientific text by Bacon, briefly mentioned in the introduction, perfectly fits within this pattern and I have come across other examples. While Neo-Latin studies were (and are) still fighting for recognition in an increasingly interdisciplinary academic world, artists around the globe have scooped up its main sources for their own goals. Without the obstacle of a deep-rooted classicism, Latin's later heritage naturally offered itself in various constellations. There is, admittedly, no huge amount of Latin in art after 1960, but what exists testifies to the language's continuing cultural potency. Sometimes it throws up philosophical questions, as in the case of *Clock*. More importantly, however, it allows us to see what Latin means outside of the university. If we do not want to accept Kosuth's declaration of Latin's death at face value, perhaps his and other art can help us to understand how it currently lives.

List of figures[*]

Figure 1. Max Ernst, *Fiat modes, pereat ars*, 1919. Offset print on paper, 43 × 31.9 cm. MoMA, New York. © ARS, New York and DACS, London or other national copyright organisations. Photograph from MoMA.

Figure 2. Joseph Kosuth, *Clock (One and Five), English/Latin Version*, 1965. Clock, photograph on paper and printed papers, 61 × 290.2 cm. Tate Modern, London. © ARS, New York and DACS, London or other national copyright organisations. Photograph from Tate.

Figure 3. Dovetail joints. Reproduction of William Fairham, *Woodwork Joints.* London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1920. From `https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21531`.

Figure 4. Giulio Paolini, *Et.quid.amabo.nisi.quod.ænigma.est?* 1969. Paint on cotton fabric, 67.4 × 425 cm. FER Collection, Ulm. © Giulio Paolini. Photograph by Ugo Mulas. © Ugo Mulas Heirs, Turin. All rights reserved.

Figure 5. Giulio Paolini, *Quam raptim ad sublimia*, 1969. Paint on cotton fabric, 65 × 420 cm. Studio La Città, Verona. © Giulio Paolini. Photographer

[99] Lobato, "Late Antique Foundations of Postmodern Theory," 52.

[*] The author has done his best to contact and acknowledge all the right holders for the artworks and images reproduced in this article and has provided all the information known to him. If he has unintentionally missed something, he can be contacted on the email address communicated on JOLCEL's website.

unknown. Reproduced by courtesy of the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

Figure 6. Giulio Paolini, *Nullus enim locus sine genio est*, 1969. Engraving on metal, 22,5 × 28 cm. Private collection. © Giulio Paolini. Photographer unknown. Reproduced by courtesy of the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

Figure 7. Giulio Paolini, *Quam raptim ad sublimia*, 1969. Business card, 7 × 10,5 cm. © Giulio Paolini. Photographer unknown. Reproduced by courtesy of the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

Figure 8. Giulio Paolini, *Et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est*, 1969. Collage on paper, 35 × 35 cm. Collection of the artist. © Giulio Paolini. Photograph by Adam Reich. Reproduced by courtesy of Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

Figure 9. Rosemarie Trockel, *Cogito, ergo sum*, 1988. Knitted wool scarf, ca. 23 × 180 cm. Private collection. © Rosemarie Trockel and VG Bild Kunst. Photograph by Sascha Fuis Photographie, Cologne. © Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne.

Figure 10. Rosemarie Trockel, *Cogito, ergo sum*, 1988. Wool (beige-black) on canvas, 210 × 160 cm. Private collection. © Rosemarie Trockel and VG Bild Kunst or other national copyright organisations. Photograph by Sprüth Magers. Reproduced by courtesy of Sprüth Magers.

Figure 11. Ian Hamilton Finlay, *UNDA*, 1987. Limestone, 4 blocks of 213 ×107 × 91 cm and 1 block of 107 × 107 × 91 cm. Stuart Collection, UC San Diego. Photograph by Philipp Scholz Rittermann. Reproduced by courtesy of the Stuart Collection, UC San Diego and the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay.

Figure 12. William Kentridge, *Staying Home*, 1999. Etching, dry point, *chine collé* and coloured pencil on printed paper, plate size 24.5 × 33.5 cm. © William Kentridge. Photograph by Strauss & Co., Johannesberg. Reproduced by courtesy of Strauss & Co., Johannesberg.

Figure 13. William Kentridge, *Drawing Lesson 50*, 2019. Video still from an installation with 19 drawings in indian ink, charcoal, torn paper on found ledger pages, table, flowers and props, measuring 242 × 359 × 179 cm in total and a video of 5 minutes and 33 seconds. Kunstmuseum Basel. © William Kentridge. Reproduced by courtesy of Kunstmuseum Basel.

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CURRENT CONTRIBUTION

Vincent Debiais, "Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin," JOLCEL 8 (2023): 139–47. DOI: 10.21825/jolcel.87626.

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NOTE

This contribution is the response piece to a larger dialogue of four articles that form the current issue of JOLCEL. The other contributions are "Between Reading and Viewing: Mapping and Experiencing Rome and Other Spaces" by Klazina Staat (pp. 7–42), "The *Incipit* Miniature of the Morgan Gospel of John" by Barbara Baert (pp. 44–67), "Language on Display: Latin in the Material Culture of Fascist Italy" by Han Lamers (pp. 69–101), and "Looking at Latin 1911–1965–2019: An Ancient Language in Modern Art" by Simon Smets (pp. 103–37).

Towards a Codico-Ecology of Latin

VINCENT DEBIAIS

Centre de recherches historiques (EHESS/CNRS), Paris

American actress Angelina Jolie's skin is covered with tattoos. Her arms, back and stomach show symbols, texts, numbers and images. Many articles in magazines and blogs have been written with the aim of discovering the meanings of the inscriptions on her body, and their relation to the main events and upheavals in her life. Birth, adoption, marriage, divorce might have left a trace on Angelina Jolie's body, which seems to have become, over the years, a diary, her intimate yet exposed logbook, where ink memories appear and disappear. One tattoo gets my attention today (fig. 1): on the skin surface that the actress so often reveals in movies and photoshoots, underneath her bellybutton, under her belt, a two-line inscription is drawn in black. It reads in Latin: "Quod me nutrit me destruit" ("What nourishes me destroys me"). The tattoo quotes a very common and still enigmatic formula attributed to English playwright Christopher Marlowe, one of the most talented writers among Shakespeare's cotemporaries. The formula has been circulating in many variations since Marlowe's death, in written collections of mottos and refrains. It is also inscribed, in humanistic capitals, on a portrait of a young man in Corpus Christi College, London;[1] this painting still causes much debate as to the identification of its subject—could it be Christopher Marlowe himself (fig. 2)?

As Louis Marin has argued for Philippe de Champaigne's works,[2] writing on paintings increases the 'opacity' of the image and distinguishes the painting as an object from its subject by proclaiming that the image is nothing else but a painting.[3] The Latin sentence in Christopher Marlowe's portrait has the same effect: it reveals the identity of the portraited, but indirectly, by evocation, and with the use of Latin, enhances its opacity—opacity, that is, not hermeticism. After Marlowe's death, the formula embarked on its secular migration from the surface of the painting to the surface of Angelina Jolie's skin, but nothing remains from its original function of pictorial reflexivity and its meaning during Marlowe's turbulent life. Yet, the phrase "Quod me nutrit me destruit" has never been so intensely reproduced as after the publication of the many articles that revealed the tattoos

1 On Christopher Marlowe and the portrait in London, see Wraight and Stern, *In Search* and Honan, *Christopher Marlowe*.
2 Marin, *Philippe de Champaigne*, 309–13.
3 Marin, *Opacité*, 149–58.

Figure 1: Tattoo of Angelina Jolie, showing the inscription "Quod me nutrit me destruit."

Figure 2: The same Latin quote as it appears on the portrait of a young man in Corpus Christi College, London.

inscribed or drawn on the actress impersonating Lara Croft. Here, there is something both fascinating and dismaying about the contemporary phenomenon of choosing—for a purpose as intimate and personal as the definitive inscription on one's skin—a formula that has become banal, almost outdated, as it has already been traced on so many bodies across the world.

Google Images accordingly provides a bewildering number of results for "Quod me nutrit me destruit" (many of them showing typos and mistakes in the Latin wording), placed in the exact same spot as the text inked on Jolie's skin, or anywhere else on young, mostly female bodies, literally from head to toe. The arrangement of the 'source' tattoo corresponds to that of the Corpus Christi College painting, yet one cannot argue that the written tattoo explicitly follows the painted layout as it uses a different script and transforms the humanistic capitals from the painting into pseudo-gothic minuscules, probably to suggest some chronological distance inspired by Latin. The tattoo "Quod me nutrit" is the only inscription with this letter type on Angelina Jolie's body that reveals a 'Latin image,' a material display of the Latin language, deliberately obscure, fundamentally visual, embodying the text into an organic object subjected to movement, alteration, dissimulation, decay and death.

I hope readers will forgive me for using this *pop* digression as a starting point for my response piece to the four beautiful articles gathered in the current issue of JOLCEL, devoted to the visual and material aspects of Latin. Angelina Jolie's skin is indeed far from Carolingian and Ottonian manuscripts studied by Barbara Baert and Klazina Staat; very different from the objects and images produced under the Fascist regime in Italy addressed by Han Lamers; it offers no comparison with the works of modern art in Simon Smets' piece. Anthropology shows, however, how much tattoos—and the specific practice of writing on skin—invite us to question the intertwining of written, material and visual cultures of a given society or language, just as the authors of this theme's issue interrogate the impossibility of neatly distinguishing the three aspects of the written, the material and the visual when studying Latin in the *longue durée*.[4]

The focus of the texts is the *place* of the Latin language; with the term 'place,' I gather the notions of 'context' (i.e., the architectural, natural, and social environment of a text) and of 'support' (i.e., the material possibility of sensual manifestation for language). The authors study very different places for Latin, from postage stamps to hillslopes, from manuscript folios to artistic installations, from cities to colonial empires. In such tremendous variations of scale, Latin is first a linguistic fact and presence before it becomes a written object in a specific location:[5] there is something in Latin, written right there. The material culture of Latin allows for the construction of a linguistic geography. It does so not only in the abstract sense of considering frontiers between languages and mapping them,

4 Le Breton, *Signes d'identité*; Cipriani-Crauste, *Le tatouage*.

5 The notion of presence is used following Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*. For its application to the epigraphic domain, see Keil, "Überlegungen," 117–42.

but also in the very concrete sense of tracing written marks on surfaces and of creating a topography of exposed writing ('topography' in this context referring to the act of inscribing written language onto a specific location). The authors' approaches to the subject thus align with the groundbreaking research perspectives opened up by Armando Petrucci's work, in particular with what he wrote about urban written displays in Italy, and about the affordances of writing to structure the way society is imagined.[6] One of the many strengths of the articles resides in the fact that they address the question of 'topography' not only in relation to real spaces and locations, such as Fascist Rome or the medieval space of liturgical processions, but also to the very spaces of written media: codex, painting, medal, landscape, label. In this comprehensive understanding of what a 'written page' is, Latin can be at the center of its space when it proclaims the beginning of the Gospel or the eternity of the city of Rome, but it can also be located on the edge or in the margin, when it tries to be subversive in modern art or to split voices and discourses.[7] When given a material shape that organizes language fragments into their social context, Latin produces a living topography of language rather than a theoretical understanding of the place of languages; it no longer shapes a strictly linguistic map but a social landscape. The materiality of Latin is what makes it possible to pass from knowing to experiencing language. Acknowledging important contributions from social linguistics—and I believe the notion of 'geosemiotics' coined by Ron and Suzie Scollon,[8] or Edward T. Hall's "hidden dimension"[9] are particularly important here—the authors introduce their readers to insights from the field of anthropology of writing, which pleads for a thorough analysis of the supports and of the material conditions for the existence of signs. From this perspective, and because of its objecthood, written language is, in Beatrice Fraenkel's words, a "situated" gesture and artifact. Hence, one can start considering blueprints, maps and territories for Latin.[10]

The meticulous attention to the medium (size, colour, shape, texture, visual effect) is evident in the four articles, and the authors dedicate time and effort to describe the substrates on which Latin materializes. Three main types of media can be identified: the traditional writing supports (a book, a postcard, a poster), the artifact (a medal, a painting, an installation), and the monument (building, city or nature when transformed into a monument through its inscription). These media types vary in their material device, scale, status and function, granting Latin a material, object-like, sensitive and visual dimension: sometimes discrete, sometimes overwhelming; obvious or invisible; coherent or disruptive. However, the careful attention to the material and visual properties of the medium immediately challenges these categories. The study of the folio in the Morgan Gospels shows, for example, that the letters sown on the background of the painting, however subtle they may seem, proclaim the very principle of incarnation and the power of the divine voice in a monumental way; similarly, without artifice and in the

[6] Petrucci, *Jeux de lettres*, 180–92.
[7] On the notion of margin for the manuscript, see Camille, *Images*.
[8] Scollon and Wong Scollon, *Discourse in Place*, 414.
[9] Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*.
[10] Fraenkel, "Actes d'écriture," 101–4.

discretion of a traditional layout, the itineraries for Rome draw the contours of a global urban geography. Conversely, the formal architectural shapes of Fascist monuments are only fragments in the system of propaganda, overshadowed by the grandiloquence of their supports, often elusive to the reader's interpretation; similarly, the excessive deployment of Latin on large-format artifacts from several contemporary artists does not invite the reader to engage with the verbal message and makes hermeticism and failure the aesthetic devices for the display of Latin language.

Such complex observations originate from the authors' recognition that the 'place' of Latin exclusively as the support of writing, that is to say as a surface, neutral and technical, simply allowing the implantation of alphabetical signs. They rather consider Latin's place as a *milieu* featuring a texture, empirical and symbolic properties which affect the status and function of inscribed messages. Anne-Marie Christin's seminal work on writing has been fundamental to address these questions through the concept of 'screen.' Christin employs this concept to acknowledge the diversity of the objects under study and to validate first a visual, then a written manifestation of language.[11] In staging the Latin text, the primordial screen—Angelina Jolie's skin, the parchment, canvas, wall, artifact—is organized, ordered and framed. The screen also features formal qualities co-shaping the inscription's effect on the beholder. The Ottonian painter transforms the skin of the animal into a marble surface mixing water and mineral; the Carolingian scribe from Reichenau models the blank page into a map of the monastery; the architect of the Casa del Mutilato (House of the Wounded) in Pordenone shapes the pediment of the building into an epigraphic screen. What Anne-Marie Christin calls the 'screen thought' allows to locate writing not only on a flat plan but also in volumes, reintroducing for texts spatial arrangements according to depth and grounds.[12] On what 'screen' does one write when landscapes are modified by pruning the forest to make trees proclaim the word *DVX*? Does one write on the hill, on the territory of Rome, on the Italian space, on nature itself? What is the real support for Giulio Paolini's banners? Is it the piece of fabric on which the letters are inscribed, the street that opens in its background, the social group stopping underneath the banner to read the text? This focus on what lies beyond writing goes beyond Latin, and the articles gathered here prompt fascinating questions about the symbolic nature of written supports. They invite to systematically consider the actual definition and status of all written supports when spaces, objects and materials are transformed into writing screens.

On these screens, the first manifestation of Latin is in the form of its letters; a so-called 'Latin' writing presenting various designs. It is difficult to phrase it unambiguously, but the objects the authors discuss seem to be affected by a chronological tension, or at the very least, they show referential ambiguities.[13] Does this impression emerge from the fact that the letters used to display Latin language seem to belong to different environments? The answer varies according

[11] See, among others, Christin, *L'image écrite*, 17.

[12] Bouchy and Fraenkel, "La notion d'écran," 14–16.

[13] Kendrick, *Animating*, 147–70 about "Enigma and Authority."

to the implied intentions of communication. Some objects show graphic forms referring to the authority of Latin (authority in the chronological distance or authority in the hierarchy of writing);[14] others use the forms available in the inscriptions' environment as common devices. In these paleographical and typographical choices, Latin becomes visual, and language becomes image—Angelina Jolie's tattoo artist has chosen the awe of a gothic script that conveys, in a contemporary American point of view, the absolute manifestation of temporal otherness, independently of the actual reading (and language) of the text. In most cases, lettering must contribute to make Latin look even 'more Latin' by using letters from Roman inscriptions in an Ottonian manuscript or on a facade of Fascist Italy; by spelling the names of Roman monuments using a minuscule invented during the Carolingian Renaissance, also used to copy normative and liturgical texts in Reichenau; by carving on contemporary limestone blocks letter types and diacritical marks that evoke the humanistic hypercorrection of modern Latin. In their analyses, the authors of this themed issue pertinently point out the necessary distinction between the theoretical paleographic evolution of forms on the one hand, and the multiple choices offered to writers when they pretend to transform traditional writing into images of Latin on the other hand. This approach does not ease the identification of visual references (quotations, repetitions, influences, contagions) from one writing type to another, but it invites to consider Latin, when it is materially anchored in the visual, as what we could call an 'icono-language'; as an image displaying language visually, in addition to its textual content, and understood as a social phenomenon.

Latin's primary iconicity seems to rely on the primordial epigraphic feature of its written manifestations. Latin is the 'icono-language' of inscriptions; for the ancient written landscape of the Forum and its altars, statue bases, the triumphal arches; for the Christian written impact on Late Antique and Medieval cities and their inscriptions of consecration and epitaphs, Byzantine mosaics and Romanesque wall paintings; for the Renaissance, Classical, and Baroque solemnity of both sober and monumental displays of religious and civil mottos on temples, palaces, and civic places. In these historical and cultural contexts, inscriptions stand out as the paradigm of Latin visuality and are evoked on the marble page in the Morgan Gospels, on Giulio Paolini's *Nullus* plaque and on Ian Hamilton Finlay's *VNDA* blocks. The survival of ancient inscriptions allows for a continued presence of Latin in social spaces of the West (and beyond). Furthermore, the almost epigraphic nature of the Latin language, with its materialization in the form of classical capitals, its ruled and framed dispositions, and the scale of its support, endures in objects that do not have an epigraphic purpose. For Latin texts, there seems to be a sort of inherent 'epigraphicity' that enables them to produce the traditional effects of inscriptions (authority, longevity, publicity) without necessarily producing epigraphic *documents*. The literary practice of *epigraphs* in Latin for the opening of a book is undoubtedly the most obvious manifestation of this feature.[15]

14 Stirnemann and Smith, "Forme et fonction," 67–75.

15 Genette, *Seuils*, 147.

The visual and material features of Latin produce a double authority; the first based on a chronological otherness granting the text the merits of *antiquitas*; the second on a hierarchy of letter types bringing into non-epigraphic texts the solemnity of inscriptions. A third type of authority could possibly arise from the fact that Latin, when it is displayed on spaces or objects and when it imposes itself materially on its environment, often elicits awe in its beholders, either because Latin appears in an unexpected shape, or because it appears unexpectedly in the first place. Such effects of the uncanny are produced by the fact that many of the objects examined are materially shaped and publicly displayed. The apparent stability of Latin, which prompted its use for the designation and classification of species, is challenged by the dynamics and displacement of written objects, by the modification of their support, by the alteration of the context of their exposure, by the subversion in the use of Latin language. In such a fluidity of deixis induced by the mobility and modifications of inscribed objects, phenomena of redundancy or incongruity occur, which give to Latin a superfluous, unstable, destabilizing connotation, or on the contrary, a normative, reassuring, acceptable one. The material and object-like existence of the language in its context embodies a three-term relationship between language, its medium and the social actors; exposed writing transforms the experience of written object into a discovery through all the senses, unlike what happens for a strictly vocal use of language. The encounter with the written object implies seeing the language, touching its sounds, and entering into symbiosis with it.

Such an embodied approach to Latin might help not to consider the material and visual dimensions of Latin language exclusively as relics. The articles skillfully steer clear of perceiving Latin as an abandoned remnant, and refrain from viewing Latin-inscribed objects as mere vestiges of an obsolete culture. They thus also consciously avoid interpreting references to chronological otherness as evidence of language becoming fossilized. The display of Latin on visual and material objects allows for an archaeology of language, and a search for written or artistic Latin models. However, this archaeological survey should not cut the object from its contexts of immediate use, from the *hic et nunc* of its environment—the 'here and now' of the liturgical reading for the manuscript from the Morgan library, the meditative reading in the case of the itinerary to Rome, the reading during the installation and performance for the artifact of modern art, the political reading in the intensity of Fascist celebrations. On the contrary, it necessitates considering temporalities with the same level of profundity as that attributed to physical locations; it questions what remains of Latin texts proclaimed in imposing epigraphic capitals when the manuscript is closed, what remains of the formulas inspired by Vergil on the facade of monuments today considered as instruments of oppression, what remains of Latin inscriptions painted on a banner when the artistic performance ends. By considering Latin's material and visual dimensions, we therefore acknowledge its potential as an archive. In doing so, we should not consider archives as the chilly place of death, but as the possibility for documents to encapsulate both the intermittence of its public exposure and use, and the guarantee of their permanence. In its form of material written object, Latin possesses the dual nature of both circulating and maintaining stability; it eventually

communicates and disseminates meaning while materially anchored in a meaningful milieu.

The examples considered in this issue of JOLCEL finally also provoke thoughts on the notion of actuality applied to languages, not only in the evolution of the practices associated with them, but also in the immediate effects their uses can have in each specific context. Inscriptions on the facade of public monuments and in the opening paintings in manuscripts hold a primary form of agency. This agency does not arise from the written display of Latin in isolation, but rather from its capacity to stimulate social phenomena such as adhesion, rejection, participation, identity, and shared action among those who interact with the inscribed objects. The notion of 'affordance' seems quite appropriate to define the possibility of Latin when embodied in, and as, an artifact.[16] However, its application may make the examination of the effect of languages overly theoretical, whereas one would like to assess the actual mechanisms involved in the discovery, examination, manipulation of these texts. In any case, the authors invite us to adopt a double approach based both on a thorough examination of each written object to which Latin is applied, and on a careful contextualization that considers the very moment of reading and the 'duration,' as it were, of the text. This approach could be defined as a 'codico-ecology' of Latin.

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