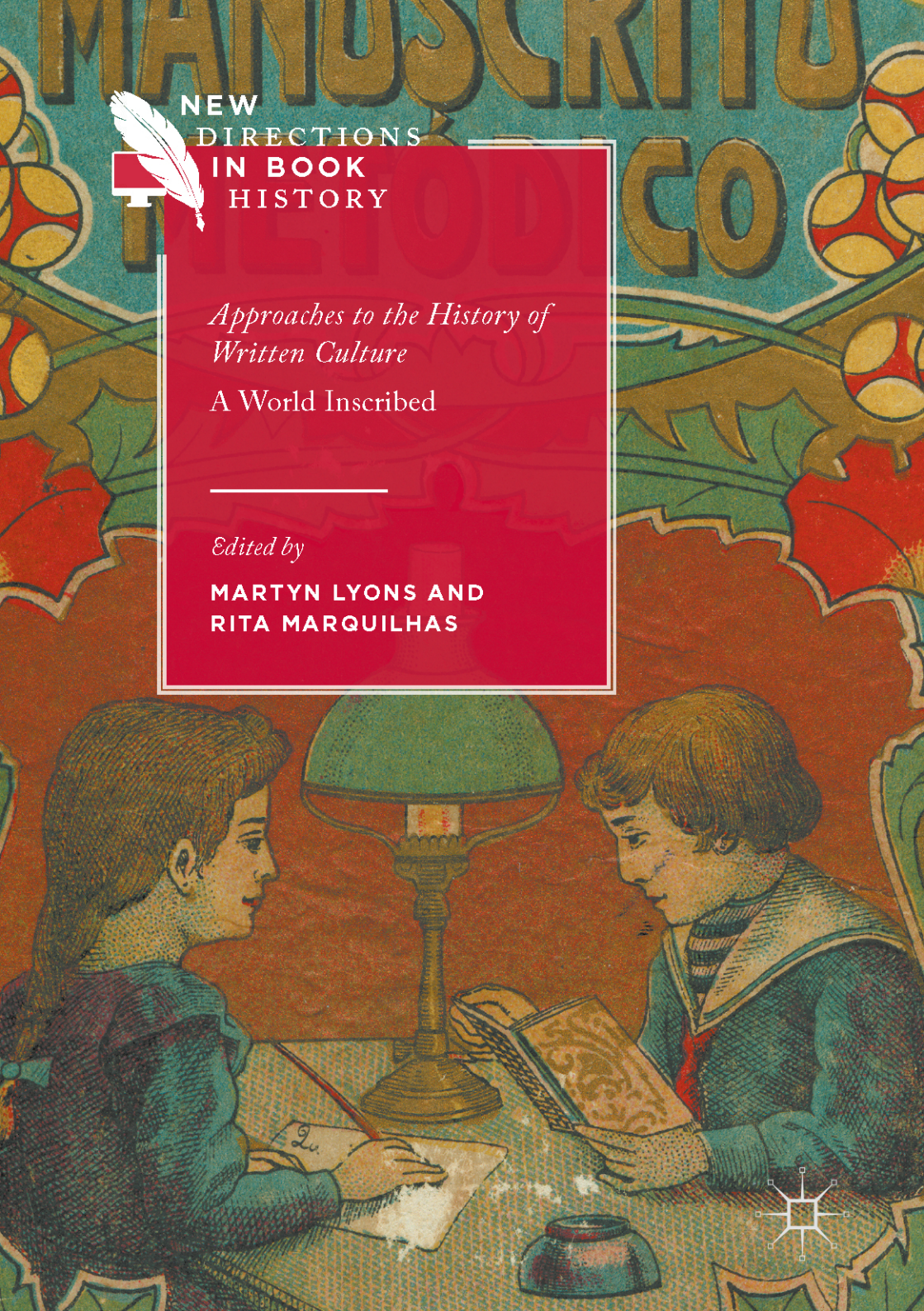

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Approaches to the History of Written Culture

A World Inscribed

Edited by

MARTYN LYONS AND RITA MARQUILHAS

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Martyn Lyons • Rita Marquilhas
Editors

Approaches to the History of Written Culture

A World Inscribed

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m.lyons@unsw.edu.au

Editors
Martyn Lyons
University of New South Wales
Sydney, NSW, Australia

Rita Marquilhas
Centro de Linguística
Universidade de Lisboa
Lisboa, Portugal

Translated by Martyn Lyons

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CHAPTER 1

A World Inscribed – Introduction

Martyn Lyons and Rita Marquilhas

Approaching the History of Scribal Culture

In 1900 or thereabouts, Lorina Bulwer, an inmate of the Great Yarmouth workhouse in the east of England, produced a remarkable and extremely long letter. It was embroidered on samples of different kinds of material which she had sewn together to form a scroll of multi-coloured cloth, five metres long (Fig. 1.1). On her sampler scroll, Lorina stitched a rambling autobiography in which she spat out her anger at being confined to the workhouse, and more specifically to its female lunatic ward. She asserted her identity frequently, repeated her name many times and declared that she was free. Lorina Bulwer's sampler reminds us of the importance of writing at all levels of society, for both intimate and public purposes as well as in the process of identity formation. It also demonstrates that writing is ubiquitous, and often uses unexpected materials and unorthodox technologies. In this book, we examine the importance of writing at different

M. Lyons (✉)
School of Humanities, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: M.Lyons@unsw.edu.au

R. Marquilhas
Centro de Linguística, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal
e-mail: rita.marquilhas@gmail.com

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Fig. 1.1 Extract from Lorina Bulwer's sampler scroll, circa 1900. (Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum of Norfolk Life.)

social levels in a range of historical contexts across the world. As in the case of Lorina Bulwer, the discussion will take account of writing's institutional frameworks, its personal expressions and the range of material support it has adopted in past societies.

Historians have often used written documents, of course, whether produced by institutions of power or private individuals. On the whole, however, they have seen them as testimony, as windows through which we can learn more about some other aspect of historical reality. Thus we study the letters of soldiers in the First World War in the hope of understanding at first hand what life was like in the trenches, and how the morale of the belligerent armies rose and fell. In plundering documents from the past for data such as this, historians focus on the referential content of the surviving texts, rather than on the way they embody textual knowledge, writing skill, reading ability and an implicit discourse on language and communication. Historians of writing have a different perspective. They seek to understand the various expressions of this textual knowledge in order to analyse the nature and function of writing *as writing*. They study the phenomenon of writing itself in order to assess its social and cultural resonance, and the ways in which its different forms structured textual meaning and were structured by it. Written documents are not merely windows on the past; they also need to be understood in the light of the material and cultural conditions of textual production in any given historical context, and the changing material support for writing, whether papyrus, parchment or paper, stone, bark, bamboo or silk. Written documents constitute historical objects in their own right, and we focus as historians on the changing relationships between humans and these meaningful and extremely complex artefacts, which both encapsulate and testify to different kinds of discursive and linguistic behaviour. We study the social uses of writing itself, not just as evidence of something outside itself.

The insights of Armando Petrucci provided us with a valuable and succinct guide to the study of the inscribed world when he wrote:

> Every age and every society can be better understood and appreciated through studying the uses it makes of writing as an instrument, the ways in which writing and reading competence is distributed throughout society, and the functions that it attributes to scribal production and its various typologies.[1]

Petrucci's original aim was to redefine and extend the discipline of palaeography so that it focused not simply on the technical description of texts,

but also on their social context and broader significance. Writing, as his own work on late antiquity demonstrated, should be studied in the context which produces, disseminates and consumes it, taking full account of the prevailing social inequalities which may determine and limit access to writing itself. Petrucci understood that the use of writing, and the social distribution of literacy skills in any given society, provide vital clues to understanding that society's workings and its structures of power. In his view, the use of writing describes the fault-lines and divisions within society, for instance between powerful clerico-bureaucratic elites and a mass of poor peasants who lived 'on the margins of literacy',[2] or in more recent times between men who acquired literacy skills and women who were not encouraged to do so.

From authors like Petrucci,[3] Roger Chartier[4] and Donald F. McKenzie,[5] to cite just a few of the first scholars to exert a strong influence, we have developed a history of scribal culture (or *storia della cultura escrita*), focusing on the meanings that different social groups have invested in written artefacts throughout history. This history of scribal culture lies in a disciplinary middle ground, at the point where sociology and anthropology, as well as literature and linguistics, meet history. Here writing is seen as social interaction mediated through enduring signs. It is understood as a practice evolving through time, its power (or counter-power) being continually re-shaped according to the perspective of the social actors using it. The challenge we all accept as historians of scribal culture is to see those artefacts not as traditional historical sources, in the sense of transparent pieces of evidence, but rather as opaque, complex discourses, which demand a thick description of the social knowledge and shared beliefs which they embody.

The term 'thick description' derives from Clifford Geertz's suggestions about the appropriate ethnographic method to use in the interpretation of cultures. This is an interpretation based on 'extrovert expressions' formulated by the informants themselves, it is microscopic in its analysis of local behaviour and assumed truths, and it targets social discourse.[6] In this sense, all the chapters which follow contribute to a thick description of written cultures in history. Such a description combines what historical informants extrovertly expressed about their uses of writing with the close analysis of practices and beliefs (made explicit or taken for granted). The scribal practices they reveal are patent in written artefacts themselves and in the technology which produced them; the beliefs they analyse are linked

to the concept of literacy as it is interpreted in different spatial, political and chronological contexts.

This kind of history of scribal culture is based on location and contextualisation. As a result, the written artefacts we encounter here are extremely varied. They include the cuneiform clay tablets of the first millennium BC in Mesopotamia (discussed by Francis Joannès), the public writings which appeared in the urban spaces of early modern Spain and modern France (in the chapters by Antonio Castillo Gómez and Philippe Artières, respectively), nineteenth-century ego-documents of non-elite people in Finland (discussed by Anna Kuismin), the esoteric personal writings of French artisans (in Nicolas Adell's chapter), handwritten copies of novels made by women of the court in pre-modern Korea (discussed by SeoKyung Han), one late nineteenth-century Cheyenne letter (discussed by Germaine Warkentin), authors' typescripts of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in Martyn Lyons' chapter), and children's writings from different periods (discussed by Verónica Sierra Blas).

All the contributors treat these written objects in three dimensions: as material object, as social practice and inevitably as text. Studying and interpreting texts are the historian's conventional stock-in-trade, but the first and second dimensions just mentioned require further emphasis. Our framework firstly implies a certain focus on the material presence of texts. The support and medium of textual messages range historically from cave walls to computer screens, and the material basis of writing, as well as the content, helps us understand its social and political uses. In Francis Joannès' contribution, for instance, it is impossible to conceive of ancient Sumerian script without recognising its exclusive dependence on the medium of clay. After the second millennium, the script struggled to compete with the Phoenician alphabet, which could be written on more pliable material, and it gradually became an esoteric cultural language, rather like Latin in modern Europe. The repercussions of the material support for writing, and its associated technologies, are the focus of the chapter by John Gagné, a historian of Renaissance Europe, who raises some of the issues involved in the transition from parchment to paper. Similarly, the various ways in which the typewriter influenced writing practices are discussed in Martyn Lyons' chapter.

These authors share the scribal culture methodology which runs through this book as a whole: they discuss the materiality of writings in the past, together with the views expressed by their users and the unconscious beliefs that may have inspired them. The users' views range from

fear and mistrust of change to enthusiasm for new technologies, and their practices could be opportunistic or just matter-of-fact. The protagonists we read about here are as varied as could be expected in a 'world inscribed': they are the novelist convinced that the keys of his typewriter participate in the development of his book, the fans of typing races, and the monarchs who suspected that their law would become fragile because rag paper support had a limited life. There are children, too, whose newly acquired literacy skills gave them freedom and a sense of adventure. The protester with his pamphlet, the artisan with his autobiography, the peasant with his diary, the Native American with his letter and the policeman with his report are all actors in this colourful cast.

The history of scribal culture proposed here assumes a broad definition of writing. Writing encompasses all marks carrying significance inscribed on whatever surface they appear. Writing is by no means confined to alphabetical scripts, but includes non-alphabetical systems and pictorial scripts such as Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphics. It includes the *khipus*, the communication system of the Inca empire, in which the knots and cords of cotton or woollen material recorded assets or embodied the genealogical memory of a village.[7] In Germaine Warkentin's chapter, it embraces the pictorial codes of Native Americans. This notion clearly contradicts anthropologists of writing like Walter Ong and historians like Ignace Gelb, who traditionally drew a clear distinction between societies using an alphabet and those which did not have a comparable 'writing system'.[8] For Warkentin, who joins a battle previously fought by Roy Harris,[9] the boundary between pictorial art and written communication is very elusive, and she proposes that we adopt the more inclusive term 'inscription' to avoid simplistic dichotomies between 'primitive' and 'advanced' forms of textual communication. Her suggestion is open to challenge and debate, but the subtitle of this book, *A World Inscribed*, implicitly endorses her idea.

The Social Practice of Literacy

Warkentin's discussion raises fundamental questions. What is writing? And following that, what is literacy? Returning to the third dimension of our formula above, we may interpret writing as a social practice, embedded in everyday life, although it is only recently that cultural historians and social anthropologists have adopted this approach. In the 1960s and 1970s, historians approached the study of writing as one aspect of the

measurement of literacy. The statistics of literacy rates, which historians customarily accumulated in Europe and North America on the basis of a signature test, or a religious examination in the case of Lutheran Sweden, never clearly distinguished the twin skills of reading and writing from each other.[10] In Europe until the nineteenth century, these were distinct literary skills, taught independently, and writing competence was always rarer than reading ability. There were in fact two literacies,[11] and the social distribution of each was distinctive in terms of its geography, social class and gender. In many parts of Europe and America, reading was taught verbally, as students were made to identify letters and syllables by chanting them, but an apprenticeship in writing was more demanding. A student who graduated from writing in a sand-tray or on a wax tablet required skill and practice in handling a goose quill. He or she had to master a new technology and a new body posture, and learn how to form evenly sized characters, keep a straight line and avoid smudging the paper with ink. Often the student never reached this stage, if his or her schooling was cut short by more demanding activities like working to supplement the family income. Reading came first in the curriculum, and writing followed. At a higher level still, arithmetic would be taught. The three 'Rs', then, formed a pedagogical hierarchy, with reading at the base, writing in the middle and numerical literacy at the summit.

The gap between reading and writing competence was for a long time disguised by official literacy statistics, which never gave us equally good information about reading and writing, and hid from view many readers who could not write. Many women in particular were readers who never crossed the writing threshold. Women were taught by the churches to read the Bible (if they were Protestants) or rehearse the catechism (if they were Catholics), but they were not encouraged to learn to write. The act of reading was conceived as passive and receptive, whereas writing seemed to confer independence and creativity, and from the authorities' point of view it could be dangerous. For these reasons, writing was considered a male prerogative. Many women who delegated their signature to others or who signed with a mark may thus have been competent readers even if they did not know how to write. The records of poor Irish women who arrived in Australia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveal just such a gap between female reading and writing abilities. In Deborah Oxley's sample of Irish-born convict women deported to Australia, 43 per cent could read only, and only 21 per cent could both read and write.[12]

In our approach to the history of scribal culture, we no longer conceive of writing as a cognitive skill to be learned once and never forgotten, as historians tended to view it when they counted the statistics of literacy. Writing, rather, is a social and cultural practice, and our questions commonly ask: what uses did people in past societies make of writing? What was writing's function and purpose in any given society? Writing may have an active and performative role, as emphasised by Béatrice Fraenkel, who considers 'acts of writing' in the same way as the philosopher of language J.L. Austin analysed 'speech acts'.[13] So far, however, this approach has been confined to contemporary usage and has not developed a historical dimension. Other scholars isolate 'literacy events', in which one or more individuals are engaged in generating or understanding a given text. As the protagonists of the New Literacy Studies argue, there are many different kinds of literacies, which today include home literacy, school literacy and workplace literacy, to name a few.[14] Literacy practices, in other words, must be situated within specific social structures and they are contingent on specific historical contexts.[15] Barton and Hamilton place strong emphasis on vernacular literacy practices, which are learned informally and thus are independent of institutionalised schooling, and which are not regulated by the rules and procedures of dominant social institutions.[16] They refer to literacy practices which enable ordinary people to organise their life at a very pragmatic level (as in writing shopping lists) and to give it some meaning (as in writing up one's war experiences), as well as enabling them to participate in social organisations outside the home (such as the local school or a babysitting group). Here the historian of vernacular literacies is inevitably lending new value to forms of writing which were previously trivialised or simply invisible, like Lorina Bulwer's sampler scroll already mentioned.

This leads us to a favourite theme in the history of writing – we might even call it a master narrative – which concerns changes in the social distribution of literacy skills, as they ceased to be the prerogative of clerical and bureaucratic elites and were increasingly adopted by courtiers, merchants and commoners. There is a gendered dimension to this story of the onward march of literacy, as literacy skills became less exclusively monopolised by dominant male elites, and were increasingly acquired by women, too. Lorina Bulwer's scroll is one small but dramatic part of women's conquest of literacy. The history of writing is usually told as a narrative of gradual progress, leading up to the acquisition of mass literacy in the West at the end of the nineteenth

century, when writing had become an indispensable, everyday necessity for all.

Nevertheless, the focus of the history of writing, as the discipline is practised today, has lost the teleological bias implicit in this master narrative of the advance of literacy. We no longer think of such history as the tale of an ever-advancing triumph of civilisation, a chronicle of high cultures, closed elites and powerful individuals. The democratisation of writing was an undeniable, multi-secular process, but it was not always a smooth one. The traumatic beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, for example, were probably a temporary setback for the advance of literacy in Western countries.[17]

In consciously challenging the 'triumph of civilisation' approach to the history of literacies, this book prepares the terrain for a comparative study of both elite and subaltern literate communities. It investigates aspects of bureaucratic literacy in Babylon, and the uses of writing in the Korean script for refined secular purposes by the ladies of the Chosŏn court. At the opposite end of the spectrum, it considers one of the last social groups to achieve full literacy – peasants, viewed by Anna Kuismin through a Nordic lens. At the same time, it shows how both those in power and their humble subjects had a long history of action through public writings, using the outdoor spaces of the city to exercise or to challenge authority through written messages (in the chapters by Antonio Castillo Gómez and Philippe Artières).

'Re-purposing' and the Question of Genre

One salient conclusion to be drawn from these and other studies in the history of scribal culture is that they shed new light on a well-known phenomenon – namely, the stability of writing systems, the enduring continuity of their material supports, codes and visual traces.[18] Such stability and continuity are normally invoked in order to explain why spelling reforms are always so difficult to implement, for instance, or to explain why certain kinds of texts (religious, administrative, funereal or laudatory) get more readily studied than others in histories of written cultures.

In this book we can discern a hidden consequence of this stasis. Because of its endurance and stability, writing becomes transformed at a pace that is always much slower than that of the various uses attached to it, whether they are interactional, political, intellectual, recreational or anything else.

Such a mismatch between the slow rate of change in writing systems and the rapid transformations that may occur in social and linguistic contexts produces a paradox which demands a remedy, and the remedy is often the *re-purposing* of the very functions served by writing. The process inevitably triggers the investment of new values in old written symbols, in former writing systems and in traditional literacy practices.

A clear example of re-purposing in the history of writing is found in Francis Joannès' chapter. Joannès shows us the historical process in which the same cuneiform technology, originally designed for the Sumerian language and which only clay could embody, was progressively adapted by the Akkadian, the Hurrite, the Hittite, the Canaanite and the Ugaritic languages. Writing cuneiform characters in clay was a practice that stretched all over Mesopotamia to the point where no more stretching became possible in the face of a competing system, that of the Phoenician script, in its Aramaic derivative, embodied in parchment. The response in the Mesopotamian context, as Francis Joannès explains, was to re-purpose cuneiform script as the proper form for scholarly usage, thus guaranteeing its survival for many more centuries in a new function, and its appropriation by one specific group, more scholarly than the preceding ones.

In Germaine Warkentin's chapter the dynamics of re-purposing are overtly acknowledged, although the author prefers to speak of the 'adaptive uses of media' when she mentions the use of paper. Cases like the Cheyenne letter she presents witness the complex contacts between the indigenous inscription traditions of North America, and Western uses of writing introduced by Europeans.

Similarly, the re-purposing shift in written cultures and the symbolic innovation anchored to it are demonstrated by Anna Kuismin, but this time the focus is on written genres. In her chapter, she examines the case of ordinary people gaining access to written communication at a time when reading and writing became generalised practices in the West, even among the under-privileged. Kuismin shows us Finns producing ego-documents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as modern social actors re-directing writing for purposes that were non-bureaucratic and non-scholarly, although they did not develop new textual genres for such uses. They clung to the traditional epistle, the diary or the account book, but re-invested them with new meanings of their own; the genres now served as tools which they could mould like plastic to adapt them to the complex self-image they were trying to project.

We use the word 're-purposing' here, but it should be noted that specialists in language change draw on several alternative terms that would serve just as well. Human language is the most complex symbolic system in existence, and its history abounds in examples of re-purposing. Depending on the level at which linguistic symbols change their value, linguists customarily refer either to 'semantic change' – a change in the denotation of a word that remains phonetically stable – or to 're-analysis' – the creative interpretation of ambiguous constructions, with the same word order but different assigned values, giving rise to innovations at the morpho-syntactic level. When semantic change occurs, new meanings are given to old words, especially by means of metaphor and metonymy, and these new meanings later become conventionalised. In time, semantic changes can leave their original departure point very far behind: an original Proto-Indo-European root like *bhel – to shine, flash, burn – can become the remote etymon of a word denoting 'white' in one descendant language (cf. Russian *belyĭ*), and of cognates denoting 'black' in others (cf. the English *black*).[19] Re-analysis may refer to many linguistic changes, especially syntactic changes: new determiners, auxiliary verbs and conjunctions, for instance, appear in this process. The word order remains stable at first, but the syntax of the words involved shifts to give them a new status.[20]

A whole new area of linguistic studies, namely the study of 'grammaticalisation', has developed from the observation of such diachronic processes.[21] To take one example, consider the various verbs for 'to be', such as *seer/ser* and *estar* in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively. These verbs, which once referred to body postures, equivalent to the English *sit* and *stand*, give rise to different kinds of auxiliary verbs in many languages. The best-known case is that of the evolution of the Latin *sedere* (to sit), *stare* (to stand) and *iacere* (to lie) into medieval Romance auxiliary verbs. They occurred frequently in front of other, non-inflected verbs (e.g. *siia comendo*, '(he) sat eating', *estava pregando*, '(he) stood praying'), but were re-analysed as auxiliary forms, retaining the features of inflection but completely losing the reference to body postures. This process of the auxiliation of what were originally posture verbs is not exclusive to Romance languages, but it can be observed today in other European languages, such as those in the North German family (Norwegian, Danish and Swedish), and in Bulgarian in the Slavic family.[22]

At another level, that of discourse, specialists in discourse analysis find the terms 'entextualisation' and 'resemiotisation' increasingly useful. They

can describe the empowering through discourse of social groups in today's multi-cultural societies. The groups concerned create new meanings for alien discursive practices, and in this way they manage to claim a new cultural identity, especially in the context of increasingly wider access to technology, as is the case of the environments of Facebook, YouTube or web forum discussions.[23] Human beings therefore constantly shift the purposes made available to them by the symbolic systems within their reach, whether this happens through well-known processes of change and variation in spoken language, or in the process of social interaction magnified by technology. The role of the scholar is to spot the shifts and analyse their possible significance, while avoiding getting trapped within the canons that are being broken.

This raises the question of challenges to literary or canonical genres. The historian of writing seeks to comprehend a broad range of writings in *non*-literary genres. Not all forms of writing considered in this book fall easily into familiar categories like 'autobiography', 'correspondence' or 'novels'. We find instead a range of hybrid genres, like the fictionalised Buddhist sutras mentioned by SeoKyung Han in the Korean court, or the collections resembling 'memory books' discussed by Anna Kuismin. Memory books, also known in Europe as *libri di famiglia* or *livres de raison*, often consisted of a heterogeneous mixture of historical chronicle and practical information connected to agricultural work, as well as a family record of baptisms and deaths.

Vernacular Writing

Dutch historians labelled a variety of autobiographical genres 'ego-documents', originally defined in the 1950s by Jacques (or Jacob) Presser as 'those documents in which an ego deliberately or accidentally discloses or hides itself'.[24] Since then, Dutch and other historians have shown an increasing interest in the autobiographies, memoirs, diaries and personal letters which interested Presser.[25] They have used self-writing as a means to trace the historicisation of the individual self between the eighteenth century and the present, from traditional manuscript sources up to the confessional culture of Facebook and today's blogs and social media.[26]

In this context, both literary historians and educationalists have expressed their faith in the transformative power of writing and its fundamentally creative aspects. Ursula Howard's recent investigation into what learning to write meant to the poor of nineteenth-century England is

profoundly penetrated by such convictions. Through writing, according to Howard, the poor could become historical actors; writing made them visible and gave them a new power.[27] Writing therefore had a subjective significance, since it was part of the process of self-realisation and the formation of an individual identity.

The search for the author's inner self in writings of the lower classes, however, is not always fruitful, partly because peasant writings tended to be very laconic and pragmatic rather than introverted or soul-searching. Because they only intermittently reveal the inner self, they do not fully correspond to the diaries and autobiographical writings which we label 'ego-documents'. In fact, peasant writings had many practical purposes other than an exploration of the ego. The French peasant autobiographer Henri Norre was not untypical: he filled his notebooks with information about crops, agricultural equipment and the wonders of super-phosphate fertiliser.[28] There are of course notable exceptions to this lack of emotional depth, as Kuismin clearly illustrates. In Nicolas Adell's contribution, too, we find embryonic autobiographies emerging from an unlikely source: the songs of French artisans.

The importance of songs is one reminder of the close connection between vernacular writings and oral culture. The continuing relationship between written and oral culture is demonstrated by Antonio Castillo's chapter on the Hispanic world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He descends to street level to show us the importance of oral communication in the composition of texts, as well as in their diffusion in the public spaces of the city, and in appropriation by their readers. The popular culture of early modern Europe was what Marina Roggero called 'an amphibious culture', in which verbal communication, print and writing all nurtured and reciprocally influenced each other.[29]

Some anthropological theory, however, has posited a clear dichotomy between written and oral culture. In oral cultures, it is argued, people tell stories differently from the way they are told in a literate society. In Walter Ong's analysis, oral storytellers are prone to repetition and redundancy. They rely on memory, which may be prodigious, but needs signposts in the story ('mnemonic clues') to guide the narrator and jog his or her memory about what comes next. Only in writing, Ong argues, which is inherently more analytical and reflective, can distance and critical rationality be fully accomplished. There was an assumption here that literacy tended to drive out verbal communication, so that Ong even talked about literate societies which retained an 'oral residue'.[30] Historians of writing,

paradoxically enough, would be among the first to question this rather dismissive attitude towards oral cultures, since they know that in vernacular writings the presence of the oral in the text is persistent and pervasive and by no means residual. The self-taught Sicilian labourer and road-mender, Vincenzo Rabito, born in 1899, showed us this when he sat down in 1967 to write his autobiography. Half a million words poured out, described in the words of his presenter David Moss as

> a mix of semi-literate Italian, Sicilian dialect and idiosyncratic coinings, covering 1,027 pages without a single break by chapter, section or sentence but punctuated by semi-colons, commas, question marks or exclamation marks between almost every word. The only divisions were the physical distinctions between the typewritten and numbered sheets of paper.[31]

The continuous stream of prose which made up his 'book' *Terra Matta* thus remained close to oral speech patterns, which in no way prevented its publication in 2007 by Einaudi, the rapid sale of 15,000 copies and its adaptation into a film screened at the Venice Film Festival in 2012. The abiding orality of ordinary writings continues to offer both historians and historical socio-linguists a rich territory in which to explore the informal registers of language usage and the interface between oral and scribal culture.

In spite of the different perspectives which separate anthropologists and historians, ethnographic influences remain important in the history of writing. Nicolas Adell's chapter outlines the anthropological approaches which have inspired work on the history of scribal culture in France, for example. Adell believes that the insights of Jack Goody are crucial, especially in his definition of writing as a 'technology of the intellect', which changes thought patterns and produces new forms of rationality.[32] Writing, Goody argued, changes the way we think, and it changes the writer as well as the reader. Goody's arguments about the formation of a specifically 'graphic logic' have made him a more popular thinker in France than even in his native England.

Philippe Artières' contribution takes a similar approach, although his chapter can be seen as part of a tradition of Foucauldian studies, focusing on new methods of control and surveillance in contemporary societies. The proliferation of writings and graffiti in late nineteenth-century Paris aroused police concern, which leads Artières to study repressive attitudes and vocabulary, and to pose questions about the policeman's 'gaze'. He

approaches the history of writing from the archives of repression, in this case those of the Prefecture of Police, just as others have done, notably Antonio Castillo, whose discussion of writings in the street relies heavily on the records of the Inquisition. Following his previous studies of prison writings and convent writing, Artières views the streets of late nineteenth-century Paris in the looming shadow of Foucault's symbol of the all-seeing, all-knowing panopticon.[33]

Like historians of scribal culture, historians of language change have recently shown a strong interest in vernacular writing. Conventional versions of language history have tended to trace the development of a standard national language and the process of its legimitisation, basing their analysis principally on the relatively formal language of printed sources. Historical socio-linguists, however, propose alternative language histories which focus more on spoken language and its informal registers. They have sometimes shown great ingenuity in constituting their corpus, like the research group in Leiden which studied the language of Dutch correspondence found in ships captured by the English during the conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[34] They study the interface between the oral and the written to develop a new history of language 'from below'. Language change can sometimes be prescribed 'from above', by educational institutions or academies, and become enshrined in grammar books and school manuals; but the forms of spoken language may continue just as before, 'below the level of awareness'.[35] One result of this new emphasis is to blur traditional dichotomies between written and oral culture, and indeed between literacy and illiteracy, in which vernacular forms are liable to be classified as 'deviant', 'non-standard' or even 'sub-standard'. Instead of borrowing these potentially derogatory labels for popular speech and writing, it is preferable to accept the blurring of boundaries, and to think in terms of a continuum of literacy along which ordinary writers may be situated.

The Visibility of the History of Writing

The history of written culture is suffering from relative neglect and it has a problem of legitimacy. Peter Burke's *What Is Cultural History?*, for example, had nothing to say about the history of written culture, although it did treat the history of reading.[36] Burke followed a familiar pattern, in which the history of writing is frequently absorbed within the history of reading and publishing, or treated as a footnote to it.

The history of reading, however, has a tendency to concentrate on the history of books, to some extent neglecting other textual forms, whether manuscript, print or electronic, which are more fragile, intimate or ephemeral. In 2015, for instance, on the 500th anniversary of the death of Aldus Manutius, scholars widely celebrated the innovations of the great Venetian printer/publisher in typography, *mise en page* and business modelling. Even though we now study a much wider range of print and manuscript objects than was once the case, it was clear that it is above all the bound and printed volume that captures scholars' attention. This volume seeks to banish the 'book fetish' currently prevalent among specialists in the history of reading and publishing, especially in the English-speaking world.[37] Like the authors of *Comprender el pasado* (who incidentally included Peter Burke, mentioned above), we believe that the importance of the history of writing needs to be recognised, and that its future lies 'at the cutting-edge of the discipline'.[38]

The contributions gathered here demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary approaches to the history of writing. This history engages archaeologists, palaeographers, anthropologists, social and cultural historians, historians of education and historical socio-linguists as well as cultural historians. Although this collection of studies only represents a selection of current scholarship and cannot pretend to be comprehensive, it includes examples of many of these approaches. In 10 chapters, presented by leading historians of scribal culture, we investigate the history of writing as a cultural practice in a variety of contexts and periods. We seek to analyse the rituals and practices determining intimate or 'ordinary' writing as well as bureaucratic, religious and courtly writing. From the inscribed images of so-called pre-literate societies, to public inscriptions and the democratisation of writing in the modern era, access to writing technology and its public and private uses by men, women and children will be analysed. Our objective is to explore the uses and functions of writing in non-alphabetical as well as alphabetical script, in societies ranging from those of Native Americans and ancient Mesopotamians to those in modern Europe.

Many of the studies collected here emerged from a panel on The History of Writing Practices and Scribal Culture, selected for the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences which met in Jinan, China, in August 2015. We would like to thank all those who participated on that

memorable occasion. Martyn Lyons is responsible for the translation of several chapters, namely Chapters 2, 6 and 10 from French, and Chapters 5 and 9 from Spanish.

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Martyn Lyons is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He has published many books and articles on the history of reading and writing in Europe and Australia, including *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (2010) and *The Writing Culture of Ordinary People in Europe, c.1860–c.1920* (2013).

Rita Marquilhas is Associate Professor in the Department of General and Romance Linguistics at the University of Lisbon, and Principal Investigator on the P.S. Postscriptum Project (ERC Advanced Grant 2011, GA 295562)– A Digital Archive of Ordinary Writings in Early Modern Portugal and Spain. She is the author of several articles on the social history of language.

CHAPTER 2

The Babylonian Scribes and Their Libraries

Francis Joannès

Introduction

Cuneiform script, composed of characters shaped like nails inscribed on clay tablets with a stylus made from reed, or engraved in stone, was developed in Mesopotamia at the end of the fourth millennium BC. Combining characters with a phonetic syllabic value (*ba/bi/bu – ab/ib/ub*) and ideograms (/kur/ = 'country', /a/ = 'water'),[1] it became a particularly effective cultural instrument, used all over the Near East for almost three millennia. It was 'invented' by the Sumerians in the south of Mesopotamia to transcribe their own language, and was subsequently adapted in the whole of Mesopotamia by semitic Akkadians, who made it the most widespread system for communication and storing information in the Near East during the whole of the second millennium. This did not mean that the Sumerian language disappeared, but instead it became the language of a dead culture, like Latin in medieval and modern Europe, still used for many traditional scientific and religious texts. At the same time, Mesopotamian cuneiform script was taken up by other languages and was

F. Joannès (✉)
Department of Ancient History and Civilisation, University of Paris-1, Paris, France
e-mail: francis.joannes@gmail.com

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the medium for transcribing the Hurrite language in upper western Mesopotamia, Hittite in Anatolia, Canaanite in Palestine and Ugaritic in north-western Syria. The second millennium was a flourishing period for cuneiform script, before it had to compete with the Phoenician alphabet, which was easier to memorise and could be written in cursive form on non-rigid material, whereas cuneiform remained exclusively dependent on clay.

The last datable cuneiform tablet dates from 75 AD and testifies to the longevity of this tradition. Besides the administrative and accounting records of the great religious and palatial organisations, and besides the archives of private individuals in the great cities of Babylonia and Assyria, cuneiform script was used to compose literary, religious and scientific works, which were handed down unchanged for a very long period, demonstrating the vigour of Mesopotamian cultural traditions.

We can study this through the achievements of its scribes, their level of competence and their conception of knowledge. Such a study is especially interesting in the first millennium BC – between the eighth and third centuries, to be precise – at a moment when several phenomena converged:

— On the one hand, the normal uses of writing were being modified, with the expansion of alphabetic script linked to Aramaic, a semitic language from the western Near East, which gradually became the *koinê* of this area between the Mediterranean and Iran, replacing cuneiform as an internationally practised script.

— On the other hand, cuneiform script progressively but relentlessly declined in its own homeland around the city of Babylon in lower Mesopotamia. This decline was both geographical and social, inasmuch as the use of cuneiform tablets in daily life was gradually eclipsed by parchment scrolls in Aramaic, although cuneiform remained the norm for scholarly texts practically up to the end of the first millennium. The use of this script became specific to Babylonian intellectuals, who inherited a very long cultural tradition and took responsibility for its transmission and preservation. It is slightly paradoxical that the cuneiform writing system, which functioned in its most common form at the beginning of the second millennium BC with about 150 characters, should have become more complex with age, so that in its final version in the second half of the first millennium, it had about 400–500 characters; this restricted its usage even further to a circle of specialists embodying an exclusive tradition. We can thus distinguish, in first-millennium Babylon, the *tupšarru*, scribes using clay tablets who were cuneiform specialists – the word itself, adapted from the Sumerian dub-sar, means 'he who writes' (sar) 'on a tablet' (dub) – from

the *sepiru*, scribes using parchment who practised alphabetic writing (the word, deriving from the semitic root Š/SPR, simply means 'the scribe').
— Lastly, we see the formation of substantial collections of scholarly tablets, either in private hands or, more spectacularly, in institutional libraries. Even the use of the word 'library' implies bodies of works in cuneiform that were deliberately collected and organised. There is evidence for such collections in Assyria from the second half of the second millennium BC onwards. When, at the end of the thirteenth century, the Assyrian King Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208) brought back from Babylon cuneiform tablets and Babylonian scribes as booty from a victorious military campaign, he was contributing to the 'babylonianisation' of Assyria, not least in cultural terms, and the tablets formed the core of a great documentary archive associated with the palace. The latest incarnation of this collection in the seventh century, namely the library of King Aššurbanipal (668–627), has been excavated by archaeologists in Nineveh.

The aim of my chapter is thus to study the status of scientific writing in first-millennium Mesopotamia, on the basis of the two famous examples of the scholarly libraries of Nineveh and Babylon, and to try to reconstitute the transmission of the Mesopotamian intellectual tradition through the medium of scribal practices. I will first summarise what we can say about the library of Nineveh, and then that of Babylon, before considering the position of scribes more broadly.

The Library of Nineveh

On 10 August 612, the city of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian empire, was seized and destroyed by the army of the Iranian Medes, who looted the upper city with its palaces and set fire to it, but left most of the cuneiform tablets in place.[2] The site was not re-occupied and Assyria entered several centuries of prolonged prostration.

The expeditions undertaken by English archaeologists at the site of Nineveh in the middle of the nineteenth century brought to light a considerable number of cuneiform tablets (nearly 30,000 items), more or less well preserved, some of them intact but the majority in fragments, originating from the south-west palace (the palace of King Sennacherib), from the north-east palace (the palace of King Aššurbanipal) and from the temple area (including the temple of the God Nabû, God of writing).[3] Taking account of fragments and

duplicates, the number of original tablets appears to have been about 2,000, to which we should add, according to other sources,[4] about 300 polyptychs in wood coated in wax. Most of these tablets belonged to the category of texts in the Mesopotamian scholarly tradition. They were removed to London, where a systematic inventory of them was drawn up.

This documentary collection became renowned in 1872, when George Smith, Senior Assistant in the Assyriology department of the British Museum, identified in the middle of the work we know as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* a narrative of the Flood which seemed to be a prototype of the biblical Flood.[5] Other texts containing close biblical parallels were subsequently recognised (The Righteous Sufferer/Job; Sacred Marriage/The Song of Songs). From then on this collection of Nineveh tablets was christened 'Aššurbanipal's Library', because his name (668–627) cropped up most frequently as their owner (and sometimes even as the copyist). From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, it was the subject of detailed descriptions published for the general public, as in the work of Joachim Menant:[6]

> After bringing to light a number of rooms with quite remarkable sculptures decorating their walls, the English explorer [A. Layard] found two which particularly caught his attention: up to a height of about 50 centimetres, the earth was covered in the debris of tablets full of writing. Some of them were still intact, but most of them were broken into several pieces. They were of various dimensions: the largest were about nine inches by six; the smallest were slightly convex; others, scarcely an inch in diameter, only carried one or two lines of script. There were thousands of these fragments. They were quickly gathered up and piled into boxes in any order to be sent off to the British Museum. Only there could scholars examine them and appreciate how interesting their contents were. They realised that a great quantity of these tablets must still be lying in the ruins, and with the help of further digging one could fill in some regrettable gaps. Mr. G. Smith was charged with this delicate mission; his investigations were very successful; in fact he managed to complete some tablets which only existed in fragments, and he put together several thousand more, scattered not only through the rooms which Mr Layard had explored, but also in neighbouring rooms. He became convinced that these tablets had been stored on the top floor of the monument, and that they had crashed down to the lower floors as the result of some destructive violence. He also realised that the ruins

> had already been explored; but he was persuaded that those responsible had merely been searching for any precious metals they could find there.
>
> These tablets are none other than the Books of the Assyrians, and the section of the palace where they were found in such abundance was a library.

From that time on, Aššurbanipal became the model of the scholar-king,[7] and his library of tablets was regarded as the first library in history, taking its place alongside the classical libraries of Alexandria, Pergamum, Rome, Baghdad and Constantinople, and so on.[8] Yet was the aim, as it was in Alexandria, to 'assemble all the knowledge of the world', and was the library of Nineveh alone intended to represent the sum of all knowledge? The answer must clearly be no: other libraries of lesser importance existed in the Assyrian empire in the seventh century, sometimes containing works not found at Nineveh, for example at Kalhu, another Assyrian capital, where in 1955 an English archaeological expedition found many tablets in the temple of Nabû, which enabled the reconstitution of a library connected to the royal palace, as Cécile Michel noted:[9]

> 300 documents (were) dug out of the ruins of the library at the Ezida, the temple of Nabû, God of scribes, built on the south-eastern side of the acropolis. This whole area had been the subject of preliminary soundings by Austen H. Layard, Hormuzd Rassam and William K. Loftus. If the city of Kalhu was rebuilt in 879 BC by Aššurnazirpal II, the library must have been established under Adad-nērārī III, at the very beginning of the eighth century (798 BC). The temple of Nabû was successively restored by Sargon II (721–705) and Aššurbanipal (668–627), who deposited administrative documents there. Chamber N12, a vast room measuring eight by four metres opening onto a courtyard, faced the cellae[10] of the gods Nabû and Tašmetum, and originally contained the library called the gerginakku. But its tablets, like the archives of Aššurbanipal, were dispersed throughout at least six rooms in the Achaeminid period (NT 12–14, 16–18); fragment ND 4311 was discovered in the throne room, in a pile of debris with broken bricks. Rooms NT 10–14 and 16 were assigned to scribes who worked at their writing in the adjacent courtyard. The Iraqi excavations of 1985 and 1986 unearthed about 15 more tablets; no doubt there are more of them still lying there today.

Similar discoveries were made at Aššur and Huzirîna in upper western Mesopotamia.[11] Elsewhere, the concept of the 'library' is often associated with the privileged world of 'belles-lettres', and it has long been thought

that the main literary works of Mesopotamian civilisation held a privileged place in the library of Nineveh.

Then, in 1964, A.L. Oppenheim drew attention to the rather particular composition of the library of Nineveh and demonstrated that it was above all a collection of scientific documents, composed of religious, magic and divinatory texts, which served to protect the Assyrian king from evil influences, as well as to train future intellectuals in the mysteries of cuneiform script.[12] In fact only a dozen truly literary works were found there (Epic of Gilgamesh, Epic of the Creation [*Enūma eliš*], Myth of Adapa, Story of the Poor Man of Nippur). In its original form, the library contained not only cuneiform tablets, including a fair number of duplicates and copies, but also polyptychs composed of small wooden or ivory boards coated in wax, assembled into unique series of between five and fifteen tablets to form almost complete literary works. As Parpola has shown, it also contained parchment and papyrus scrolls, perhaps carrying texts in alphabetic Aramaic script.[13] Polyptychs on tablets had the advantage of constituting bound series. As for clay tablets, they concluded with a colophon, detailing the tablet's precise place in the work or the series to which it belonged, its status (copy or original), and the name of the person who had written and checked it. Some Nineveh colophons were written by Aššurbanipal himself:

> (I) Aššurbanipal, great King, powerful King, King of the world, King of Assyria, son of Assarhaddon, King of Assyria, son of Sennacherib King of Assyria, I have written this tablet in the house of scholars, exactly according to the rules of the tablets, polyptychs, and duplicates of Assyria or the land of Sumer and Akkadia, I have verified and collated it and I have placed it in my palace for my own royal reading. If any man should efface my name thus inscribed in order to write his own name in its place, may Nabû, scribe of the universe, then destroy his name![14]

We can now therefore reconstitute, even in the absence of complete series, some divinatory or lexical works, thanks to the colophons found on the examples discovered. Most of the great series were in fact extremely long, consisting of tens of tablets, as Table 2.1 illustrates.

The history of this library can also be related to some of the Assyrian empire's major political problems. When Aššurbanipal put down the rebellion of his brother Šamaš-šum-ukin, viceroy of Babylon, in 648 BC, he ordered the seizure of a massive number of scholarly tablets from

Table 2.1 Examples of great canonical series with the number of tablets

Title of the work	*Type of text*	*Number of tablets*
Atra-hasis	Literary work: History of the Flood	3 tablets
Uru-an-na = *maštakal*	Pharmacopoeia	4 tablets
Tin-tir = *Babilu*	Lexical list (place names of Babylon)	5 tablets
An = *Anum*	Lexical list (names of divinities)	6 tablets
Enūma eliš	Literary work: Epic of the creation	7 tablets
Erim-huš = *anantu*	Lexical list (dictionary of rare words)	7 tablets
Malku = *šarru*	Lexical list (synonyms)	8 tablets
List of the stars	Lexical list (astronomical inventory)	10 tablets
Zaqiqû	Divination by dreams	11 tablets
Ša naqba imuru	Literary work: Epic of Gilgamesh	12 tablets
Alamdimmu	Divination by physiognomy	12 tablets
Šumma izbu	Divination by teratology[15]	24 tablets
Ur_5-ra = *ḫubullu*	Lexicography	24 tablets
Izi = *išātu*	Lexical list (acrographic vocabulary list[16])	30+ tablets
Sig_7+alam = *nabnītu*	Lexical list (vocabulary of parts of the body)	Between 32 and 54 tablets
Sakikkū	Symptoms of disease	40 tablets
Enūma Anu Enlil	Divination by astronomy	70 tablets
Šumma alu ina mele šakin	Divination of daily life	107 tablets
Barutu	Divination by extispicine[17]	135+ tablets

Babylonian libraries and had them removed to Nineveh. An inventory of the captured tablets was drawn up, and the text has been reconstituted by Parpola, who was able to list what had been seized at the Assyrian king's command (see Table 2.2).[18]

The Library of Babylon

After 610 BC, political power shifted to the south of Mesopotamia and to Babylon, where Kings Nabopolassar (626–605) and Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562) established the neo-Babylonian empire, largely inherited from the Assyrians, and initiated extensive refurbishments and restoration work in the city of Babylon and its main buildings. The temple of the main god, Bêl-Marduk, king of the gods and head of the Babylonian pantheon, was restored, together with its many-storeyed tower, the *ziggurat* Etemenanki. For several centuries Babylon became a centre of cuneiform

Table 2.2 Tablets captured by Aššurbanipal, according to Parpola

Known series	*No of examples of the same series*	*Total number of tablets*
Exorcisms (*ašipūtu*)	9	18 tablets, 1 polyptych
Divination by astronomy (*Enūma Anu Enlil*)	8	107 tablets, 6 polyptychs
Divination by teratology	8	10 tablets, 10 polyptychs
Divination of daily life	6	79 tablets, 1 polyptych
Medical recipes (*bulṭe*)	5	6 tablets, 24 polyptychs
Divination by dreams	4	22 tablets
Divination by extispicine (*bārûtu*)	3	135 polyptychs

culture, scarcely affected from a cultural point of view by major political transformations such as conquest by Cyrus and the foundation of the Achaemenid Persian empire in 539, followed two centuries later in 330 by the conquest of Alexander the Great.

However, whereas archaeological findings at Nineveh allowed us to situate fairly precisely – according to the archaeological standards of the time – the place where the tablets of 'Aššurbanipal's library' were found, nothing of the kind happened at Babylon. The site was the target of several clandestine excavations which brought to light all manner of texts, but they almost always dated from the first millennium, and were bought by the representative of the Trustees of the British Museum in Baghdad as soon as they were unearthed (about 1876–1880) and sent off in boxes to London.[19]

Only after systematic excavations led by the German archaeologist R. Koldewey between 1899 and 1917 did a clearer idea emerge of the gigantic archaeological site that is Babylon. It was deduced that most of the cuneiform tablets and fragments acquired by the British Museum and catalogued as scholarly, religious and literary tablets originated from an area to the south of the temple of Marduk. When the British Museum's inventory numbers were compared with the official reports sent by its representatives, it could be shown that the tablets sent to London between 1876 and 1880 all came from a common, and probably fairly limited, source on the Babylon site.[20]

A reasonable number of these tablets are astronomical in nature, and several are records of the observations of celestial bodies, which proved very valuable. Their astronomical observations in fact provided a precise dating source which proved that the great majority came from the later period of the millennium, and above all from the third and second centuries BC, a time when Babylon was the capital of an important province of the Seleucid empire, constituted after conquest by Alexander the Great by his lieutenant Seleucos I (305–281). Once this dating was established, it was clear that this was a common body of texts including series of lexicographical, literary, ritual, divinatory and liturgical works, with a large number on astronomy.

On the other hand, it remains impossible to determine how many texts the library contained which were not inscribed on clay, such as wooden polyptychs, parchments or papyri. Scholars have remarked on the presence of a limited but significant number of tablets with one side inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform and the reverse carrying a transcription in Greek alphabetical script. These tablets, the so-called *graeco-babyloniaca*, suggest that a certain number of documents may have been transferred from syllabic cuneiform into cursive Greek (or Aramaic) alphabetical script. Perhaps this was also the case as far as writings on perishable material were concerned (wood coated in wax, hide or papyrus), but since none of this material has been discovered, we must make the argument *a silentio*: we need the missing link which would show us how the transmission of the Mesopotamian scholarly tradition to neighbouring or later civilisations was made – that is to say, from cuneiform script on clay tablets into alphabetical writing on parchment.[21]

It is equally hard to go beyond the hypothesis that the library's origins lie to the south of the Esagil complex on the Babylon site, and we cannot assign the function of a library to any individual building. Paul-Alain Beaulieu[22] put forward an interesting suggestion which was taken up by Francesca Rochberg-Halton:[23] that unlike the Assyrian intellectuals in Nineveh, who formed a sort of inner circle around the sovereign because they were in direct and frequent contact with the king, the learned scribes of Babylon practised in what Beaulieu calls an 'academy', translating the Babylonian word *(bīt) mummu*. This expression refers to a site which is both a workshop for the manufacture and repair of religious objects such as divine statues, and a 'school for scribes'[24] placed under the patronage of the Mesopotamian deities of writing: the Akkadian god Nabû and the Sumerian goddess Nisaba. This academy was certainly linked to the temple

of Marduk, but might have spread over several different buildings, as some university faculties do today. So whether it comprised a single centralised source of documentation or a body of sources networked to each other, we might still call the whole thing a 'library', accessible to scholars associated with the temple. As for the precise location where the tablets were stored, it was probably in what the Akkadians called (borrowing from Sumerian) *girginakku*, a building of clay and reeds, analysed by Charpin:[25]

> *girginakku* is usually translated as 'library' (and not 'bookcase') or 'Bibliothek' (and not 'Bücherschrank'). Such 'libraries' have indeed been discovered. The most celebrated is that in room 355 of the Ebabbar of Sippar, excavated in 1985–87 under the direction of the late W. Al-Jadir (...). But two other examples had been discovered much earlier, in the temple of Nabû in Khorsabad (...); unfortunately they were empty (except for a few fragments of prisms and tablets in H5), perhaps because the tablets they once contained had been taken elsewhere or perhaps because they contained writings on wood which have not survived.

In the course of time, however, and certainly more emphatically from the first century BC onwards, the Mesopotamian cultural tradition lost its diversity. A few literary or scientific works were translated into alphabetical form and on material other than clay. But this was not apparently the case for everything to do with astronomy, especially 'mathematical astronomy' (as opposed to 'observational astronomy'), which remained attached to clay and cuneiform. There, too, material reasons probably played a part: Mesopotamians perfected a numerical system with a base of 60, which enabled them to write large numbers while taking up very little space. The hypothesis has been advanced that because this system of measuring distance, angles and so on, specific to so-called Chaldean astronomy and astrology, was so effective, astronomy therefore became the discipline best represented in Babylon in scientific sources at the end of the Hellenistic period and the beginning of the Parthian.

Mesopotamian Scribes and the Transmission of the Scholarly Tradition

A clear hierarchy existed in the scribal world of the first millennium. First we find the practising scribes, mastering an elementary syllabary of about 200 characters, who worked as public writers and whose training was

based on legal formulae learned by heart which they could adapt to different circumstances. Thus, the conventional formula for acknowledging a debt (*u'iltu*) could be adapted to a dozen different situations, ranging from a simple loan to purchase on credit.

Above them we find the traditional scribes, mastering a far more substantial syllabary of about 500 to 600 characters with different phonetic and ideogrammatical values. They often learned their trade in a family milieu – in Mesopotamia the notion of technical expertise handed down from father to son was enduring. Above all, they transmitted traditional culture and canonical texts in Akkadian (a literary language known as Standard Babylonian) and in Sumerian, which, as we have seen, was a language of culture from the second millennium, the equivalent of Latin in the medieval and modern West. They mastered what the Babylonian texts call *tupšarrūtu*, or the art of the scribe.[26]

Traditional scribes' scholarly education relied on the endless recopying of great texts preserved in the documentary collections and, to a much lesser extent, on the addition of new works, a rare practice in the literary sphere after the end of the second millennium,[27] or on commentaries leading to more esoteric uses of literature.[28]

Several dedications on tablets copied by apprentice-scribes have been discovered in connection with temples in the cities of Babylon, Borsippa and Sippar in Babylonia. These show the expertise acquired by the young scribe (but the expertise was relative, because many of them had made mistakes!). They were offered to the temple and deposited in a chest especially devoted to this purpose, the *gunnu*, where they were collected by an individual with the title of *kanik bābi*. One of these dedications has been recently published by Andrew George and provides a good example of the practice:[29]

> For Nabû, august, majestic and awesome heir, firstborn son of Asarre, foremost of all, who bears the tablet of the destinies of the gods, whom the Igigi gods respect most in the entire universe, my lord, I, Šamaš-rīhtu-usur, son of Šamaš-iddina, the baker of Šamaš and Aya, with joy in my heart went out to the open countryside. I picked up some clean clay and brought it from the holy clay-deposit. I loaded(!) it on my shoulder and transported it. For my good health, for a long life, for well-being, for the well-being of my father's household, my own stability and my successful raising(!) of a family, I(!) wrote (this) tablet. I(!) sent it in to the gunnu-container, to the porter of the door of E-babbarra. O tablet, when you enter, [intercede(?)] for Šamaš-rīhtu-usur, son [of Šamaš-iddina!].

However, as several private library inventories of the Seleucid period show (third to second centuries BC), especially in Babylonia (Anu-ikṣur, Iqīšaia, etc.),[30] no scribe or intellectual seems to have owned a complete work at his home. This raises a question about the copying of major works: were they preserved in their entirety in a few 'great' centres associated with the royal palace or the temples? Or should the creation of a canonical series be considered as an ideal to which the intellectuals responsible for this canonisation aspired, while in reality no series was ever preserved or copied in its complete form? In this case we would have discovered traces of the real usage of a few great texts (no library, even in our contemporary world, sees all of its works consulted at this rate), rather than clues to the organisation of scribal production. At present no reliable response to this question is possible. Probably, however, literary works were copied in their entirety, unless what we have found was only conceived as an aid to learned commentaries or interpretations. But Mesopotamian civilisation lasted for so long that we can assume we have recovered most of the manuscripts which constitute its cultural heritage.

On the basis of this data, we can draw a sketch of Babylonian scribal culture between the sixth and second centuries BC. Scribes formed a socio-professional category that we can define as intellectuals associated with a temple. They carried out religious duties in the vast complex of the temple of Bêl-Marduk, and were maintained by the landed income of the temple, which acted as a sort of autonomous political and religious institution, mediating between the Babylonian population and the royal power, whether Persian, Archaeminid, then Seleucid Greek and finally Arsacid Parthian. However, that was the limit of the temple's political authority: the imperial administration put in place by the Persian kings in the fifth and fourth centuries to run their empire was Persian at the highest administrative level, and Egyptian, Aramaic or even Judaean at its lower echelons. In fact, few Babylonians were included, and the regime used not cuneiform script but imperial Aramaic. The Persian and later Greek scribes in the imperial administration of Babylon had to be specialists above all in cursive alphabetical script on hide or papyrus.

So having thus lost what we might call their 'political use', Babylonian scholars concentrated on the intellectual use of their written documents, and sought in them a multitude of meanings and references which led them to become more and more esoteric.[31]

We can count several stages in the long development of the relationship between science and the uses of writing in Mesopotamia:
— First, we encounter a hypothetical rationality specific to divination and the interpretation of omens, conceived as the expression of a permanent communication between the human and divine worlds. The gods could be questioned and their responses read through the medium, above all, of hepatoscopy (the interpretation of a liver according to a binary yes or no formula). In this way one could record the simultaneous connections – and not a causal relationship – between particular omens and major political events. All this was set in writing and formed a stock of observations validated by experience. The wizard or astrologer established a connection with the deity by means of a rational protocol (question/reading of the response/interpretation). This could be carefully differentiated from the product of direct 'inspiration', linked with prophecy and quite alien to scribal culture.
— From the second half of the second millennium, a process of canonisation emerged. Intellectual circles in Babylon apparently took the initiative here to collect together disparate sets of observations put into writing over the course of previous centuries, and compile them in canonical series obeying their own internal logic. In this way they ended up with the great classic series on divination or lexicography. The same phenomenon can be observed for lexical series, the formation of lists of knowledge of plants or minerals or medical treatments. All this depended on a body of knowledge in the Sumerian language inherited from the third millennium, regarded as being created at the very beginnings of human history by intermediaries between gods and humans, the civilising spirits called *apkallu* and then by the sages, the *ummanu*.[32]

Another group of learned scribes, which was just as old, was based on their common attachment to the Edduba, the 'house of tablets', which was not a school in the strict sense of the term (a place where one serves one's apprenticeship), but a course of study and a common corpus of cuneiform texts used for scribal training (thus Michalowski talks of the scribes of the Edubba as a 'club').[33] Scribes of the Edubba tradition were in fact described as *mūdû* – 'scholars' – but they became scholars through reading their texts and not as a result of divine inspiration. The sage Enmeduranki, for instance, who received divinatory knowledge directly from the gods, must be distinguished from the guardians of the *nisirti ummani*, who transmitted and taught the learned tradition through writing. The idea is still the same: an initial inspiration of divine origin,

allowing the development of knowledge set down in writing and transmitted through intellectual circles to subsequent generations.

The intellectuals are thus situated within a genealogy of knowledge which justifies their existence. They are the descendants of the most ancient sages and their role is to maintain and transmit the scholarly tradition, based on the use of cuneiform script.[34]

In the second half of the first millennium, when Mesopotamia had clearly lost all political autonomy, the raison d'être of the sages who controlled writing was to explore different forms of rationality provided by the scholarly writings. They developed on the one hand a reflection on the internal organisation of the lists and, on the other, an attempt to find the richest possible connections between cuneiform script (with the design and even the shape of the characters) and the meaning and value of the characters (the multiplication of phonetic and ideogrammatic values), as well as the relationship between words and the realities rendered by the characters. Here they moved into methods of categorisation and the organisation of knowledge which were the result of intensive exploration of the possible meanings of all this data. At the same time they moved into a form of esoteric knowledge and, as for any human community in a minority, into a conception of knowledge reserved for initiates.[35] The over-arching idea is the correspondence, more or less evident, which exists between elements of objective reality and their designation (words) or representation (characters). Intellectual work consisted of revealing this correspondence and passing from the universal to the particular and vice versa.

This knowledge was sometimes renewed, in particular with the spectacular development of mathematical astronomy, alongside observational astronomy, in the second half of the first millennium. But on the whole it drew on a tradition which was thousands of years old and essentially based on writing. The astronomers in the temple of the god Marduk in Babylon between the third and second centuries BC observed the night sky every day. They knew, thanks to previous calculations, which celestial phenomenon was about to appear (a conjunction of the planets, an eclipse). Yet it was still necessary to observe the phenomenon, because its precise mechanisms (the state of the sky at the moment of observation, the visibility of the phenomenon, the colour of the stars involved) influenced the significance of the event in a divinatory context. The results of their daily observations were compiled in monthly reports which their editors called 'astronomical journals'. In any given month these journals also recorded contemporary data

which on the face of it had no relation to astronomical realities: the price of the principal agricultural products in Babylon, the water level reached by the Euphrates in the capital, an important political or religious event.[36] Finally the interpretation was found, thanks to the great divinatory series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, which provided the means of determining the positive or negative significance of the astronomical event.

Matching up the data recorded in astronomical reports apparently revealed highly significant correspondences between the state of the heavens, the economic situation (a price rise, the scarcity of a product), the hydraulic situation (the level of the Euphrates, of great importance in a region eternally dependent on irrigation) and the political situation. We know that Babylonian scribes drew on this type of documentation to compose their historical chronicles.

At the end of the process, we arrive at a presentation of the writing of history which revisits ancient traditions and illuminates (according to Babylonian intellectuals' own criteria) a reading of events with a true historical sensibility (and sometimes too much so, because the chronicles are singularly lacking in objectivity and in any case that was not their purpose). They distinguished between good and bad reigns, often on the basis of criteria dictated by the need for piety towards the Babylonian gods. Their chronologies go back to the earliest times.

All this could not be done without assembling the largest possible amount of written data, enabling one to illustrate and understand the widest range of circumstances, in terms of astronomy, divination, lists of words and reality. Accumulating data written on cuneiform tablets led to the creation of scholarly libraries, where the knowledge of first Assyrian and then Babylonian intellectuals was gathered together, but not always broadly diffused. Step by step the circle of users shrank and, as it did so, its legitimacy and relevance also diminished. One important question remains: to what extent, by what means and on what scale were entire slabs of this scholarly knowledge transmitted, from the libraries of Nineveh and Babylon, to the rest of the ancient world and then to posterity?

Notes

1. Conventionally, phonetic values of characters which make up Akkadian words are rendered in italics, while ideogrammatic characters, inherited from Sumerian, are in roman font.

2. David Stronach, 'Notes on the Fall of Nineveh', in Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting, eds., *Assyria 1995*, Helsinki (Helsinki University Press), 1997, pp. 245–257 (Stronach 1997).
3. Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, 'The Library at Nineveh', in Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Capital Cities: Urban Planning and Spiritual Dimensions*, Jerusalem (Bible Lands Museum), 1998, pp. 147–156 (Lanfranchi 1998); Jeanette C. Fincke, 'The Babylonian Texts of Nineveh. Report on the British Museum's *Ashurbanipal Library Project*', *Archiv für Orientforschung* 50, 2003–2004, pp. 111–149 (Fincke 2003–2004).
4. Simo Parpola, 'Assyrian Library Records', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 42, 1983, pp. 1–30 (Parpola 1983).
5. David Damrosch, *The Buried Book: The Loss and Rediscovery of the Great Epic of Gilgamesh*, New York (Henry Holt), 2007 (Damrosch 2007).
6. Joachim Menant, *La bibliothèque du palais de Ninive: découvertes assyriennes*, Paris (E. Leroux), 1880, pp. 16–18 (Menant 1880).
7. Stephen L. Lieberman, 'Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection', in Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard and Piotr Steinkeller, eds., *Lingering Over Words. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, Atlanta GA (Harvard Semitic Studies 37), 1990, pp. 305–336. (Lieberman 1990).
8. Cf. the old but very thorough description by Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's,* Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7/1–3, Leipzig (J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung), 1916, pp. lxv–lxxxii (Streck 1916).
9. Cécile Michel, 'Une liste paléographique de signes cunéiformes. Quand les scribes assyriens s'intéressaient aux écritures anciennes....', in Fabienne Wateau, ed., in collaboration with Catherine Perlès and Philippe Soulier, *Profils d'objets, Approches d'anthropologues et d'archéologues, colloque no. 7 de la maison René-Ginouvès, Nanterre, 16–18 juin 2010*, Paris (De Boccard), 2011, pp. 245–257. (Michel 2011).
10. Cella = a temple sanctuary with a statue of its deity.
11. Olaf Pedersen, *Archives and libraries in the Ancient Near East, 1500–300 B. C.*, Bethesda MD (CDL Press), 1998. (Pedersen 1998); Daniel T. Potts, 'Before Alexandria: Libraries in the Ancient Near East', in Roy MacLeod, ed., *The Library of Alexandria*, London (I. B. Tauris), 2000, pp. 19–33. (MacLeod 2000).
12. Adolf Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press), 1964, pp. 15–22. (Oppenheim 1964).
13. Parpola, 'Assyrian Library Records'.

14. Hermann Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone, Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 2, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Verlag Butzon and Bercker Kevelaer), 1968, p. 97. (Hunger 1968).
15. Teratology = the study of birth defects and abnormalities.
16. That is, a list of signs.
17. Extispicine = a technique of divination by examining the viscera of sacrificed animals.
18. Parpola, 'Assyrian Library Records', p. 6.
19. Julian E. Reade, 'Rassam's Babylonian Collection: the Excavations and the Archives', in Erle Leichty, *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum. Volume VI: Tablets from Sippar 1*, London (British Museum Publications), 1986, pp. xiii–xxxvi. (Leichty 1986).
20. This reconstruction is the work of Philippe Clancier, *Les bibliothèques en Babylonie dans la deuxième moitié du premier millénaire avant J.-C., Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 363, Münster (Ugarit-Verlag), 2009. (Clancier 2009).
21. Clancier, *Les bibliothèques en Babylonie*; Markham J. Geller, 'The last wedge', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 87, 1997, pp. 43–95. (Geller 1997); Aage C.F. Westenholz, 'The Graeco-Babyloniaca Once Again', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 97, 2007, pp. 262–313. (Westenholz 2007).
22. Paul-Alain Beaulieu, 'De l'Esagil au Mouseion: L'organisation de la recherche scientifique au IVe siècle avant J.C.', in Pierre Briant and Francis Joannès, eds., *La transition entre l'empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques*, Paris (De Boccard), 2006, pp. 17–36 (Briant and Joannès 2006).
23. Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture*, Cambridge, UK (Cambridge University Press), 2004. (Rochberg 2004).
24. According to the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, letter M, volume 2, p. 197b.
25. Dominique Charpin, 'Les mots et les choses: *girginakku* 'bibliothèque', *Notes Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 60, 2007, pp. 75–76. (Charpin 2007).
26. Dominique Charpin, *Lire et écrire à Babylone*, Paris (Presses Universitaires de France), 2008. (Charpin 2008).
27. By the first millennium, the canonical versions of the essential corpus of great literary works had become fixed. The only notable addition seems to have been the *Epic of Erra*. This development does not concern scientific literature, in particular the astronomical corpus.
28. Parpola, 'Assyrian Library Records'; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, 'New Light on Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 82, 1992, pp. 98–111. (Beaulieu 1992).

29. Andrew George, 'The Colophon of MS 5007', in Miguel Civil, ed., *The Lexical Texts in the Schøyen Collection*, Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 12, Bethesda, MD (CDL Press), pp. 274–279 at p. 275. On the training of Babylonian scribes from the first millennium generally, Petra Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Christ, Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 275, Münster (Ugarit-Verlag), 2001. (Gesche 2001).
30. Clancier, *Les bibliothèques en Babylonie*, first part.
31. Beaulieu, 'New Light on Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture'.
32. Erica Reiner, 'The Etiological Myth of the Seven Sages', *Orientalia Nova* Series 30, 1961, pp. 1–11. (Reiner 1961).
33. Piotr Michalowski, *Correspondence of the Kings of Ur: Epistolary History of an Ancient Mesopotamian Kingdom*, Winona Lake, IN (Eisenbrauns), 2011. (Michalowski 2011).
34. Francis Joannès, 'Le parcours intellectuel des lettrés de la Babylonie récente', *Revue Historique* 302:3, 2000, pp. 693–717. (Joannès 2000).
35. Beaulieu, 'New Light on Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture'. Nevertheless, the notion of the secret text had long existed: colophons on Middle Assyrian tablets from the second millennium stipulated that they were not to be divulged, no doubt to prevent rituals from being carried out by non-specialists which could have catastrophic consequences. See Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone,* p. 32.
36. Abraham J. Sachs and Herman Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia,* Volumes I–III, Vienna (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft), 1988–1996. (Sachs and Hunger 1988–1996).

Francis Joannès is Professor of Ancient History and Civilisation at the University of Paris-1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, France. He researches the social, economic and intellectual history of Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC. He has published many papers and a book entitled *Les premières civilisations du Proche-Orient, 3000–1500 BC* (2006).

CHAPTER 3

Writings in the Korean *Han'gŭl* Script by and for the Women of Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910)

SeoKyung Han

The literary culture of the late Chosŏn period consolidated various innovations in the writing and reading practices of pre-modern Korea.[1] For example, the Korean script or *Han'gŭl*, invented in 1443 and promulgated in 1446, confirmed its role as an effective writing system while interacting with Classical Chinese. Women played a key role in promoting the popular usage of *Han'gŭl*. Chosŏn women served as narrative objects, audiences and authors of *Han'gŭl* books. At the same time, they played an important role as mediators between two writing systems, and they promoted the use of *Han'gŭl* in both private and public spheres, inside and outside the home, thus contributing to the consolidation of *Han'gŭl* as a medium of public communication. This chapter seeks to define their role alongside that of male intellectuals.

It is evident that many late Chosŏn texts were still written only in Classical Chinese, which was conventionally considered as the official writing system. Yet towards the end of the period, an increasing number of Classical Chinese texts were translated into *Han'gŭl*. Moreover, the

S. Han (✉)
State University of New York, Binghamton, NY, USA
e-mail: shan3@binghamton.edu

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extant source materials of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910) illustrate that not only official and personal documents but also literary works were written originally in *Han'gŭl*, for a broader audience, from the eighteenth century onwards.

The accessibility of Chosŏn literary sources makes pre-modern Korea one of the best-documented sites of antiquity, and invites both synchronic and diachronic approaches to the book culture of Korea and East Asia. At first Buddhist scriptures were collected, but the majority of surviving sources refer to Neo-Confucian principles and rituals. The sources illustrate the competition and compromises between Mahayana Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism in Korea, as the elite of high-class *yangban* established Chosŏn Neo-Confucianism.

Most of the Chosŏn literary sources, remarkably, are in book form, with pages tied with string through five holes on the right-hand side. Other forms of long, unbound papers, hanging scrolls, signboards and tombstones also provide evidence of a wide range of writing genres. At the same time, non-textual forms of the folk opera *p'ansori*, the shamanist trance ritual *Kut*, as well as Buddhist rituals and popular religious paintings illustrate the subject matter of many popular literary works. The reproduction of Chosŏn texts in books and other forms demonstrates how Buddhism and Confucianism were transmitted, translated and transformed across different regions in East Asia and in different periods, and how the oral and written traditions of individual areas mutually interacted.

The literary sources in Korean script or *Han'gŭl* allow us to map the circulation of *Han'gŭl* across all levels of society, notwithstanding the official status of Classical Chinese, as the new writing system came to characterise Chosŏn literary culture. Most *Han'gŭl* texts appear in a genre which we would now categorise as the novel.[2] Recent studies have shown that the novel-like narratives of the Chosŏn were produced in *Han'gŭl* much more frequently than in Classical Chinese. These novels were circulated in both the central area around the capital (now Kyŏnggi Province), even within the royal palaces, and in provincial areas, and they were also reproduced country-wide in handwritten rather than print copies. Notably, they exhibit countless variations, as the contents of the same novels were modified in different local versions, different styles of handwriting appear in individual copies of the same novel, and so forth. Such variety, it is argued, epitomises the Chosŏn *Han'gŭl* novels but, at the same time, this makes it impossible either to account fully for all of their details or to establish clear general patterns.

Still, the most revealing aspect of the *Han'gŭl* novels, as I argue in this chapter, is that a majority of them were hand-copied by women. In particular, a large number of *Han'gŭl* novels have been found in the central palaces and more specifically in their inner quarters; these particular novels have been categorised as the novels of the *Naksŏnche* (樂善齋, the 'Learning room for taking pleasure in doing good'). The *Naksŏnche*, built by the 24th king Hŏnjong for Lady Kim or one of his consorts, is located in the east corner of the *Ch'angdŏk* Palace (昌德宮, the 'Prospering Virtue Palace'), also called the *Tong* Palace (東闕, the 'East Palace'). It has been suggested that novels were originally stored in the *Chunghi* Hall (重熙堂, the Hall of 'Cherishing Prosperity') – the building where the crown prince was educated – and then moved into the *Yŏnkyŏng* Hall (演慶堂, the Hall of 'Spreading Happiness') – the building where the king and the queen took their rest; both buildings being located within the same *Ch'angdŏk* Palace. Finally, in the late 1920s, the novels were re-located to the *Naksŏnche*. The novels of the *Naksŏnche* include all the novels found inside the central palaces, but today the phrase instead connotes the novels that were hand-copied by the court ladies.[3]

Extant royal *Han'gŭl* novels, compared with locally (re-)produced ones, appear quite distinctive, written in a clearer, more elegant and more consistent manner, well bound and using high-quality paper. These novels were in fact hand-copied by the ladies of the court. This apparent historical association with court women, ranging from queens to female attendants of lower rank, provides an apt channel for exploring how the *Han'gŭl*, since its invention in the early fifteenth century, was consistently used for written communication within the palace by ladies of the court. It further leads us to consider how ladies of the court, the typical female intellectuals of the Chosŏn, contributed to shaping Chosŏn literary culture. Thus, this chapter pays special attention to the historical significance of the popularisation of *Han'gŭl* novels among the ladies of the court towards the late Chosŏn.

In referring to the 'ladies of the court', I include a number of women in high-ranking positions. First and foremost comes the queen, the king's primary wife. The crown prince's wife and her high-ranking attendants are also part of this group, as well as the king's and the prince's other high-status concubines. Dowagers, or widows of previous rulers, and other female relatives of the king and previous rulers are included here. In addition, the phrase designates a number of elite women in the service of the queen. There was also a large number of

low-born female slaves employed by the court, but they are not included in the category of 'court ladies'.

Among *Han'gŭl* literary sources of the late Chosŏn recently exhibited at the National Hangeul Museum,[4] the *Konchŏn ŏp'il* (坤殿 御筆, *Regal Writings from the Queen's Residence*, 1794) appears quite useful for investigating the continuities and ruptures in Chosŏn literary culture during its later period. This single-volume collection starts with two *Han'gŭl* novels – the *Mansŏkkun chŏn* (萬石軍傳, 'Story of a Millionaire') and the *Kwak Cha-ŭi chŏn* (郭子儀傳, 'Story of Kwak Cha-ŭi'). Both novels have been identified as hand-copied by Queen Hyoŭi (孝懿王后, 1753–1821), queen of the 22nd Chosŏn king Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800). At the end, we find the queen's own *Han'gŭl* epilogue or *pal* (跋). In it she explains why she selected and copied these particular novels. Then one more epilogue is added, written in both *Han'gŭl* and Classical Chinese. Its authors, Kim Ki-hu (金基厚, 1747–1830) and Kim Ki-sang (金基常, 1807–?), relatives of the queen and serving civil officials, stated that this literary work was given by the queen as a gift to their family – the Kim of the Ch'ŏngp'ung area (near the current city of Chech'ŏn in the North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province of South Korea).

As we know, the Chosŏn queens had access to numerous literary works within the palaces. Ever since its foundation, the Chosŏn court had functioned as a leading printer and book distributor, insofar as it regulated the production and transmission of the sources, resources and technologies for making the books. At the same time, the court ran the royal libraries both inside and outside the central palaces.[5] Recent studies have indicated that the royal *Han'gŭl* novels were mainly stored in the buildings where the kings took a rest, where the ladies of the court resided and where the crown princes were educated. Accordingly, Queen Hyoŭi could easily have obtained two of the above-mentioned *Han'gŭl* novels from the royal libraries within the palaces.

The history of the queen's *Regal Writings* first serves as a good example to argue that the queens, or ladies of the court in general, learned or were taught how to read and write the *Han'gŭl* alphabet, just as they were expected to know how to read and write Classical Chinese. The Chosŏn source materials reveal that inside the palace, *Han'gŭl* was used from its inception in the early fifteenth century as another written communication tool alongside Classical Chinese, and its usage was constantly increasing towards the later Chosŏn. Moreover, official historical records, such as the

Chosŏn wangjo sillok (*Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty*; hereafter the *Sillok*), illustrate that in the fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, the *Han'gŭl* was used widely at court, inasmuch as female and male attendants exchanged private letters in *Han'gŭl*;[6] and some of the female attendants, normally from high ranks and serving the court ladies, corresponded by means of *Han'gŭl* letters with Buddhist monks all over Korea.

Extant *Han'gŭl* letters show that the majority of them were written for female readers.[7] At the same time, more of them were written by women than by men. This supports the hypothesis that women were the primary readers of *Han'gŭl* texts. It also suggests that epistolary writings served as the women's preferred literary form or genre for using the newly invented writing system. This makes it possible to assume that the court ladies of the early Chosŏn in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries corresponded in *Han'gŭl*, most likely with their family members. Nonetheless, the majority of available *Han'gŭl* letters known to have been written by the court ladies were produced from the seventeenth century onwards.[8] Intriguingly, the majority of the available letters written by the kings to female members of their family were also produced from the seventeenth century onwards: the largest number of known letters was written by the 21st king Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776) and the 22nd king Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800), the husband's grandfather and husband of Queen Hyoŭi, respectively. In fact, the largest number of available *Han'gŭl* sources was apparently produced between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, in the later Chosŏn. Likewise, a considerable number of other *Han'gŭl* texts appear in the later Chosŏn, and both men's and women's literary engagement in *Han'gŭl* increased, yet the increase in the women's engagement appears more conspicuous – which will be detailed further below.

It needs to be emphasised here that the ladies of the court in the early Chosŏn also played a leading role in using or socialising the *Han'gŭl* in other ways. The popular usage of the *Han'gŭl* was motivated and mobilised most of all by the Chosŏn court. Interestingly, the Chosŏn court first applied the newly invented writing system to compose Buddhist texts and translate Buddhist literature from Classical Chinese, although the central court had originally chosen (Neo-)Confucianism as its ideology and had officially prohibited all Buddhist practices since its foundation. Recent surveys of the (re-)publication of *Han'gŭl* texts indicate that the majority of the *Han'gŭl* translations of the Buddhist sutras were led by the central court in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in early Chosŏn. In the later Chosŏn, reproductions of *Han'gŭl* Buddhist works were increasingly

popularised country-wide: the *Han'gŭl* translations of the primary texts of (Neo-)Confucianism were carried out mainly in the late sixteenth century.[9]

The most representative *Han'gŭl* Buddhist works, published first by the court, are the 24-volume *Sŏkpo sangjŏl* (釋譜詳節, *Episodes from the Life of the Buddha*, 1447) and the three-volume *Wŏrin ch'ŏngang chi kok* (月印千江之曲, *Songs of the Moon's Reflection on a Thousand Rivers*). Both works were printed (1447) with the *Kapin* movable metal type (made in 1434) during the reign of the fourth king Sejong (r. 1418–1450), the inventor of *Han'gŭl* in 1444. To pray for the repose of his wife, Queen Sohŏn (昭憲王后, 1395–1446), King Sejong ordered his son, who later became the seventh king Sejo (r. 1455–1468), to publish the *Sŏkpo sangjŏl*. Then King Sejong authored the *Wŏrin ch'ŏngang chi kok* in the unique literary form of prose-poetry or *Kasa*, and praised the Buddha's compassion in *Han'gŭl*. Later, his son King Sejo combined both works and republished them as the 25-volume *Wŏrin Sŏkpo* (月印釋譜, the combined work of the *Moon's Reflection* and the *Episodes*, 1459) on the sudden death of his first son, Crown Prince Ŭikyŏng (1438–1457). In 1461, the king also established a Superintendence for Sutra Publication or *Kan'gyŏng Dogam* (刊經都監) and set out to translate the Buddhist sutras from Classical Chinese into *Han'gŭl*. Moreover, both his wife, Queen Chŏnghi (貞熹王后, 1418–1483), and daughter-in-law, Queen Sohye (昭惠王后, 1437–1504) – the wife of his deceased son Ŭikyŏng and the mother of the ninth king Sŏngjong (r. 1469–1495) – are famous for their full support for Buddhism. Likewise, the reign of King Sejo has been seen as one of the most pivotal moments in promoting the production and reproduction of the Buddhist sutras and influenced the translation of literary works from Classical Chinese into *Han'gŭl*.

Official *Sillok* records demonstrate that the ladies of the court and, most commonly, the queen regent and the queen dowager promoted and patronised *Han'gŭl* translation and the (re-)production of the Buddhist sutras. The roles of three queens of the early Chosŏn have been especially recognised: Queen Chŏnghi (貞熹王后, 1418–1483), consort of the seventh king Sejo (r. 1455–1468), Queen Sohye (昭惠王后, 1437–1504), mother of the ninth king Sŏngchong (r. 1469–1495), and Queen Munchŏng (文定王后, 1501–1565), consort of the 11th king Chungchong (r. 1506–1544). The question of how directly they participated in translating Classical Chinese into *Han'gŭl* is still under examination. Nonetheless, they made a practical contribution to the production of *Han'gŭl* Buddhist

scriptures and thereby to the further development and circulation of *Han'gŭl* as a written tool.[10]

Another significant aspect of the contribution of the ladies of the court was the written orders that the queens gave to civil officials. Some of the Chosŏn queens, more precisely the paternal grandmothers and mothers of the kings, had participated as regents in the administration. As detailed in the *Sillok* records, the queens regent wrote orders in *Han'gŭl* and gave their written orders to the civil officials. Such use of *Han'gŭl* by the queens serves as an important example of how *Han'gŭl* was adopted as an instrument of Chosŏn government processes.

What is remarkable here is that some of the queens' *Han'gŭl* orders were translated into Classical Chinese when the orders were included in the *Sillok*. Here, it is worth noting that some of the queens' *Han'gŭl* orders have been found, evidently transmitted, on pieces of paper.[11] A few of the kings' *Han'gŭl* orders have similarly been found as pieces of paper. Yet neither these particular queens' orders nor those of the kings have been found in the *Sillok* records. Although further studies are critical, it is interesting that both the queens' and kings' *Han'gŭl* orders in paper form were apparently sent either to local officials or to those dispatched into the country as a whole.

We may compare these with the previously discussed queens' orders that were included in the official records of the *Sillok*, not in their original *Han'gŭl* versions but translated into Classical Chinese. The queens' orders in the *Sillok* appear to have been delivered to civil officials in the higher echelons working in the central government of the court. This supports the possibility that the queens' *Han'gŭl* orders had to be translated into Classical Chinese for targeted readers among high-ranking civil officials, not simply for the purpose of being included in the official records.

These examples of the queens' *Han'gŭl* orders remind us of how the epilogues of Queen Hyoŭi and the two Kims were represented in the collection previously mentioned. In contrast to the queen's epilogue, the Kims' epilogue was presented in both its *Han'gŭl* and Classical Chinese versions. Both Kims, the queen's cousins, belonged to the intellectual elite of the high-class *yangban* (scholar-officials and military elite) of the Chosŏn.

The traditional assumption has always been that male intellectuals would not have been taught to read and write *Han'gŭl*, and may even have been prohibited from doing so, because it was conventionally seen as a script created for and used only by women and lower-class people. The

Kims' *Han'gŭl* epilogue, however, contradicts this view. If we consider that in the previous examples the kings sent *Han'gŭl* letters to the female members of their family and that civil officials received *Han'gŭl* orders, it is clear that male intellectuals of the Chosŏn could acquire literacy skills in *Han'gŭl*; that they knew how to translate from one writing system into the other; and that *Han'gŭl* was accepted as an effective tool of written communication in the palace, in politics and among the upper classes.

Yet it is notable that the Classical Chinese version of the two Kims' epilogue was also included in the queen's *Han'gŭl* work. Considering that the previously discussed queen's *Han'gŭl* orders were recorded in the *Sillok* as translated Classical Chinese versions, the Kims may also have first written their epilogue in *Han'gŭl* and then translated it into Classical Chinese. Their epilogue was to be read by Queen Hyoŭi, the main author of the collection, and their family members, the targeted audience of the work. More pointedly, while writing the epilogue in *Han'gŭl*, they had female readers in mind – the queen and their female family members. However, the queen's own epilogue was not translated, although hers would be read by the male members of her family, including the two Kims. As mentioned above, *Han'gŭl* versions of the queen's orders, especially those targeting high-ranking civil officials, were reproduced in Classical Chinese versions. Some of the queen's *Han'gŭl* orders, arguably delivered to dispatched or local officials, remained untranslated.

These examples are consistent with the argument that in Chosŏn, translation between Classical Chinese and *Han'gŭl* depended on how far their linguistic or textual characteristics were compatible, how far they corresponded with and were replaceable by each other. Yet the translation process also had to incorporate numerous contextual factors, including gender difference and hierarchies among the social strata and indeed within the upper stratum itself; it seems that the dynamics of who wrote the original texts for what purposes (or for whom) could be critical.

Queen Hyoŭi's *Regal Writings* (1794) likewise illustrate how the translation between the two writing systems was developed or consistently formalised starting from the early Chosŏn period. The work's two *Han'gul* novels reveal other characteristics of translation in the later Chosŏn. The queen was involved in the *Han'gul* translation of both the 'Story of a Millionaire' and the 'Story of Kwak Cha-ŭi'. Her translation was apparently done in the eighteenth century, the precise period when we know that *Han'gul* novels were being most popularised both inside and outside the court. It has been argued that the royal collection of

Naksŏnche novels, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, appears most developed in this period. This royal collection contains a total of 113 different kinds of *Han'gul* literary sources.[12] Among them, 83 sources have been considered as novels and 67 among those, comprising more than five volumes, are sub-categorised as lengthy novels.

The *Naksŏnche* collection substantiates the growth of *Han'gŭl* literacy, accompanied by an increase in the readers of the novels towards the later Chosŏn, probably starting from the seventeenth century. Yet it should be mentioned here that ladies of the court had access to *Han'gŭl* novel-like narratives from the early Chosŏn, since 17 early Chosŏn Buddhist novel-like narratives have been found.[13] Most of them were written in both Classical Chinese and *Han'gŭl*, and were compiled as chapters of completed Buddhist works.[14] One of the most quoted, and in fact controversial, narratives is *Wangrang panhon chŏn* (王郎返魂傳, 'Story of Wang-rang's Resurrection').[15] Continuing debates on whether and how this 'Story' should be regarded as a novel or something similar have been helpful in figuring out the characteristics of the early Chosŏn novel-like narrative. They have also been insightful in reminding us of the under-studied and under-estimated role of the Buddhist literary tradition in enhancing the prose style of writing and establishing a literary form of the novel in Chosŏn.

The 'Story' appears as one of the constituting narratives, 9–11 in total depending on the extant Chosŏn versions (1637, 1753, 1765, 1766, 1780) of the Buddhist work *Kwŏn nyŏm yo rok* (勸念要錄, *The Concise Records on Guiding the Recitations*, circa mid-sixteenth century). The *Concise Records* was authored by the Buddhist monk Po-u (1515–1565) for the edification of the people.[16] Studies of his work have noted that Po-u must have had access to the earlier version (1304) of the 'Story' written in Classical Chinese, which was published in the previous Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392) as a chapter of the *Amitabha* sutra. He adapted the content of this initial version at the same time as he copied its original Classical Chinese and translated it into *Han'gŭl*.[17]

According to Po-u's version, Wang-rang met his deceased wife Lady Song (probably in a dream) and received a warning note to recite the sutras; practised recitation and impressed the king of the Underworld; was released from Hell with his wife and both were re-incarnated; and they were both re-born in Paradise. Po-u's work likewise neither rephrased the sutras' passages nor reproduced the Buddhist stories, but rather adapted or fictionalised those sources and thereby developed its own storyline.

Other extant narratives also appear to adapt the stories that historically comprised the Buddhist sutras.

The 'Story' and other extant Buddhist novel-like narratives of the early Chosŏn have been viewed as an important source demonstrating how orally transmitted literary elements, such as myths and folktales, were re-integrated into written prose practice rather than into poetry, in association with the establishment of *Han'gŭl* writing practice. At the same time, however, the creative development of the *Han'gŭl* version of the 'Story' raises numerous questions, such as how to identify *Han'gŭl* literary works and the roles of their authors; and how to discover and interpret the process of translation in the Chosŏn literary tradition. Still, Po-u's 'Story' and other extant Buddhist literary sources suggest that the novel-like narratives of the early Chosŏn were normally produced in a relatively short form, often forming part of a single volume rather than occupying a full volume in their own right. These narratives, by and large, developed a monotonous and patterned storyline and incorporated a few fixed literary elements, often borrowing Buddhist motifs (previous lives, reincarnations, reunions, karmic relationships etc.) and dream-based fantasies.[18]

Intriguingly, no source materials tell us whether or how the ladies of the early Chosŏn court took part in the (re-)production process of the aforementioned novel-like narratives, such as translating and hand-copying, in addition to reading those narratives – although they were, as discussed earlier, constantly involved with the production of *Han'gŭl* writings. Instead the *Naehun* (內訓, *Instructions for Women, circa* 1475) of Queen Sohye (昭惠王后, 1437–1504), mother of the ninth king Sŏngchong (r. 1469–1495), seems a unique example of women's writings of that period.[19] She adapted the key (Neo-)Confucian primers and wrote this work in both Classical Chinese and *Han'gŭl*, specifically for the proper education of the ladies of the court. The *Naehun*, for example, was reproduced continuously after its first publication and circulated within the inner quarters of the Chosŏn palaces. It seems possible that Queen Hyoŭi read it in an eighteenth-century version.

Actual examples of women's engagement in (re-)producing the novels, however, do not appear until the seventeenth century. As is well known, the *Han'gŭl* letters (circa 1652–1674) that Queen Insŏn (1619–1674), consort of the 17th king Hyojong (r. 1649–1659), wrote to her daughter Princess Sukmyŏng (1640–1699) illustrate their constant exchanges of *Han'gul* novels, in and out of the court, which proves that the *Han'gul* novels were already widely hand-copied in those days.[20] In addition, the

personal literary collection of Kwŏn Sŏp (權燮, 1671–1759), one of the most famous writers of the late Chosŏn, tells us that not only his paternal grandmother but also his mother (1652–1712) enjoyed reading the novels and hand-copied them. His relative, Chin-ŭng Kwŏn (1711–1775), also stated that his mother (1676–1737), Lady Song from the Nonsan area (currently the city of Nonsan in the South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province of South Korea), copied the novels to improve her writing skill when she was young.[21] According to Kwŏn Sŏp's records, his grandmother, Lady Yi from the Hamyŏng area (currently the city of Hamyŏng in the South Chŏlla Province of South Korea), copied the *Han'gŭl* versions of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, one of the most popular and most widely circulated Chinese novels of the period. Kwŏn Sŏp's mother, Lady Yi (1652–1712) from the Yongin area (currently the city of Yongin in the Kyŏnggi Province of South Korea), copied a large number of *Han'gŭl* novels consisting of several volumes: she handed out the copied versions of the novels to her children and asked them to keep the novels and look after them carefully. Lady Yi, Kwŏn Sŏp's mother, appears to have had a close relationship with Queen Insŏn and often exchanged *Han'gŭl* novels with the queen – as the queen did with her daughter.[22]

These examples from seventeenth-century Chosŏn clearly show how the court ladies and women of the elite families read and copied *Han'gŭl* novels and, moreover, played a role in transmitting those novels beyond court circles. The novels mentioned in these sources often ran to unprecedented lengths, as can be seen in their extant versions. Those novels mentioned also illustrate how the lengthy *Han'gŭl* novels of the late Chosŏn integrated a large number of literary elements and incorporated more intricate and more layered storylines, which contrasts with the characteristics of the early Chosŏn novel-like narratives previously discussed.

It seems of further note that many of the aforementioned novels deal with family dynamics over a couple of generations, such as the 180-volume *Won wŏl hoe maeng yŏn* (玩月會盟宴, 'Meetings of Sovereigns in the Won wŏl Tower'). These novels, although fictional, were grounded in women's real-life experiences, and they treated difficulties that women had to overcome, primarily as wives and daughters-in-law. Considering that changes in the rules and pattern of post-marital residence, from matrilocality to patrilocality, occurred most noticeably through the seventeenth century, the appearance of such themes in

those novels appears explainable. Also in this period eminent Neo-Confucian scholars started writing didactic books, prioritising the roles of daughters-in-law, for their female family members. Their publications evidently follow the book projects of the Chosŏn court, which designed, printed and distributed Neo-Confucian didactic books from its foundation up to the early seventeenth century.[23]

The ladies of the court perhaps understood the difficulties of fulfilling the role of daughter-in-law and felt empathy with the female protagonists of the novels. In other words, their constant reading of the novels suggests that they saw the novel as another literary form through which they could express their personal feelings. Although the question of whether and how the Chosŏn women authored or created a novel is still under examination, the previously discussed examples of the *Han'gŭl* letters substantiate the fact that the court women articulated their emotions, feelings and thoughts through epistolary writings and long fictional works.

The court women also kept their own journals in *Han'gŭl* at this time. As is well known, Queen Inmok (1584–1632), consort of the 14th king Sŏnjo (r. 1567–1608), wrote two pieces of what we now entitle the *Sulhoe mun* ('Writings about my thoughts').[24] Queen Inwŏn (1687–1757), consort of the 19th king/Sukjong (r. 1674–1720), kept journals,[25] and Queen Hŏn'gyŏng (1735–1816, known as Lady Hyegyŏng), the wife of Crown Prince Sado (1735–1762) and the mother of 22nd king Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800), authored the book *Hanjungnok* (*Reminiscences in Retirement*, 1795–1805?). Queen Inwŏn praised the love of her birth parents. Yet both the other queens went through political turmoil and the deaths of their family members, including the deaths of their son and husband respectively, yet survived and recorded what happened and how they thought and felt. They were likewise capable of writing lengthy *Han'gŭl* texts. Recent research on pre-modern Korean literature has revealed that such realistic descriptions developed out of the context of the Japanese invasion, *Imjin Waeran* (壬辰倭亂, 1592–1598), as illustrated in the detailed and lengthy narratives in which refugees recorded what they experienced physically, emotionally and psychologically.[26]

Still, it is significant that the ladies of the court copied lengthy novels in *Han'gŭl* above all. They contributed to the constant reproduction of those novels, and even the increase in reproduction in the later Chosŏn, and thus the establishment of the royal collection of novels. Their method of

consistently publishing these literary works in manuscript form is unique in the growth of *Han'gŭl* text reproduction.

In the course of the Chosŏn dynasty, the country-wide circulation of *Han'gŭl* texts was achieved through both printing and hand-copying. The Chosŏn source materials demonstrate that, just as in the case of Classical Chinese texts, the *Han'gŭl* texts were consistently printed with blocks and type, either in wood or metal, primarily by the Chosŏn court, the provincial offices and the designated local Buddhist temples. Those printed versions, either in Classical Chinese or in *Han'gŭl*, were regularly distributed across the regions until the demise of the dynasty. Yet the printed quantities of the texts are limited, and the variety of the printed texts also appears narrow. The sources indicate that the authorised scriptures of (Neo-)Confucianism and Buddhism and the adapted or secularised versions of those scriptures were printed most frequently, and their Classical Chinese and *Han'gŭl* versions were printed and distributed together or alternately across the provinces.

Three publishers indeed functioned as the major distributors in Chosŏn, printing the texts that would be utilised primarily for the purpose of popular education, mainly in the 'home school' system. The majority of these printed texts describe how and why virtues such as filial piety, loyalty and chastity should be internalised and externalised. Their descriptions appear intentionally related to the ideas and ideals of (Neo-)Confucianism and, arguably, (Neo-)confucianised Buddhism. These texts present their topics in an accessible and dynamic way, for example juxtaposing Classical Chinese and *Han'gŭl* writings, deploying pictorialised or illuminated characters, and including illustrations or diagrams.

The multiple volumes of the *Haengsilto* series (*Proper Conducts with the Illustrations*, 1433 onwards) epitomise how the central political authority of the court promoted official book projects for the edification of the common people through printing. The extant versions and editions of the *Haengsilto* series can be traced back to the earliest 1430s version and up to the latest 1850s version. They were officially printed with woodblocks and circulated country-wide until the demise of the Chosŏn dynasty. Some sequels of the *Haengsilto* series consisted of exemplary biographies of Korean and Chinese historical figures, both female and male, whose filial piety, loyalty and chastity were honoured historically through oral and written transmission during the Korean and Chinese dynasties. Another noteworthy characteristic is that all biographies in all volumes of the series are represented through both illustrations and text. The texts were initially written in literary Chinese.

Yet after *Han'gŭl* was invented in the 1440s, these were either translated into or re-composed directly in *Han'gŭl*.

The *Pumo ŭnjunggyŏng* (*Sutra on Honoring Parental Love*, circa tenth century), the second most published Buddhist sutra or apocrypha in the Chosŏn, also exemplifies how the religious authorities of the Buddhist temples printed the books country-wide. These literary works, printed mainly with woodblocks throughout the dynasty, demonstrate how Classical Chinese, *Han'gŭl* and the illustrations were integrated. The illustrations normally came first, with the text printed on the verso. In the text, reading from right to left and from the top downwards, sentences in Chinese were interleaved with the *Han'gŭl* versions. In some versions, *Han'gŭl* sentences then appear in an upper section, above both the illustrations and the Classical Chinese text.

Both the *Haengsilto* series and the *Pumo ŭnjunggyŏng* were printed for continuous circulation. Even this particular Buddhist work specifies throughout its content the necessity of transcribing it as a form of devotion to Buddha. But their hand-copied versions, either in Classical Chinese or in *Han'gŭl* or both, have rarely been found; this was not how they were normally reproduced.[27] This supports the possibility that in the Chosŏn the printed versions were not always selected as original texts to be hand-copied. Their print-based and repeated publication also opens up the possibility that their physical distribution range was intentionally limited, anticipating further dissemination through verbal communication. It is apparent that the teaching personnel, such as the head of the family and the Buddhist monks, played a key role in delivering those works' contents to lower-class people and enlarging the audiences of the texts.

In marked contrast, the lengthy *Han'gŭl* novels of the court were consistently handwritten rather than printed in the late Chosŏn. Publication of Queen Hyoŭi's *Regal Writings* and indeed the *Naksŏnche* novels illustrates how both the main readers and the reproducers of those novels were the court women. Significantly, such a relationship between the court women and the lengthy *Han'gŭl* novels demonstrates how *Han'gŭl* writings were popularised as a medium which reflected, transmitted and brought out emotions, feelings or personal thoughts, as well as how *Han'gŭl* was developed as a popular writing system and even adopted by the newly emerging literary form of the lengthy narrative. These two literary transformations occurred together through the late Chosŏn and interacted with each other.

Notes

1. In this chapter, the romanisation of Korean follows the McCune–Reischauer system, and the English translations and romanisation of the titles of the references follow the versions provided by the authors.
2. Sŭng-min Yang, 'P'ilsapon kososŏl ŭi t' ksŏng kwa kach'i: Han'gŭl p'ilsapon ŭi yut'ong mit chonchae yangsang ŭl chungsim ŭro' 필사본 고소설의 특성과 가치: 한글 필사본의 유통 및 존재 양상을 중심으로 [A Study of the Characteristics and Values of Classical Novels in Manuscript: With a focus on the distribution and existence patterns of Han'gŭl manuscripts], *Kukŏsa yŏn'gu* 20, April 2015, pp. 7–37.(Yang 2015)
3. Chong-muk Yi, 'Chosŏn side wangsil tosŏ ŭi sujang e tehayŏ' 조선 시대 왕실 도서의 수장에 대하여 [A Study of the Treasury of the Royal Book Collections in Chosŏn], *Sŏji hakpo* 26, 2002, pp. 5–39.(Yi 2002)
4. *Konchŏn ŏp'il*, National Hangeul Museum, accessed 27 August 2015, at http://www.hangeul.go.kr/eventBbs/bbsView.do?bbs_id=3&bbs_no=1&curr_menu_cd=0103020000.
5. Chong-muk Yi, 'Chosŏn side wangsil tosŏ ŭi sujang e tehayŏ'.
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SeoKyung Han recently obtained her PhD at the State University of New York at Binghamton, USA. Her research focuses on the book culture and history of ancient to pre-modern East Asia. She especially explores gender issues and the relationships of women with books, not only as the narrative objects of books, but also as authors and/or as audiences (readers and listeners), and their historical significance and implications.

CHAPTER 4

Paper World: The Materiality of Loss in the Pre-Modern Age

John Gagné

This chapter aims to make two points regarding the history of document loss and destruction in the age of rag paper. That age spanned from about 1200 to 1820; here my focus is largely on the first half of that period. The first point stresses how paper can be a useful tool for historians to reconsider narratives that have become perhaps too closely associated with the Gutenberg world: narratives about the materials and circulation of knowledge, or about the history of censorship. The second proposes that writing paper came with a sensibility, one that generations of users cultivated and naturalised, that was characterised by its ability to stimulate cultural reflection on evanescence. This kind of reflection can be traced in venues where paper-based writing became a daily pursuit. The reason that degradation and oblivion accompanied the paper sensibility is because users placed significant and polarising demands upon the medium: unlike parchment or wax, it functioned for *both* short-term and long-term use. It was a technology both for today and for eternity, and that polarisation put paper in a singularly precarious place in the pre-modern media universe. If this concern over degradation could be seen as one side of the sensibility of paper, then its inverse side was an ethos of disposability that emerged in

J. Gagné (✉)
Department of History, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: john.gagne@sydney.edu.au

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the fourteenth century: one could turn paper to trash with less compunction than parchment.

To set the stage for this story, the first section offers a brief summary of rag paper's history, with particular focus on concerns over material durability. The following section turns to the practical consequence of the sensibility I have proposed, a consequence I call the 'paper sensibility'; this phrase suggests the way that paper's adoption into European knowledge systems could transform visions of time and history. The chapter devotes the bulk of its attention to governmental (rather than scholarly) contexts, and it traces two streams of response – positive and negative – in Europe's reception of paper. It concludes with a brief coda that turns from degradation to intentional destruction, and proposes how we might think about recovering histories of lost documents.

First, a primer on the history of paper.[1] Papyrus, a water-grass-based paper, had been plentiful in antiquity, but was decreasingly used after the fall of Rome. Animal skin, called parchment or vellum, became the preferred medium of Europeans by the sixth or seventh century, and by the High Middle Ages it was the predominant medium. Paper, whose origins we will encounter in a moment, was essentially a recycled product. Scraps of woven linen cloth, rags (usually used clothing), hemp rope and raw flax were pounded in giant vats of quicklime and then water in order to unbind the fibres.[2] Artisans then sieved this slurry through screens; once dried, these sheets of paper received an application of size, a thin coating of starches or gums to prevent the ink from bleeding. The nature of this process meant that the clothing and paper trades were interrelated and that the clothing trade even pushed paper production forward. When spinning-wheel technology increased the amount of cloth Europeans produced and wore in the late thirteenth century, it to some extent relieved the constant dearth of raw materials available to paper-makers.[3]

Medieval European paper was a Muslim product. The skill of its manufacture had made its way from China to Persia to the Arab peninsula and then to the pan-Islamic world, which included Iberia from the eighth to the twelfth centuries. Jews also made use of rag-paper, since Jewish merchants introduced paper to India in the eleventh century.[4] The density of Muslims and Jews in the medieval western Mediterranean explains why the first European Christians to employ paper were in post-Arab Sicily and in Spain. After the kings of Aragon conquered the Valencian Muslim town of Xátiva in 1250 (a hub of paper fabrication), they incorporated the new medium into the process of royal record-keeping.[5]

Through the late Middle Ages, debates over the value of paper tended to denigrate its usefulness on religious grounds. Jews, Christians and Muslims all expressed suspicions about its materials. Twelfth-century Christian abbot Peter the Venerable complained that paper was a Jewish medium, and Muslims in the fifteenth century worried about impurities in paper manufactured by Christians. The most germane example here is the Christian complaint that paper was the least durable medium for inscribing holy texts. Part of the story of rag paper's spread from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries is its emancipation from the majority of these religious associations.[6] Not only did paper-making become a craft plied by tradespeople of all religions, but paper itself found its great success outside the traditional spheres of power (monarchy and the ecclesiastical elite), which in general adhered to the use of parchment for centuries. The new market – distinct from these elites, but overlapping with them too – was made up of socially mobile urban dwellers, who used paper to facilitate and document all their social and economic transactions.[7]

The advantages of the new medium – that it was easier to procure than parchment, simpler to make, cheaper by a factor of six – recommended it to European users in the mid-thirteenth century. As far as surviving evidence suggests, paper's real explosion came in the period from 1250 to 1300. It was roughly during this half-century that the first paper documents appeared in southern France (1248), Italy (1275) and England (1307).[8] Paper's success, however, was met with a fairly consistent complaint on the part of rulers. The princes who had adopted paper early were also the first to notice its limitations as a durable recording technology. For instance, in 1231 the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Sicily Frederick II Hohenstaufen – whose reign was marked by every kind of innovation in the techniques of statecraft and bureaucracy – forbade the registration of important public documents upon paper, and insisted that these documents be written on parchment. He decreed:

> Since it should be hoped that their trustworthiness will last for many years in the future, we consider it right that they should not succumb to the danger of destruction from old age. No proof at all should be taken in court or outside of court from documents written on paper (...) unless they are receipts for debts or the payment of debts.[9]

He gave his imperial notaries two years to transfer paper documents to parchment. The legal exemption of receipts is interesting too, and it

suggests that paper was already in wide use for receipts of commercial exchange. The emperor's concern for the durability of official records may have arisen from seeing that the records of Sicily's earlier kings were already decaying. In the 1220s, Frederick required 50- and 60-year-old documents from his predecessor to be re-copied 'because they were beginning to be wasted by age'.[10]

Similar laws appeared under the Spanish kings. The Castilian King Alfonso the Wise (r. 1252–1284) legally required specific materials for particular documents: book three, title 18, law five of his civil code specified when paper could or could not be used. In short, charters of royal gifts and offices were to be written on skin, along with leases, suits, concessions and 'other things that rich men transact between each other'. Alfonso allowed paper to serve for fewer kinds of documents – essentially scripts that lubricated the transitory functions of government: letters, summonses, tax documents, safe conducts.[11] As paper material came to form part of the instruments of government, rulers wished to ensure the maximum longevity of documents. In the 1340s, the king of Aragon legislated paper quality production standards to this end. The law explained that not only had artisans been making smaller sheets than in the past, sheets in both private care and public records had 'become tattered and ruined within a brief space of time, and folios fall away from one another'. Another ruling appeared about a decade later, alleging that producers 'are making (...) paper from a pulp so bad that after a short time it spontaneously rips and comes apart'.[12] On one hand these Aragonese laws belong to a familiar category of medieval legislation against industrial fraud, but on the other they signal an agitated response to changes in the material support of information culture. The first Christian European societies that had adopted paper, purposely or casually, into their systems of registration were also the first to fret extensively over the perishability of their written records. Even with the improvement in manufacturing techniques in the fourteenth century, the delicacy of paper never disappeared from cultural commentary.

These early responses lead to one of the central hypotheses of this chapter. New technologies of information, as the digital age continues to remind us, offer specific qualities that help to shape their utility in human society. Personal computers, for instance, have offered varieties of tactility, display, speed and even intelligence that have encouraged new habits in users. When Walter Ong argued in 1982 that writing restructures consciousness, he was pointing to the coupling of technological and

psychological revolutions.[13] To transfer information orally is a fundamentally different act from a transfer achieved through signs inscribed on an object. The cognitive project is different for writing because a second project – a material one – mediates the first. The arrival of paper in Europe is an interesting case in this regard because, to paraphrase Ong again, the word had already been technologised. Writing was already a highly refined art. The refinement of literacy, intellectually and materially, restricted its field of utility largely to the social elite. It was usually only the chanceries of rulers and the scriptoria of monastic houses that had permanent facilities for writing in the years around 1200. Citizens and subjects may have been represented in documents written by clerks or bureaucrats, but they rarely wrote them in their own hands.[14] Attending to this lower, non-writing end of the social scale, pre-modernist scholars of the past two decades have insisted upon the continued importance of oral forms of address, and orality does indeed represent a persistent sphere of expression that had a much wider – perhaps universal – utility than did pen and parchment.[15] As an information technology, paper sat socially somewhere between vellum and speech. Paper shifted the medium of the technologised word laterally, and that lateral shift – from one predominant writing surface to another, literally from animal to vegetable – deserves attention. The shift had obvious effects, such as an explosion in the social potential of inscription: paper made writing (and eventually printing) more abundant, more affordable, more possible. Such consequences are self-evident. But we must not forget Ong's proposal that literate technologies cultivate and discipline new modes of thought, and the argument of this chapter proposes that paper stimulated cultural reflection on evanescence, on degradation and oblivion, and even on history and time. There is – or there should be – a kind of intellectual history of the materials of information and literacy; this chapter intends to contribute to that project.

The hypothesis – to return to the proposal promised above – is that the complaints of the medieval princes over paper's degradation reflect early evidence of the impact of paper upon conceptions of the interrelationship of materials, time and posterity. The adoption of paper as the most common literate medium triggered what I call a 'paper sensibility' over the course of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The paper sensibility functioned on at least two levels: the material and the conceptual. The first level relates to the realities of abundance and fragility. Paper collected rapidly in the studios of notaries and lawyers, in the cells of scholars and in the repositories of governments. Moreover, observers

saw paper – even given the improvements in material durability wrought by paper-makers in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – as something subject to deterioration or destruction. Such was the pre-condition for the second, conceptual level, at which responses came to be developed. One could say that there were two conceptual streams to emerge from the problem of the material bulk and fragility of paper. The first, the 'positive stream', devised constructive management solutions, and was a form of mobilisation to the challenges posed by the paper world. The second, the 'negative stream' – a current of history that I think is less studied – was characterised by an attitude of resignation to loss, and reveals under-appreciated histories of obliteration.

Let me just quickly summarise the positive stream, a vision of which has emerged out of work in the history of the book and the history of science over the past 20 years. Abundance was a capacious idea that pre-modern intellectuals both esteemed and denigrated. The esteem accrued to a rhetorical tradition of embellishment and copiousness in speech and writing (*copia*), while the impatience was rooted in fears of the growing size and diminishing quality of the Republic of Letters. Such at least was Petrarch's lament around 1350: he groused that everyone wished to be a writer and yet none had talent. Books proliferated, he argued, but not one was worth reading.[16] His complaints explicitly relied in turn upon antique complaints articulated by Cicero. As the value of copiousness waned in the age of paper and printing, expressions of concern over useless bulk took its place, and these protests functioned as markers of discernment for the scholarly elite, because they exposed the poor intellectual quality evident in the flood of publications. Thanks to the attention of a diligent cluster of scholars – best and most conveniently represented in the 2003 edition of the *Journal of the History of Ideas* edited by Daniel Rosenberg, featuring essays by Ann Blair, Brian Ogilvie, Jonathan Sheehan and Richard Yeo – we have come to see that the *positive link* between the problem of abundance and materials developed in a culture of management strategies to facilitate navigation of the metastasising information world.[17] Many of these strategies to circumvent intellectual dross or mere bulk have now attracted major studies, including encyclopaedism, scrapbooking, excerpting, commonplacing, note-taking and filing.[18] These were constructive methods devised largely by pre-modern scholars, and they became the generative conceptual kernels of the disciplines of bibliography, as well as of library and archival science.

At the same time, the discussion is just opening up about what we might call the 'negative stream' between the materials of the paper world and new conceptual responses in pre-modernity. As we have seen, early pronouncements on paper underlined the dangers of its perishability, and I am led to propose that the 'paper sensibility' saw a broad re-assessment of the delicacy of written culture. When paper documents could be seen to fall apart over the course of a human lifetime, observers were forced to think about degradation and destructibility. The negative stream allowed implications to flow both into the past and into the future. Looking backwards from the age of paper, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists began concertedly to lament the loss of ancient texts. If one sought to re-capture a lost antique society's textual canons, and at the same time viewed one's own canons as imperilled by the ravages of time, we can surmise that new fields of sympathy with the past could be opened up. The very degradability of 'modern' written culture in those centuries made loss and obliteration cultural themes. Seen from this perspective, a wide range of things can begin to seem disconcertingly fleeting. Paper enabled a cultural reckoning in which it became increasingly clear that all media, by extension, faced similar problems of durability, whether they were the paper pages I have been discussing so far, or indeed parchment and stone as well, even though their erosion proceeded at slower rates. Even if their corruption was slower it was no less remarkable: when the Western historical sensibility began in the late fourteenth century to inter-relate the surviving materials of the past – in other words, to see the texts, coins, art and architecture of the past as elements of a historical archive that were profoundly inter-dependent[19] – then the advanced decay of the stones of ancient Rome made the survival of its fragmentary textual legacy all the more incredible, and the probability of an ocean of lost learning almost a certainty. The evanescence of all things, and especially human societies and their collected wisdom, hinged upon the durability of materials. The 'negative stream' in the discourse of paper allowed the perception of loss to register deeply in European society, and might help us account in a new way for some of the concerns of Renaissance culture. While recognition of evanescence had been a part of European society for centuries, perhaps the new factor was a persistent frustration with evanescence, and a set of new discourses devoted to it.

Petrarch looked back to Rome with increasing despondency in his familiar letters, addressed to the ancients as if they were alive to read them, and reported to them the sad fate of their works. He wrote to

Livy lamenting that of the historian's 142 books, only 29 had survived.[20] Only scripture would endure, Petrarch thought, because God granted unique perpetuity to his own texts, histories and laws. 'Of all other writings,' Petrarch explained, 'the most distinguished ones perish and, for the most part, have perished already. There is no remedy for this tremendous loss, because there is no understanding.'[21]

Some who participated in the negative stream foresaw gloomy futures as well. Paper, to some eyes, became the great liability of the era of print, and this view received explicit treatment in the German abbot Johannes Trithemius' 1494 treatise, *In Praise of Scribes*. The treatise is famous among book historians for the way in which it contrasts the skilful and holy handiwork of scribes with the unthinking machine that appeared to render them obsolete. 'Printing is a paper thing,' Trithemius protested, 'and in a short time it will all be gone.'[22] Scribes should copy printed books onto vellum, he concluded, so as to stave off the inevitable. Most commonly, scholars see Trithemius' complaint over the instability of paper books as an instructive but reactionary and even quaint response to technological change. Yet seen from the vantage point of the longer history of paper, his lament comes to look like a logical extension of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century fear of loss that travelled with the medium.

Part of the reason that this negative stream has revealed itself to our view is thanks to a kind of apotheosis of the history of the book, which – having mastered a certain view of the book as object and tool – has turned to the book unbound, or more precisely to the never-bound book: loose leaves and sheets.[23] The sheet raises even more expansive questions about technologies of literacy, since loose papers have such wide horizons, and such high likelihood of loss or destruction. As Peter Stallybrass has reminded us, printers do not print books, they print sheets, and many of those never-bound sheets have vanished absolutely, such as the 130,000 indulgences purchased by a southern Italian bishop around 1500, no trace of which survives.[24] Sheets of paper spanned the boundaries between print, manuscript and mixed media, boundaries that are finally softening in our visions of the material culture of literacy. The loose leaf worked in concert and in competition with the book, or sometimes in unique circumstances inside or outside the scholarly world. The unbound sheet acted in several theatres of knowledge, and it allows us to peer not just into the history of scholarly practices that have attracted the greatest share of interest so far, but also into administrative, juridical, mercantile and

popular ones. Printed sheets circulated as religious indulgences, contracts, safe conducts and tickets, and reached more widely than the book. The list grows longer if we ignore whether a sheet was inked by press or by pen – letters, notes, registers, account books and archives fall into this category, and open up for us new histories of the domestication of paper into new cultural forms and practices, and its role in the development of new genres, such as diaries. One valuable example of this kind of work is Thomas Wetzstein's *Heilige vor Gericht* (Saints on Trial), which examines the way in which professionalised legal documentary practices involving files, briefs and testimonies shaped the success and failure of canonisation trials under the late medieval papacy.[25]

One of the pre-eminent loose sheets was the manuscript letter, a comforting correspondence that could, at times, burden senders and receivers, especially celebrated writers of the early sixteenth century like Luther and Erasmus. Luther complained in 1529 about being so overwhelmed with daily letters that they were strewn on tables, chairs, stools, consoles, windowsills, cabinets and mouldings. Erasmus, in a similar predicament of receiving and especially of writing prolifically, grumbled in like fashion. But his solution – and here is where the positive stream diverges from the negative – was the opposite of the constructive strategies for bulk that he practised elsewhere in his commonplacing and indexing work. Those were techniques to help bend abundance towards usefulness, to make copiousness a virtue. In this instance, Erasmus took a lament like Luther's to a pragmatic but drastic solution, commenting:

> I have written and am still writing so many letters that they can hardly be carried away on two carts. I myself have burned many of them, since I know that they weigh upon my correspondents.[26]

Whether Erasmus burned only the letters he received – or perhaps even some that he penned himself – remains unclear. In either case, destruction became a way to lighten the burden of unmanageable bulk.

Most famous for his laments of drowning in documents is King Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–1598), sometimes called the paper king. His desire to oversee all aspects of royal governance became unbearable for him over the two decades between 1560 and 1580. 'I have 100,000 papers in front of me,' he wrote to a secretary, 'so far I have not been able to get free of these devils, my papers, and I still have some to deal with tonight.' Philip immersed himself in the ocean of paperwork to the point of distraction:

'I cannot cope with any more today,' he wrote in 1578, 'I am shattered'; and on another occasion, 'I have neither eaten nor lifted my head all day (. . .) my eyes and head cannot take any more.'[27] The unending arrival of new letters, petitions, reports and files inspired him to institute a team of abbreviators, made permanent in 1585, to help summarise and condense his daily labour.

What happened as these papers gradually migrated off his desk evidently formed part of the monarch's thinking after 1585 as well. Charles V had founded the archival depository at Simancas in 1540, but in 1588 Philip signed a 30-chapter-long order outlining its conditions of care, regulations that are said to be the first of their kind. So claims the Spanish historiography; I suspect that a similar case could be made for the French archivists of the 1370s.[28] What does distinguish Philip's instructions is his concern not just for classifying data, but also for the environment of paper storage: his orders make specific allowances for space, humidity and temperature. Among these injunctions was the prohibition of all heat and light sources for fear of fire. All work, for this reason, had to be completed between dawn and dusk. As thorough as the retention of state papers was, it was necessarily also a process of discrimination, through which documents were classed as valuable or not. In 1568, when Philip's disturbed son Don Carlos died after more than a year's imprisonment under his father's orders, the king burned all his son's papers, writing that they 'no longer have any use'. And later he also destroyed all his correspondence with his daughters, 'so as not to carry the load of any more papers'.[29] The Spanish archive came into being as much through a process of destruction – judged at the time to be judicious, expeditious or even simply space-saving – as it did through a programmatic effort to shape a patrimony. The usefulness of papers had to do with their evident future applicability, a standard that the king's correspondence with his children failed to meet. What the archive promised instead was the extension of evidence for decision-making; the abbreviators needed, ideally, to be able to trace the link between summary and amplitude; that is, between the précis produced for the prince and the full evidentiary record. The frequent commands of rulers to their secretaries to trace 'the true and full information' of pending cases demanded preservation and highly articulated classifications.[30]

However, one of the central problems of the archive in the early age of paper was whether users would re-assess the relationship between materials and their contents. It became increasingly difficult to defend the

medieval dicta preserving parchment as the preferred medium for irreplaceable information. Through the fourteenth century this separation had been easier to defend thanks to the cartulary – the bound vellum digest of legally or thematically organised charters, transcribed from original documents.[31] Those originals often did not survive, but the cartulary amassed pertinent and foundational charters into parchment volumes for easy access. Cartularies were preserved selectively, in the sense that copyists often produced them for a reason other than merely to safeguard them with a legal case or argument in mind. Accordingly, cartularies directed and outlined a finite scope of possible inquiry into precedent. What gradually replaced the cartulary in many regions after the thirteenth century was the file.[32] In addition to bound parchment and paper volumes, archives – especially from the 1320s forward[33] – saw the proliferation of loose sheets stored in drawers, bags, boxes and cabinets. Yet where and how they were best stored were questions that found answers only through trial and error over the span of several generations. France's royal archive was, in the twelfth century, a mobile chest of charters that travelled with the king until it was lost at the Battle of Fréteval in 1194, an event that spurred the institution of the stationary *trésor des chartes*, the kernel of the kingdom's most treasured parchments.[34]

Paper took much longer to settle into a centralised location, since it was often the province of notaries, secretaries, ambassadors and other bureaucrats, whose work was mobile and dynamic; that fact meant that the archive was for a long time a virtual space built by social ties rather than a physical repository. Patronage and professional competencies facilitated the collection of state documents in private hands. One way of seeing the gradual shift towards a statist centralisation of records is as a kind of triage response to the losses that the older model allowed. In his 1588 archive regulation, King Philip II related a story that illustrates how he perceived such traditional decentralising habits as a dilution of the patrimony. Three generations earlier, the treasurer of the king's great-grandparents, Fernando and Isabel, had amassed a collection of valuable royal papers at his home in Valladolid. Grateful that they had been recently re-discovered, the king nonetheless griped that they had suffered from 'moths, dust, rats, and humidity', and concluded that the lack of consistent care in a private home left these files open to be 'mistreated and deflowered'.[35] In this regard, Philip's policies for archival management instituted provisions for heightened vigilance, as a specific response to the delicacy of the paperwork he was discharging from his desktop into the fortress at Simancas.

Management and destruction went hand in hand; at times destruction was itself a form of management, as we saw with Erasmus and Philip II. Nor was it, of course, limited to the age of paper. Antiquity was replete with instances of book burnings as refusal: refusal of political compromises, refusal to tolerate intolerable ideas, refusal to permit posterity to remember what should be forgotten. (Many such examples were catalogued by Thomas Bartholin, a French physician in Copenhagen, whose library went up in flames in 1670. He channelled his grief into a short treatise entitled 'On the Burning of His Library'.)[36] Pietro da Cortona's 1634 tapestry of the first Christian Emperor Constantine incinerating what might be pagan documents points to the power that authorities have always wielded to shape the dominant discursive field.[37] Such power did not lie outside the reach of subjects and citizens, either, who punctuated the end of unpopular regimes with the destruction of paperwork that had undergirded unjust systems of oppression. Destruction as management was an efficient strategy because it wiped the slate clean, and new futures could be postulated, invented or forged. As much as dominating and creating paperwork articulated a claim to power, destroying it did the same thing. Narratives of liberation may accompany many of our cases of destruction (the French Revolution is a case in point[38]), but we can surmise that there were just as many cases of tyrannical destruction, whether in colonial contexts, in illegitimate regimes or – in an attenuated sense – in cases of censorship. One of the histories remaining to be written is a history of censorship as document destruction. Most scholars prefer to examine the role of print in the pluralisation of opinion as an intellectual history; but it is also fundamentally a history embedded in the materials of literacy that extended beyond typography. In other words, there is another story about censorship that does not need to rely so heavily on the printing press as its engine. This narrative could extend more easily into the period before Gutenberg, and into more socially embedded networks in any period, as Robert Darnton achieved in his book *Poetry and the Police*, which shows how manuscript poems and songs attracted state censure in Enlightenment Paris.[39]

If censorship is a form of normative discrimination, then so also is the erection of systems that guide whether and how state records should be preserved: the former takes place in public spheres, the latter in the vaults of repositories. Neither is systematic, although both are made to seem that way. One of our long-term goals in studying such topics should be to see how the ostensibly modernising logic of library and archival habits between 1320 and

1820 – which entailed desire for both tradition and innovation – was shaped by destruction. Sometimes an accidental fire was an excuse for a new dispensation with new rules, order and classifications; but equally sometimes the authorities of the new dispensation sought an excuse to kindle the flames themselves. Illegitimate regimes – as well as interregna, regencies, restorations and states of exception – took interruptions of power as opportunities to fabricate plausible pasts and ambitious futures through the suppression or obliteration of documents that they were charged to preserve.

The rhetoric of impediment that we often use in reference to lost materials might be profitably overcome by interrogating a suite of concepts that accrue to the history of vanished documents, concepts like cultural patterns of loss (i.e. what went missing when, and why), how uselessness was framed, and shifting articulations of value, commodity, legibility and durability. There is, in other words, evidence enough to begin a history that can account not only for the cultural sensibility that accompanied paper, but also for the specific conditions that surrounded its disappearance. If we cannot have the documents themselves, we can at least work towards a fuller understanding of their demise.

Notes

1. The most recent survey of paper's global history is Lothar Müller, *White Magic: The Age of Paper*, Hoboken, NJ (Wiley), 2015 (Müller 2015).
2. Leila Avrin, *Scribes, Script and Books: The Book Arts from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, London (British Library), 1991, p. 285 (Avrin 1991).
3. Lynn White Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology: Collected Essays*, Berkeley, CA (University of California Press) 1978, pp. 274–275. (White 1978).
4. Jonathan M. Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*, New Haven, CT (Yale University Press), 2001, p. 41. (Bloom 2001).
5. Josep Maria Madurell i Marimon, *El paper a las terres catalanes: contribució a la seva història*, Barcelona (Fundació Salvador Vives Casajuana), 1972, vol. 1, pp. 21–26; Robert I. Burns, 'The Paper Revolution in Europe: Crusader Valencia's Paper Industry – A Technological and Behavioral Breakthrough', *Pacific Historical Review* 50, 1980, pp. 1–30, at p. 7. (Burns 1980).
6. Peter the Venerable, *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*, Washington, DC (Catholic University of America Press), 2013, p. 218 (Venerable 2013); Leor Halevi, 'Christian Impurity versus Economic

Necessity: A Fifteenth-Century Fatwa on European Paper' *Speculum* 83, 2008, pp. 917–945, at pp. 919–922, 929–941.(Halevi 2008).

7. Attilio Bartoli Langeli, 'La documentazione degli stati italiani nei secoli XIII–XV: forme, organizzazione, personale' in *Culture et Idéologie dans la genèse de l'état moderne. Actes de la table ronde organisée par le Centre national de la recherche scientifique et L'École française de Rome*, Rome (École française de Rome), 1985, pp. 35–55.(Langeli 1985).
8. Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066–1307*, Oxford (Blackwell), 1992, p. 120 (Clanchy 1993); Maurice Prou, *Manuel de paléographie latine et française*, Paris (A. Picard), 1924, p. 20 (Prou 1924); Giancarlo Castagnari, 'La diffusione della carta nell'Occidente europeo', http://educa.univpm.it/storia/difcarta.html, previously printed in Piero Lai and Anna Maria Menichelli, eds., *La prima edizione a stampa della Divina Commedia*, vol. 1, Foligno (Comune di Foligno, Assessorato alla cultura), 1994.(Lai and Menichelli 1994).
9. 'Cum enim eorum fides multis futuris temporibus duratura speretur, iustum esse decernimus, ut ex vetustate forsitan, destructionis periculo non succumbant. Ex instrumentis in chartis papyri [. . .] nisi sint apochae vel antapochae, in judiciis, vel extra judicia, nulla omnino probatione assumatur.' See English translation in James M. Powell, ed. and trans., *The Liber Augustalis*, Syracuse, NY (Syracuse University Press), 1971, p. 50 (book 1, title LXIII).(Powell 1971).
10. '[. . .] quoniam concipiebant vetustate consumi.' Arthur Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique*, Paris (F. Alcan), 1925, vol. 1, p. 498; *Regesta Imperii Online*, RI V.1.1, nos. 1376 and 1382.
11. *Las siete partidas del sabio rey don Alonso el Nono*, Madrid (Boletín Oficial del Estado), 1974, vol. 2, ff. 88v–89r: Tercera Partida, Titulo XVIII, Ley V: Quale cartas deuen ser fechas en pergamino de cuero, e quales en pergamino de paño.
12. Burns, 'Paper Revolution,' p. 23.
13. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, New York (Methuen), 1982, pp. 78–116.(Ong 1982).
14. On the use of documents in twelfth-century England at local levels, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 46–51.
15. Brian Richardson, 'Oral Culture in Early Modern Italy: Performance, Language, Religion', *The Italianist* 34:3, 2014, pp. 313–317.(Richardson 2014).
16. Petrarch, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, trans. Conrad H. Rawsky, Bloomington, IN (Indiana University Press), 1991, vol. 1, Book I.44, 'De Scriptorum Fama', p. 144.(Petrarch 1991).
17. Daniel Rosenberg, ed., 'Early Modern Information Overload', special dossier in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64:1, 2003.(Rosenberg 2003).

18. Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1996 (Moss 1996); Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age*, New Haven, CT (Yale University Press), 2010 (Blair 2010); Elizabeth Yale, *Sociable Knowledge: Natural History and the Nation in Early Modern Britain*, Philadelphia, PA (University of Pennsylvania Press), 2016, pp. 205–248.(Yale 2016).
19. Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval*, Paris (Aubier Montaigne), 1980, p. 87, makes the cultivation of 'ancillary sciences' like epigraphy and numismatics central in the shift from medieval to post-medieval epistemes.(Guenée 1980).
20. Petrarch, *Rerum Familiarum Libri*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Albany, NY (State University of New York Press), 1985, vol. 3, XXIV.8, Letter to Titus Livy, pp. 332–333.(Petrarch 1985).
21. Petrarch, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, vol. 1, Book I.43, 'De Librorum copia,' p. 141.
22. 'Impressura enim res papirea est et brevi tempore tota consumitur.' Johannes Trithemius, *In Praise of Scribes*, ed. Klaus Arnold, trans. Roland Behrendt O.S.B., Lawrence, KS (Coronado Press), 1974, p. 15.(Trithemius 1974).
23. See for instance Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press), 2014, pp. 151–174, for Boyle's loose notes.(Yeo 2014).
24. Peter Stallybrass, '"Little Jobs": Broadsides and the Printing Revolution' in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, eds., *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, Amherst, MA (University of Massachusetts Press), 2007, pp. 315–341. (Baron et al. 2007).
25. Thomas Wetzstein, *Heilige vor Gericht. Das Kanonisationsverfahren im europäischen Spätmittelalter*, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna (Bölhau), 2004, esp. pp. 427–429.(Wetzstein 2004).
26. Cited in Arndt Brendecke, 'Papierfluten. Anwachsende Schriftlichkeit als Pluralisierungsfaktor in der Frühen Neuzeit', *Mitteilungen des Sonderforschungsbereichs* 573:1, 2006, pp. 21–30, at p. 23.(Arndt 2006).
27. Cited in Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, New Haven, CT (Yale University Press), 1998, p. 29.(Parker 1998).
28. Olivier Guyotjeannin, 'Les méthodes de travail des archivistes du roi de France (XIIIe-début XVIe siècle)', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 42, 1996, pp. 295–373, at p. 309.(Guyotjeannin 1996).
29. Brendecke, 'Papierfluten,' p. 28.
30. A random example from Milan's ducal register: Duke Massimiliano Sforza in 1514 asked his secretaries to assemble a file 'in modo che si possa hauere la

piena et uera informatione' on the case of an abbey's income. Archivio di Stato di Milano, Frammenti Registri Ducali, 4b, LXVIII, f. 109r.

31. Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*, Princeton, NJ (Princeton University Press), 1994, p. 82.(Geary 1994).
32. On the power of the file, see Bruno Latour, 'Drawing Things Together,' in Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, eds., *Representation in Scientific Practice*, Cambridge, MA (MIT Press), 1990, pp. 19–68, at pp. 54–56. (Lynch and Woolgar 1990).
33. Guyotjeannin, 'Les méthodes de travail,' p. 341.
34. Krzysztof Pomian, 'The Archives. From the *trésor des chartes* to the CARAN', trans. Christine Haynes, in Pierre Nora, ed., *Rethinking France: les lieux de mémoire*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press), vol. 4, 2010, p. 87.(Nora 2010).
35. *Instrucción para el gobierno del Archivo de Simancas*, ed. José Luis Rodríguez de Diego, Madrid (Ministerio de Cultura), 1989, Chapter 15, p. 109.
36. Thomas Bartholin, *On the Burning of His Library and On Medical Travel*, trans. Charles D. O'Malley, Lawrence, KS (University of Kansas Press), 1961, pp. 2–42.(Bartholin 1961).
37. The tapestry is part of a series held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Accession number 1959-78-12.
38. Ben Kafka, 'The Demon of Writing: Paperwork, Public Safety, and the Reign of Terror', *Representations* 98, 2007, pp. 1–24.(Kafka 2007).
39. Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Cambridge, MA (Harvard University Press), 2010.(Darnton 2010).

John Gagné is Lecturer in History at the University of Sydney, Australia. He teaches early modern history, with a focus on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy and France, and he also studies comparative colonialisms, gender, information history and material culture. He is writing a book on war and the breaking of Renaissance states (*Milan Undone*), and is preparing another book on paper and the history of obliteration in the West (*Paper World*).

CHAPTER 5

Writings on the Streets: Ephemeral Texts and Public Space in the Early Modern Hispanic World

Antonio Castillo Gómez

Introduction

In July 1588, a humble Portuguese cobbler named João Vicente, a converted Jew born in Campomaior, decided to emigrate with his family to Brazil. He was inspired by the incentives offered by the Crown, which he learned about from a notice he came across in the streets of Lisbon, where he had arrived with the original intention of embarking for Cape Verde or Angola.[1] After arriving in All Saints' Bay (Salvador de Bahía), where he stayed for three years, he took ship for Buenos Aires, and from there he crossed Argentina to Potosí, in present-day Bolivia. There, in 1601, he was indicted by the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Lima. After more than 10 years of trials, he was pardoned, re-admitted to the Catholic Church and released in June 1612, but forced to wear the penitent's robe (*sanbenito*). In 1622, a royal official arbitrarily arrested him and deported him to Panama. From there he was sent to Cartagena de Indias (in present-day Colombia). Once again, he fell foul of the

A. Castillo Gómez (✉)
Department of History, University of Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, Spain
e-mail: antonio.castillo@uah.es

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Inquisition, which accused him of relapsing into Judaism and condemned him to be burned at the stake in 1626.[2]

Considering all the tragic vicissitudes of Vicente's peripatetic life, the fact that it all started with a notice in the streets of Lisbon seems a minor detail. The detail is important, however, for the aims of this chapter. It can be understood as a clue, in Carlo Ginzburg's sense of the word – that is, as a sign through which we can perceive other matters of greater substance.[3] From this angle, the evidence of the notice and the effect it had on the Portuguese cobbler take us beyond the details of his case, to glimpse the different uses, materialities and meanings of writings in the city, in particular those disseminated through temporary display in a public place. Although the phrase 'public writing' tends to be associated with epigraphs and inscriptions on monuments, Armando Petrucci gave it a broader definition, describing it as

> any type of writing conceived for use in open spaces, or even in closed spaces, to allow multiple readings (by a group or a crowd) of a written text on an exposed surface at a distance.[4]

Among the different kinds of writing we can classify as public, I focus here on a series of ephemeral sheets, whose contents alternate between two poles: on the one hand, they are writings of information and propaganda, those fundamental aims of the writings of power, among which we can include edicts, decrees and posters announcing festivities; on the other, there are writings which challenge the dominant political, religious and moral system in the territories of the Spanish monarchy in the early modern period, and this was the primary purpose of defamatory libels and lampoons or pasquinades (*pasquines*).

There are many studies of the latter and fewer of the former, but only seldom have they been juxtaposed with each other in order to analyse their specific social and political roles. Putting them side by side enables us to examine the contrasts between these two types of text, some produced legally and others illegally, illustrating one facet of the dialectic between power and freedom in the history of scribal culture.[5] The first category of writings originates in the ability of powerful institutions, ranging from the Crown down to the municipalities, to use public space as an instrument for their publicity and propaganda purposes. The second group, in contrast, springs from a transgressive impulse which entails subverting government authority wielded over public space, as expressed in the nature of the messages and the attitude of graphic rebellion adopted by their authors.

Both categories, nevertheless, share the same spaces and modes of publication, and both edicts and libels were publicly disseminated with the aims of influencing power relations, encouraging ideological or moral cohesion, pursuing political struggles and social conflicts or encouraging harmony among the population. They normally targeted a wide and undifferentiated readership, by combining different communication technologies: writing, orality and sometimes visual culture as well. Lastly, although previous studies have privileged printed productions, it is important to realise that both edicts and libels were disseminated in handwritten copies as well as in printed form, in unequal quantities of course, as this chapter will show. We need to understand the written culture of any period in its entirety, independently of its material support or the physical layout of the page, especially when the different functions of such texts are quite comparable.

This assortment of texts enables us to capture different moments of life in the early modern city, seen as a privileged space for written communication.[6] Brian Richardson and others have examined Italy from a similar perspective; here I explore Hispanic cities in the same period.[7]

Information and Propaganda

As already mentioned, one of the most typical forms of ephemeral urban writings was legal and administrative documents issued by the established authorities. When Sebastián de Covarrubias, the lexicographer of Spain's Golden Age, defined decrees, he accurately listed the characteristics, function and mode of publication of such texts:

> They are commonly letters posted in public areas, giving notice of something, so that all may know of it and understand it and for the information of interested parties and those obliged to respond to such edicts.[8]

Although he only mentions the exhibition of the document, this was always preceded by a verbal proclamation, of the whole text or an extract, as the circumstances demanded. The public reading could not proceed in just any fashion, because it amounted to a political act, and the public crier was warned to perform it 'in a loud voice, slowly and with good enunciation'.[9] These requirements aimed at better communication, of course, but so too did the role assigned to those who mediated between the authorities and the people. At the sound of a trumpet blast, the crier, just like

the priest in other ceremonies, acted as an intermediary between the institution and the targeted public. His performance and behaviour were subject to rules and rituals governing his actions, as well as the appropriate musical accompaniment and in a few cases they even prescribed who should be present, as we see, for instance, in the following fragment from Burgos in February 1521, concerning the publication of the Edict of Worms of 17 December 1520, in which the Emperor Charles condemned the popular uprising:

> In the city of Burgos, on the sixteenth day of the month of February in the year 1521, this notice was read and proclaimed, with trumpets and the beating of the drums, from a covered wooden platform and royal dais (*cadahalso*) in the principal square of the city, in the presence of the gentlemen in the highest council of their Highnesses and the magistrates of their Household and Court, and below the said stage stood many knights and people who heard it and saw it. The said notice was proclaimed in its entirety, in the presence of all those aforementioned, posted on the said royal dais and stage, fixed to the cloth in which they were covered until nightfall, with two drummers who remained with it.[10]

Clearly, every act of proclamation was not vested with the same degree of solemnity; that depended on the importance of the institution responsible and of the contents. An edict issuing from a municipality or a corporation was not treated in the same way as a royal or inquisitorial decree or a papal bull, which would normally be proclaimed with great solemnity and respect. At the same time, the ritual was subject to many regulations, and altering any of them could incur corresponding warnings and sanctions. This is what emerges, for example, in a letter written on 24 March 1627 by Antonio Morga, president of the Audiencia of Quito, to the Council of the Indes, complaining about the attitude of the city authorities who had neglected to accompany the representative of the Holy Office on the day an edict of anathema was pronounced.[11]

The combination of verbal proclamation and the written document implied three modes of reception. Firstly, it would be read aloud in church or some other public space by a scribe, priest or crier. Secondly, it provided for the individual or delegated reading of the text posted in the usual places, normally at the gates of the city or in churches or government buildings, as well as on the walls in the busiest squares and streets.[12]

Thirdly, there was the subsequent, more relaxed reading of a printed edition, possibly by experts and officials involved, especially in the case of edicts, decrees and orders printed in brochures.[13] The oral *performance* of the act took on great importance in a public proclamation, as we can also see in the distinctive prose of these texts, which draws on turns of phrase suitable for verbal communication.

In many cases in the late Middle Ages publication depended entirely on verbal proclamation, but the great innovation of the early modern period was the public exhibition of the document for a specified period, even if precedents for this did exist.[14] Texts destined for temporary exhibition in 'public places' were copied or printed on large-format paper. Even when printed versions were an advantage, notably when texts needed to be diffused in various locations of the same city or in different cities, in some situations they would still be drafted by hand.[15] This is what happened in the 1530s and 1540s, when the rector and councillors of the Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso in Alcalá de Henares issued declarations on matters like the provision of canonries and prebendaries, or details of the university's property leases.[16] In the same fashion, Hugo de Velasco, vicar-general of the bishopric of Cuenca, ordered the implementation of the agreements of the Council of Trent (Fig. 5.1).[17] We can find many more examples from later periods, particularly concerning edicts about individuals, such as those sent in May 1651 to the Council of Orders to search for one Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, friar of the Order of Alcántara, who had escaped from imprisonment at the Court in Madrid.[18] The choice of writing technology depended on the importance and the scope of the edict.

This kind of text had some essential elements, including their very similar tone. Normally they began with the name of the issuing authority or institution, or else they might open with an allusion to verbal proclamation: 'Now listen all that this is published and made known on behalf of (…)' a phrase used by Don García de Toledo, Viceroy of Catalonia, to ban the entry into the Principality of potentially plague-infected people arriving from France or Valencia;[19] or 'Hear ye, let it be known (*tengan todos por públicos*)', used in Mexico City in 1647 in an act of excommunication against Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, bishop of Puebla de los Ángeles, and his vicar.[20] Then followed the explanation or *expositio* in legal terms, and the relevant order (*dispositio*), to conclude with the details of implementation, the date and validating signatures. Where appropriate, the verso was used to keep a record of public readings of the document

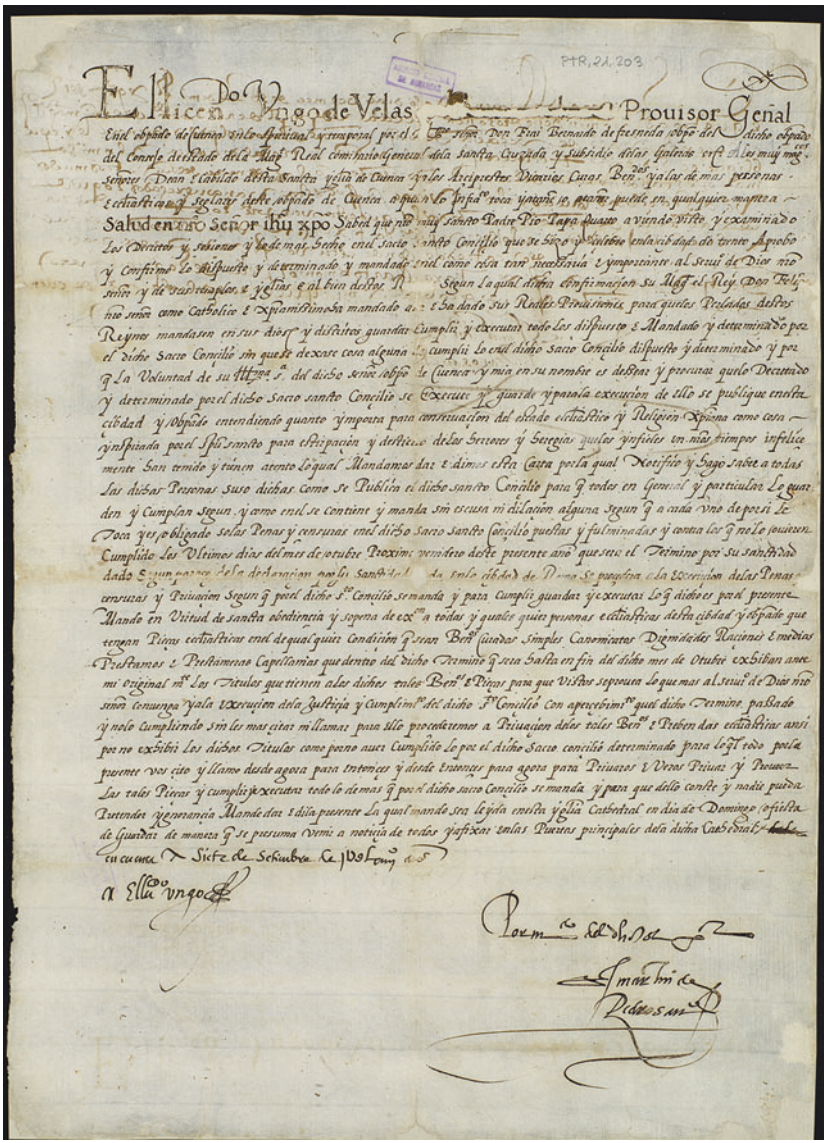
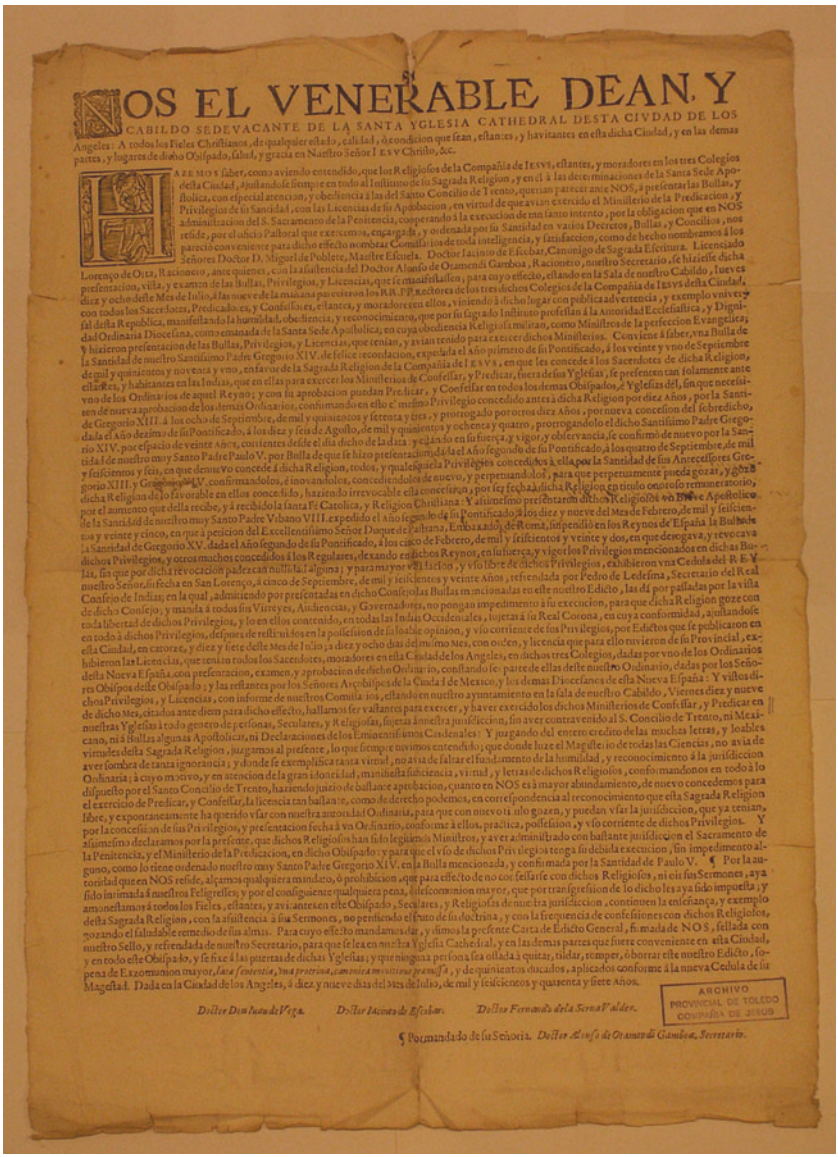


Fig. 5.1 Manuscript edict from Hugo de Velasco, *provisor general* of the Bishop of Cuenca, ordering the implementation of the decisions of the Council of Trent, 7 September 1564.
(Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas, Patronato Real, leg. 21, doc. 203.)

along with a note on where it had been posted, whenever this had been stipulated. Sometimes the document enjoyed more permanent validity, as happened with inquisitorial edicts when questions of faith were on trial. Thus, an edict was promulgated by the Holy Office of Mexico on 30 April 1620, ordering the confiscation of two books: *Vida y virtudes del venerable varón Francisco de ϒepes* (Life and virtues of the venerable bachelor Francis of Yepes), written by the Carmelite friar José de Velasco and published in Valladolid in 1616, and *El solitario contemplativo y guía espiritual, sacada de diversos santos y padres espirituales* (Solitary meditation and spiritual guide, excerpted from various saints and spiritual fathers), written by friar Jorge de San José and published in Lisbon on 1617. This edict was given at least eight public readings between May and August of that year, according to the series of annotations on the back of the document.[21]

Printed decrees inherited the same diplomatic structure of manuscript versions, to use the technical bibliographical term. Some even included handwritten signatures to reinforce the legal validity and originality of each decree, although in the long run mechanical production would prove more practical. Print brought clear benefits to the textual and typographic arrangement of the edicts, and this was especially apparent from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. Typographic space was better organised, with the use of capital letters or large characters at the beginning of the text and at the beginning of other important sections; the use of rounded or italic characters to improve legibility; and the incorporation of emblems and iconographic motifs into the heading, which emphasised its role as an expression of power. This was particularly clear in edicts promulgated by the Papal Curia and other ecclesiastical bodies (Fig. 5.2).

The advantages of typographical composition were even more marked in posters made for the literary competitions which formed part of public festivals organised for various reasons by municipal councils, cathedral chapters, religious orders, universities, guilds and even a few individuals. The occasion might be a royal proclamation, the visit to the city by a member of the royal family, funeral arrangements for a local celebrity, the appointment of a resident to perform a certain duty, a welcome offered to some church authority, a canonisation or the translation of some holy relics. The content of the document varied according to the purpose of each celebration, but in general the fiesta was seen as a propaganda tool designed to enhance, firstly, the legitimacy of the monarchy and the church, and secondly, the merit and dignity of the organising institutions and groups.[22]



NOS EL VENERABLE DEAN Y CABILDO SEDEVACANTE DE LA SANTA YGLESIA CATHEDRAL DESTA CIVDAD DE LOS Angeles: A todos los Fieles Christianos, de qualquier estado, calidad, ò condicion que sean, estantes, y habitantes en esta dicha Ciudad, y en las demas partes, y lugares de dicho Obispado, Salud, y gracia en Nuestro Señor IESV Christo, &c.

HAZEMOS saber, como aviendo entendido, que los Religiosos de la Compañia de IESVS, estantes, y moradores en los tres Colegios desta Ciudad, ajustandose siempre en todo al Instituto de su Sagrada Religion, y en el a las determinaciones de la Santa Sede Apostolica, con especial atencion, y obediencia à las del Santo Concilio de Trento, querian parecer ante NOS, à presentar las Bullas, y Privilegios de su Santidad, con las Licencias de su Aprobacion, en virtud de que avian exercido el Ministerio de la Predicacion, y administracion del S. Sacramento de la Penitencia, cooperando à la execucion de tan santo intento, por la obligacion que en NOS reside, por el oficio Pastoral que exercemos, encargada, y ordenada por su Santidad en varios Decretos, Bullas, y Concilios, nos pareció conveniente para dicho effecto nombrar Comissionados de toda inteligencia, y fatisfaccion, como de hecho nombramos à los Señores Doctor D. Miguel de Poblete, Maestre Escuela, Doctor Iacinto de Escobar, Canonigo de Sagrada Escritura, Licenciado Lorenço de Otaz, Racionero, ante quienes, con la assistencia del Doctor Alonso de Otamendi Gamboa, Racionero, nuestro Secretario, se hizieffe dicha presentacion, villa, y examen de las Bullas, Privilegios, y Licencias, que se mas offreciessen, para cuyo effecto, estando en la Sala de nuestro Cabildo, Jueves diez y ocho deste Mes de Iulio, à las nueve de la mañana parecieron los RR. PP. rectores de los tres dichos Colegios de la Compañia de IESVS desta Ciudad, con todos los Sacerdotes, Predicadores, y Confessores, estantes, y moradores en ellos, viniendo à dicho lugar con publica advertencia, y exemplo vniversal desta Republica, manifestando la humildad, obediencia, y reconocimiento, que por su sagrado Instituto professan à la Autoridad Ecclesiastica, y Dignidad Ordinaria Diocesana, como emanada de la Santa Sede Apostolica; en cuya obediencia la Religiosa milician, como Ministros de la perfeccion Evangelica, y hizieron presentacion de las Bullas, Privilegios, y Licencias, que tenian, y avian tenido para exercer dichos Ministerios. Conviene à saber, vna Bulla de la Santidad de nuestro Santissimo Padre Gregorio XIV. de felice recordacion, expedida el Año primero de su Pontificado, à los veinte y vno de Septiembre de mil y quinientos y noventa y vno, en fauor de la Sagrada Religion de la Compañia de IESVS, en que les concede à los Sacerdotes de dicha Religion, estantes, y habitantes en las Indias, que en ellas para exercer los Ministerios de Confessar, y Predicar, fuera de las Yglesias, se presenten tan solamente ante vno de los Ordinarios de aquel Reyno; y con su aprobacion puedan Predicar, y Confessar en todos los demas Obispados, è Yglesias del, sin que necessiten de nueva aprobacion de los demas Ordinarios, confirmando en esto el mismo Privilegio concedido antes à dicha Religion por diez Años, por nueva concession del sobredicho, de Gregorio XIII. à los ocho de Septiembre, de mil y quinientos y setenta y tres, y prorrogado por otros diez Años, por la Santidad del Año dezimo de su Pontificado, à los diez y seis de Agosto, de mil y quinientos y ochenta y quatro, prorrogandolo el dicho Santissimo Padre Gregorio XIV. por espacio de veinte Años, contenidos desde el dia dicho de la data: y gelado en su fuerça, y vigor, y observancia, se confirmò de nuevo por la Santidad de nuestro muy Santo Padre Paulo V. por Bulla de que se hizo presentacion en dicha del Año segundo de su Pontificado, à los quatro de Septiembre, de mil y seiscientos y seis, en que demas vno concede à dicha Religion, todos, y qualesquiera Privilegios concedidos à ella por la Santidad de sus Antecessores Gregorio XIII. y Gregorio XV. confirmandolos, è innovandolos, concediendolos de nuevo, y perpetuandolos, para que perpetuamente pueda gozar, y goze dicha Religion de los favorables en ellos concedido, haziendo irrevocable esta concession, por ser fecha à dicha Religion en titulo onroso remuneratorio, por el aumento que della recibe, y à recibido la santa Fè Catolica, y Religion Christiana: Y assimesmo presentaron dichos Religiosos vn Breve Apostolico de la Santidad de nuestro muy Santo Padre Vrbano VIII. expedido el Año segundo de su Pontificado à los diez y nueve del Mes de Febrero, de mil y seiscientos y veinte y cinco, en que à peticion del Excellentissimo Señor Duque de Palthana, Embaxador de Roma, fue servido de los Reynos de España la Bulla de la Santidad de Gregorio XV. dada el Año segundo de su Pontificado, à los cinco de Febrero, de mil y seiscientos y veinte y dos, en que derogava, y revocava dichos Privilegios, y otros muchos concedidos à los Regulares, dexando en dichos Reynos, en su fuerça, y vigor los Privilegios mencionados en dichas Bullas, sin que por dicha revocation padeziesen nullidad alguna; y para mas vor vallacion, y vso fobre de dichos Privilegios, exhibieron vna Cedula del REY nuestro Señor, fin fecha en San Lorenço, à cinco de Septiembre, de mil y seiscientos y veinte Años, refrendada por Pedro de Ledesma, Secretario del Real Consejo de Indias; en la qual, admitiendo por presentadas en dicho Consejo las Bullas mencionadas en este nuestro Edicto, las dà por passadas por la villa de dicho Consejo; y manda à todos los Virreyes, Audiencias, y Governadores, no pongan impedimento à su execucion, para que dicha Religion goze con toda libertad de dichos Privilegios, y los en ellos contenido, en todas las Indias Occidentales, sujetas à su Real Corona, en cuya conformidad, ajustandose en todo à dichos Privilegios, despues de restituidos en la posseision de su loable opinion, y vso corriente de sus Privilegios, por Edictos que se publicaron en esta Ciudad, en catorze, y diez y siete deste Mes de Iulio; à diez y ocho dias del mismo Mes, con orden, y licencia que para ello tuvieron de su Provincial, exhibieron las Licencias, que tenian todos los Sacerdotes, moradores en esta Ciudad de los Angeles, en dichos tres Colegios, dadas por vno de los Ordinarios desta Nueva España, con presentacion, examen, y aprobacion de dicho Ordinario, constando ser parte de ellas deste nuestro Ordinario, dadas por los Señores Obispos deste Obispado; y las restantes por los Señores Arcobispes de la Ciudad de Mexico, y los demas Diocesanos de esta Nueva España: Y vistos dichos Privilegios, y Licencias, con informe de nuestros Comissionados, estando en nuestro ayuntamiento en la sala de nuestro Cabildo, Viernes diez y nueve de dicho Mes, citados ante diem para dicho effecto, hallamos ser vsantes para exercer, y haver exercido los dichos Ministerios de Confessar, y Predicar en nuestras Yglesias à todo genero de personas, Seculares, y Religiosas, sujetas à nuestra justificacion, sin aver contravenido al S. Concilio de Trento, ni Mexicano, ni à Bullas algunas Apostolicas, ni Declaraciones de los Eminentissimos Cardenales: Y ponderando del entero credito de las muchas letras, y loables virtudes desta Sagrada Religion, juzgamos al presente, lo que siempre hemos entendido; que donde luze el Magistrio de todas las Ciencias, no avia de aver sombra de tanta ignorancia; y donde se exemplifica rara virtud, no avia de faltar el fundamento de la humildad, y reconocimiento à la jurisdiccion Ordinaria; à cuyo motivo, y en atencion de la gran calidad, manifiesta suficiencia, y virtud, y letras de dichos Religiosos, confo mandonos en todo à lo dispuesto por el Santo Concilio de Trento, hallando justo de ballance aprobacion, quanto en NOS es à mayor abundamiento, de nuevo concedemos para el exercicio de Predicar, y Confessar, la licencia tan ballante, como de derecho podemos, en correspondencia al reconocimiento que ella Sagrada Religion por la concession de sus Privilegios, y presentacion fecha à vn Ordinario, conforme à ellos, practica, posseision, y vso corriente de dichos Privilegios. Y assimesmo declaramos por la presente, que dichos Religiosos han sido legitimos Ministros, y aver administrado con ballante jurisdiccion el Sacramento de la Penitencia, y el Ministerio de la Predicacion, en dicho Obispado: y para que el vso de dichos Privilegios tenga su debida execucion, sin impedimento alguno, como lo tiene ordenado nuestro muy Santo Padre Gregorio XIV. en la Bulla mencionada, y confirmada por la Santidad de Paulo V. ¶ Por la autoridad que en NOS reside, alcamos qualquier amdanco, ò prohibicion, que para effecto de no confessarse con dichos Religiosos, ni oir sus Sermones, aya sido intimada à nuestros Feligreses, y por el consiguiente qualquiera pena, ò escomunion en vso, que por transgresion de lo dicho les aya sido impuesta, y amonestamos à todos los Fieles, estantes, y avitantes en este Obispado, Seculares, y Religiosas de nuestra justificacion, contenten la enseñança, y exemplo desta Sagrada Religion, con la assistencia à sus Sermones, no pretiendo el fruto de su doctrina, y con la frequencia de confessionerse con dichos Religiosos, gozando el saludable remedio de sus almas. Para cuyo effecto mandamos fixar, y fixmos la presente Carta de Edicto General, firmada de NOS, sellada con nuestro Sello, y refrendada de nuestro Secretario, para que se lea en nuestra Yglesia Cathedral, y en las demas partes que fuere conveniente en esta Ciudad, y en todo este Obispado, y se fixe à las puertas de dichas Yglesias, y que ninguna persona sea osada à quitar, tildar, romper, ò borrar este nuestro Edicto, so pena de Excommunion mayor, *late sententiæ, ipso facto incurrendæ, & trecentorum aureorum pænalis*, y de quinientos ducados, aplicados conforme à la nueva Cedula de su Magestad. Dada en la Ciudad de los Angeles, à diez y nueve dias del Mes de Iulio, de mil y seiscientos y quarenta y siete Años.

Doctor Don Iuan de Vega. *Doctor Iacinto de Escobar.* *Doctor Fernando de la Serna Valder.*

¶ Por mandado de su Señoria. *Doctor Alonso de Otamendi Gamboa, Secretario.*

Fig. 5.2 Edict of the dean and chapter of the cathedral of Puebla recognising the Jesuit Order's licence to confess and preach in the diocese, Puebla, 19 July 1647. (Archivo de España de la Compañía de Jesús en Alcalá de Henares (AESI-A), fondo Alcalá, caja 90, exp. 44.)

As usual with such edicts and ceremonies, the literary contest was first announced orally, and afterwards the poster was attached to the customary sites throughout the city. First of all the introduction would explain the theme of the festival, and then the content, language and metre required for poetic compositions, concluding with final information about the judges, the details of how to enter and the deadline. One example of such a poster was published in Zaragoza in 1619 on the occasion of a tribute paid by the city to friar Luis de Aliaga, following his appointment as Inquisitor-General (Fig. 5.3).[23] The archbishop's shield at the top announced the propaganda function of the document. The preface did the same, underlining the links between the city and the Dominican friar, before moving on to enumerate the new rules governing the selection of the poems. The poems were conceived as means to legitimise the Inquisition and recognise the contribution of the Crown of Aragon to its modern role in the person of King Ferdinand, in order to silence anyone inclined to give credit to Queen Isabella of Castile. They emphasised the new Inquisitor's membership of the Dominican order, underlying that order's role in the creation of the Holy Office. Other compositions praised the merits and virtues of Aliaga himself, and expressed the city's joy at his appointment. He was in fact the prior of the convent of Santo Domingo.

Examining their publication protocols will not suffice to interpret fully the role played by edicts, decrees or festival posters. The care taken in organising their layout, in both manuscript and especially in printed documents, clearly shows that their significance was symbolic and political rather than administrative and judicial.[24] The political and religious authorities used public dissemination by oral or written means to propagate the principles which upheld the social, political and religious order of the Catholic monarchy. If we think of them in this one-dimensional light, however, we will have only a partial appreciation of their functions. Every norm contains the possibility that it might be weakened, perhaps disobeyed or even violated. Various judicial prosecutions reveal the failure to comply with orders issued in the edicts, like the one brought in September 1559 by the Council of the Supreme Inquisition, to identify those people who 'had removed and taken down from the said Church' an edict on prohibited books which should have been exhibited on the door of Cori cathedral (Cáceres) for 30 days.[25] Another prosecution was opened in March 1614 against Martín Nuñoz, vicar of the archbishopric of Albarracín, to discover whether he had in fact ordered that no reading

CERTAMEN POETICO QVE
LA AVGVSTA CIVDAD DE ZARAGOZA,
CON SV VNIVERSIDAD, DE QVIEN ES PATRONA PROPONE EN
el Theatro de aquella, a los ingenios Españoles, en la promocion dignissima del Illustrissimo señor don Fr Luys
Aliaga Confessor de su Magestad, y de su Consejo de Estado: a la presidencia y officio
de Inquisidor General.

COMVN decho es fundado en la misma naturaleza el amor de los padres a sus hijos, por ser los que en algunas manera los hazen eternos, pero muy particular el que gozan los que ponen excellencias y virtudes dellos en memoria, y gloria
del Illustrissimo señor don Frey Luys Aliaga su hijo amantissimo, ... nan puesto en tan sublime lugar, y que assi ...
eternizada por su causa en la memoria de las gentes, pide a toda España le ayude a celebrar el contento que tiene, escriuiendo
a los sujetos siguientes.

CERTAMEN PRIMERO.

En ocho octauas se ponderen el zelo que tuuo el Catholico Rey Don Fernando de ejecutar la necessidad, y fundacion de la Inquisicion de los Reynos
los buenos efectos que ha hecho el Santo Oficio, estendiendo las heregias, y la
gloria que resulta a los de Aragon, de q̃ van en primero que en ninguno de los otros Reynos
ro de sus luzes, assi de principio a este heroyco edificio, que mas le asseguro
le dara un rico vaso de plata. al segundo un corte de jubon de raso. al tercero
un espejo de cristal bien guarnecido.

CERTAMEN SEGVNDO.

En quinze dizires, mezclen su elegancia las Musas Latinas, celebrando la
religion del Señor Santo Domingo, alguna madre de nuestros Santos, y la
Inquisicion, que con su doctrina, y sangre han illustrado, y establecido este San-
to Oficio. Al primero se dara un Relicario de oro. al segundo una Biblia rica
mente engualdrapada. al tercero tres varas de raso.

CERTAMEN TERCERO.

En cinco octauas, y un epilogo de vna Cancion Real, como la de Garcilaso, que comience, *El alegre de vna mala gana*: se celebren parte de las
virtudes, erudicion, y prudencia, y otras excelencias, que las qualces ha llegado
el Illustrissimo Señor don Frey Luys Aliaga, interesar con conocentos los aires.
Al primero se le dara vn vaso de plata dorado. Al segundo los guantes de
gineta al tercero va par de medias de seda.

CERTAMEN QVARTO.

Han se de glosar los quatro versos siguientes.

Fomenta esta prouincia
la Fe con la Inquisicion,
cuyo amparo y proteccion
conserua Filipo, y Aliaga.

Al primero se dara vn rico anillo de oro, con vna esmeralda. al segundo un
corte de jubon de tela de Napoles. al tercero va par de guantes de ambar.

CERTAMEN QVINTO.

VN Soneto en que se den las gracias a la Magestad por la merced que ha
hecho a esta Ciudad, y Vniuersidad, con tan acertada eleccion: Al pri-
mero se le dara una pieça de plata. al segundo un broque de escribir, con las
guarniciones doradas. al tercero una vanda guarnecida de oro.

CERTAMEN SEXTO.

En veynte tercetos en dialogo le introduzgan las Ciudades de Çaragoça y
Valencia, que compitan en la gloria que les resulta, a la una por tener
por hijo al Illustrissimo Señor Don Isidoro Aliaga, y a la otra por ser la Arço-
bispo, y entrambas concluyan ofreciendole los parabienes, y assista con ellas al dia
de entrambas al Illustrissimo señor Inquisidor general su hermano. Al primero
se le dara un falero de plata dorado: al segundo un Agnus illuminado, bien
guarnecido de oro: al tercero tres varas de damasco.

CERTAMEN SEPTIMO.

En diez liras en nombre de Çaragoça, y vniuersidad se celebre el contento
que tiene, viendole madre de tal hijo. Al primero le dara vn Cornesillo de
plata dorado: al segundo vn quadro de Santo Domingo: al tercero vn mon-
tadientes de oro.

CERTAMEN OCTAVO.

Si los Principes siguen vnas empressas para mostrar la virtud del animo a
que se inclinan, no es justa cosa que los Ecclesiasticos carezcan dellas: assi
el que mejor empressa hiziere, acomodandola a su Illustrissima, guardando to-
gas reglas de las leyes dellas, se le dara grazia de la misma empressa en vna la-
mina de oro. Al segundo vn adreço de espada, y dagas dorado. Y al tercero que
trae vnas de tafetan.

CERTAMEN NONO.

En ocho decimas se propongan los hechos desta Republica, y Vniuersidad, los
illustres premios de la virtud, y letras, animandoles con el exemplo de sus
illustrissimos. Al que mas se acercare se le daran los seys ramos de Cocoy-
no Cuzita. Al segundo quatro cuchares de plata. Al tercero dos varas de raso.

CERTAMEN DECIMO.

Pidese en Romance, en que con elegancia refiera el Regular concurso
que este Reyno, Ciudad, y Vniuersidad han tenido, los demonstrables, y
festas que se han hecho en esta ocasion. Al primero le daran vna Imagen de nue
stra Señora del Pilar de Oro. al segundo vnas memorias de Oro. al tercero, vna
Cruz de Ebano guarnecida de Oro.

Al cual dicho dia pedira el Rey con el dicho Real Acuerdo, y el otro dicho dia nombrara el qual se juntara y entrara a Francisco Espinel Ciudadano y Secretario de la
Ciudad, que estara en las casas de la dicha Ciudad, y de todo el dicho dia ante el dicho Real Acuerdo, y Diputados, y Veintenas, y Consejo de su Magestad y de la Inquisicion de
los dichos Reynos, Don Tristan Sanchez de Cuenca, Caballero del Orden de Santiago, del Consejo de su Magestad en el dicho Real Acuerdo, y Don Francisco de Salazar, del mismo Consejo de su Magestad, y Inquisidores en
Corte: El Doctor Pedro Calixto Ramirez, Canonigo de la Santa Iglesia de la dicha Ciudad, del Consejo de su Magestad en el dicho Real Acuerdo, y Don Francisco de Salazar, del mismo Consejo de su Magestad, y Inquisidores en
la Corte del Tribunal de Aragon, y Juan Lopez Escribano de Mandamiento de su Magestad, y Oficial de la misma Ciudad, y el Doctor Martin Hernando de Izquierdo Oficial
de la Ciudad de Çaragoça, y Catedratico de Visperas de Leyes en la Vniuersidad.

En Çaragoça por Juan de Lanaja Quartanet, impressor del Reyno de Aragon y Vniuersidad. 1619.

Fig. 5.3 Poster announcing a poetry competition organised by the city and university of Zaragoza as a tribute to the Inquisitor-General, Friar Luis de Aliaga, Zaragoza, 1619.
(Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España. Ms. 9592, f. 7.)

or posting of any edict of this type would be tolerated in the church of that city.[26] Elsewhere, traces of rebellion appeared on the documents themselves, as happened in September 1597 with some residents of Colima (Mexico), who attacked the university graduate Sebastián de Valderrama, who had just been appointed priest and vicar of the town. They stigmatised him as 'the greatest of villains, mad, drunk and a thief, who collects what he is not owed', and wrote these insults at the foot of a bill of excommunication, signed by him, which had been posted on the church door.[27]

Signs of Protest

This last piece of evidence brings us to the exercise of freedom mentioned in my introduction. Urban space was also a site of textual confrontation, and the writings which best expressed transgression in all senses of the word – in their messages, space and graphic organisation – were undoubtedly defamatory libels and pasquinades. Here I leave aside those writings of protest which did not emerge in isolated incidents, but which appeared over much longer periods and expressed the political, social and religious conflicts which troubled the Spanish monarchy throughout the early modern period. A substantial part of the propaganda distributed took the form of printed pamphlets and they gave rise to genuine 'writing wars', with consequent effects on public opinion, as happened during the Catalan and Portuguese revolts against Philip IV, and the power struggles between rival court factions during the minority of Carlos II.[28]

Just as in the previous section, we may start with the definition given by Covarrubias in his dictionary, where he makes no distinction between libel and pasquinade. The libel, he says, refers to 'defamatory writings which are published anonymously and posted on pillars and corners of public places or disseminated through streets and public places'. He added that the adjective 'famoso', or infamous, was usually applied to them, 'associating them with infamy and dishonour'. As for the *pasquin* or pasquinade, he noted that the word refers to the well-known Roman statue of the minstrel Pasquino, to which people used to attach 'defamatory libels, from which we get the term pasquinade for such libels'. He goes on to say that they are usually 'prejudicious to individuals and those who govern and administer justice'.[29] In fact the name descends from Roman students' custom of using the statue to display their burlesque creations, prepared for St Mark's Day, which helped to make the pasquinade synonymous with

satirical poetry, and this also applied to infamous libels.[30] Perhaps it can be said that pasquinades and satires were texts critical of the authorities as well as of the dominant ideology and morality; while libels, often described as infamous or defamatory, were much more often personal insults directed at individuals whose honour and reputation were in question. So when, in 1621, the lawyer Francisco de la Pradillo wrote in Chapter 42 of the first part of his book *Suma de todas las leyes penales, canónicas y civiles* (Complete digest of penal, canon and civil law), he discussed three ways to give an insult:

> I may insult another by one of three methods: by writing or by the spoken word or in deed. An insult is given in writing when someone produces posters against another, in which he writes and utters defamatory and insulting words, which the law calls defamatory libels. And in such cases, not only he who composes and makes the libel, but also he who sees it and reads it in the cantons does so under pain of death, unless he removes it and tears it up.[31]

Writings on the streets were thus criminalised for their heterodox or damaging criticisms. Libels and pasquinades were liable to be prosecuted immediately, which meant that orders were issued for their immediate removal from wherever they had been posted, and the matter would be referred to the competent authorities for further action.[32] The preservation of these documents and their availability for historical study thus depends directly on this judicial process. The historian relies on inventories of them drawn up by contemporaries, whether they did so in a page of notices, in the course of a journey or in more literary texts. Although such indirect sources do not assist study of the material and graphic qualities of the written texts, we can compensate for this with other indications of their social diffusion.

Judicial measures launched to stop the dissemination of a text usually stated that it was posted in all public places, which means, as we have seen for literary edicts and posters, in those urban spaces where heavy traffic circulated: squares, intersections, church entrances and government buildings.[33] In the trial initiated by the Inquisition in New Spain in 1602 against Gabriel de Arratia, steward of the bishop of Puebla, accused of publishing libels, the prosecution alleged that they were posted 'on merchants' doors'.[34] In Madrid, they were often encountered on the plaza del Palacio, the Guadalajara gate, the Puerta del Sol and the square at the

Court prison.[35] As for the libellists' favourite times, they usually posted material at night, avoiding police patrols. In the case of the libels found on 18 September 1644 on the Pardon door of Cartagena de Indias cathedral, attacking the royal visitor Martín Real and the judge and governor Don Bernardino de Prado, they were reportedly placed there between 'nine and ten at night', by a person 'muffled up in a cape'.[36]

Just as the choice of time and place of publication was an integral part of transgressive and criminalised writing, its language and textual arrangements were important to guarantee its effectiveness. The Castilian vernacular was commonly used, and very often lent itself to poetic compositions (satires, romances, sonnets and 10-line stanzas or *decimas*), dialogues and question-and-answer compositions. It also facilitated memorisation and oral transmission.[37] Let us not forget that many libels were not only displayed on walls, but also sung in the streets. This was the case with the mottoes and poems treating the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, a very controversial subject in the first half of the seventeenth century in both the Iberian Peninsula and America, involving the Jesuits and Franciscans who supported the pontifical interpretation, against the Dominicans who denied that the Virgin Mary had been conceived free of sin.[38] The same applied to the libels against Martín Real and Governor Bernardino de Prado, already mentioned, diffused on half-folio sheets, written in two columns and composed of short, rhythmic phrases suitable for memorisation and singing in the streets (Fig. 5.4).[39]

Attempts were made to protect the anonymity of authors, which allowed gentlemen of rank to defend their collective interests without having to face any unpleasant consequences.[40] Writers might use a deliberately distorted hand, with 'disguised', 'counterfeit' or 'base' characters of poor quality, as they were described in the prosecutions launched against them (Fig. 5.5).[41] All the same, it was recorded in plenty of cases that broken script was not always difficult to decipher, as Cristóbal Téllez de Almazán recognised. As judge in the Audiencia of Manila, he was dealing with some defamatory libels published in July 1599 in the Philippine capital against its governor.[42] Other cases, in contrast, leave a record of the difficulties faced at the time in tracking down the authors, which were especially great in cities without the same judicial infrastructure as, say, Rome or Madrid. This was precisely the argument of Bernardino de Prado Beltrán de Guevara, magistrate of the Audencia of Santa Fe and a judge in Cartagena de Indias, when he discussed the libel

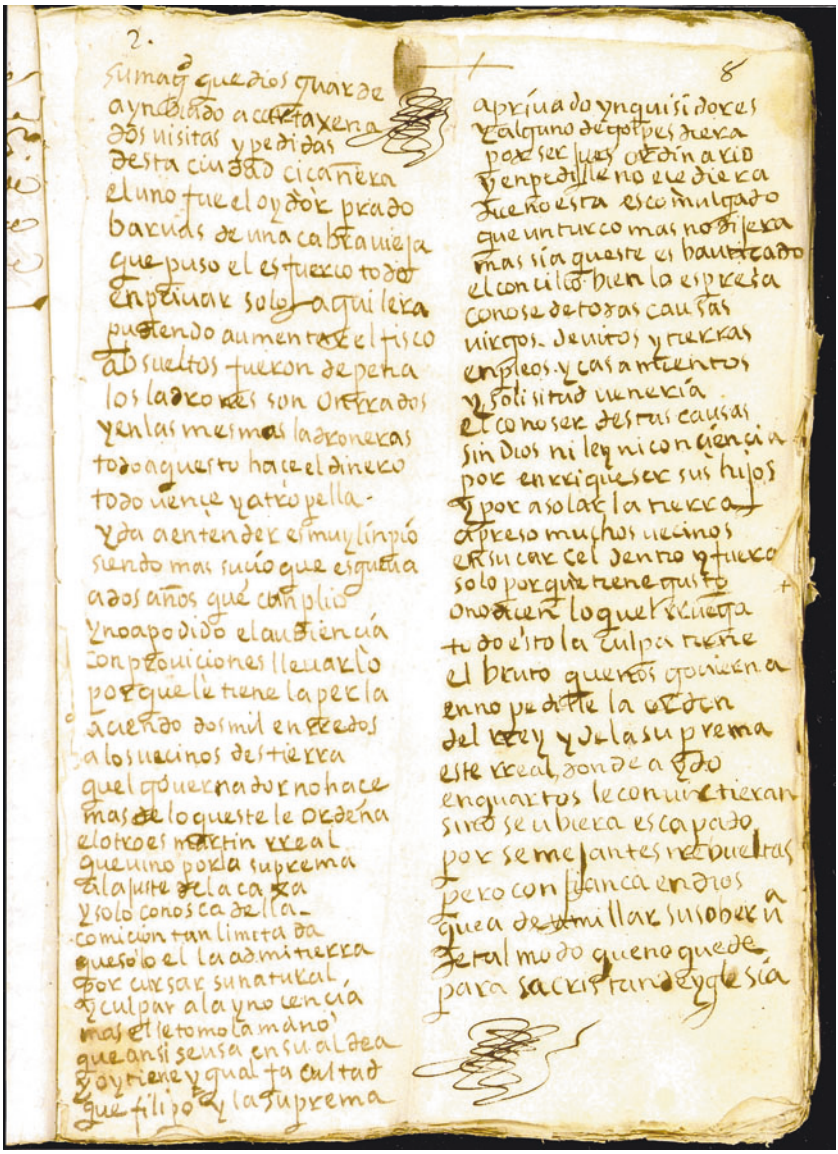


Fig. 5.4 Libel against the Royal Visitor Martín Real and Governor Bernardino de Prado, distributed in Cartagena de Indias, September 1644.
(Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Inquisición, leg. 16013, exp. 35, no.1, f. 1v.)

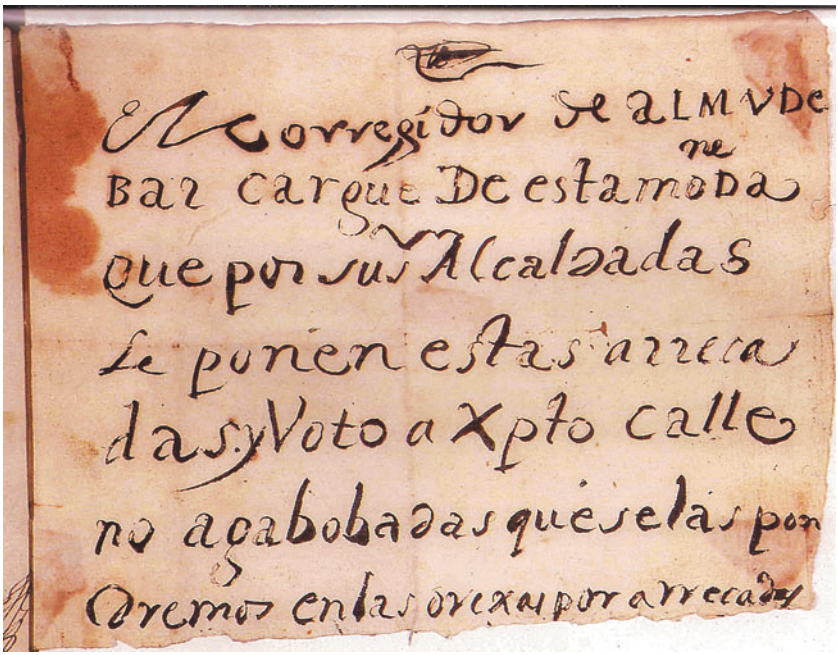


Fig. 5.5 Libel against Pedro Beluti de Haro, mayor of Logroño, 16 September 1680.
(Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Inquisición, leg. 26179, no. 6, f. 6r.)

which was posted in the main square of Cartagena in April 1641 against the governor Melchor de Aguilera.[43]

It was not usual for authors to sign such writings, but this did not prevent a few authors from taking responsibility in this way. One of the strangest examples is that of the libels produced by the Irishman William Lamport against the Mexican Inquisitors. Guillén Lombardo, who had become hispanicised since his arrival in Corunna in 1630, rose to be adviser and swordsman to the Count-Duke of Olivares. After Olivares fell out of favour with Philip IV in 1643, Lombardo was sent to Mexico to find out whether the former viceroy supported an uprising in Portugal. In the capital of New Spain he was soon arrested and imprisoned by the Inquisition, accused of witchcraft and of conspiring against the regime. On 26 December 1650 he managed

to escape from prison, but he was recaptured within a few days and incarcerated for nine years until his death at the stake on 19 November 1659.[44] Before his execution, however, he had time to write various pieces attacking the Inquisition, including a few libels, duly signed, either in folio format – like his *Declaración de los justos juicios de Dios* (Declaration of God's true judges) – or in half-folio – like the *Pregón de los justos, juicios de Dios, que castigue a quien lo quitare* (Cry of the just, judges of God who punishes all those who abandon him). He filled practically the whole surface of these documents, leaving 'a very narrow margin', and, according to custom, they were attached 'with half-chewed bread to the cathedral door which gives on to the main square, facing the stone cross', so that in this way they could attract more readers.[45] Not only were they read on the spot, but copies were also distributed (and later collected by the Holy Office of Mexico[46]) so that they could be read in the small groups which huddled everywhere in the vicinity of the cathedral, as used to happen in similar cases:

> on Monday, the second day of the feast of the Nativity, between seven and eight in the morning, arriving by Tacuba Street, I saw many people gathered at the corner at the end of it, where there was a new house and shop, reading a large sheet of paper, written in tiny lettering, which was fixed and stuck onto the wall facing the sewer, and the witness read the statement in the first line which said: 'Don Guillén Lombardo, by the Grace of God'. And then at the foot of this sheet there was a name which read: 'Don Guillén Lombardo', in a flourished signature.[47]

The preference for large lettering, whether upper or lower case, is explained by the need for the public display of the document and a striving for greater legibility. Agustín de Vidarte y Ancilla noted as much in connection with the pasquinade found in July 1608 on the north door of the Alcázar in Madrid, accusing the Duke of Lerma of treachery. He observed that it was written 'in large letters', which allowed many people to read it before the gatekeeper took it down at seven in the morning.[48] In other cases it was noted that three pasquinades, posted on the same door, on the Guadalajara gate and in the Court prison, respectively, had been written 'in large and very legible characters' on a half-folio sheet, 'filling up just short of four and a half lines', as can be seen in the original, which has been preserved.[49]

Occasionally the symbiosis between the written text and the spoken word, in the form of songs or jokes which appeared frequently in charivaris (*cencerradas*),[50] was accompanied by gestures designed to humiliate and ridicule the insulted person at his home.[51] He would be stained with dye or other liquids, animal excrement would be thrown over his property, effigies were produced to mock him, while paintings drew attention to his alleged vices. His properties and residences might be marked with insulting signs like horns and the penitent's robe and conical cap, if the accused was a converted Jew.[52] Caricatures and hostile drawings figured prominently in political quarrels, as can be seen in a Portuguese satire of 1641, representing Philip IV and his favourite the Count-Duke of Olivares setting out to avenge Portugal's declaration of independence beneath effigies of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza (Fig. 5.6).[53]

Taken together, these strategies, leading to the eventual appearance of a pasquinade in the city at the break of dawn, produced in most cases a form of writing directed at a broad readership, which was mixed enough to embrace the passers-by in the street and small groups of people gathered in squares and at street corners. In the prosecutions launched by the Inquisition in New Spain, this was precisely the problem. When Gabriel de Arratia was accused in 1602 of attacking the privileges of the Holy Office, it was expressly noted that what contributed most to aggravating his offence was the fact that 'with expressions of great joy, he went through the said town of Puebla de los Ángeles, publishing the said libels in squares and on merchants' doors, offering copies of them to anybody who asked for one'.[54]

Conclusion

In contrast to other writing practices which were more limited in terms of their readership and spaces of diffusion, the urban writings I have discussed in this chapter were distinguished by their attempt to address practically every level of society. Naturally, certain edicts could be of more concern to some groups than others, and some defamatory libels would enjoy greater resonance in the neighbourhood or community where the accused actually lived. The fact that they were ephemeral publications, relating to particular circumstances and specific moments, does not subtract one iota from their importance at the time in transmitting messages which the institutions of government wished to propagate, and this was the job of official edicts and similar writings. They remained important, too, when it came to defying the conduct of political and ecclesiastical authorities, criticising the excesses of

Fig. 5.6 Satirical pasquinade against King Philip IV and Count-Duke of Olivares, published in Lisbon, 1641
(New York, Hispanic Society of America, HC 387/97.)

the ruling class or dissenting from some of the principles which sustained the political, social or moral foundations of the Catholic monarchy on one side or other of the Atlantic.

In spite of widespread illiteracy in this period, the posting of texts on walls and the added impact of oral transmission or the distribution of copies which some authors produced, especially in the case of libels and pasquinades, guaranteed them wide diffusion, within the reach of all, as the closing words of edicts quite appropriately mentioned, for example thus: 'And so that this may be brought to the attention of all, we order the present edict to be posted in the public areas of this village.'[55] The variety of communication technologies adopted – writing, oral transmission and very often images as well – assisted wide circulation among very different social groups. People could thus make use of several different strategies to grasp the contents, clearly deciphering the gist of the text as the Portuguese cobbler João Vicente did. They could perhaps interpret the images as in the pasquinade against Philip IV and the Count-Duke of Olivares personified by Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, or they could listen to what others were reading aloud or singing, as happened so often when writing and the spoken word mutually reinforced each other's impact. Both served to transmit information and mobilise popular opinion in the Hispanic cities of the Golden Age. In fact, no one could avoid them, not even those whose eyesight was failing or who could not get close enough to the walls. Thus we meet a certain Alonso Ruiz de Velasco, who had to make use of eye-glasses to read some libels against the government's financial abuses, 'which discussed disrespectful and insolent matters' in some Castilian villages at the end of January 1574.[56]

Notes

1. This study forms part of the research project '"Scripta in itinere": Discursos, formas y apropiaciones de la cultura escrita en espacios públicos desde la primera Edad Moderna a nuestros días', funded by the Spanish Ministry for the Economy and Competitivity (Ref. HAR2014-51883-P).
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10. Prudencio de Sandoval, *Primera parte de la vida y hechos del emperador Carlos Quinto, máximo, fortíssimo, rey de España y de las Indias, islas y tierra firme del mar océano*, Valladolid (Sebastián de Cañas), 1604, f. 264r. (Sandoval 1604)
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humiliation of someone who had offended the community (editors' and translator's note).

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55. RAH, Jesuitas, 9-3576 (34), Madrid, 30 April 1691, Edict of Alonso Portillo y Cardos, vicar of Madrid, banning shops from opening on religious holidays.
56. AGS, Patronato Real, leg. 72, doc. 71, f. 1028v–1029v.

Antonio Castillo Gómez is Professor in the History of Scribal Culture at the University of Alcalá, Spain, where he directs SIECE (the Interdisciplinary Seminar in the Study of Written Culture). He is a specialist in the history of written culture in the Hispanic world in the early modern period, and recently published *Leggere nella Spagna moderna: Erudizione, religiosità, svago* (2013). Together with Verónica Sierra Blas, he has edited a substantial series of works on reading and writing, including *Cinco Siglos de Cartas: Historia y prácticas epistolares en las épocas moderna y contemporánea* (2014).

CHAPTER 6

Writing One's Life: The French School of the Anthropology of Writing

Nicolas Adell

Introduction

Écrire la vie (Writing a Life) is the title of a collection of autobiographical texts by Annie Ernaux, a high-profile contemporary French novelist.[1] The author and her collection encapsulate the main issues addressed by French exponents of anthropological approaches to writing, and they identify the main analytical perspectives the group adopts. Ernaux is the daughter of working-class parents who became a writer and sociologist, and all her autobiographical texts explore the ways in which intimacy is first and foremost a social category. When the prestigious French daily *Le Monde* turned to someone to draft a tribute to Pierre Bourdieu when he died in 2002, she was a logical choice. She was in a better position than anyone to represent the two social worlds on which the French school of anthropological approaches to writing has based its analysis: on the one hand, the world of all people 'without distinction' (*sans qualité*) – workers, the marginalised, soldiers, the poor and so on, but also including non-Western worlds where literacy is incomplete or arrived late – in other words all those for whom

N. Adell (✉)
Department of Anthropology, University of Toulouse–Jean Jaurès, Toulouse, France
e-mail: nicolasadell@yahoo.fr

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writing can be 'difficult'; on the other hand, the world of the 'over-qualified' – professional writers, intellectuals, artists – all those for whom writing is not just simply a means of communication but a milieu in its own right which reproduces a version of life and the world to be found in field notes, laboratory notes or private diaries.

Both these two worlds have wrestled with the same complementary questions: how does life writing emerge? What are the social, technical, cultural and symbolic conditions which give rise to the idea of putting one's life and world into lines on the pages of a book? These questions open up further investigation into the autonomy of writing in relation to the spoken word. This research has taken two directions: firstly, into studies of the individuality of the signed text,[2] the role of the 'author's hand' and copyright;[3] and secondly, work on the spread of lower-class literacy.[4] What is the impact of life writing on the way one thinks about oneself, on ways of representing the individual and his or her personal life? Jack Goody's work on 'graphic thinking' has had particular resonance in France,[5] and so too has Paul Ricoeur with the concept of the 'identity narrative' and the study of what the narrative actually does to the narrator.[6]

In this chapter I intend to illustrate the ways in which these problems have been posed and tackled in two empirical research projects of my own. The first focuses on a group of French artisans, the *compagnons* of the Tour de France, representing the world of all those 'without distinction' who, along with Freemasonry, formed one of the last official initiatic societies of Europe.[7] The second project poses questions about life writing by intellectuals, representing the world of the 'over-qualified', examining a very old problem which is worth revisiting with a new intellectual approach focusing on the relationship between life and writing.

Popular Culture and the Anthropology of Writing

The anthropologist Daniel Fabre coined the term 'ordinary writings' to describe two distinct aspects of writing practices.[8] 'Ordinary writings' designated common non-literary genres of writing, like making lists, taking notes, labelling objects, writing a letter, regardless of the social classes concerned. But he also used 'ordinary writings' to refer to practices specific to certain social categories we might call 'popular', whether we are talking about their reading, or about communities relatively unfamiliar with the act of writing and in which it is a rare occurrence. The phrase 'ordinary writings' has been widely understood in this second sense,

because it formed part of a long debate about the nature of 'popular culture' which originated in the 1960s with a book by Robert Mandrou.[9] Although Mandrou showed how the two cultures of the common people and the elites could sometimes be porous and flow into one another, he nevertheless clung to the idea of two distinct cultural camps, especially when it came to writing. The elite had mastered writing and therefore had the capacity to express doubt and criticism, whereas the rest were condemned to extreme passivity and extraordinary gullibility.

In the 1970s, three elements helped to sharpen the debate. First of all, the French translation of Richard Hoggart's book forced a re-appraisal of the assumption that the lower classes regarded the printed text with great awe and naive respect.[10] Using mainly autobiographical evidence, he showed that the 'culture of the poor' could also embody critical judgement and scepticism towards the printed text. This idea was taken up and amplified by Michel de Certeau, who argued that the popular classes could elaborate strategies of resistance against the dominant culture (a domination which rested partly on the mastery of writing).[11] Further extending Hoggart's ideas, De Certeau showed how, in their everyday practices, actors 'without distinction' could turn into cultural 'poachers', appropriating elements of elite culture.

A second element which provoked a re-thinking of the question of popular culture in the 1970s was the appearance of Italian *microstoria*, which made an immediate impact in France and for a time enjoyed immense success. The 'popular' was no longer a generalised category, but could take individual form in the shape of a few characters considered no longer as representatives of the masses (workers or peasants), but as individuals operating within complex heterogeneous formations. Menocchio, in Carlo Ginzburg's celebrated study, is no more representative of the Friulian peasantry in the sixteenth century than Louis-François Pinagot was a typical French nineteenth-century artisan, in Alain Corbin's attempted biography.[12] They were both *possible* incarnations of those milieus in those periods. This was the beginning of what Jacques Revel and Jean-Claude Passeron would later call 'thinking case by case',[13] going beyond the dichotomy between the general type and the specific counter-example. Similarly and at the same moment, the evidential paradigm seemed to nullify the impossible contradiction between rational thought (as manifested notably in writing) and the irrational (which oral cultures supposedly retained).[14]

The third and last factor which animated the discussion on popular culture as far as it related to written texts was the publication in 1977 of Jack Goody's *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, and its rapid

translation into French, which was a sign of how eagerly its appearance had been awaited.[15] Its popularity derived in part from the criticisms it levelled against the arguments of Lévi-Strauss and his followers about 'primitive thought' and structuralism in general, which were then coming under more frequent attack. Goody's work was also well received because of what it argued about writing. Writing had not only transformed the means of communication and the way thoughts and decisions were recorded; its impact was not felt merely in the consequences which flowed from it. Rather, it had an impact on thought processes themselves, generating new methods of thinking, creating a genuine graphic mentality.[16]

The French anthropological approach to writing – understood in an interdisciplinary sense to embrace historians, sociologists, ethnologists, literary specialists, philosophers and psychologists – was based on these three foundations. It primarily emphasised the practices and graphic culture of people 'without distinction', and/or so-called oral societies in which writing penetrated intensively into everyday practices and the complex ways in which texts are used. Writing had thus ceased entirely to be the key which separated two social worlds (elite/people, writing/orality); it was now a privileged observation post for interrogating the broad and intersecting processes of representation, memorisation, conceptualisation, narration and authorship. One characteristic of this French school was the special attention it paid to autobiography and the scribal process of self-representation, in the ongoing works of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Philippe Lejeune and Paul Ricoeur.[17]

Extraordinary Men 'Without Distinction': The *Compagnons* of the Tour de France

My investigation into the importance of writing for the *compagnons* of the Tour de France builds on the scholarly foundations of this anthropological approach to writing, established most notably by Daniel Fabre, Roger Chartier, Béatrice Fraenkel and Bernard Lahire, although the French school never considers itself a unified whole.[18] The *compagnons* were highly skilled craftsmen, working mainly in the building trades. Since the eighteenth century, they had continued to use a complex training system which was at the same time practical, pedagogical and initiatic. Alongside training in the workshop, the young apprentice learned theoretical lessons and rituals which punctuated his progress towards the status of *compagnon*. Today the world of these French journeymen survives in only about

10 small communities bringing together 20,000 members in all. Because of its unique characteristics, *compagnonnage* offers a privileged opportunity to study the place of writing in the world of people 'without distinction'. It brings normally obscure features into view with startling clarity.

The issue of writing's place in oral-based societies takes on an unusual aspect here: writing was ever-present for the *compagnons*, but at the same time a certain level of orality was necessary to maintain the secrets of initiation, and it reinforced customary practices, in contrast to the written regulations of *compagnonnage* which one had to know how to circumvent. The great art of the *compagnons* lay and still lies in respecting the rules without obeying them to the letter. This is reminiscent of Richard Hoggart's view of the complex articulation at work in customary and popular circles, which were surrounded by writings, whether printed or not, and which approached them not deferentially, with passive respect or in fear, but with a more ambivalent attitude. There was space for commentary and irreverent criticism, which did not preclude allowing writings a certain authority in some situations.

This ambivalence is clearly evident in *La Règle*, which contained the internal regulations of the profession concerned, a guide to its rituals of initiation and sometimes a history of the trade. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, it became a constant target for critical comments, evaluations, adjustments and re-writing. When *compagnonnage* began to re-assess its organisation and philosophy at the turn of the nineteenth century, most communities of journeymen plunged into their regulations, rituals and history, and proposed that these should be profoundly re-worked and re-written.[19] They did not passively accept their history, but re-wrote their past in the image of a desired present, and then consigned it to the archives, on ageing paper in an archaic form of handwriting. Nor did they passively accept the content of initiatory rituals themselves, because the authenticity of these was less important than their effectiveness. 'Our rituals are not complicated enough', complained one of the officers of the Parisian journeymen tanners at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[20] A broad review of the texts on rituals then got under way, borrowing from various sources, such as travellers' accounts describing the customs of non-Western societies – including Bernard Picart's very successful *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, published between 1723 and 1737 and reprinted thereafter up to 1821.[21] They used Masonic catechisms with their very precise accounts of how to train an 'apprentice', a '*compagnon*' and a 'master'. Even today,

a group of *compagnons* known as the Association Ouvrière des Compagnons du Devoir is in the process of re-writing parts of the first initiation rite, the Adoption, which they consider not striking enough to impress young apprentices.

In spite of these critical re-evaluations of the fundamental organising texts of journeymen's organisations, the text retained a magical aura which turned it into a literally sacred object protected by taboos. Several *compagnons* had to be present to see and consult *La Règle*; any damage to the document was punishable by a stiff fine. Besides, *La Règle* was not just a handbook for the initiation, it also fulfilled a function as a sacred object during the ritual itself. It was dramatically unveiled to the neophyte in a moment of epiphany which concluded the ritual, and in a sense it concretised the concept of revelation.

This state of mind produced a strong conviction in the power of writing. For the *compagnons*, writing could never be merely 'ordinary'. The act of writing posed no difficulties for them, and it was never a laborious task; in fact, the life of the *compagnon* was full of writings. Besides the regulations, they wrote a great quantity of lists (*compagnons* present, *compagnons* fined, *compagnons* in debt), narratives of their travels and apprenticeships (which are embryonic autobiographies, and I shall return to them), songs and above all correspondence. Through letters, they organised the life of the community in the different towns of France where *compagnons* were to be found and which together made up the 'Tour de France'. Their letters were for some time composed in coded initials in the Masonic style, to prevent them from being read if they fell into the wrong hands. This unusual form of writing demanded some effort to draft and also to read, but it implied a special engagement with the document which enhanced its value and power. Accordingly, just as for *La Règle*, the rules required the presence of at least three *compagnons* to open and read correspondence received. Writing *did* something to the writer, to the reader and to the content of what was written. In the initiation ritual, the new name to be taken by the neophyte at the end of the ceremony was put in written form. In some cases, for example with tilers, the written name was burned and the ashes sprinkled into in a glass of wine, which the recipient had to imbibe so that he truly absorbed his new identity.

Compagnonnage was also exceptional in another way. It revealed another side of the problems articulated by the French anthropological approach to writing, namely life writing. The *compagnons* of the Tour de France included within their ranks a very substantial number of

autobiographers.[22] Why were autobiographers so over-represented among them? And did this extraordinary case constitute a 'normal exception' in the phrase of Italian micro-history, illustrating some lesser-known aspects of autobiographical writing? Here I would like to summarise some of the conclusions I reached.[23]

I felt that it would be helpful to dissociate the three components of 'auto', 'bio' and 'graphy', following the methods of Georges Gusdorf and, in a more literary genre, Roger Laporte.[24] This would enable me to examine how each of the components interacted with the others in any given situation. The requirement for order and discipline, which distinguished journeymen communities from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, nurtured in them a habit if not a mischievous taste for writing out the regulations or lists of *compagnons* fined for various offences, as I have already mentioned. In addition, the training and skill of these craftsmen were substantially acquired on their travels, during which they learned to master techniques from different regions. Thus the *compagnons* soon needed a structured network covering the whole country, and this produced an intensive correspondence and the introduction of identity papers (called *arriats, affaire* or *trait carré*), which gave the name of the bearer, verified that he had been initiated in a certain town and that he was doing his Tour de France. Furthermore, the legal ban on secret societies, together with their passion for documentary archives and the invention of foundation myths which went back to the construction of the Temple of Solomon, led the *compagnons* to adopt a writing code for certain documents ('in hieroglyphics', as they sometimes called it; Fig. 6.1). This reinforced the belief in the power of letters and of writing, notably in the initiation ritual in which *La Règle* was endowed with magical properties. The key for the *compagnons* was to 'capture' its force.

All this meant that their world was impregnated with all sorts of writings, and that 'graphy' had a special presence in journeymen's societies. In parallel to this 'graphy' was the 'bio' component; that is, the ability or acquired habit of telling one's life story. *Compagnonnage* inherently expected everyone to develop a certain narrative competence. The Tour de France itself, as a journey of apprenticeship, invited storytelling. Letters sent to loved ones to let them know when the *compagnon* would return, to ask them for a little money or just to give them some news, formed the background. For the most part, however, these were oral narratives. The return to one's native town was the occasion for many narrative accounts

Fig. 6.1 Decorated cane head of a *compagnon* wheelwright, 1895
Around the circumference, FBDALTCCDDRAPPLSeCne = 'Fernand Boilevin Dit Angoumois La Tranquillité Compagnon Charron Du Devoir Reçu A Paris Pour La Sainte-Catherine.'

In the centre, DPLD = 'Dieu Protège le Devoir'.

Between the compass and the set-square, P for Paris.

Source: Photo bank of the Musée du Compagnonnage (Tours).

(With kind permission of Laurent Bastard, Curator of the Musée du Compagnonnage.)

that *compagnons*' autobiographies folded into narratives of the Tour de France.[25] A recently discovered manuscript of the memoirs of the journeyman carpenter Joseph Bouas (1875–1963) consists of a school exercise book of 114 pages entitled 'Souvenirs d'une famille de compagnons de 1740 à nos jours' (Memoirs of a family of journeymen from 1740 to the present).[26] In fact the preceding four generations are described in just 26 pages, and only 5 pages cover the half-century between the end of his

travels as a *compagnon* and the moment he took up his pen. So Joseph Bouas needed all of 80 pages to narrate his four years on the Tour de France, which formed the most important time of his life.

We can go further. This travel narrative of the *compagnons* was highly ritualised, and this assisted its development and eventually its transfer into text. Since the eighteenth century, every *compagnon* arriving in a new city was obliged to go through a ritual, the *montée en chambre*. This was a rite of entry, which varied according to the trade concerned but always incorporated a dialogue. The new arrival had to affirm his identity, the place where he had been 'received' – that is, initiated as a *compagnon* – as well as the name of the town where he originated. This ritual became increasingly formalised and progressively lost all its narrative content, gradually eliminating the element of conversation about the journey. Instead it became a simple exchange of greetings in which the narrator's work was more interesting than anything he had to narrate.

Before, however, the processes of formalisation finally took control of *compagnonnage* rituals in the nineteenth century, the arrival protocol had consisted of a narration of things seen, and it perhaps never entirely abandoned this aspect even if it was relegated to more ordinary discussions. A good *compagnon* was expected to give precise descriptions, sometimes in minuscule detail. This was a longstanding tradition, as witnessed by a satirical piece from the early eighteenth century, *L'Arrivée du brave Toulousain*, which mocked *compagnons*' practices, especially the protocol of welcome when they entered a town. The text reproduces the protocol of identification of a cobbler from Toulouse when he arrives at the home of an Elder, Pied-Tortu (Twisted Foot). When Pied-Tortu asks him what was remarkable in his old workshop, the Toulousain replies:

> On the right-hand side, there are three awls with no blades, with boxwood handles with silver settings, and an old worm-eaten bench; on the left, three bars from the cage of the feather-brained bird (*tête de linotte*) whom the Wandering Jew was teaching how to whistle.[27]

In spite of its element of parody, this passage nevertheless corresponds to the 'remarkable observations' customarily found in nineteenth-century autobiographies. Thus the joiner Agricol Perdiguier noticed at Montpellier 'in the Doric entablature of the Peyrou gate, below the triglyphs, a few hanging stone droplets which the sculptor had not clearly

defined'; at Nantes, he noticed a small *bas-relief* depicting Mark Anthony in a pose 'which decency does not allow me to describe'.[28]

Here the *compagnons* were no doubt adopting a practice common to other itinerant workers in France and elsewhere. This deployment of a ritualised narrative appears most clearly in the words of Christian Bechstedt, a German baker at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Carrying out a journey of apprenticeship required by his guild, as in the system of *compagnonnage*, he is invited by his comrades on his arrival in a new town to reply to the question 'Where do you come from?', as if to satisfy an arrival protocol. Only after this formality is he invited to lay down his pack and to tell, this time in more detail, the story of his trip, and thus of his adventures.[29]

The *compagnons* were thus quite familiar with 'graphy' and they often gave oral versions of their life stories ('bio'), but they still had one more step to take before they could assume the role of author ('auto'). Not every individual who writes and knows how to tell his or her life story automatically becomes an autobiographer. An extra element is required, a sort of autobiographical kernel. This was the song. Since at least the eighteenth century, *compagnons* have shared a strong tradition of sociability based around singing, and today's *compagnons* have inherited a repertoire of nearly 1,500 songs, written by *compagnons* but often performed to traditional French melodies.[30]

Thus it is hardly surprising that the *compagnons* who took up the pen to recount their life story always took particular care to reserve a place for the songs they had composed or, failing that, for their poems. Until the 1960s, not a single *compagnon* autobiographer omitted to sprinkle his account with a few songs. Contrary to what was previously believed, these songs are not there just to decorate the story. On the contrary, they take centre stage, and the autobiographical thread is woven around them. The songs act as 'sketches of the self',[31] the tentative beginnings of a truly personal form of writing. In them it is no longer a question of writing lists, rules or letters for the community. The communal celebrations of the *compagnons* now compete with a more individual history, although it may still in some sense be an exemplary one. In the *compagnon*'s song, the singer falls back on himself, as he re-traces and at the same time re-discovers the thread of his life as a *compagnon*. Their stories may retain some formulae, like the details reported orally on the Tour, but they aim at something far more ambitious:

> Friends, I am going to tell you a story
> Which is the life of one of our *compagnons*.[32]

The main purpose of *compagnonnage* songs is 'to tell you a story'. These stories, written and sung, generally consist of a narrative of events which is not simply an epic drama of their wanderings, but the foundation of a broader history of their society or of one of its members. The *compagnons*' songs thus distance themselves from the most recent events, as the narrator seeks to re-order much earlier facets of his life.

Songs generate the potential to write this life. The practices, lists and registers of *compagnonnage* all include signs of the self, reinforcing in everyone the sense of an indissoluble individuality. The *compagnon*'s song goes further, taking a decisive step towards autobiography insofar as it turns the individual who writes it, or who is written about in it, into an author. More precisely, it offers a glimpse of the possibility of a new mastery of writing, less intimately linked to the institution of *compagnonnage* and to its service. The *compagnon*'s song remains a work of the community, performing a different service but one nevertheless in the same category as the rules and lists. Unlike them, however, it contains a hope of achieving a truly autobiographical writing which might subsequently liberate itself from the song itself.

Erudite Lives

These exceptional *compagnons* lead us to the second group studied by French historical anthropologists of writing practices, and I turn here from the working classes to the intellectual, artistic and scientific elites. Here too, recent studies have focused on the impact of writing, describing how creative works are constructed, 'the material order of knowledge' or 'the hands of the intellect', to borrow the titles of two significant works.[33] There has also been an emphasis on the specific forms of life writing produced by intellectuals, in which 'the author's hand' acquired increasing importance during the eighteenth century, as the intellectual reproduced his or her own body as a 'body of paper', blurring once more the distinction between the life and the work.[34] The eighteenth century was the moment when, as Chartier put it,

> the affirmation of creative originality wove together the author's life and his works, situated works within a biographical framework and made the writer's suffering and moments of happiness the matrix of his writing.[35]

Current studies, soon to be published, will further extend this analysis of intellectual work.[36] It is important to investigate the role played by writing in the identity construction of those individuals who invest most heavily in it. In order to disentangle the connections underlined by Chartier, we must also examine particular situations, concentrating on intellectual autobiographies, which are highly formalised and constitute a literary genre of their own.[37] The genetics of autobiography becomes essential here, because it reveals the extent to which outlining one's own life is linked to one's work production. Both, after all, share the same technique, namely writing, and sometimes the same supporting material (since an experiment recorded in a diary is both a personal event and data forming part of scientific work).

In my view we have been insufficiently aware of the degree to which becoming a historian of oneself (as presented in the autobiographies we call ego-histories[38]) is governed by the fact that one testifies about the self *as an intellectual*. I am referring to texts in which scientific reflection on one's own life and daily experiences appears quite clearly, but not always with the same level of conscious intention we find in ego-histories, for instance in the private diaries or notebooks presented by René Loureau.[39] Taking notes on the world and one's life, and associating this with a correspondingly scientific mode of reflection and analysis, produces a close intermingling of the 'two beings who make the whole man', in Robert Musil's formulation, sealing up the rupture which modernity has reinforced and institutionalised.

I do not need to go back as far as Montaigne's *Essais*, which conform perfectly to this learned reproduction of the self and the world in which the author, discussing himself, is displaced into a parallel creative existence.[40] Examples of pre-ego-historical texts can be found more recently at the turn of the twentieth century. We cannot exactly categorise them as prototypes, because the practice of taking notes on oneself and one's experience can assume quite diverse characteristics. Two models, however, can be distinguished, and they are linked to each other: the writer's 'literary journal' and the ethnologist's 'field notes', which both derive from travel writing (the writings of George Foster, 1754–1794, who accompanied Captain James Cook on his second voyage, are seminal here).[41] There are some hybrid or intermediary types between these two models, like Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*,[42] the various journals (of a book, a trip or an event) of Edgar Morin,[43] not forgetting Émile Zola's *dossiers*

préparatoires[44] or Susan Sontag's journals and notebooks,[45] to mention only a few of the possible configurations.

Here we can see the crucible in which the self-reflective life of the intellectual took shape at the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, ethnologists reflected on the place they occupied in the eyes of 'others', falling back on themselves, as when Malinowski noted in his ethnographic journal on 24 November 1917: 'forcing myself to keep a journal obviously affects my way of life'.[46] Writers became their own primary material, which consisted of all they saw, did and felt, to give a scrupulously *pointilliste* and episodic articulation of their life and work which had none of the smooth flow of an ego-history. Journals and notebooks are probably as distant from ego-histories as 'Lives' are from biography, in Marc Fumaroli's analogy.[47] The distance, however, must be appreciated over a short time span, between the rapid development of the writer's diary and field notes between the 1800s and the 1940s, and the moment when ego-history appeared and became a full-blown genre between the 1980s and the 2000s. In 1983, the Haskins lectures were inaugurated in the USA by the American Council of Learned Societies, in which the lecturer, a world-renowned researcher, was called upon

> to reflect on a lifetime of work as a scholar and an institution builder, on the motives, the chance determinations, the satisfactions (and dissatisfactions) of the life of learning, to explore through one's own life the larger, institutional life of scholarship.[48]

It would be interesting to examine the period between these two phases (although this would be another research project in its own right), to establish the detailed connections and the different expressions of the reflective intellectual life. This would require relaxing the grip of ego-history in order to identify different modes of expression of the learned self, but this is an objective now worth pursuing. New perspectives could lay bare the mechanisms through which life and works touch each other, illuminating both the textual genesis of ego-histories and the process through which contemporary intellectual life is elaborated.

From this angle, the studies directed by Dan Dana[49] on Mircea Eliade's diaries are fascinating (notably *The Portugal Journal*, which appeared In 2006, and the journal which should be available in its entirety in 2018). They suggest that Eliade, no doubt assisted by writing his diary, thought of his life as an echo of one of the central figures of his intellectual work –

Zalmoxis, a Romanian hero and 'hidden God'. Similarly but from a slightly different perspective, I am examining Jean-Paul Sartre's *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, written between September 1939 and spring 1940.[50] Here the philosopher's reflections on himself and his experience of life as a soldier go beyond the level of a memoir or even of testimony (although Sartre himself classed his notebooks as just that[51]), to become a site for developing ideas[52] and a privileged instrument for observing the obscure beginnings of an intellectual life.

In *La Nausée* (Nausea), Sartre put these words into the mouth of the biographer Roquentin: 'One must choose: either to live or tell the story' (*vivre ou raconter*). But Sartre himself did exactly the opposite in the *Carnets*, intertwining the threads of his life and work. On 15 January 1940, he wrote to Simone de Beauvoir:

> Right now, I am not trying to protect my life after the event by philosophising, which would be wretched (*salaud*), nor to make my life conform to my philosophy, which would be too pedantic (*pedantesque*), but really life and philo are now all one and the same (*ne font plus qu'un*).[53]

Conclusion

The research projects mentioned above address, I believe, the same problematic shared by all those specialists in writing whom I have called the French anthropological school. These specialists have different interests; they embrace, for example, the 'social history of writing' as outlined by Philippe Artières.[54] In spite of these differences, their problematic can be condensed into a single question: what does writing do to the life of the writer? This is a sign of the enormous influence exerted by the work of Jack Goody in France, in spite of the specific directions taken by the anthropology of writing, and the application of his arguments in new contexts.

Goody questioned Lévi-Strauss's notion of the 'Primitive Mind', and above all the ways in which we have access to it (is working on the *transcription* of a myth studying primitive thought or studying primitive thought that has already been domesticated by writing?). The French anthropological approach is more interested in what writing does to the subject than in what writing does to thinking patterns. Does writing modify the world in which it is inscribed? The subject's position in society? The meaning and logic of his actions? Does it affect her knowledge and

representation of herself? One answer to these questions was to plunge into a very important field of study for French literary criticism, namely what Ferdinand Brunetière called 'personal literature'.[55] Personal literature, including notebooks, private diaries, sketches, 'auto-fiction' and of course autobiography, seems an ideal site to encounter the various problems which concern French anthropologists of writing. Studying an author's rough copies allows us to observe the construction of a literary work, and to explore the material conditions of its production and progressive elaboration. Interest in rough drafts became something of an obsession at the end of the eighteenth century, as witnessed by writers themselves, who began to preserve evidence of how they composed their works. The emblematic example of this was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who compulsively kept all the manuscript versions of his novel *La Nouvelle Hélöise*.[56] In some cases, the rough draft is enriched by an accompanying 'working journal', which describes how the writer works, one of the best examples being André Gide who, after the publication of his novel *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (The Counterfeiters, 1925), published his *Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs* (1927).

Personal literature gives anthropologists an insight into the power of writing which takes us far beyond the context indicated by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the famous chapter of *Tristes Tropiques* on the 'Writing Lesson', where the very act of writing forms the basis of the power of the individual who possesses the technique. Beyond the act itself, we have to consider how writings on the world, events and phenomena exercise an influence over the world, events and phenomena, even if it is only to impose order upon them. This 'writing one's life' is not simply transcribing what happens. Following the ideas of Jacques Derrida and Alain Robbe-Grillet,[57] there is nothing 'outside the text', because a life as it is lived consists only of a jumble of disjointed facts that writing alone can put in order. It does so through a triple process of *selection* (the author throws out what is not significant for his or her present life), *condensation* (what is significant is always overloaded with significance) and *ordering* (the writer weaves together the selected threads of his or her life in order to say: 'This is why I am who I am').

Lastly, the focus on personal literature allows anthropologists and historians to grasp issues in contemporary French philosophy relevant to their approach, even when philosophers themselves do not tackle them directly. The task is to reconsider the conceptual moorings of the author, the individual and the subject. And what better place to work on these fundamental ideas than sites where a person or an author tries to give his

or her life some unity, both as an individual ('I am the only one to have lived my life') and as an actor in his or her own existence ('I am the hero of my own life'). The archives of personal literature only ever give us the *effort* required to forge this unity, attesting to the divided, shared, multiple or plural identities of every person. 'Writing One's Life' is always an attempt to triumph over all the diversity which characterises us. The French anthropological school has given itself the broad aim of describing and analysing the extremely diverse forms which this conquest can take, according to the milieu, the period and the individuals concerned.

Notes

1. Annie Ernaux, *Écrire la vie*, Paris (Gallimard-Quarto), 2011.(Ernaux 2011).
2. Béatrice Fraenkel, *La signature. Genèse d'un signe*, Paris (Gallimard), 1992. (Fraenkel 1992).
3. Roger Chartier, *La main de l'auteur et l'esprit de l'imprimeur (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris (Gallimard-Folio), 2015 (Chartier 2015); in English *The Author's Hand and the Printer's Mind*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Cambridge, UK (Polity), 2014. (Chartier 2014).
4. François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et écrire: L'Alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, Paris (Editions de Minuit), 2 vols., 1977 (Furet and Ozouf 1977); in English *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry*, Cambridge, UK (Cambridge University Press), 1982. (Furet and Ozouf 1982).
5. Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge, UK (Cambridge University Press), 1977. (Goody 1977).
6. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, Paris (Seuil), 1983–5, 3 vols., and his *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris (Seuil), 1990. (Ricoeur 1990).
7. In English a *compagnon* is a journeyman, but I retain the French name because this is how the *compagnons* are usually known and how they knew each other. The *compagnons*' 'Tour de France' was the obligatory two- to eight-year journey they made from town to town in search of work as part of their training. The English equivalent is going 'on the tramp' (editors' and translator's note).
8. Daniel Fabre, ed., *Écritures ordinaires,* Paris (POL/Centre Pompidou), 1993. (Fabre 1993).
9. Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris (Stock), 1964. (Mandrou 1964).
10. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*, Harmondsworth, UK (Penguin), 1957. (Hoggart 1957).

11. Michel de Certeau, *La culture du pluriel*, Paris (Union générale d'éditions), 1974, and his *L'invention du quotidien*, Paris (Union générale d'éditions), 2 vols., 1980. (Michel de Certeau 1980).
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Nicolas Adell is an anthropologist and *maître de conférences* at the University of Toulouse–Jean Jaurès. After conducting research into the world of French *compagnonnage* (*Des hommes de devoir. Les compagnons du Tour de France, XVIIIe–XXe siècle*, 2008), he has focused more recently on the construction of an anthropology of knowledge (*Anthropologie de savoirs*, 2011) and of intellectuals (*Ce que la science fait à la vie*, 2016). The main thread of his work remains the question of writing the self and, more broadly, the representation of existence.

CHAPTER 7

Calendar, Chronicle and Songs of Sorrows: Generic Sources of Life Writing in Nineteenth-Century Finland

Anna Kuismin

Life Writing 'from Below'

In recent decades literary scholars have come to recognize, beyond traditional autobiographies, a much wider range of texts which narrate the self – often now grouped under the capacious term 'life writing'. They have traced the hybrid forms of text in the early modern period out of which the genres of diary and autobiography crystallized. This wider understanding has challenged previous models – based on canonical autobiography – of the motivations, intentions and value (or inadequacies) of self-narratives.

This observation by T.G. Ashplant in a recent issue of the *History Workshop Journal* points to a growing interest in texts produced by non-elite people and the ways in which they widen previous notions of autobiographical writing.[1]

Studies of the autobiographical writing of upper- and middle-class writers are plentiful, but only relatively recently has serious scholarly attention been paid to peasant and working-class authors. The Rotterdam Project, for example, inventoried over 3,800 Dutch diaries

A. Kuismin (✉)
Department of Finnish Studies, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: anna.kuismin@kotikone.fi

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and autobiographies by authors in the early modern period, but they were predominantly public officials, clergymen, schoolteachers, merchants or officers in the navy – in other words, members of the educated classes.[2] The most useful account of British working-class autobiographies lists over 800 published in the form of books or newspaper articles during the nineteenth century.[3] Their authors, however, were a working-class elite or 'labour aristocracy' of skilled artisans and craftsmen, rather than factory workers; and 90 per cent of the authors inventoried were male. In parallel research projects conducted in Germany and Switzerland, peasant authors are found only rarely.[4]

Peasants, however, *did* write, and peasant writers were especially prolific in highly literate Nordic societies, like the farmers and 'barefoot historians' of nineteenth-century Iceland.[5] Britt Liljewall examined a corpus of 230 autobiographies by people of humble origins in Sweden. They wrote sometimes for publication, sometimes for their children and sometimes to record local rites and customs.[6] Following these precedents, I turn in this chapter to research on writing 'from below' in my native Finland.

The texts my colleagues have analysed represent a wide range of genres, from letters to handwritten newspapers, mostly produced by self-educated men – farmers, crofters, rural craftsmen, churchwardens, seamen, farm hands and even beggars – who came of age during the nineteenth century.[7] The material is heterogeneous, ranging from fragmentary notes to autobiographical novels. This chapter presents a number of cases to illuminate the ways in which common people wrote about themselves in a situation in which few models for life writing were available to them.

Around 20 years ago I discovered autobiographical texts written by Finnish-speaking nineteenth-century common people – types of writings I had not known existed, because the writing skills of the majority of the population were far from functional. This discovery led me to edit an anthology of life stories produced by ordinary nineteenth-century Finns.[8] In 2001 I founded a discussion circle on vernacular literacy during the long nineteenth century. Over time, the circle has grown into an interdisciplinary network focusing on the processes and practices involved in the production, dissemination and reception of texts 'from below'. The network has initiated conferences and research projects, one of which involved scholars from other Nordic countries. An international conference on *Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity* was held in Helsinki in 2014; the conference proceedings have now been published.[9]

My corpus consists of around 100 texts produced by unschooled Finnish-speaking people born between 1751 and 1864. The authors were exceptional in their own rural environments, because fully literate people comprised a minority of the population during the first six or seven decades of the nineteenth century. By 1880, about 13 per cent of Finns over the age of 10 could officially read and write, and at the end of the nineteenth century, 40 per cent of those who had reached the age of 15 were able to write.[10] Most of the texts originate from archival sources, but there are also writings put into print by the authors themselves, their descendants or local history societies.[11] I wish to demonstrate that the unpublished texts that seem hybrid from today's perspective are less strange when seen in the light of their 'pre-texts' and the cultural situation in which they were produced.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Swedish was the language of education, administration and the legal system in Finland, while the majority of the population spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. There were few books published in Finnish. In 1809, following Sweden's defeat in the war against Russia, Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian empire and the long union with Sweden ended. The rise of Finnish nationalism was fostered by the fear that annexation would ultimately mean the Russification of the country. This threat could be met only by national unity, which was to be created by Finnish-language culture. The Finnish Literature Society (FLS) was founded in 1831 to promote the development of Standard Finnish and Finnish-language literary institutions.

One of the first measures of the FLS was to fund the excursions made by its first secretary, Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884), to note down oral poetry in the easternmost parts of Finland and in eastern Karelia, where the epic tradition was still alive. *The Kalevala*, an epos composed by Lönnrot and published in 1835 (a second, enlarged edition appeared in 1849), had great symbolic value: it enabled Finns to embrace the richness of their oral traditions. In 1863 Finnish was granted equal standing with Swedish, an aim to be realised within 20 years, although in practice it took longer than this to achieve Finnish aspirations. Ideology was not enough; popular education was also a part of the nation-building project. Lectures, newspapers and popular books were weapons in this struggle.[12] The revivalist movement also had a role in enhancing literacy, both in terms of reading (books, tracts and hymns in broadside publication) and writing (sermons, stories of conversion and letters to the like-minded).

The archiving work of the FLS has made it a treasure trove for research from below. From early on, people were encouraged to send their texts to the FLS, but collections also include material solicited or collected by specialists and lay people. As a result, the creation, preservation and study of lower-class writing in nineteenth-century Finland were closely linked to the nation-building process, to a degree not usually encountered in other European countries.

Autobiographical Poems

The idea of a common national language, spoken by the majority of the population, was in line with nineteenth-century European nationalism, influenced by Hegelian and Herderian thinking. Gathering folk poetry was one of the first steps in the process of creating Finnish literature. Besides encountering rural people who could recite traditional lore, folklore collectors were happy to meet those who composed poems of their own and sometimes even wrote them down. In 1834 Elias Lönnrot suggested that the Finnish Literature Society should pay attention to contemporary 'Natural Poets'. The most promising 'Peasant Poets', as they were later to be called, were invited to become members of the FLS, and Lönnrot published their poems in his magazine *Mehiläinen* in the 1830s and 1840s.

For people living in a society still strongly marked by oral tradition, the verse form was a natural way to express oneself. Many Peasant Poets were only known in their home areas, while others gained fame outside their local circles. Most of their poems were composed in the traditional metre (alternate rhyme, four-line stanzas, seven or eight syllables) or in the so-called new folksong style. The poets applied the familiar form to comment or report or reflect on incidents around them, including the course of their own lives. Olli Karjalin (1805–1855), a tailor from Eastern Finland, started his poem by naming his father and grandfather and ended his text by referring to his own death:

> Now I have tried to relate
> all the turns, every journey
> all the things I've done
> I have written down here
> so that they will be remembered
> but what I can't predict

cannot tell the people
where my fortune will take me
where I will end up.
As an old saying relates
an old tale tells us
I knew where I was born
the place where I grew up
But I can't know the place
where I will die.[13]

Writing was a new technology for self-taught poets, which manifests itself in several ways.[14] For example, Johan Ihalainen (1778–1856) wrote a poem entitled 'This is my life story written in verse in which you will learn what has made me compose poetry and taught me to write' around 1850. It is addressed to Doctor Wolmar Schildt, whom Ihalainen asked for new writing implements to replace those destroyed by people angered by his satirical songs. Ihalainen depicts his bitter childhood experiences and the crippling illness that made the former tailor a pauper, and explains that he had learned to write without help from others:

No one has taught me
those who knew the writing skill
I myself started to try
to think how to do that work
As a young boy
I took a pen between my nails.[15]

Like Johan Ihalainen, Johan (Juho) Tanholin (1863–1928) was of illegitimate birth. He earned his living by begging and writing satirical songs.[16] However, his circles were much wider than those of his earlier colleague. Tanholin noted down folklore and corresponded with scholars and writers. 'Life of the Folk Poet J. Tanholin', written in 1912, is filled with images of homelessness and abandonment, reminiscent of the oral 'songs of troubles' or 'songs of sorrows', which were laments about loneliness, unhappy marriages, the sufferings of orphanhood and the wickedness of others.[17] While Ihalainen lived in close proximity to oral poetry, Tanholin could read it in its published form. The recipient of his autobiographical poem, the FLS, had had a long history of collecting and publishing folk poetry.

'After-Memories', Family Inscriptions and the Chronicle

It may seem far-fetched to seek models of constructing the narrative of one's life from memorial sermons given at funeral services, but when published these speeches were called *jälkimuisto* ('after-memory'), the word that was used to signify biography, before *elämäkerta* took its place. The *personalia* section of a memorial sermon consisted of a biographical sketch of the deceased. Written by the clergy, life stories were formulaic, as can be seen from the typical text sketched by Johan Lemmetty (1801–1869), a farmer and an amateur ethnographer:

> He was born into this world in ___. His father was a respectable farmer in ___ and his mother was ___. Right after his natural birth he, due to the attention of his parents, was taken to be baptised and through this Holy ceremony was joined in the Christian congregation and in ___ he renewed this union in the first communion. When he had reached a suitable age, he married in ___ with ___, daughter of the ___ farm from ___, with whom he lived in a loving and good marriage for 40 years and during that time God blessed them with ten children six sons and four daughters (. . .). As to his death, on 2 September he became ill with dysentery, and his head started to ache, and when his illness became more and more heavy he wanted to have the Lord's communion which he was granted, and on 29 September he quietly passed away. He had lived in the Valley of Sorrows for 73 years.[18]

Forms of biographical consciousness can be also seen in family inscriptions, the dates of births and deaths of family members written on the inside cover of the Bible or the Hymnal; signs of the cross were used to mark their death. They would not exist without the institution of parish records that had been kept in Lutheran Finland since the 1660s.[19] As Arianne Baggerman and her colleagues have pointed out, controlling time and autobiographical writing are closely connected.[20]

Ajantieto (Information/Knowledge about Time), a chronicle published as an appendix to the Hymnal, a book owned by most families in nineteenth-century Finland, is one of the texts that had an impact on popular life-writing practices. Updated numerous times, the chronicle's lists of wars, famines, comets, pestilences, rulers as well as inventions and discoveries grew in length. The recorded events in the earliest editions were rather laconic, but over the years the style became more verbose, and some entries expanded into short narratives.[21] *Ajantieto* instilled historical

consciousness and provided a model for marking the most important events that one wanted to remember. For example, *Aica kiria* (Book of Time) of Abraham Hjerpe (1766–1833), a former soldier and a churchwarden from western Finland, consists of chronological lists of life events. The first list is very short, while the second concentrates on the time Hjerpe was enlisted:

> In the year 1766 on 10th of October I have been born
> 1805 died my mother
> 1778 died my father and I was taken to the house of strangers. When I was 13 years old I became a soldier in the reserve
> 1786 I was made a solder at the age of 20 Abraham Hjerpe
> 1811 I was a parish clerk and a churchwarden for one and half years during the office of Nils Eijmelaux [Aejemelaeus] (…)
> 1780 I was enlisted
> 1784 I was taken to Sveaborg [a fortress in Helsinki]
> 1788 the war broke out and I was taken to the sea
> 1789 was taken to the border of Savo (…)
> 1808 began the war with the Russians
> 1809 we came back from Tornio but the Russkies were still in the country.[22]

Hjerpe's document resembles the oldest texts in Britt Liljewall's corpus of Swedish life stories. According to Liljewall, 'the contours of a life formed by the individual himself stand out, in spite of the limited contents of the text. It can be seen as a life story, even if the different entries are isolated from each other and are not linked in a coherent or continuous story or narration'.[23] Unlike Hjerpe, Pietari Västi (1751–1826), a farmer from Ilmajoki, included some comments in his annalistic life narrative, 'Remembrance for those who come after [me]'. It starts from the author's birth and the year of his father's death. As if anticipating a question from a reader, the third entry is justified in this way: 'Because there is no other way one can learn to know life and understand the habits of other people so in 1763 I went to work at Penttilä, serving there for two years one year at Rahkola one year at Ruskala in Kyrö.'[24] Perhaps Västi had no need to work outside his home, hence the explanation he gave for his employment. He also explains that he voluntarily enlisted in the army in 1769 because he wanted to learn more about life. The rest of the events recorded such as getting married include no explanations. Breaking off

in the middle of a sentence, the document is either unfinished or a fragment of a longer text.

One of the most interesting examples of the impact of *Ajantieto* is provided by the 'Muisto-Kirja merkillisimmistä tapauksista' (Memory Book about the Most Remarkable Events), a chronicle put together by Efraim Lindgren (1834–1909), a modest country tailor from south-western Finland. Probably dating from the 1880s, the self-stitched booklet is written in the style of a printed book and set in two columns. The title is taken from the subtitle in one of the editions of *Ajantieto*. Lindgren called his manuscript *muisto-kirja*, which can also be translated as a book of reminiscences/remembrances/souvenirs. *Muistikirja*, a notebook, is literally a memory book, the word *muisti* referring to the cognitive aspect of the word. Lindgren copied annals from *Ajantieto*, starting from the New Testament era. Yet the closer he came to his own time, the less concerned he was with 'big' history: the focus shifted from general history to local events and finally touched upon the chronicler's own life in retrospective, diary-like entries.[25]

The hybridity of Lindgren's chronicle is even more prominent because of the texts surrounding it. The compilation consists of two issues of *Kristillisiä Sanomia* (Christian News) from 1862 and 1863, leaflets on bears, whales and the telegraph, a map of ancient Israel drawn by the author and embellished with references to the Bible, as well as an 11-page manuscript in Lindgren's hand, entitled 'On the First Sunday of Advent'. Obviously Lindgren wanted to save these texts, but why they were bound together remains a mystery.[26]

From Calendar to Diary

Almanakka, an annual calendar with weather forecasts, farmers' planting dates, phases of the moon and the like, was another publication that had an impact on life writing. People started to jot down notes in the margins, but when blank pages were added there was more room for making notes.[27] Adam Smyth has similarly drawn attention to the importance of annotated almanacs for life writing at all social levels in early modern England.[28] According to Bjarne Stoklund, the influence of the almanac is evident in Danish peasant diaries in the choice of what is recorded, in their short, concise form and in their schematic method of notation.[29] The calendar was used to mark past events, not future ones.

The notes were often grouped under the heading of months; it is probable that they were not jotted down one at a time, but all at once.[30] The almanacs of the Seppälä family in western Finland from 1813 to 1887 provide an illustrative case. The earliest notes concern the weather and agricultural work, but from the 1850s the new master of the farm started to record 'the most remarkable things' as well, such as the billeting of Russian soldiers in the neighbourhood, trips to town, accidents and a solar eclipse. The almanacs, sewn onto a long leather belt, hung on the wall in the common room at Seppälä,[31] a fact that points to their practical and symbolic importance. One can assume, for example, that arguments about the weather at a certain point in recent history could be solved by consulting the calendars.

The word for diary in Finnish, *päiväkirja* (day book), does not figure in early life writing. 'This is a Book of Time', wrote Tuomas Tallgren (1768–1838), a churchwarden and a tailor, using the empty pages of an old parish records book. The first entry contains family inscriptions. The columns of the ledger guided Tallgren: the date was marked in one column, weather observations in another one. Events at the congregation, the crop and Tallgren's duties were laconically reported, but historical events such as the war of 1808–1809 and the death of Emperor Alexander I are occasionally mentioned in his 'time book'.[32] Tallgren's successor Adam Ivendorff (1814–1897), who knew Tallgren's journal and even copied it, kept a diary for five decades. The first entry deals with his nomination as an ambulatory schoolmaster, written in the style reminiscent of church council minutes. Ivendorff's range of topics is wider than Tallgren's. He reports on fires, thunderstorms, weddings, people who emigrated, new curates at the parish, the building of a railway and so on, but he writes about the schooling of his own son too.

Johan Aapo Jääskö (born 1819), a boat-builder from Lapland, kept a diary from 1852 up to 1900. There are some family inscriptions and some autobiographical remarks at the beginning of the diary. Writing about 'the memories of times', Jääskö saw his role as a chronicler.[33] He used both longhand and print-type text that brings to mind old devotional books. Imitating the almanac, he added images of the moon in his text, but also used a cross to mark a death, images of boats, reindeer, swords and rifles (when writing about the Turkish wars). Another early diarist was Eva Christina Lindström (1823–1895), an unmarried fisherman's daughter whose text covers the years from 1859

up to 1893. She concentrates on the weather and work in the archipelago of Uusikaupunki on the south-western coast of Finland. The approach of the diarist is a collective one; the presence of the 'I' is missing. A rare example of a text written by an unschooled rural woman, Lindström's diary is a rich document, albeit difficult to read. When it was published, the editor added a translation into Standard Finnish alongside the original text.[34]

Expressing Emotions in Life Writing

Swedish peasant diaries have been characterised as documents consisting of laconic remarks on work and weather, devoid of personal reflection.[35] This applies to many documents I have unearthed, but I have also discovered diarists who reveal their feelings in one way or another. Jostein Fet, who has studied Norwegian writing peasants, has discovered that peasant annals can include 'personal musings and comments of the writer, even frank accounts of his own love-life, a theme studiously avoided by most peasants'.[36]

One of the earliest documents to include personal reflection is the 'Memory Book of the Most Remarkable Events in My Life', started in 1859 by Juho Rolig (later Kaksola, 1835–1913), a farmer from Central Finland. The notebook opens with a two-line verse that encourages one to remember the past and think about the future. The entries start from 1849:

> My father became unable to see and so ill that people thought he would die; that brought the first tears to my eyes, as I had spent the time of my childhood in a playful way and was totally unused to these kinds of misfortunes.

The following year Rolig took his father to Helsinki to find a cure, and he was also ill himself. The year 1851 was remarkable because of the author's first communion, and in 1852 he was moved by revivalist meetings. The deaths of Rolig's mother and his two nieces occurred in 1853. The entry for the year 1858 consists of a line written in a secret code, deciphered as 'I taught Amalia Maria to write'.[37]

The laconic style changes in a long entry dated 29 June 1865, when Rolig married a young woman 13 years his junior – the girl about whom he had written in secret code. Although he was happy to be

eternally united with his beloved, the wedding day was filled with contradictory emotions:

> Joy and sadness, desire for revenge (bad as it was), patience, doubt and hope, pretention and all kinds of light-mindedness, graveness and seriousness – but the former ones tended to win over the latter ones. No single thing ruled over the other. A ghost of badness aroused a sparkle of revenge and made it aglow to excite my heart, fluttering in the storm, but I did not want to lose my reputable name and give in and break the pact of peace with my conciliatory nature. (…) If somebody could have seen my heart then he would have said that it was lunatic and in need of a doctor's cure.[38]

What caused these conflicting feelings is not explained. Marriage meant a farewell to the old life, because Rolig moved to Kaksola, his in-laws' farm, but it sparked thoughts about the future too:

> everywhere I go, I hear the wind humming quietly: you are new to this place, unknown and perhaps unused to us, but you probably are our present master, or our future one. If you understand the land and have the desire to improve it, perhaps you will find here eternal joy and happiness.[39]

The style Rolig uses points to his literary interests – in the early 1860s he had founded a reading society in his village and edited a handwritten newspaper.[40] After 1865, Kaksola – as he was now called – wrote a yearly entry on his wedding anniversary. In 1880 he reflected on this practice in the following way:

> And the reason why I decided to record these yearly memories was the change in my outer life, an extraordinary turn on that particular day: that I ceased to be a single person but was divided into two, in other words, became united from two different persons. And because I've been united from two fleshes, I could no longer live the way one lives for oneself (myself), but I have to live for the benefit of my second half (…) But [now] I am already divided into several parts, namely seven, and I have to let the unity of life run for all my members.[41]

Happiness gave way to grief, as five of his eight children died. In distress, Kaksola comforted himself with quotations from the Hymnal; sometimes the entries take the form of a prayer. The principle of a spiritual diary, the

constant vigilance over the state of one's soul, seems to have been the guiding principle of the author, even though he mostly wrote an entry only once a year. The entries deal with his family and his state of his mind. Interestingly, the death of his father induced a passage resembling a funeral sermon. In 1872, the entry includes a poem Kaksola had written to commemorate the christening of his daughter Fanny. According to Fet, family inscriptions in the Norwegian material he studied similarly consisted of

> notes made by the head of the household about important events in the life of the family, such as betrothals, births, deaths and marriages, with dates and years. The newborn are welcomed with pious wishes for a good and godly life, and when someone dies, the writer expresses his hope that the bereaved will one day meet again the deceased in the glory and everlasting joy of heaven.[42]

In 1872 Matti Saxberg (1826–1908), a farmer from central Finland, wrote a short text entitled 'Remembrances of My Life for [My] Descendants'. Like the title of Västi's document, it points to future readers. Saxberg starts from the date of his birth and the death of his father in 1838, and mentions the impact of revivalism in his youth:

> I was encouraged by many to repent and that I tried to do but came to see that it is not for a human being to decide. And so even now sin encircles me and I cannot get away from it unless God wants to cleanse me and release me.[43]

The genres that come to mind are confession and testimony.

Saxberg relates the major events of his life. In August 1845 there was a boating accident; his mother and sister were drowned, while he and 10 other people were saved. Altogether 26 people lost their lives. Saxberg was left 'with great sorrow and longing'. He inherited the family farm and was married in 1857. At the time he became the father of two sons, a bad thought came over him. The nature of this thought is revealed. Saxberg mentions the murder of his uncle, the death of his youngest daughter and the economic problems that made him seek the wrong kind of solace: he filled his life with too much food, drink and worry about money. The incentive to write this text for posterity seems to point to a marital problem, but its nature is not explained. Although the author's motive

seems to stem from his desire to gain understanding in the eyes of his family, the function of writing is a therapeutic one. The text ends with a prayer resembling a psalm of the Old Testament. There is also another document relating to Saxberg's life, an annalistic life narrative, the last entry of which is written in 1901: 'Let this writing remain forever so that I would not be called a liar. Let it stay untouched by fire.'

Both Kaksola and Saxberg were religious men and had been influenced by revivalism: reading and writing were part of and contributed to their individual religiosity. For example, when Matti Paavola (1786–1859), a farmer from western Finland, experienced a religious crisis in 1817, he searched his soul by writing. Interestingly, Paavola alternated between the first and third person singular in describing his religious quest.[44]

Romantic Discourse in Diaries

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Finnish non-elite writers adopted the principle of jotting down daily notes. The diary of Aleksanteri Vallin (1853–1905), a farmer's son from southern Finland, shows how people interested in reading had a wider selection of material within their reach. Vallin owned a small selection of books, and he read serialised fiction in the newspapers. For example, he mentions the Hungarian writer Mór Jókai, who was published in the paper *Uusi Suometar*.[45] Vallin started to write in his almanac by adding extra pages to it, but soon began to use self-made notebooks. In all, his diary from 1879 to 1882 consists of 600 pages. Vallin wrote profusely about his love for Manda, whom his family opposed because she was socially inferior to him.[46] The following passage, dated 21 November 1881, exemplifies the romantic discourse present in the diary. In his stream of consciousness Vallin addresses Manda or God and reminisces about his encounters with his great love. Unfortunately, dialectal features of the text are obscured by the translation:

> in the morning rain western wind oh my manda I missed you everything reminded me of you when I went shooting birds oh oh that word comes from the sigh of the soul's mourning oh I was crying for my love my dear manda the love I have found in you without it I cannot exist oh this world is very bad oh how sweet were those memories when I think about the time for example when we were building the fence between our pasture and Jaakkola oh those were the encounters of our innocent love oh you my wonderful my

> own I cannot have a pure conscience and find peace without you, oh oh (. . .) help us god people cannot [help] nor do they want to, oh my head aches for longing my manda, oh my sweet darling manda oh in the evening when the moon was coming out the wind.[47]

Vallin refers to a novel to signify matters of the heart in an entry from 1880: 'I'm going to write a novel on my 27th year, oh it will touch [the reader's] heart and blood.'[48] If he ever wrote his novel, it has not survived. Even though Manda bore him a child, the couple did not marry, because Vallin's family expected him to marry 'up' to save the family farm.

Carpenter Kustaa Kaisla (1874–1923) is another sentimental male diarist. He started writing in 1906 after having discovered that the young woman with whom he was in love might have had a relationship with his brother. Kaisla's discourse resembles romantic fiction:

> Oh, my only love, is this the way you disappeared like a dream at night. For a moment heavenly brightness shone in my eyes, but then the clouds' fogs fell on me and started to cool off my cheeks, now they have become colder and even cooler they get, soon their shine will be gone.[49]

Kaisa Kauranen compares Vallin and Kaisla with upper-class young men who drugged themselves with romantic feelings, described by Peter Gay in his book *The Bourgeois Experience: The Tender Passion*.[50] Vallin's and Kaisla's texts differ from Swedish peasant diaries, which do not reveal much of their authors' emotions. One has to remember, however, that expressing one's feelings can take place in other contexts. Janken Myrdal has compared the letters a young farmer sent his bride and his diary entries at the time. The farmer openly expressed his thoughts and feelings in his letters, but there are only short mentions of his bride in his diary.[51]

On the whole, Finnish men in my corpus wrote more openly about their feelings than women. Anna Nikula (born 1865), a farmer's daughter from north-western Finland, started keeping a diary in November 1883 while attending a dairy school away from home. In March 1885, the matter-of-fact, homely style changes drastically:

> My heart is my memory book. What has been written there during this time has been printed with hot letters. Morning, evening, day and night, one

> name is echoing, one image and one thought remains: will I find happiness in the world? This I've asked my heart. It has answered: no. But when I ask: will I find peace, the same heart answers: yes. I know where I'll find it – in my memories. The world is a desert for me now. My eyes! Why don't you shed tears of blood? Heart! Has anyone lifted off your heavy burden? No – and yet you don't fall under it.[52]

The passage is almost a verbatim quote from a novel by K.J. Gummerus from 1870;[53] it continues for several pages, with no reference to the source. Nikula literally borrowed romantic discourse to represent her emotions. The text she copied in her diary or 'memory book' is associated with intimate feelings.

Pre-Texts of Ida Digert's Diary

The first pages of the diary kept by Ida Digert (1874–1940), a seamstress from south-western Finland, present an interesting case in terms of generic sources of the diary. Ida's father was a crofter, but he gained extra income by working as a clerk at the local sawmill, driving people to the station and renting rooms. Ida had attended the local primary school for one year only, but she came from a fairly literate family: both her father and paternal grandfather were able to write, and her eldest brother had university training. The notebook is sewn together from loose leaves and bound by cardboard covers. The following text is written on the front cover:

> I go to the woods
> I go to the hilltop
> I talk to God's trees
> I chat with the willows
> And I won't tell the others
> About the sorrows of my heart. Only the dark forest
> and the clear sky Will hear about my troubles.[54]

The first four lines are from the *Kanteletar*, a collection of oral lyrical poetry first published in 1840–1841, while the rest of the text comes from a popular folksong. In oral poetry, both texts are classified as songs of sorrows. Bearing the theme of loneliness, they express the idea that one can reveal one's sorrows only in the solitude of nature. Interestingly, the

text can be seen as a metaphor for the step from the oral to the written: the solitude of nature has become a diary, hearing the sorrows of its author.

The inside and outside covers resemble another writing practice, namely copying the words of songs into a notebook. However, the extracts of poems or songs are not neatly placed on the page, but appear diagonally and vertically too. The initials 'I. D' and the title 'Notes: This book has been put together in 1894' are marked in the middle of the texts. The second page reveals the following catalogue:

> Mother. Anna Elisapet Digert.
> Father. Kaarlo Digert.
> Children.
> Brother. Kaarlo Anton Digert born.18 7/11 63. †
> Brother Johannes Henrik Digert 18 26/12 65.
> Brother Kustaa Aatolf Digert †
> Brother Eli Alpert Digert 18 30/4 71
> Ida Joseffa Digert 18 2/2 74
> Sister Bertta Sofia Digert 18 2/2 74
> Brother Mauno Nikolai Digert 18 4/12 79[55]

This list resembles family inscriptions. However, Ida's way of defining family relations – mother, father, brother, sister – makes her the protagonist, even though her name is not highlighted in the constellation. The second page reveals another catalogue, a list of the years the diarist has lived. It can be connected to annalistic life writing, but the list is a skeletal one:

> 1874. February 2nd I have been born. In the municipality of Marttila, at the Chapel of Koski, in Tuimala village (at Mäntylä [croft])
> 1875
> 1876
> 1877
> 1878
> 1879
> 1880
> 1881
> 1882
> 1883
> 1884
> 1885

1886
1887
1888
1889
1890
1891
1892
1893
1894 Begins this diary, with some notes.
2nd of February I became 20 years old.[56]

Why the empty spaces after the years? Ida could have marked down the year when she attended primary school or her confirmation at the age of 15 – these kinds of things were often highlighted in life stories. One thing is certain, though: the catalogue emphasises the importance of starting a diary ('Begins this diary, with some notes') and the presence of 'I' in the text ('I have been born', 'I became 20 years old'). It is also significant that Ida uses the word *päiväkirja*, indicating the practice of jotting down daily notes.

The first entry begins *in medias res*, with a report on the meeting of a local temperance society and the revelation of the trouble Ida's father has had. The local police officer accuses him of embezzling money. Keeping track with the rumours and the claims, Ida reports on the court cases, but also writes about her sewing work, the events she attends and so on. In 1895, her eldest brother, a teacher of mathematics, returns home permanently ill. His death and funeral are depicted in detail. Towards the end the diary entries become scarcer; there is only one entry in 1899, a poem. Ida is more open in expressing her grief over her brother's death than revealing her romantic feelings, which are hidden between the lines or expressed in quotations of poems. Anna Nikula quoted a romantic novel, whereas Ida Digert resorted to poetry.

Hybridity and Intimacy Re-considered

Most of the texts I have presented above do not fit into standard definitions of autobiography and diary: they do not narrate the history of the author's personality or consist of day-to-day accounts of things done and felt. Some of them consist of laconic lists of events, like the texts of Pietari Västi and Abraham Hjerpe, while Johan Kaksola developed a pattern of writing annually in his memory book. Efraim Lindgren started to copy the Chronicle, but when

approaching his own time he turned to local and personal history. The hybridity of these texts is less apparent when the texts are juxtaposed with the generic sources that Finnish common people had at their disposal at the time of writing. As Jan Blommaert observed in his study on grassroots historical writing in the Congo, 'quite a lot of what the texts represent hinges on the way in which they have been assembled out of locally available resources'.[57] The Calendar and the Chronicle were available and provided people with models for recording important events. However, oral sources should not be forgotten: songs of sorrow influenced life writing too. The tradition of autobiographical poetry produced by ordinary people continued well into the twentieth century in Finland. For example, in 1963 gardener Pekka Huuskonen published his life story in verse, consisting of 2,800 lines.

Revivalist movements had their effect on writing practices: the focus on the inner world and the prayer meetings channelled literate expression towards diary, autobiography and hymn. The changes in the forms of life writing are also linked to the development of literacy and Finnish-language literary institutions. In the early nineteenth century, literate common people did not have much reading material in their mother tongue, while those writing at the end of the century had better access to books and newspapers and could adapt discourses from poetry and novels to express their intimate feelings. It is significant, however, that Ida Digert started her diary with family inscriptions and a list of years she had lived, and that the motto of her diary is taken from the songs of sorrow. These pre-texts carry the traces of older forms of life writing.

The investigation of Finnish nineteenth-century autobiographical writings from below shows that life writing often originates from various kinds of writing practices and oral sources, and that social and cultural situations determine what kinds of roads the formation of genres can take.

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Anna Kuismin is Docent (Adjunct Professor) of Finnish and Comparative Literature at the University of Helsinki and was originally a specialist in literary theory and contemporary Finnish literature. She coordinated the Nordic research project 'Reading and Writing from Below: Toward a New Social History of Literacy in the Nordic Sphere during the Long Nineteenth Century' (financed by NORDCORP, 2011–2014) and was the principal investigator in 'Exploring Social Boundaries from Below: Class, Ideology and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-Century Finland (financed by the Academy of Finland, 2011–2014). She recently co-edited (with M.J. Driscoll) *White Field, Black Seeds: Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2013).

CHAPTER 8

Reading the 'Cheyenne Letter': Towards a Typology of Inscription beyond the Alphabet

Germaine Warkentin

The 'Cheyenne Letter' (Fig. 8.1) has not often been discussed by students of Native American communication, though it has ignited debate among writing specialists. Garrick Mallery, the noted American writer on Native pictographs, collected it sometime before 1888. He related that it was sent from Indian Territory (roughly today's Oklahoma) by a Cheyenne man named Turtle-Following-His-Wife to his son Little-Man at the Pine Ridge Agency in present-day South Dakota, to say he was sending 53 dollars so that the son could come to visit his father. The letter 'was drawn on a half-sheet of ordinary writing paper, without a word written', states Mallery, and was sent by post in an envelope.[1] In the same mail the agent at Pine Ridge received a letter from his counterpart in the Territory explaining the situation and enclosing the necessary 53 dollars.

The letter prompts several important questions about what we can legitimately term 'writing'. Firstly, like many Native inscriptional artefacts, the document seems to have been copied and re-copied as it was passed from hand to hand; if an original exists it is not among Mallery's papers in

G. Warkentin (✉)
Department of English, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada
e-mail: g.warkentin@utoronto.ca

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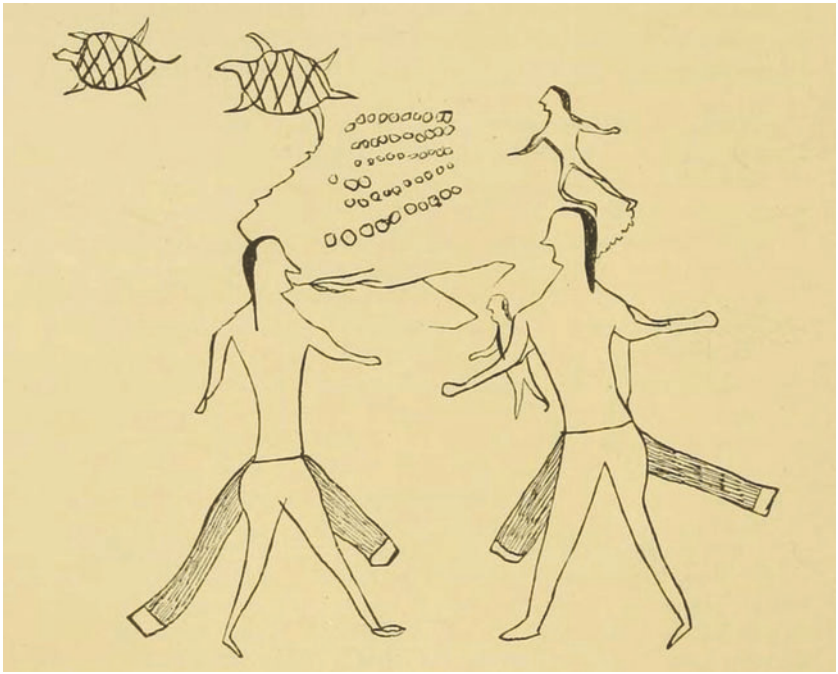

Fig. 8.1 The Cheyenne Letter. Turtle-Following-His-Wife writes to his son Little-Man asking him to return from the Dakotas to Indian Territory, ca. 1883–1888. (Garrick Mallery, *Picture-Writing of the American Indians*, 1888–1889.)

the Smithsonian.[2] Secondly, is what we have a picture or a text? If it is a picture, why does it seem so very specific in its content? If a text, how can it be so clearly outside the orbit of the language-oriented writing we are familiar with? Thirdly, in either case how is it to be interpreted? The letter is semasiographic; that is, written in pictographs (pictorial non-alphabetic signs). If its signs comprise a text, what is the key that would make that text legible, and to whom? Little-Man was a noted traditionalist, distinguished in Cheyenne history as Keeper of the sacred Medicine Arrows, tribal emblem of the Cheyennes.[3] His response is not recorded, but he would certainly have been able to interpret the message. The agent in Pine Ridge had the accompanying letter in the Roman alphabet, the key to

which he had doubtless internalised early in life, to tell him what the 'picture-writing' meant. He paid out the 53 dollars, and Little-Man set out on his journey.

Almost every problem surrounding the vexed question of the nature of writing centres on issues raised by the Cheyenne Letter: the puzzle of pictorial versus textual communication; the materiality of the object itself; the cognitive, linguistic and social context in which the letter was composed; and – a question foundational for any issue involving writing – that of legibility. We cannot tell what marks on a piece of paper or other substrate mean (if they mean anything) unless we know what system makes them legible, and possess the key to that system enabling us to decipher and read them. Furthermore, knowledge of what is legible is inevitably social: the way to interpret those marks needs to be taught among members of any society for which legibility is important, just as the Pine Ridge agent would have been taught to read as a child. But the central issue is whether the marks mean something to a reader other than their initiator and, if so, how that meaning is conveyed. Can we assume, then, that a key to the letter was known to the Cheyenne father who inscribed the pictographs, and to his son who received them? Can we apply the term 'writing' to the Cheyenne Letter?

When we ask what 'writing' means, we encounter an aspect of human culture that has been narrowly defined by those who specialise in its study. Scholars investigating very early systems or those that do not use the Roman alphabet – for example in the Americas Stephen Houston (Maya), Frank Salomon (Andean khipu), Elizabeth Hill Boone (Aztec), Heidi Bohaker (Great Lakes Ojibwe) – have long proceeded on the assumption of a broader definition of writing, with distinguished results.[4] Their work implicitly validates Albertine Gaur's insistence that 'If all writing is information storage, then all writing is of equal value.'[5] But even if we accept their arguments, we cannot look for support to most current theories about the nature of writing. The study of writing has generally been the province of different disciplines: epigraphy, palaeography, textual editing, archaeology, ethnography, semiotics and linguistics. Few attempt to theorise the problem beyond their immediate concerns, even when challenged by the semiotician Paul Bouissac, who argues that 'the heuristic assumption that pictographs and petroglyphs have communicative rather than expressive or deictic functions' is strong enough to withstand such a test.[6] Prevailingly, however, it is linguists who have developed the most influential general explanations of writing.

Naturally philologists focused on the relationship between spoken language and inscribed marks – that is, glottographic writing – and treated written 'sign language' not merely as separate from 'full writing', but as inferior to it, less evolved and less functional. In his influential contribution to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1975), Ignace J. Gelb dismissed pictographs as primitive because they lack 'systematic correlation between the visual marks and linguistic elements'.[7] Thus semasiographic systems, he and others have argued, do not appear to have the complexity and fluent combinatory possibilities of 'true' writing. They do not represent 'an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly *without the intervention of the utterer*' (my italics).[8] In his comments on the Cheyenne Letter, the respected Sinologist John DeFrancis simply dismissed it as an inadequate attempt at communication. In his view all full writing systems are glottographic: they are language based, complex in character and entirely free of mediation. 'The forthright answer to how pictographs work as a system', he wrote,

> is that they don't. Pictographic writing is not a system. It is at best exceedingly limited in what it can express and who is able to understand it. It is not protowriting nor a forerunner of full writing. And it should not be called writing without the clearly expressed reservation that it refers to a very restricted type of communication.[9]

For DeFrancis pictographic material is primitive, conveying 'no more information than do the isolated graffiti drawn on countless American walls',[10] the male/female indicators on washroom doors, or highway signs. Implicit in this position are two assumptions that have long hampered most discussions of writing: that it moves progressively towards an ideal condition of completeness, and that this development begins in some primitive state which must be left behind for humankind to flourish. 'Without writing,' David Diringer maintained, 'culture (...) would not exist, except perhaps in a form so rudimentary as to be virtually unrecognizable.'[11]

That depends, of course, on what is meant by 'culture'. Linguists following Gelb's principles have rarely addressed the question of what constitutes 'full writing' in the terms that a culture that does not employ an alphabet (Roman or otherwise) might require. The attempt to use statistical methods to identify linguistic elements in semasiographic systems has been strongly repudiated – using statistical methods – by Richard

Sproat.[12] The classicist Barry B. Powell, acknowledging the semasiographic character of mathematical and musical notation, rejects the charge that pictographs are entirely primitive; indeed, his very example is the Cheyenne Letter, which he terms a 'descriptive-representational' device like the pictorial instructions for uncrating a refrigerator, something that is not primitive but merely simple and functional. However, even of mathematical notation he observes that 'the limitations for the expression of many kinds of information by semasiographic means are enormous. We cannot discuss the origins of the American Civil War or the meaning of life by means of mathematical symbols.'[13] Of the semasiographic systems of the Americas, Geoffrey Sampson observes that 'it remains an open question whether these could ever have been expanded into comprehensive written communication systems'.[14]

Yet as early as 1967 Archibald Hill, though himself a supporter of language-based theories of writing, pointed out that many flaws in the standard classification were emerging; even alphabetic systems such as English and Finnish have fundamentally different approaches to the rendering of language. Furthermore, he rejected the linguists' contention that semasiographic writing could never represent ideas as yet not embodied in speech, envisioning a new typology of writing that would place all systems in relation to each other.[15] Albertine Gaur, pushing further, argued that the definition of writing is really an issue in the broader subject of information history. 'Each society', she wrote,

> stores the information essential to its survival, the information which enables it to function effectively. There is in fact no essential difference between prehistoric rock paintings, memory aids (mnemonic devices), wintercounts, tallies, knotted cords, pictographic, syllabic and consonantal scripts, or the alphabet. There are no primitive scripts, no forerunners of writing, no transitional scripts as such (terms frequently used in books dealing with the history of writing) but only societies at a particular level of economic and social development using certain forms of information storage. If a form of information storage fulfills its purpose as far as a particular society is concerned then it is (for this particular society) 'proper writing.'[16]

Today Hill's views are without wide influence, and Gaur's are encouragingly broad but untheorised. The space between them is occupied by linguists still fighting their corner and archaeologists and other specialists whose rich founts of information about how non-alphabetic scripts

actually function have been little exploited for their explanatory potential. For example, James D. Keyser and Michael Klassen provided archaeological data in their fine *Plains Indian Rock Art* (2001), but did not probe further to ask how their study of pictographic narrative would respond to specifically linguistic criticism.[17] Evidently, the meaning of the term 'writing' needs re-examination.

Writing certainly has a long history, and it would be hard to deny that it must have begun with marks made on material objects. Clearly, the discovery of the 'phonetic principle' in Sumer in the fourth millennium BC[18] was a vital development in alphabetic writing. Nevertheless, the obsession of Western civilisation with the difference between 'primitive' and 'fully evolved' – indeed, the assumption that alphabetic writing is the most mature – has blinded us to the multitude of paths to the sharing of information on material objects that humans have carved out as they developed, technologically and culturally, the many ways marks could be made to communicate. It is possible, using empirical evidence, to show that far from being either a limited system or a form of proto-writing, semasiography is one element of a much larger class of information transfer using material objects, one that includes as subsets both the 'full writing' of the linguists and the semasiography of a wide range of peoples past and present. For this larger class, I propose the term 'inscription'.

'Inscription' is a more fruitful concept than the familiar but somewhat controversial 'writing', not least because it authorises us to employ the suffix 'glyph' for marks made on a material base, rather than the more usual 'graph'. Glyph is the prevailing term for written inscriptions in archaeology, epigraphy and sometimes ethnography. Its etymology is suggestive: *glyph* means something carved or impressed upon a material object, and thus evokes the earliest attempts to make marks on rocks, the petroglyphs that are found all over the world, in Australia, Central Asia, Europe and the Americas. For millennia human communication has been deeply affected by the materials it employs. Mark and object are bound together by a simple fact of physics: without the object that provides a substrate, we could not even *see* the marks we are making. This is true of all marks made for the purpose of communication. Even the screens on which we read the coded texts of digitised information are themselves material objects, yielding the end product of an act of inscription carried out on our keyboards. 'Inscription' opens the way to broader concepts of system and legibility than the entirely legitimate but narrower category of glottographic writing. Not only does it alert us to the need for rigorous analysis

of the specifically material process of making communicative marks upon an object, it invokes as well the technological and social circumstances, indeed the cosmological beliefs, that enable the communication of information.[19] More neutral and inclusive than 'writing', 'inscription' specifies that originary act of crafting marks upon the objects that reveal them. And in its comprehensiveness, it makes available for empirical analysis the broad range of data provided by all cultures that employ inscription, as well as that yielded by the many disciplines that make inscription their study.

The breadth of such a concept of inscription requires us to attend not only to the relations between marks and spoken words, but to the cognitive abilities that make it possible to employ marks to share information, and to the social and cultural situations in which specific systems develop. Thus, in examining the Cheyenne Letter, to which I will shortly return, we are led to ask whether there is a social history of inscription within Native culture on the western plains of North America that makes the letter more fully informational than it appears to a non-Cheyenne. Does it represent the exploitation of a documentable system of communication shared with others? Does it share technological features with other such artefacts? Was the letter supplied by the agent sending the money merely a helpful addendum, or did it have an identifiable function within Cheyenne practices of information exchange? Does the letter indicate the presence of a system within which it is legible, and how is that system sustained by larger systems of belief? The category of 'writing' alone is not sufficient to sustain the weight of the evidence we find when, posing questions such as these, we look more carefully.

That being said, it is a very long way from the making of a mark by one of our Late Palaeolithic ancestors to the inception of a working practice of inscription on the western plains of North America. For a mark to become legible, not only visible but actually interpretable, it has to be part of a system of relationships that functions to produce meaning for beings with the cognitive capacity to recognise and share that meaning. Recent excavations have revealed the earliest known marks among humans already sufficiently complex, cognitively and socially, to sense the uses to which such marks might be put: prehistoric bladelets and tooled ochre from cave 13B at Pinnacle Point, and incised ochre plaques and beads at Blombos cave in South Africa.[20] Such images, whether literal or abstract, rapidly become iconic in the already rich cognitive and cultural experience of early humans, radiating symbolic meaning and sometimes entering into association with other icons to

produce the kind of connection for which our only term is a grammatical one, 'syntax'.

In discussing syntax, the linguist Thomas Givón describes three levels of iconic coding: lexical (pictographs), propositional (coding for states, events and their sequential concatenations) and discourse-pragmatic (coding for the functional or social domain of language).[21] For the student of inscription, however, these categories are not grammatical alone: they provide the basic elements of the continuous inscribed discourse which alphabetic cultures term textuality, and as such immediately evoke the material conditions in which textuality begins. In strikingly different contexts, signs of syntactical development between iconic marks on a material base have been observed by John Baines in late second-dynasty Egypt,[22] by Luca Zaghetto in metal *situla* art of the Veneto in the seventh century BC,[23] by John M.D. Pohl in Mixtec ceramics in ancient Mexico,[24] and by Keyser and Klassen in northern plains petroglyphs.[25] All these cases present us with syntactically related icons, the inscribers and interpreters of which evidently agreed on what system made them legible. If inscription is detectable by its systematic character, then in any specific case, whether glottographic or semasiographic, it is to the nature of that system we need to attend, and to its full extent: semiotic, material, historical and cultural.

In re-thinking the problem of human inscription practices, I occupy a kind of *laboratoire imaginaire*, to vary what André Malraux famously called his 'museum without walls'. It is situated not in Europe, where glottographic writing and the Roman alphabet have historically been dominant, nor in Asia, with its long and quite different practices of inscription, nor in Mexico and South America, where research on inscription is well established, but in North America before and during early contact. The area from the Rio Grande to sub-Arctic North America is one of the most inscribed landscapes in the world, with material evidence of a continuous practice of marking dating back, so it has been argued, to about 11,500 BC.[26] Yet the term 'inscription' has rarely been applied to the informational systems of its aboriginal cultures, which have prevailingly been dismissed as merely pictorial, according to the usual distinction between the primitive cultures of orality and the more evolved cultures of the written. As a result, Frank Salomon and Sabine Hyland argue, the parameters within which their information systems are confined are the narrow ones of 'civilization and phonetic writing', leaving unacknowledged the variety of graphic behaviour among systems using other principles for the material communication of information.[27] Yet for the

Americas in general, it is the very variety of inscription types – both across a vast time span and, until contact, isolated from other influences – that makes them richly productive of both inquiry and explanation. Here as elsewhere in the world, documentable and in many cases dateable pre-contact information systems flourished, ranging from the pictographic practices of the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and the shell-bead wampum of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) to the long and various informational traditions of the various tribes of plains Natives, and stretching from petroglyphs to the painted buffalo robes and ledger books that we shall see are as expository in function as was the Cheyenne Letter to a Cheyenne reader.

To broaden those parameters is no easy task. Since the addition of a fourth great system of inscription, that of Mesoamerica, to the three 'pristine' writing cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt and China, the study of inscription, at least for Mexico and South America, has flourished, including even the strings and knots of the *khipu* used by the Andean Inkas to communicate certain types of information. North of the Rio Grande, however, inscription is more difficult to conceptualise: its peoples were – and are – many and widespread. Their cultural practices often differ sharply, exploiting for communication on a material base petroglyphs, painted pictographs, inscribed buffalo robes and war shirts, winter counts (pictographic chronologies) and ledger books, wampum belts and treaty signatures. Richard Sproat insists that any analysis of written forms must be supported by good empirical evidence.[28] He is right to do so, but the Cheyenne Letter shows how much more we will learn about human inscription as we broaden the parameters within which that empirical data is collected and analysed. There are traps here, of course: the fantasy of authorisation that awards priority to Western European values and methods in analysing such sources.[29] Carlo Ginzburg observes with frustration the historian's 'fear of falling into a notorious, naïve positivism, combined with the exasperated awareness of the ideological distortion that may lurk behind the most normal and seemingly innocent process of perception'. Balancing this, he points out, is the obligation to refuse assigning unfamiliar cultural phenomena to a state outside culture.[30] I share his exasperation, but in the *laboratoire imaginaire* a beginning can be made. The Cheyenne Letter, approached with such cautions in mind, illustrates why it is properly termed 'inscription', why it is not primitive and why, though pictorial in method, it is definitely not art.

The letter from Turtle-Following-His-Wife displays two characteristic features of Native cultures: adaptiveness (the letter is not a typical Native genre) and practicality (the message conveys a set of clear instructions). But it also shows a secure command of the writer's inherited inscriptional and oral repertoire, making it quite possible to read within the traditional system of legibility that produced it. Context is everything in the interpretation of artefacts that take so many forms, over so many generations and across such a broad area, but elements of that system are evident among peoples stretching from the Blackfoot in the north to the Cheyenne in the south. Its many variations are expressed not only in petroglyphs on rock, but in the variety of material media – hide, fabric, eventually paper – that they exploited during a long process – more than a millennium – of constant migration, internal warfare, technological change and the penetration into their lands of white settlers. It is in this mutating semiotic landscape that the practices of inscription and reading invoked by the Cheyenne Letter came about.

In the letter, two men are presented in a graphic style common in the later painted hides and ledger books of the plains: outline figures clothed here in typical Cheyenne breechcloths. As is characteristic of Cheyenne visual communication, they face each other.[31] Above the figure on the left is his name glyph:[32] he is Turtle-Following-His-Wife. Above the right-hand figure is his name glyph: he is Little-Man. Lines attach the glyphs to the appropriate figures, and between them is drawn a more complex line from father to son. This line represents the activity of speech, just as streams of arrows and trails of hoof prints were used to signal activity in war (Fig. 8.2). Such action lines structure the syntax of plains inscription, whether early petroglyphs or later ledger books. Here, the crook in the line makes explicit that the son is being beckoned to come to his father. As Candace Greene points out, in such images it is the right-hand figure who in many cases is the actor, the left-hand one the acted upon.[33] Though Turtle-Following-His-Wife was Little-Man's father and thus ought to have appeared on the right, the orientation here almost certainly acknowledges Little-Man's high cultural status; he had taken on the important ritual role of Arrow-Keeper as early as 1883.[34] Above the speech line are 53 small circles indicating the 53 dollars the father wants the Indian agent to give his son. Fifty-three US dollars was a good deal of money in the 1880s, about $1,350 today, though what such a sum was intended to cover is unknown.[35] Whatever they signify in value, the circles are not a primitive attempt to communicate a number. In the Native graphic

Fig. 8.2 'The heroic warrior has ridden to the rescue of an unhorsed comrade in the midst of battle (...) under fire from mounted enemies whose presence is indicated by horse tracks that emit the smoke of muzzle blasts.' McLaughlin, ed., *A Lakota War Book from the Little Bighorn*, p. 109. DR09. Artist F, 'The Decoy.' (MS Am 2337. Houghton Library, Harvard University.)

tradition it is a tally, one of the oldest types of communicative imagery in the pictographic repertoire, where it appears in late prehistoric petroglyphs, painted hides and ledger drawings, counting coup against an enemy[36] or recording a series of war exploits. Tallies, it is worth noting, are found in many cultures of inscription across the world.

The need for an accompanying letter from the local agent in Indian Territory to his counterpart in South Dakota is from one point of view obvious, but does it undermine the argument that the letter represents an effective system of pictographic inscription? Readers of glottographic inscription, particularly the Roman alphabet, as Ignace Gelb and others have argued, expect texts to be entirely free-standing and without mediation. Plains inscription, in contrast, involved a parallel practice of oral explication resulting from the warrior culture in which it flourished. It was expected,

indeed proper, for the elite owners of pictographic buffalo robes and war exploit shirts to legitimise their wearing with elaborate verbal explications of the achievements the robes documented.[37] The ledger books, in their turn, emerged in a highly social process of collaboration among members of warrior societies.[38] All these media were part of a complex of inscription and storytelling rooted deep in the fabric of Native culture (and not unknown even in alphabetic societies). These were not cultures where the 'primitive' oral was succeeded by the more sophisticated 'written', or where either was subordinated to the other as a mere supplement, but where the two communication systems were culturally inseparable. The agent in Indian Territory had to send the 53 dollars, of course, but in terms of Native assumptions about complementary information practices, his explanatory letter to a fellow white man made perfect sense.

However, can we generalise about pictographic communication from the Cheyenne Letter, or was it an untypical example? Keyser and Klassen point to the shared cultural traits of many plains nations: not only hunting bison, living in tipis and transporting burdens on dog- or horse-drawn *travois*,[39] but also valuing status acquired through war honours, horse raiding and membership in ranked societies. 'These commonalities', they write, 'allow a generalized overview of Plains Indian culture to focus on shared themes of government, religion, warfare, and bison hunting.'[40] Such commonalities, I would argue, include the shared features of plains information practice. On the northern and southern plains such practices differed from one nation to another, and were sometimes specific to an individual nation; of necessity there existed a well-developed sign language for intertribal communication. At the same time, many cultural features that the plains peoples had in common also distinguished them from Native peoples in the central and eastern part of the continent, where there were very different ways of recording and transmitting information; Turtle-Following-His-Wife's letter would probably not have been legible at all to an Ojibwe or an Iroquois. Still, among the peoples of the plains the evident consistency in inscription practices invites investigation. It may be a result of their experience as hunter-gatherers exploiting the specific material resources of the western landscape, their extensive trade contacts, or their struggles with profound historical change. Yet documentable and in certain cases dateable evidence exists, and though none of it applies to every plains nation, it does confirm the presence of an overall pattern.

That pattern can only be sketched here, but it reveals the elements of a system. Throughout their history – indeed, until very recently –

plains inscriptional practices were gendered, and people's sense of what it was important to communicate was inflected accordingly: the highly developed material crafts of women were both decorative and symbolic; when they painted on hide they produced brilliant abstract patterns. Men concentrated on communicating their ritual and social activities.[41] In the earliest extant sources of plains inscription – the petroglyphs that appear widely across the western landscape – two subjects dominate: shamanistic images, possibly related to rituals such as the vision quest, and intertribal warfare. The former produced awe-inspiring and usually solitary iconic images, the latter outline figures, often with a characteristic triangular shape and V-neck, bearing round shields, and later riding the horses that would become one of the great Native pictorial subjects. Variations of this pictographic lexicon also appear on the buffalo robes and war shirts that remain to us from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the ledger books of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Beginning with Garrick Mallery, the adjective 'biographical' has been used to describe the narrative features of this material: the frequent grouping of figures involved in specific events; the action lines, especially hoof prints and arrow traces, that tell us the sequence of events; the tallies recording coups and captures; and the occasional name glyph. If the shamanistic pictographs are of solitary figures, iconic, the images that appear first on petroglyphs, then on painted robes, war shirts and eventually in ledger books, are not only profoundly social but syntactic/propositional, relating as they do the war deeds of the men who display them. Readings of these sequences are increasingly being made; see for example the stunning battle scene at Writing-on-Stone in Alberta,[42] and the superb Blackfoot robe (Fig. 8.3) in Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, explicated by Arni Brownstone.[43] Sequentiality, if not syntax proper, is also a major organising feature of the winter counts; year by year they report events affecting the whole community, old and young, men and women.[44] Despite variation from tribe to tribe and from one level of evidence to another, we are in the presence here of the same phenomenon, observed, as I noted earlier, by Baines in early Egypt, Zaghetto in Italy and Pohl in pre-conquest Mexico: the linking of images in recognizable syntactical relationships for the purpose of communication. By any reasonable standard the making of such communicative artefacts was culturally self-aware across a number of plains peoples, and indeed has remained so over at least two millennia.

Fig. 8.3 A pre-1850 Blackfoot war robe. 'One can identify 21 separate vignettes, depicting more than 80 war deeds, including the capture of some 39 weapons and the injuring or killing of 30 enemies. 52 hand motifs stand in for the robe's protagonist.' Brownstone, 'Blackfoot Robe,' P. 24. ROM2012_13013_3. (With permission of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM.)

We can situate such practices securely in the rich historical and technological context provided by the western plains, but to do so produces an awareness of process, rather than a straightforward historical chronology. Though we are dependent entirely on the survival of perishable material evidence to trace these changes, what we find is a continuous *practice* of material communication, a practice that shared certain features but took many forms. As Galen Brokaw writes of the variety of media and the challenging chronology associated with the Andean *khipu*, 'the formal affinity among these various media is phylogenic; that is to say, they exhibit synchronic relationships rooted in diachronic processes'.[45] So too does the evidence show that the practice of inscription described above was characteristic of the plains peoples as a group, but as individual hunter-gatherer societies they had to sustain a variety of different skills to inscribe, record and transmit their knowledge while on the move from

place to place. Over time such constant transformation forced them to experiment with different inscriptional materials.[46] Necessarily, they communicated using what was locally available or could be carried with them, but they were also technologically very alert, taking a sharp interest in artists like Karl Bodmer and George Catlin, who travelled west in the early nineteenth century.[47] Absorbed in the very specific subject matter of warfare, they exploited a shifting pictographic lexicon of body forms, action lines, tallies and name glyphs to communicate it, and as substrates they adapted to the rocks, animal skins and plant and mineral colours which local ecologies afforded them. Winter counts were kept first on hide and then on trade fabrics, and by the mid-nineteenth century we find the extraordinary ledger books, captured media in which warrior society members – among them Lakota, Crow, Kiowa and Cheyenne – collaborated to record their triumphs.[48] However, though materials and forms changed, the actual practice of inscription flourished, as tribal migration and warfare gave way not only to the coming of the horse, but to the arrival of English and American trading companies, European painters and entrepreneurs, American soldiers as warlike as themselves, accountants and their paper stocks and ledgers, and eventually the print culture of emerging settler communities. Contemporary Native American writers and artists are well aware of the tradition of practice that lies behind their own projects.[49]

Elsewhere in North America, Native inscription systems differed from practices on the plains, and their making and social purposes differed from each other. To take only three examples: the Ojibwe of the Great Lakes region usually painted their petroglyphs, kept secret the inscribed birch bark scrolls of their sacred Midewiwin or spiritual society, and had a sophisticated notational practice, including clan signatures (*doodemag*) that were still in use recently.[50] In Acadia (Nova Scotia) in about 1652, Father Gabriel Druillettes reported that the Mi'kmaq were eagerly writing down what he said with charcoal on birchbark. No information as to those inscriptions survives, but the hieroglyphs used today were developed in the 1670s by Father Chrestien LeClerq and almost certainly were based on them.[51] The Iroquois south of the Great Lakes transmitted urgent information in signs carved on trees (dendroglyphs, well reported but now lost to natural forces).[52] For greater permanence they also produced the famous shell-bead wampum belts, the most important of which were archived by the Onondagas at the capital of the Iroquois league near today's Syracuse (New York). Historically the belts were regarded by all

parties, white and native, as documents, and they remain powerful political instruments today. In each of these cases we see evidence, though of very different methods, replicating the state of inscription on the plains: an assumption of legibility, a practice of transmission and a dimension other than (or in some cases in addition to) the pictorial.

To plumb this record of inscription across many cultures requires solid empirical work on actual examples left to us by the past or still functioning today, but conducted in recognition that our questions arise in a Western culture of reading and inquiry. If our writing system is glottographic and our perspective strongly determined culturally, how should we go about studying this very different body of material? Not only the scripts of Native America but the documentary record of writing in general would be well served by the adoption of a new taxonomy of inscription. Archibald Hill recognised the challenge posed by the many different kinds of inscription that have existed, both alphabetic and non-alphabetic. The typology he developed is still language oriented, but the issue of how inscribed signs represent language is effectively re-situated in the larger category of utterance:

> It is often said that the primitive systems consisting of pictures are not properly writing systems at all. A classification such as that proposed here makes it possible to show that these systems are basically the same as the more advanced types. The purpose of writing can be said to be unique identification of an utterance. All systems leave some of the linguistic structure out of the record, since not all parts of linguistic structure are required for unique identification (...). *writing is a partial outline of an utterance, enabling the reader who has the proper background knowledge to identify the utterance uniquely, and to reconstruct a reasonably close parallel to it.* (My italics)[53]

'Proper background knowledge' stresses both the criterion of legibility and its relation to social understanding. As the reading expert David Olson has pointed out, even phonetic writing never renders what we say completely: any reader has to have the necessary context to identify what is written as this utterance and no other, and our interpretation needs only to be a close approximation of it.[54] To explore writing in this way opens up a much broader range of social and material evidence about how humans have communicated using inscribed signs, and indeed continue to do so.

In that exploration, I have found a kind of mental spreadsheet useful, into which data can be inserted as sign systems are plotted across a wide range of ancient and modern practices, investigating in each case the simple question 'What is it that a given society wants to communicate and how does it go about doing so?'[55] Among the headings I use are 'Substrate', 'Culture of Group', 'Features of Notation', 'Graphic Features', 'Functioning of the System' and 'Social History of the System'. Here are some sample questions from a much longer list, drawn from published studies of sign systems in Africa, Australia, Canada, Asia and Central America.

- At what date was the artefact created?
- Is its substrate natural (geological or organic) or manufactured?
- Is the result monumental? Architectural? Portable?
- Is the society sedentary? Hunter-gatherer? Socially stratified?
- Are the signs glottographic, ideographic, logographic, semasiographic, mixed?
- Is a sign inventory available?
- What conditions for legibility are present and demonstrable?
- What evidence of syntax can be detected linking individual signs discursively?
- Is there evidence of more extensive coding?
- Are there repeated signs? Combined signs? Sign clusters?
- What is the direction of reading?
- Is there evidence of controlled format or palaeographic style across multiple artefacts?
- Is the existence of a scribal culture or continuity of transmission evident?
- Is it the society's intention to communicate, to record, to preserve?
- Who controls the culture of inscription and by what means: ritual, political, economic, scribal?
- Have alternative scripts been developed in opposition to that control?
- Did the system endure a colonial or *mestizo* period?
- Is there a history of resistance and/or loss?

And when we are finished plotting data, there are further questions we need to probe. Data alone cannot resolve the 'hard problem' of writing: marks may turn into icons, and icons become symbols, but how in fact does

an individual icon connect with another to create syntax, the propositional condition that produces discourse? Furthermore, in what way does this effect operate across cultures, which it seems to? And what is the relationship of any inscription system to a given culture's sense of 'the proper order of things', to its cosmology? For example, metaphors of writing and the book operate with extraordinary power in Western alphabetic culture, and we need to seek their parallels in other systems of material communication as well.

Such questions demand the broader canvas proposed in the 1990s by Roy Harris, who as it happens was a linguist. Harris argued for an 'integrational' – that is, a relational – account of writing systems, one taking into consideration the interactions between three factors: biomechanical, macrosocial and circumstantial.[56] The biomechanical addresses the physiological and neurological aspects of reading; the macrosocial considers what specific peoples have required of their communicative practices; and the circumstantial considers both technological and specifically historical developments. Approached in this way the Cheyenne Letter may seem simple, but it is not primitive. Rather, it demonstrates how in studying a sample inscription, using rigorously assembled data and the categories suggested by Harris, our understanding of non-alphabetic inscription can be unfolded. When we attempt this, a view of writing heavy with cultural prejudice and outdated theory finally gives way to a more inclusive understanding of an ancient and deeply humane activity: the recording and transmitting of our knowledge by the simple act of inscribing and interpreting legible marks on material objects. That is what Turtle-Following-His-Wife did when he wrote to Little-Man, what I do in composing this chapter, and what you do as well when you read it.

Notes

1. Garrick Mallery, *Picture-writing of the American Indians* (1888–89, reissued in two volumes), New York (Dover), 1972, pp. 363–364. (Mallery 1972) It is possible that the Letter was re-drawn for publication, and several remarks of Mallery in his section on Native name glyphs (1:445–460) indicate he was anxious that such images should be accurate.
2. Candace Greene (Smithsonian Institution), personal communication, 19 June 2015.
3. G. A. Dorsey, *The Cheyenne*, no place – probably Chicago (Field Columbian Museum Anthropological Series 9.1), 1905, p. 11.(Dorsey 1905).
4. Stephen Houston, 'Writing in early Mesoamerica,' in Stephen Houston, ed., *The first writing: script invention as history and process*, Cambridge, UK (Cambridge University Press), 2004, pp. 274–309

(Houston 2004); Frank Salomon, *The cord keepers: khipus and cultural life in a Peruvian village*, Durham, NC (Duke University Press), 2004 (Salomon 2004); Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in red and black*, Austin, TX (University of Texas Press), 2000 (Hill Boone 2000) and her *Their way of writing* Washington, DC (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection), 2011 (Boone 2011); Heidi Bohaker, '*Nindoodemag*: The significance of Algonquian kinship networks in the Eastern Great Lakes region 1600–1701,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 63:1, 2006, pp. 23–52 (Bohaker 2006) and her 'Indigenous histories and archival media in the early modern Great Lakes,' in *Colonial mediascapes: Sensory worlds of the early Americas*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover, Lincoln NE (University of Nebraska Press), 2014, pp. 99–137.(Cohen and Glover 2014).

5. Albertine Gaur, *A History of writing* (revised edition), New York (Cross River Press), 1992, p. 14.(Gaur 1992)
6. Paul Bouissac, 'Art or script? A falsifiable semiotic hypothesis,' *Semiotica* 100, 1994, p. 352. (Bouissac 1994).
7. 'Writing' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th edition, 1975), vol. 29, p. 985. Gelb was responsible for the initial systematic overview, pp. 982–989.
8. *The World's writing systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, New York (Oxford University Press), 1996, p. 3 (Daniels and Bright 1996).
9. John DeFrancis, *Visible speech: The diverse oneness of writing systems*, Honolulu (University of Hawaii Press), 1989, p. 47. (DeFrancis 1989).
10. Ibid., p. 35.
11. David Diringer, *Writing*, New York (Frederick Praeger) 1962, p. 13. (Diringer 1962).
12. Richard Sproat, 'A statistical comparison of written language and nonlinguistic symbol systems,' *Language* 90:2, June 2014, pp. 457–481 (Sproat 2014).
13. Barry B. Powell, *Writing: Theory and history of the technology of civilization*, Oxford (Wiley-Blackwell), 2009, pp. 23 and 36 (Powell 2009).
14. Geoffrey Sampson, *Writing systems* (second edition), Sheffield (Equinox), 2015, p. 22.(Sampson 2015).
15. Archibald A. Hill, 'The Typology of writing systems,' in *Papers in linguistics in honor of Léon Dostert*, ed. William A. Austin, The Hague (Mouton), 1967, pp. 92–99.(Hill 1967).
16. Gaur, *A History of writing*, p. 14.
17. James D. Keyser and Michael Klassen, *Plains Indian rock art*, Seattle (University of Washington Press) and Vancouver (University of British Columbia Press), 2001, Chapter 15, 'Biographic tradition,' pp. 224–256. (Keyser and Klassen 2001).
18. Powell, *Writing: Theory and history*, p. 36.

19. Kathryn E. Piquette and Ruth D. Woodhouse, 'Developing an approach to writing as material practice,' in *Writing as material practice: Substance, surface and medium*, ed. Piquette and Woodhouse, London (Ubiquity), 2013, pp. 1–13 (Piquette and Woodhouse 2013).
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22. John Baines, *Visual and written culture in ancient Egypt*, Oxford (Oxford University Press), 2007, pp. 131–140, especially p. 137(Baines 2007).
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27. Frank Salomon and Sabine Hyland, 'Graphic pluralism: Native American systems of inscription and the colonial situation', *Ethnohistory* 57:1, Winter 2010, p. 2.(Salomon and Hyland 2010).
28. Sproat, 'A statistical comparison,' p. 478.
29. Ruth Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, 'Art, authenticity, and the baggage of cultural encounter,' in *Unpacking culture: Arts and commodities in colonial and post-colonial worlds*, eds. Phillips and Steiner, Berkeley, CA (University of California Press), 1999, pp. 3–19 (Phillips and Steiner 1999).
30. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi, Baltimore (Johns Hopkins University Press), 1980, p. xvii.(Ginzburg 1980).
31. Candace Greene, 'Culture and meaning in Cheyenne ledger art,' in *Plains Indian drawings, 1865–1935: Pages from a visual history*, ed. Janet Berlo, New York (Harry N. Abrams for The American Federation of Arts and the Drawing Center), 1996, p. 26.(Greene 1996).

32. On name glyphs see Mallery, *Picture-writing*, pp. 445–460; Keyser and Klassen, *Plains Indian rock art*, p. 266; Black Elk and John G. Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks,* Lincoln, NE (University of Nebraska Press), 2014, plates 2a and 2b (Elk and Niehardt 2014).
33. Greene, 'Culture and Meaning,' p. 29.
34. Renate Schukies, *Red Hat: Cheyenne blue sky maker and keeper of the sacred* arrows, Münster (Lit Verlag), 1993, p. 86 (Schukies 1993); for the status of Arrow-Keeper see Peter J. Powell, *Sweet medicine*, Norman, OK (University of Oklahoma Press), 1969, vol. 2, pp. 486 and 875–895.(Powell 1969).
35. We can only speculate why the substantial sum of 53 dollars was specified. Little-Man needed funds for the journey, which might have taken a few weeks on horseback, and possibly longer if he had to transfer from one to another of the emerging new railway lines. Or on leaving home he may have been instructed to bring certain commodities on his return. The computation most likely falls into the 'historic standard of living' category; see http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php (accessed 9 October 2015).
36. A warrior 'counted coup' by touching an enemy during the fray; this was considered a much more daring and courageous act than merely killing him.
37. Evan M. Maurer, 'Robe' [Paris: Musée du quai Branly 71.1886.17.1], in *The Plains Indians: artists of earth and sky*, ed. Gaylord Torrence, Paris (Torrence 2014), p. 94, and see plate 95.
38. *A Lakota war book from the Little Big Horn: The pictographic 'Autobiography of Half Moon',* ed. Castle McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA (Houghton Library of the Harvard Library and Peabody Museum Press), 2013, pp. 49–68. (McLaughlin 2013).
39. Tipi: the characteristic conical hide dwelling or teepee of the plains; *travois*: a kind of sledge made of two poles joined by a frame and drawn by an animal.
40. Keyser and Klassen, *Plains Indian rock art*, p. 59.
41. John C. Ewers, *Plains Indian painting: A description of an aboriginal American art*, Stanford, CA (Stanford University Press), 1939) p. 7 (Ewers 1939), an important early study with many black-and-white illustrations. A recent exhibition catalogue with a number of fine colour reproductions of inscribed plains artefacts is Torrence, *The Plains Indians: artists of earth and sky*.
42. Figure 14.31, in Keyser and Klassen, *Plains Indian rock art,* p. 251.
43. Arni Brownstone, 'Blackfoot Robe,' *Every object has a story: Extraordinary Canadians celebrate the Royal Ontario Museum*, ed. J. Macfarlane, Toronto (Royal Ontario Museum), 2014, pp. 24–30 (Brownstone 2014a).
44. Christina E. Burke, 'Waniyetu Wówapi: An introduction to the Lakota winter count tradition,' in *The Year the stars fell*, ed. Candace S. Greene

and Russell Thornton, Washington, DC (Smithsonian National Museum) and Lincoln, NE (University of Nebraska Press), 2007, pp. 1–4 (Burke 2007); Barbara Risch, 'A Grammar of time: Lakota winter counts, 1700–1900,' *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 24.2, 2000, pp. 23–48.(Risch 2000).

45. Galen Brokaw, 'Semiotics, aesthetics, and the Quechua concept of *Quilca*,' in Cohen and Glover, *Colonial mediascapes*, p. 191.
46. Ewers, *Plains Indian painting*, pp. 3–7.
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48. McLaughlin, *A Lakota war book,* p. 61 and *passim*.
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52. Fred E. Coy, Jr., 'Native American dendroglyphs of the eastern woodlands,' in Diaz-Granados and Duncan, *The Rock-art of Eastern North America*, pp. 3–16.
53. Hill, *The Typology of Writing Systems*, pp. 92 and 94–5, my italics.
54. David Olson, *The World on Paper*, Cambridge, UK (Cambridge University Press), 1994, especially pp. 261–265.(Olson 1994)
55. The development of a full database, with images, would not be impossible; an example is InscriptiFact, which focuses on inscribed objects of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean: http://www.inscriptifact.com/index.shtml A similar comprehensive project, though not specifically oriented towards inscriptions, is GRASAC, The Great Lakes Research Alliance for the Study of Aboriginal Arts and Cultures: https://grasac.org/gks/gks_about.php.
56. Roy Harris, *Signs of writing*, London (Routledge), 1995, p. 22.(Harris 1995).

Germaine Warkentin is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Toronto, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. She taught, does research and publishes across several disciplines: English (Renaissance and Early Canadian), Italian (the vernacular writings of Petrarch) and History (Early Canada). She is currently working on a study of the material book and its relation to the structures and development of the brain and social communication. Among her numerous editions is the recent *Collected Writings* (two volumes) of the seventeenth-century explorer of North America Pierre-Esprit Radisson (2012, 2014).

CHAPTER 9

The Scribal Culture of Children: A Fragmentary History

Verónica Sierra Blas

Childhood does not have, nor can it have, its own clearly defined times and spaces: childhood inhabits every era and it is always being written and rewritten everywhere.

Childhood, Writing and History

In the opening chapter of Dominique Julia's *La scrittura bambina: Interventi e ricerche sulle pratiche di scrittura dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza*, which is unquestionably an indispensable reference point for the study of the written memory of childhood, the author pointed out the need to rescue childhood writings from oblivion in order to allow children to take their rightful place in History.[1] Although more than two decades have passed since Julia first issued this suggestive challenge to historians, it remains relevant today. It has been amply demonstrated that it is no use our trying to recovery the history of childhood if we do not include among our research materials the documents produced by children themselves. Only in them can we find their traces, only in them can we hear the true echo of their voices.

V. Sierra Blas (✉)
Department of History, University of Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, Spain
e-mail: veronica.sierra@uah.es

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The social history of scribal culture,[2] together with the history of education, has become one of the flagships of this rescue mission, launched in the 1990s and continuing today. As Julia suggested, it is a question of lending some dignity to sources which even today are still to a great extent unfamiliar, and which specialists continue to regard with undue suspicion. There remain those today writing history for whom documents written by children are neither as valid nor as interesting nor as trustworthy as those produced by adults. There is certainly an urgent need to reflect on the conditions of production, diffusion and conservation of the written testimonies of childhood, to investigate their discourses, practices and representations, to identify their characteristics, uses, functions and significance, in order to demonstrate with evidence in hand their existence, their value, their usefulness and their necessity in our reconstructions of the past.

The scant attention paid by historians to date to documents produced by children and in childhood cannot be attributed merely to a lack of interest or to persistent ignorance. Rather, as Egle Becchi has argued, the marginal historical space to which children's written testimony has been relegated is closely connected with two elements that we should not overlook. On the one hand, children are infrequent writers, and they rarely leave us traces of their lives, their experience and the way they think and feel, which means that childhood is a vital stage of life in the sense that it lies at the most rudimentary level of scribal production; and on the other, this type of material is rarely preserved in public archives, due partly to its fragility and ephemeral nature – to which I will return later. Above all we must cite the indifference shown towards the documents of childhood by those who direct the 'politics of memory',[3] who have not considered and still do not consider that they deserve to survive through time, thus provoking their destruction, which is as unpardonable as it is irrevocable.[4] To be fair, we must not forget to add to these destructive effects of public policy the fact that the conservation of childhood writings has been extremely sketchy. Only rarely have families preserved them in private homes, because they have not been regarded – and hardly anybody has ever advised them otherwise – as having any importance or significance apart from whatever sentimental or anecdotal value may have been invested in them.

The enormous difficulty of locating childhood material in either public or private archives has led many scholars to the conclusion that the scribal history of childhood is to a large extent an 'impossible history'.[5]

Experience, however, has also shown that 'the documents exist, if we take the trouble to look for them'[6] and that, faced with the indisputable scarcity of direct sources, we can always turn to secondary sources to give us an idea of the writing practices of childhood and infancy in historical time, whether we think of ordinary or extraordinary writings, school-generated or extra-curricular writings; whether we see them through official eyes, as we do with administrative or normative texts, or through a more personal lens by means of oral testimonies, photographs, literary and artistic works or ego-documents – such as memoirs, diaries, autobiographies of schoolteachers recollecting their professional life and of adults recalling their own childhood[7] – which all provide excellent images of the 'physical and psychological landscapes of childhood'.[8]

The Written Memory of Childhood and Infancy

If the research accomplished so far on the scribal culture of childhood has taught us anything, it is that the further back in time we travel, the more complicated it becomes to unearth documents written by children.[9] Between antiquity and the middle of the nineteenth century, the scribal history of childhood is, and can only ever be, very partial, as indeed is history itself, since the only trail we can follow during this extended period to get closer to children's written production is the one left by children belonging to political, socio-cultural and economic elites, as these strata were the only ones which at that time enjoyed the privilege of literacy. Reading and writing were inescapable imperatives for these 'chosen ones', if they were going to occupy the places reserved for them in the world.

Scholars have shown great interest in the documents produced by those children who grew up to become great and famous individuals, whose names figure in our history textbooks and will continue to do so. This applies, for example, to the writings of Marie Bonaparte, the great-granddaughter of Lucien Bonaparte, Emperor Napoleon I's younger brother. In her *Cahiers de bêtises* (Books of Stupidities), five notebooks written by the princess between the ages of 7 and 10 (1889–1892), she combined text and drawings in both English and German, although neither was her mother tongue. She noted everything that happened in her daily life, not only to herself but also to the people around her (her father, her grandmother, her tutor, her governess and the palace gardener, among others). She described her dreams and the games she played, she wrote stories, letters, poems and short dramatic works, as well as keeping a record of her

reading, notes on the lessons she had learned and the homework demanded of her, and making notes on the various daily activities in which she participated.[10]

As we have just seen, the future ruling classes, the sons of aristocrats (and to a lesser extent their daughters too), and in a later period the children of the bourgeoisie, produced exercise books and diaries which customarily included details of the activities associated with their education and with the recreation time of an 'exemplary childhood'.[11] Yet letters are undoubtedly the documents which historians have most frequently drawn upon in the complex task of reconstructing the world of infancy and childhood in different historical eras, not only for their heuristic value, but also simply because epistolary writing dominated writing and communication practices up until the middle of the twentieth century.[12] Given the special status of correspondence, letters take on a leading role in every sphere, including that of conservation, since letters comprise the majority of the documents that have been preserved, and therefore their quantity and quality allow us to follow the traces of childhood.[13]

Letter writing was considered an essential element of courtly education and sociability, so it is not surprising that correspondence assumed primordial importance in the daily lives of the children of the elites, especially when they were separated from their parents. They had to keep their parents informed of their academic progress, report on their behaviour and their current state of health, as well as being obliged to show, in well-formed handwriting, the respect, deference and obedience due to their elders, especially at certain times of year. These were filial duties of the first order, as we can appreciate from this letter written on 4 October 1867 by the future King Alfonso XII of Spain to his father, Prince Don Francisco de Asís of Bourbon, congratulating him on his 45th birthday:

> My dear beloved Papa:
>
> If the fond affection (*entrañable cariño*) of a respectful, loving and obedient son could ever be enough to convey to you on this day all the joy and satisfaction that I wish for you, nothing would please me more than to contribute thus to your complete happiness.
>
> But since this is not possible, because I know that other thoughts occupy your mind, please receive, beloved Papa, this affectionate memento that I am devoting to you, with my wish to see you glad and satisfied on this birthday, which has inspired your ever-loving son, Alfonso.[14]

Letters were not only an essential pedagogical aid in the upbringing of aristocratic and bourgeois children, they were also a fundamental instrument of control and effective vehicles of the 'good manners' which the children of the ruling classes were obliged constantly to display, to distinguish themselves from all those who did not form part of their inner circle. The courtly tradition, furthermore, imposed a duty to preserve letters, since they constituted, along with other family and private writings, records and symbols of the lineage and therefore of the power of wealthy families. One who kept faith with this tradition, for example, was the Infanta Catalina Micaela, who kept every single one of the letters she exchanged with her father, King Philip II of Spain. Another was the French *dauphin*, the future King Louis XIII, who preserved all his correspondence with his father Henri IV, between 1603, when he was no more than 3 years old and wrote his first letter, and 1610.[15]

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, and above all after the first decades of the twentieth century, the exponential rise in literacy levels, the expansion of state primary education, which started to become compulsory in Europe from the later part of the nineteenth century onwards, and a sequence of historical events involving massive movements of people (world wars, transoceanic and intercontinental migrations) all brought about a proliferation of children's writings. All children, from the minority who came from wealthy families to the children of workers and the lower classes, now had and seized the chance to gain access to the world of writing, even if they did so to different degrees and in different circumstances, either out of their own free will or compelled by others, out of pure necessity or just for pleasure.[16]

Consequently, together with the documents produced and preserved by the ruling classes of preceding periods, the documents of lower-class children could now be produced and preserved for the first time, although with rather different aims, objectives and means. This production and conservation of children's documentation of a popular origin in the contemporary world was inseparable from at least two phenomena. Firstly, we must cite the importance which the school system started to attach to ordinary writings at this exact moment. Secondly, the re-evaluation of children's writings played a significant role just as writing practices began to figure more prominently among the principles guiding some of the most important and revolutionary arguments for pedagogical renewal in the contemporary era.[17]

Learning to write everyday documents was incorporated into the school curriculum. Knowing how to draw up household or business accounts, to issue receipts, to compile a diary or a memory book, to draft letters in a wide variety of genres or to fill in application forms or official requests acquired, in this way, ever greater prominence in schools. Writing (and reading) all these documents became essential in the performance of activities and tasks connected to the conduct of daily life outside school, whether at home or at work.[18]

Calligraphy was now thrown out, and by the same token instructors abandoned their previous obsession with making children produce examples of magnificent penmanship, by teaching them how to write different kinds of characters in a style that was now practically obsolete and only remotely applicable to daily life. Instead, a substantial part of children's time came to be taken up in an apprenticeship in composing private documents, as reflected in many of the school exercise books which have survived from this period, in which we can observe many exercises of this kind.[19] A good illustration of this 'scholarisation of ordinary writing'[20] is the appearance in the same period of teaching materials designed especially for this purpose, among them the so-called *Lecturas de manuscritos* (Manuscript Readings), defined by Antonio Viñao Frago as books 'in which the letters appear identical or similar to those achieved normally with the pen'.[21] These manuals contained an infinite number of model documents for use in everyday life, above all in letters, so it is no coincidence that even today correspondence constitutes the popular communication medium par excellence[22] (Fig. 9.1).

Besides the institutionalisation of everyday writing within the school system, the other phenomenon which greatly contributed to the growing production and conservation of children's writing in the contemporary era was, as I have previously indicated, the emergence of various new currents of pedagogical theory, which succeeded in incorporating certain modes of ordinary (as opposed to supervised) writing practices into the principal axis of their educational programme. This was true, among other cases, of the Freinetian School, or of the better-known 'Pedagogy of Idealism' of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice. These new theories of education and apprenticeship, simultaneously with new educational agendas, brought with them a new conception of writing. As Maite Alvarado has made clear, they further brought about a progressive and substantial transformation of the pedagogical discourse on writing, going beyond the dominant and highly disciplined rhetorical model which had prevailed for centuries in the

Fig. 9.1 Cover of Antonio Bori y Fontestá, *Manuscrito metódico,* Barcelona (Imprenta y librería de Montserrat), 1909. (Archivo de Escrituras Cotidianas, University of Alcalá de Henares, Fondo Escolar, FE 1.2.)

traditional schoolroom, to locate themselves at a new conjuncture which promoted freedom, spontaneity and natural expression, at last letting childhood speak for itself. As Alvarado wrote:

> The new pedagogy of expression and creativity enabled children to begin to write about their own experiences and impressions, about what they knew, about the world that surrounded them, about what they felt and desired.[23]

This new role given to personal documents in the writing apprenticeship and in the formation of the personality of the individual child boosted the production of journals, notebooks, letters, bulletins, periodicals and so on, first of all in the schoolroom and subsequently outside school. As a result, teachers, parents and students invested a symbolic value in all these materials which until then had been lacking, and they began at last to attach some importance to their preservation in educational institutions, which were trying to construct their own historical memory. Significantly, this was just the moment when school archives and pedagogical museums were flourishing, usually centred around the annual exhibition and celebration of school work, lending reality to some of the ideas formulated long before by thinkers of the stature of François Rabelais, Juan Amós Comenio, Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi. Preservation was now also considered important in private homes, in family archives, as priceless and unique records of a vital stage of life, namely childhood, which was now understood as a key to identity formation. It therefore became necessary to leave some trace of it behind to be re-visited in the future.[24]

The burgeoning output of this kind of material produced by and for the school, as well as beyond the school's institutional boundaries, and the new interest shown in conserving it as a model, a memory or a justification, at an institutional as well as a personal level, has allowed scholars access to numerous written testimonies from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thanks to them we have been able to undertake the difficult but necessary task of writing the history of the 'missing link'[25] of children's writings. We pursue this project even though the majority of documents which have come down to us are the work of almost anonymous children. We can hardly ever manage to find out much more than their names and, if we are lucky, their geographical origin and age, and we do so even though the majority have been produced within their school environment. Those

documents which speak of children's lives outside their role as dedicated and hardworking students are, in contrast, very few.

A Fragmentary History

Davide Montino flatly asserted in many of his publications that the history of children's writings could only be a 'history of fragments',[26] and that the first job for historians trying to reconstruct it was no more nor less than to go out and identify, gather together and accumulate these scattered and disparate fragments, so as to give them some shape and meaning. The fact, however, that children's written memory may be fragmentary does not necessarily mean that the role of children throughout history is condemned to be so too. From our own, more distant perspective, we know how childhood has been capable of re-inventing itself step by step, and how, thanks to children's writings and their ability to represent themselves and to their way of comprehending the world, children have continued to portray themselves in the presence of adults as active subjects who participate in, shape, challenge or transform history from the viewpoint of their own reality, as argued by Nicholas Stargardt, Juri Meda and Antonio Gibelli, among others.[27]

Every testimony written by a child is, as Emanuele Banfi and Daniele Foraboschi have put it, an 'unrepeatable instant' in their childhood.[28] Hence the importance of being capable of seeing every piece in the jigsaw puzzle of the child's individuality and uniqueness, and at the same time of imagining it as a single part of a greater whole, always trying to make it fit with other pieces which are similar (or not) in order to construct a collective history. In so doing, we have to take into account the fact that children's writings present a series of common characteristics which are all their own – although children's writings differ enormously – and which recur in every historical period. We must evaluate their true dimensions in the contexts of the different chronological periods in which they were produced, the unequal social status of their authors, their gender and their different levels of literary competence. These common characteristics can be summarised in the following five categories:

1) The first is the ritual character of children's writings. We have to remember at all times that we are confronting writing that is instrumentalised, regulated, disciplined, and which only on a few occasions succeeds in breaking free completely, because it is always dictated by rigid and well-entrenched norms. School students were powerfully

conditioned not only by the circumstances surrounding every 'writing act'[29] (usually supervised and directed by an adult), but also by the graphic models which their writings were supposed to emulate. Each writing exercise entailed compliance with specific graphic demands which were to be learned through practice and which varied according to the typology of the document in hand.[30] For example, taking dictation would never be written in the same way as writing a composition[31] (Figs. 9.2 and 9.3). Similarly, one would hardly write a letter in the same style as a diary. Before we even read a single line, simply the pagination of the text and the structure of the document are enough to tell us what kind of writing exercise we are considering. All these normative limits are generally imposed, legitimated and canonised by formal schooling, and hence they can be grasped to perfection in school books and exercises, and they are transposed into daily life and remain relevant in daily contexts. Children know that whether they are sitting at a desk or not, all that they wish to communicate must of necessity incorporate certain formal, textual, graphic, grammatical, discursive and rhetorical coordinates which define how, when and to whom they should write, what can be and should be written and what should not.

2) The second feature is the spontaneity and potential for transgression inherent in manuscript production. In spite of the limits outlined in the previous section, we should not forget that there is always something in children's texts which reveals a personality and shows us their ability to transgress established norms. Thus at any given historical moment they may violate the restrictions imposed by those who possess 'scribal power'.[32] Children's writing is quite capable of subverting and going beyond the rules imposed by schools and adults, which is clearly demonstrated, for example, by some of the marginal writing practices which develop in the classroom itself (secret notes, cribs etc.), by children's correspondence (whenever it takes the form of a horizontal exchange of letters, that is to say between equals, from child to child, outside the scope of adult surveillance) or by the 'politically incorrect' writing exercises (graffiti) in very visible public spaces which were certainly never designed as writing surfaces.

3) The third point focuses on the linguistic peculiarities presented by children's texts. These must be seen in the context of the anthropological processes that occur during childhood, which cast the child as the main actor in an important rite of passage leading him or her out of the oral world into the world of writing.[33] The scribal productions of children introduce their

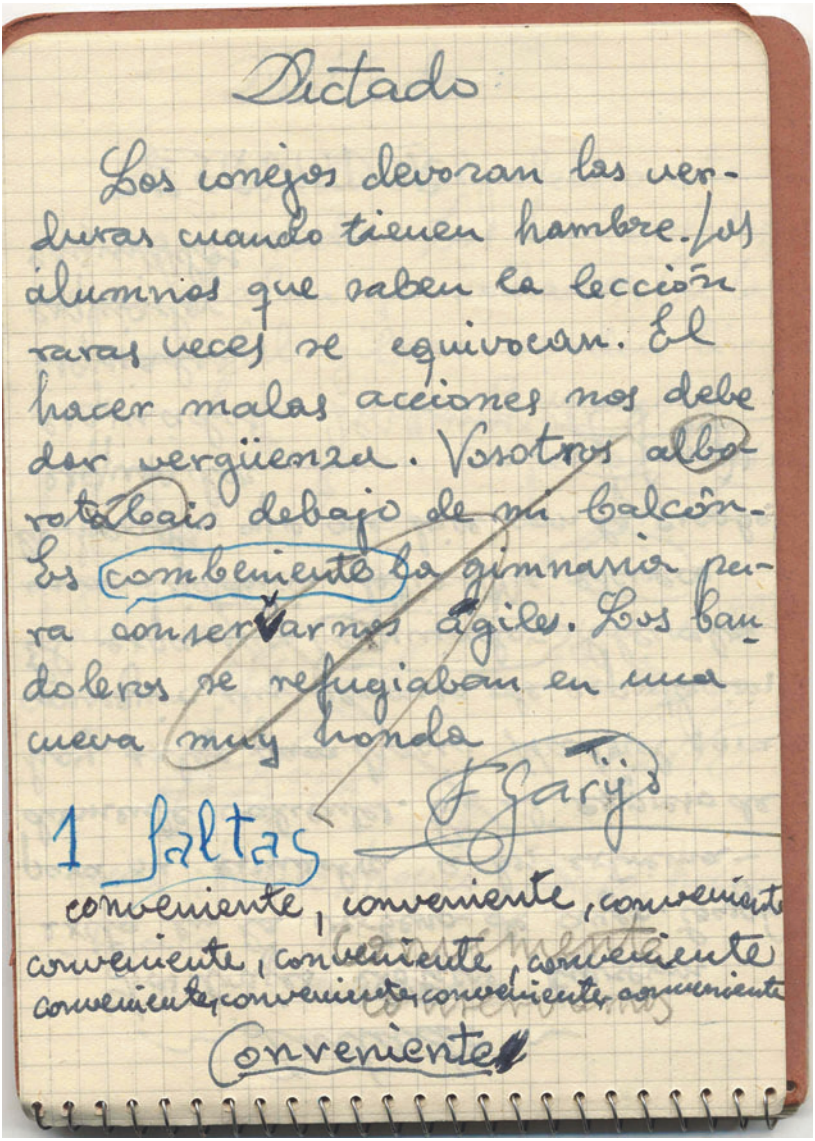
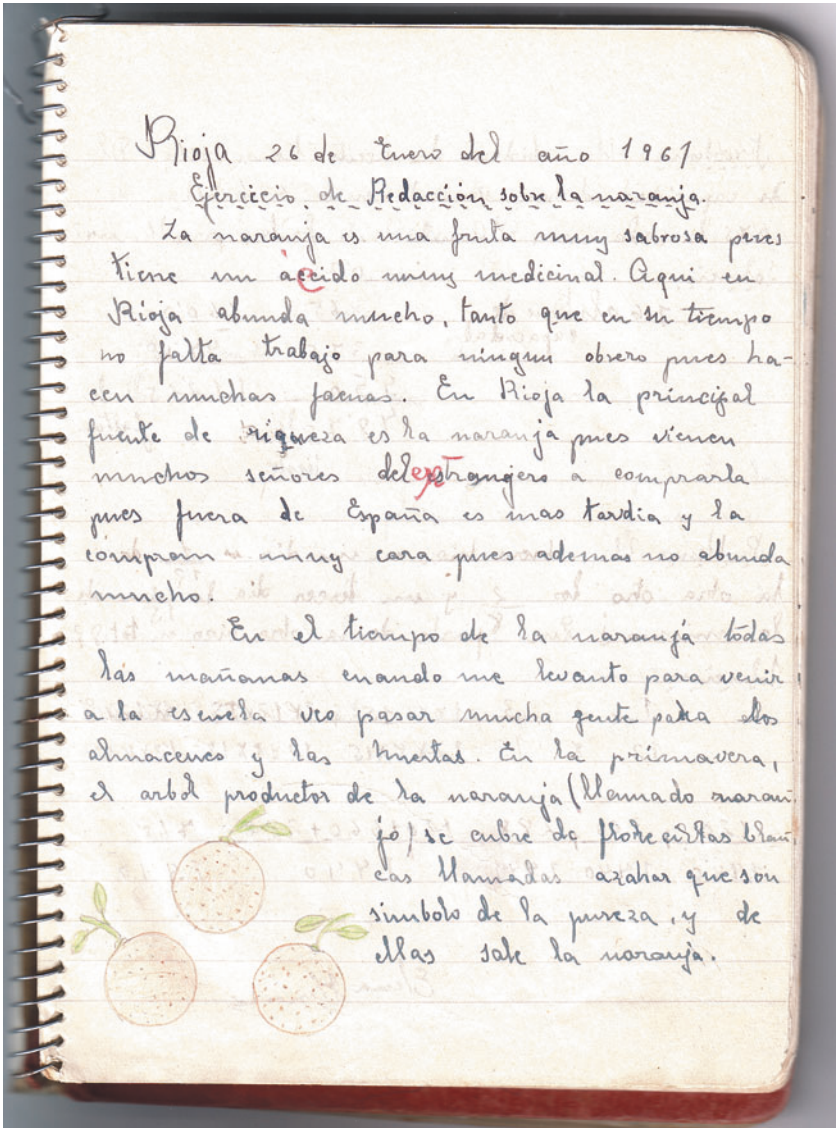


Fig. 9.2 Dictation exercise. School exercise book of Francisco M. Garijo, Berlanga de Duero (Soria), 1952. (Archivo de Escrituras Cotidianas, University of Alcalá de Henares, Fondo Escolar, FE 2.31.)



Rioja 26 de Enero del año 1961

Ejercicio de Redaccion sobre la naranja.

La naranja es una fruta muy sabrosa pues tiene un acido muy medicinal. Aqui en Rioja abunda mucho, tanto que en su tiempo no falta trabajo para ningun obrero pues hacen muchas faenas. En Rioja la principal fuente de riqueza es la naranja pues vienen muchos señores delextrangero a comprarla pues fuera de España es mas tardia y la compran muy cara pues ademas no abunda mucho.

En el tiempo de la naranja todas las mañanas cuando me levanto para venir a la escuela veo pasar mucha gente para los almacenes y las huertas. En la primavera, el arbol productor de la naranja (llamado naranjo) se cubre de flores blancas llamadas azahar que son simbolo de la pureza, y de ellas sale la naranja.

Fig. 9.3 Composition exercise. School exercise book of Elena Hernández, Rioja (Almería), 26 January 1961. (Museo de la Escritura Popular de Terque (Almería).)

authors as future members of literate adult society. At the same time, however, they reveal the problems that children encounter at this stage in understanding the nature of their linguistic environment.[34] In their attempts at comprehension, which is always an active process, they formulate and construct their own hypotheses, try to grasp the rules, test the expectations and, as Emilia Ferreiro, Clotilde Pontecorvo, Nadja Ribeiro Moreira and Isabel García Hidalgo have emphasised, they improvise their own grammar. Their grammar does not turn out to be a literal copy of adult models, but instead forms an original combination of principles which can and should be interpreted as a reconstruction of the language itself.[35]

4) Fourthly, children's writings are fragile and vulnerable. They are fragile because they are essentially ephemeral; that is to say, they are generally created without any intention of preservation. Either they fulfil a very practical and immediate purpose, as happens at school, or else they challenge the established order of things, they exist outside the scope of adult supervision and as a result they are considered 'dangerous', in the sense – and this is very clear – that they are not permissible or that this kind of writing can incur punishment or reprimand.[36] Moreover, children's writings are vulnerable material because they are easily manipulated, given that they are continually exposed to the influences that adults exercise over them. In addition, these influences might effectively lend the writing objectives that were not its own, sometimes quite substantially transforming its original function. This is the case, to take one example among many, of the school work and exercise books which end up being produced as evidence on which teachers themselves are evaluated, and which today accumulate in thousands and thousands of personnel files.[37] A similar case is the writings and sketches produced by children for therapeutic purposes in times of war, which are later exhibited in public and may even be sold at auction to raise money for armies in combat, or for the propagation in civilian circles of the ideas defended by belligerent armies in order to win support for one cause or another.[38] In fact, in contrast to what happens with adult writing, which attempts to hide the presence of censorship whenever it exists, or else to create mechanisms for counteracting it, children's writing instead makes it very visible. Censorship indeed constitutes one of the many limitations and influences to which children's writing is constantly subject, and hence it is inherent in its very nature.[39]

5) Fifthly and lastly, children's written testimony is very selective. Children's writings are to a great extent 'chosen writings' because, with a few exceptions, they have been selected where others have been rejected.

Researchers therefore have an absolute need to discover the motives for each selection if they want to avoid coming to erroneous conclusions. As a result, the children's texts that are available to us today are usually those that present the highest quality and the best talent (for instance, outstanding classwork), those that gave most pleasure or that attracted most attention to their authors, addressees or 'owners' (whether children, parents, schoolteachers, collectors or archivists), or those that have been produced at certain key moments in life (like congratulations, invitations or commemorations). They might even represent historical landmarks, occasionally becoming symbols of particular historical events. One fairly exceptional example of this is the diary written by the 11-year-old Tanya Savicheva during the siege of Leningrad in the Second World War. Compiled between 28 December 1941 and 13 May 1942, and consisting of no more than nine pages, her diary was discovered among the ruins of their house by her sister Nina, who passed it on to a journalist at *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. It was first introduced as evidence at the Nuremburg war crimes tribunal, and was subsequently engraved in stone on the monument erected in Tanya's memory at Shatki, where she died in 1972. It is now exhibited at the St Petersburg Historical Museum:

> Zhenia died on 28 December 1941, at 12:30.
> Grandma died on 25 January 1942, at three o'clock in the afternoon.
> Leka died on 17 March 1942, at five o'clock in the morning.
> Uncle Vasia died on 13 April 1942, at two hours after midnight.
> Uncle Lesha on 10 May 1942 at four o'clock in the afternoon.
> Mama on 13 May 1942 at 7.30 a.m.
> The Savichevs died.
> Everybody died.
> Only Tanya is left.[40]

Conclusion

Studies in the history of the scribal culture of children have largely followed the same trajectory as the historiography of the book and of reading. Many studies have concentrated up until now on children's literature and children's newspapers, and also on school textbooks, but very few scholars have been interested in researching the reading practices of children or in configuring the child as an active reader.[41] Similarly, in the

domain of research into the history of writing, it is possible to find many contributions on the teaching tools and manuals used throughout the centuries to teach children to write (both inside and outside school), but, in spite of all that has been achieved to date, scholarly contributions which concentrate on the child as a writer and on his or her written production remain few and far between.

This chapter is therefore conceived as an invitation, as were in their time the extremely distinguished works I have cited throughout this chapter. They invite us to step out onto the multiple and exciting paths that children's writings open up for us; the journey becomes compulsory when the aim is to make childhood visible and to recognise it as a subject for historical study. These roads have already been well mapped out, although only a few travellers have actually made the trip. As we travel down them we are obliged to adopt a multi-disciplinary perspective. One of the keys of this work will lie to some degree in our ability to test whether the five characteristics listed above are applicable, and in what form and to what extent, in every corpus of texts under investigation. We must bear in mind the many hazards that lie in wait for the student of children's writings, which remain always marginalised, liminal and hybrid. For century after century, quite independently of their material support, their authors and their contents, there has existed, still exists and will continue to exist a tension between what is permitted and what is discouraged, between the spontaneous and the supervised, between play and duty, innocence and manipulation, the public and the private. In the last resort, children's writings constitute a site of convergence and of conflict between the plans of adults and the world as seen and understood through the mentality and life experience of children. Their true richness and uniqueness lie in this struggle between opposing forces.

Notes

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Verónica Sierra Blas is Professor of History at the University of Alcalá de Henares. Together with Antonio Castillo, she coordinates SIECE (Interdisciplinary Seminar for the Study of Scribal Culture) and RedAIEP (Network of Archives and Researchers on Popular Writing). Her most recent published works include *Palabras huérfanas: Los niños y la Guerra Civil* (2009), on the correspondence of children evacuated overseas during the Spanish Civil War; and *Cartas presas: La correspondencia carcelaria en la Guerra Civil y el franquismo* (2016), on prison writings. She is the Curator of the travelling exhibition *Entre España y Rusia: Recuperando la historia de los Niños de la Guerra*.

CHAPTER 10

Policing Writing in the City, 1852–1945: The Invention of Scriptural Delinquency

Philippe Artières

Introduction

In the last few decades, the vocabulary and toolkit we use to describe writing have drawn heavily on ethnographic research. The two research projects directed by Daniel Fabre turned the 'site of writing' and certain 'writing objects' into subjects of ethnographic inquiry: adolescent girls' diaries, household papers, the writings of shepherds and even farmers' notebooks.[1] A new focus on the anthropology of our own society opened up the field both to the study of new and low-prestige contemporary inscriptions, and also to the study of quite undistinguished writers. The notion of the 'ordinary' applies to the widening of the lens in both these directions. The ordinary not only consists of what is non-literary, it also describes what is produced by non-professional writers. Similarly, a whole current of applied anthropology is involved in 'literacy studies', which use illiteracy as a gateway into the study of writing. Researchers engage in large-scale qualitative and quantitative research in order to understand how individuals or groups engage with writing (in the form of, for example, the press, administrative forms and even books).

P. Artières (✉)
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France
e-mail: ph.artieres@wanadoo.fr

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This chapter adopts a different approach. My aim is not to draw up a typology or even a broad picture of writing objects and practices. Instead, I focus on 'writing moments', by analysing the social mechanisms in which they are embedded. By 'writing moment' I mean a sequence of time during which writing objects and practices are articulated. The focus is not confined to the place of writing, or to the connecting chain between writers and readers; it also incorporates an element of memory, and sometimes it also has an archaeological dimension.

Since the study is located within contemporary history, our descriptions of writing must rely on the particular sources mobilised. In them we see not only how writing moments are classified, but also the terms used by social actors themselves in writing about writings. Especially helpful here is the research carried out by sociologists of work, particularly that produced in and around the journal *Langage et Société*.[2] To describe a 'writing moment' is to study how several different writing practices engage with each other, how these practices fit with the known uses of writing by the relevant social actors in the past, and in what terms their writings are described by other actors who are themselves producers of writings.

It will inevitably be objected that the scope of such a description is virtually infinite; but since I am committed to working from a corpus of archival documents, the material has its own natural limits. Furthermore, since I am adopting a kind of retrospective ethnography, I can change the focus and I am not compelled to describe the totality of the moment in detailed close-up; instead, certain scenes can be isolated and framed for comparison with other contemporary or past moments.

The thinking of Michel Foucault is extremely valuable in this approach. The theme of writing, it will be recalled, runs right through his *Discipline and Punish* (which first appeared in French in 1975), from the writings of executed criminals to prisoners' tattoos and the graffiti in the juvenile reformatory at Mettray.[3] Foucault suggests a new type of panopticon, in which the observer no longer scrutinises the prisoner's behaviour in his cell, but appoints himself as the reader of his writings (brief notes, inscriptions, diaries). The prison warden's observations no doubt form the pre-history of the 'policing of writing'. The prison became a laboratory where techniques were first tested and objects discovered.[4] Graffiti are unquestionably the most disturbing corpus, but also the one in most urgent need of decoding.

How did writing become a 'dangerous' practice?[5] How did inscriptions, mere words traced on a surface, manage to arouse acute social fear? No doubt the training of urban Parisian policemen (*gardiens de la paix*), which

was organised in the 1880s to include lessons both on handwriting and also on reading, had something to do with what we may call the birth of the 'policing of writing'. From now on, policemen and *gendarmes* throughout the country were expected not just to be there, imposing the authority of their uniform wherever they were present, but also to become readers.[6] This involved a number of tasks. The police agent had to become an observer of the social situations developing in front of him, but at the same time he had to interpret clues, and in particular he had to be capable of reading the writings which he came across. He was expected to be an active reader, and capable of using this skill to prevent disorder. In this way the policeman was transformed into an epigraphist of a very special kind: his eyes now scoured the spaces of the city for the least sign of writing.

Inventing a New Reader

Commissioner Dayre's *Petit manuel de police à l'usage des inspecteurs et agents de police* (Short Police Manual for the Use of Inspectors and Police Agents), which appeared in Paris in 1877, included five articles dealing with the surveillance of writing in public areas.[7] The first was concerned with written forgeries, the second was about posters, the third discussed the dissemination of writings, the fourth was devoted to shop signs and the fifth focused on the authors of inscriptions, thus:

> Various forgeries. – (…) Public or genuine written forgeries, assumed to have been committed by public officials, are crimes listed and punishable under article 145 of the Penal Code.
>
> Public or genuine written forgeries, or of documents issued by banks and commercial establishments, committed by private individuals, are crimes listed and punishable under article 147 of the Penal Code.
>
> Forgeries in public writing constitute crimes listed and punishable under article 130 of the same Code.
>
> Posters. – Posters issued by public authorities must only be printed on white paper, and are free of stamp duty, as are posters for duly authorised regional competitions and mutual aid societies.
>
> Handwritten posters may be written on white paper.
>
> Posting writings concerning political events or treating political subjects is strictly prohibited (Law of 10 December 1830, art. 1).
>
> Any written poster exhibited in a public place, on walls, or on any form of construction, or even printed on cloth or displayed in any way whatsoever, will be liable to a poster duty (Law of July 1852, art. 50).

> Any poster displayed which does not contain the true name and address of the printer is an offence punishable by articles 283, 284, 285 and 286 of the Penal Code.
>
> Pedlars. – Pedlars (*colporteurs*) refers to individuals engaged in the sale of printed matter of any kind, such as books, geographical maps and images of any sort.
>
> This activity is subject to the regulations of the Law of 16 July 1849. Every pedlar must possess a personal authorisation, delivered by the Prefect of the department where he is itinerant, and his volumes, printed material and images of any sort, contained in his basket, must carry the prefecture's blue stamp of authority. To be without a permit is an offence, and unstamped material is in contravention of the law. In both cases, the police will seize the offending merchandise and escort the offender before the police commissioner (*commissaire*).
>
> Shop signs and signboards. – The police must enforce the municipal decree relative to shop signs and signboards and draw up reports of any infringements they encounter.
>
> Publicans, innkeepers, caterers, restaurant owners and all retailers who do not show a board or a tavern sign indicating their profession are committing an infringement of article 50 of the Law of 28 April 1816, punishable by article 471 no.15 of the Penal Code.
>
> All active *brasseries* must display a sign on which is written the word: 'Brasserie' – Same law, article 124.
>
> Inscriptions. – Any person drawing, engraving or tracing obscene or seditious inscriptions on the walls of buildings facing onto a public thoroughfare, is committing a crime listed by the Law of 17 May 1817.

Most of the legislation cited by these five articles was not new, but through them and under their influence the gaze of the urban policeman was being newly fashioned.[8] In fact, in the later part of the century, as Quentin Deluermoz has demonstrated, the work of the forces of order was subject to increasing constraint and regulation. In 1854, the municipal police of Paris had gone through a thoroughgoing reform aimed at improving and modernising its activities. The number of uniformed police in Paris was increased and they acquired a greater degree of mobility within the whole of the metropolitan area. The police were to embody the principle of order and they now obtained a new visibility. Deluermoz explains:

> The Prefecture expressly sought to construct the body of the police: because the man on the beat was its shop-window, his physical appearance had to be regulated. But the police also had to know how to use its own resources and

> it had to ensure that the policeman always acted as an agent of the institution. In a sense, therefore, the police body itself had to be policed.[9]

Stationed in an arrondissement, the policeman had to know how to read and write, and he needed to show adequate intelligence and the proper attitude, in order to perform a good service. The policemen formed a brigade, a company of about 300 men, who, according to the decree of 10 June 1871,

> for the full duration of their service, have to cover without interruption the patch to which they are assigned. They must walk along their designated routes and for the length of time previously determined. They must not stop to chat, either among themselves, or with other individuals, except in the course of their duties. Any conversation with prostitutes is especially prohibited. When on night duty, the police patrol will stand thus: one on one side and the second on the other side of the street; they will not speak and will direct their attention solely to the surveillance for which they are responsible.

The circular further ordered that every policeman must strive

> to get to know the residents on his patch, so as to protect them and their property effectively. Whenever on duty, he should carefully observe any unknown individual, whose manner and behaviour may seem suspect, so as to prevent any crime or offence against public order, against individuals or against private property. He must watch over the implementation of police laws and regulations, in particular those established for the freedom and security of the public highway and public health. It is recommended that police agents should have a thorough knowledge of all streets, squares, passage and culs-de-sac, etc., in the area where they are stationed.

Some provisions of the rules even went so far as to prescribe the policeman's required reaction in the event of any intervention: 'They must act with firmness, but, at the same time, with calm and moderation.' In the words of Quentin Deluermoz,

> the whole body of the policeman, his gestures and attitude, were subject to control. There was no formal training, no practical exercises, but a year-long apprenticeship on the ground. These processes were enforced by control, surveillance and punishments: before going out on duty, the brigadiers

> reminded policemen of their latest instructions, and they wrote down the most important orders in their notebooks.[10]

The policeman's gaze would thus be fashioned in the street.

A New Focus on Written Objects

> We today observed on the plinth of the statue of the Republic, opposite the Institut, the following words painted in green: 'Long Live the King!' The letters measured about ten centimetres in height. They are on the side of the plinth facing the Seine. Passers-by were not paying much attention to this inscription.[11]

This report of 29 December 1884 was by one of the new policemen. Today his precise account of a piece of writing on stone seems banal, since the struggle against graffiti, labelled 'vandalism', has become a familiar part of police activity.[12] This was not at all the case at the end of the nineteenth century. This record of illicit writing was a small but significant event; it signalled a turning point in the definition of police functions,[13] it inaugurated a new attitude and initiated new practices. The policeman not only detailed where the writing was to be found, he recorded its size and colour, the supporting surface and consistency. He also mentioned the amount of trouble it caused, what would today be called the 'salience' of the writing.

How had such a record of writing become possible? What interest could a policeman on his beat have in so carefully noting down a few characters in green paint?

> Yesterday evening at 10h ½ inspectors Dulac and Mignot from my unit arrested one Duleux, Paul, of 19 years of age, born at Bray-sur-Somme, son of Jules and Louise Turquet, bachelor, describing himself as a business clerk and residing at 24b rue de Charenton. This person was taking notes in a notebook at the corner of the rue de la Cité and the Quai du Marché Neuf. After questioning him about what he found so interesting in what was happening around him and the notes he was taking and considering his embarrassed replies, we escorted him to the police station at the city barracks.[14]

Why was this man writing in public suddenly considered a suspect? And, more importantly, why did the inspectors regard the act of

writing in public worthy of observation and description in an official report? This novel kind of police reading, which up until then they had hardly been concerned with, seems to be part of the massive rise of written culture.[15] The police gaze was also an extension of the medical gaze; it was the medical profession which put in place what we have already called a second type of panopticon (after the first version imagined by the Bentham brothers at the end of the eighteenth century) – the graphic panopticon outlined by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*.[16] This new apparatus of control relied on the readers who made up the new police of writing: a police force which recorded writings found, gathered writings read by citizens, watched public spaces, found illicit writings, tracked down clandestine writings and fought against anonymous writings.

Among the various reading practices studied by historians since the 1980s[17] – group reading, reading aloud, silent reading and so on – repressive readings have been neglected. In the abundant scholarly literature on censorship, no one has considered censorship in the form of an act of reading.[18] Students of censorship have attached more importance to the content of what is censored than to the action of suppression. One day a study of reader-censors must be carried out, especially inside penitentiary institutions and the armed forces, to highlight this special reader whose job it was to black out text, cancel it, cut it and stamp it. This gatekeeper of writing is very different from the policemen I have been discussing, who do not sit in one place all day waiting for writings to land on their desk, but must go out hunting for them, as Michel de Certeau would have said of his 'nomadic reader' searching for food.[19]

As they hunt, and this is pertinent to our argument, these policemen map out a field of inquiry on urban writings, and they are in a certain sense the precursors of an anthropology of writing. Whereas scholarly experts organise large research teams to decipher ancient writings, they instead find themselves worrying about trivial contemporary inscriptions. Their methods created a form of knowledge which was extremely precise, but is today totally devalued. Perhaps such practices have something in common with the ways in which nineteenth-century social sciences went about trying to 'capture' the world. And perhaps, too, our own ways of proceeding are not so very different from theirs.

In fact this new police gaze in the public space covered a range of quite different locations: from cemeteries and public monuments to shopfronts and stairwells. These domains offered writing which was observed,

described, transcribed and collected – small actions, barely recorded, but which surface here and there in the archives.

Writing about Writing

Forming police attitudes towards writing – indeed, we might call it the police discovery of writing – required the appearance of a specific vocabulary. The task of perfecting a precise lexicon was long and tedious. First of all, standardising the practices adopted by police on duty was a difficult task, especially given that policemen's literacy skills varied considerably. Furthermore, describing written objects was not straightforward: what should be described? The physical document or its contents? Or possibly both, but if so, in what way? At this point we immediately come up against a methodological problem: how can we trace the evolution of descriptive practices and what sources are available for doing so?

We can mobilise two corpuses here, but each has quite a different function. On the one hand, there are the day books (*mains courantes*) of Parisian police stations, endless lists of the micro-events which punctuated a day in the life of the neighbourhood, accumulated and added to by several authors from one hour to the next. The other source is less substantial. It was generated by the surveillance of the commemoration of an exceptional event: the revolt of the Paris Commune in 1871. Every year from 1880 onwards, there was a demonstration which attracted special police attention, and reports on it were drawn up and sent to the Prefect of Police. The sources therefore consist of police records which were not specifically devoted to writings as an object of surveillance, or at least which did not regard them as a first priority.

Police attitudes to writings were thus formed within the general framework of surveillance and were expressed in observations which at first appear rarely and intermittently. Describing the writing was always secondary. In their lexical selection, the police did not borrow from the printing vocabulary of the time, rather their distinctive prose emerged hesitantly and tentatively.

Items Lost and Found

The day books of the arrondissement police stations record all the micro-events noted by policemen on the beat, and they provide a valuable source for tracking the place of writings in the police universe. The day book is a

peculiar object, in which we find a diverse succession of scattered notes, telescoped into one another. They range from the discovery of an abandoned infant to that of a letter, not forgetting records of acts of violence. The police used them to record objects lost and found in the street, either by a policeman on his beat or by a member of the Parisian public. A certain number of writings can be found among them from about 1885 onwards. However, these discoveries of writings are not very frequent and, as a result, they give us only a sketchy idea of the lexicon of writing which the police adopted. Everything depended on the skills of the individual policeman, which could vary enormously.

The day books examined in one police station of the 13th arrondissement during the last five years of the nineteenth century give us an interesting sample of writings found by the police, and illuminate the way they were described.[20] They provide only a sample, and so they give us a rough indication rather than a systematic account. In order to show exactly how the number of written objects increased in this period, it would be necessary to conduct a statistical study based on all the Parisian day books which have survived. The documents would then produce an exhaustive and quantitative history viewed literally at street level.

Sometimes the discoveries happened in dramatic circumstances, as on the night of 8 August 1895, when Gilles Abel, a public works contractor aged 42, living at 4 Boulevard d'Italie, turned up at the Croulebarbe police station:

> On the 7th of this month at about 10h10 in the evening, on leaving his office on the ground floor, he heard the cries of a child waking up (. . .) in a cavity they found an infant six to seven months old feminine sex wrapped in linen, very clean in a basket a letter in an envelope bearing no address which he opened and which was addressed to his wife urging her to take the child. The person who wrote the letter described herself as his cousin. He said he had no relatives in Paris. He asked to keep the child and provide for its needs.

The bulk of letters, however, were discovered in the street or in the gutter, by the police or other citizens who brought the writings to the police station. Thus, on 7 August 1895, Justine Santoire, a day-labourer living at 19 rue Harvey in the 13th arrondissement, brought 'a notebook covered in black waxed cloth enclosing a birth certificate in the name of

Lelièvre and various papers of no value, found this day in the rue du Champ de Manoeuvre'.

Inventories like this are accompanied (or not) by an estimate of the value of the document found. On 13 September 1895, a policeman noted in connection with papers discovered at six o'clock in the morning by Léon Bouvier, 40 years old, in the Bièvre river, at the place where it emerges from the covered passage behind the Gobelins factory: 'A napkin containing three savings bank passbooks, army identification papers and a marriage certificate, bills, letters of credit, notes etc. some in the name of Widow Fils, some in the name of Widow Cloiseau.' So he read the documents, listed what they consisted of and extracted the information he needed to identify the owners. On each occasion we naturally find the same concern to identify the owner. A few weeks later, on 26 September 1895, under the heading 'Lost and Found', the description stops as soon as a document is found bearing a name: 'an apprentice's passbook (*livret*) in the name of Pouillat Victor and various papers of no value found at 15 minutes past noon in the passage des Gobelins'. The same thing occurred on 9 September with 'a notebook containing several documents of no value, in the name of Charpentier, found on the ninth of this month avenue des Gobelins number 31'; 'two sheets and a letter signed Nicol of Finistère, addressed to the Bon Marché department store by Honzié Armande residing at 8 rue Campo Formio', found on 3 December 1895; or again on 6 January 1896, the 'passbook (*livret*) of a live-in nurse in the name of Chevalier (Pauline) found on the sixth of this month Avenue des Gobelins'. Many more examples could be quoted: 'a notebook in black waxed cloth enclosing a small photograph, accounts and letters of no value', 'a letter with an address in Russian found on the Boulevard Arago' and so on.

Sometimes the documents had deteriorated too much to allow any identification. Thus, on 17 January 1896, 'a worker's passbook in poor condition containing papers (songs, work certificates, a receipt for a military passbook)' was illegible. Information like this tells us what kinds of writings Parisians used to carry with them at the end of the nineteenth century. If we rely on the findings of Arlette Farge for the eighteenth century, they appear to have hardly changed in 150 years.[21] A few policemen took obsessive care in describing objects found in the street. One of them wrote on 19 June 1896: 'At 7h20 in the evening Rousset found on the Place d'Italie at the corner with the avenue des Gobelins a black leather purse containing one one-franc coin, a ring of yellow metal, two keys on a key-ring, a tiny porcelain bather and a

small piece of paper on which were written pomes (*sic*) and signed "Henri" and a small piece of lace.'

These are valuable descriptions, because they place the written object among a collection of other personal items. We also find examples of personalised writing accessories. On 1 October 1896, 'a notebook in green and garnet-red leather, on the cover of which were found the intertwined initials PV and containing various papers of no value in the name of Pierre Vauchey', was discovered by Alphonse Farelicq in the avenue des Gobelins.

The written object could play a role not only in restoring lost objects, but also in solving police mysteries. In fact, policemen and their fellow citizens did not only find napkins and wrappers, they also made some other macabre discoveries. Thus, on 8 September 1896, 'at about 9h15 in the evening, a rusty tin box of rectangular shape and containing a woman's hand (dried up). The box also contained three letters and was found on the public highway in rue Broca opposite no. 89 by police agent Rayonnet.'

However, the presence of writing takes on a more precise form in cases of suicide.[22] The police describe everything in the vicinity of the corpse, even to the point of copying out the contents of a letter, as on 20–21 January 1896, after the suicide by shooting of Émile Veret, a 40-year-old widower with one child, a business clerk living at 29 avenue des Gobelins: 'On the mantelpiece a document relating as follows: "Suffering from an incurable disease, I deliberately take my own life, I send kisses to all my family and poor little René. Write to Mr. Alph. Brigonnet 86 rue de Maubeuge. My brother-in-law. Signed Émile Veret."' At some suicide scenes the police found no evidence of a written document: 'He was still holding a revolver in his right hand and a small mirror in the left hand' was all that one of them recorded on 31 January 1896. Nevertheless, the concern for detail, and the search for any clue that might distinguish a suicide from a murder, led the police to search through all papers present at the scene. On 20 April 1898, Rosalie Delpé, a 65-year-old widow with one child and of no profession, took her life by suffocation at 35 rue Croulebarbe. The policeman added the letter she had written in her room to his entry in the day book. Perhaps the drama was played out in a public place, for example when someone committed suicide by throwing themselves into the Seine. Besides fishing one body out of the river at the Quai d'Austerlitz on 29 October 1898, the following were also retrieved: 'the deceased's effects, two letters, a loose sheet and an envelope'. Here is

another, more spectacular discovery in connection with an anonymous suicide on 7 May 1896:

> On 7 May at 9h in the evening police agent Coringe of the 13th arrdt deposited at the police station:
> a black cap
> a notebook containing some writing in which a Schmith (Victor) announced his suicide;
> a birth certificate in the name of Schmith (Pierre-Henri); a work certificate in the name of Schmith; five photographs.
> All the above objects were floating on the water after the deliberate fall of an unidentified person into the Seine from the Bercy bridge at about 7h30 in the evening.

Parisians who killed themselves at the end of the nineteenth century almost always left a suicide note; it might be very brief, like that of Henri Prosper Coustard, 61 years old, married with four children, a leather worker (*mégissier*) living at 39 rue Croulebarbe who, before hanging himself in February 1896, pencilled this note: 'When you are no longer good for anything, you have to go by the hand of the deceased.' The note might be addressed to someone in particular; thus between the dates of 28 and 30 March 1896, according to the day book, Jean-Marie Haumètre, a widower aged 37 and a labourer living at 137 rue du Chevaleret, killed himself by hanging and left these words on yellowing paper: 'Why do you want to leave me. I am leaving you at five o'clock in the afternoon and above all don't tell my family', and on another white page: 'Marie, forgive, I forgive you, Haumètre.' This was also the case with Jules Noirit, a 62-year-old farrier, on 10 June 1896. On the table in his apartment at 30 rue Esquirol, they found a letter addressed to his daughter living at 18b avenue d'Italie, in which he wrote that he was ending his life deliberately because he was in too much pain (from a double hernia).

Suicide cases also turned up writings which had nothing to do with the death itself. On 15–16 January 1896, at 8 Boulevard Arago, at the home of Seiborsky Galitch, a 30-year-old Russian medical student who had committed suicide, police found a telegram addressed to the deceased by Archpriest Vassilieff. On 22 July 1896, Anne, the wife of one Buisson, a 69-year-old itinerant dealer, suffocated in smoke from a coal fire at 33 rue Lebrun. She left no message, but 'On a small table could be seen a court order summoning the deceased before the tenth correctional court on the

25th of this month, to answer the charge of insulting a police agent by words, gestures and threats.'

In this brief outline of a typology of suicide writing,[23] the policeman was essentially interested in the contents, because they often contained the deceased's dying wishes. These were often addressed to two recipients. Thus, Camille Delemare, born on 8 October 1845, the father of one child, an insurance clerk living at 12 rue Véronèse, 'left two notes written in his own hand saying that he was taking his own life and not to tell his either his 83-year-old mother or the journalists so as not to spread the news of his death (19 October 1896, suicide by shooting)'.

> 15/16 June 1897
> Suicide by hanging
> Evrat, Jules, 30 years of age, widower, labourer, 81 rue Broca
> He had lost his wife two months ago and his suicide was attributed to his grief. He left two letters on the table – one addressed to Monsieur the Police Commissioner and one addressed to his wife who died two months ago. In the first, he asked to be buried in a civil ceremony in the Paris [illegible]. He asked for forgiveness from his aunt etc. He said that a packet on the table was meant for Madame Dollians at the Salpêtrière [hospital]. He bequeathed all he had in his home to Mr and Mrs Saulnier at 97 rue de Montreuil, 27 francs 60.
> In the second: 'My dear darling Blanchette, I am coming to meet you again underground, my love. You are my only consolation. My adored darling (*mignonne*), my angel, I am leaving this earth for you, because you deserve it.'

We see how these randomly discovered writings were given a material description and perhaps a textual transcription, but at this stage the policeman's gaze never managed to superimpose one of these operations on the other. The combination of the two was nevertheless conceivable, because some agents appended the authentic document to their report. Removing the document from where it had been found in this way constituted a potential recognition of the value of *papers of no value*. Elsewhere, in other situations, as we shall see, it took the form of systematic evidence gathering.

Deposited Writings

The development of police surveillance throughout the Third French Republic (1870–1940) is well documented, especially as far its capacity for observation and surveillance was concerned.[24] The expanding police

apparatus was not just aimed at crime; in fact it targeted political life first and foremost.[25] In the archives of the Prefecture de Police, one finds countless files opened on such and such a suspect individual, reports from informers about meetings and gatherings and so on. One hypothesis would be that the new interest in writing stemmed from its primary role in circulating and disseminating political ideas. Surveillance of the written word would thus complete the legislative armoury on posters, and especially election posters. But what was to be done about extraparliamentary movements? How could they be brought under control? Some events, particularly the various political meetings and commemorations that made up the annual militant's calendar, were an opportunity for the police to bring themselves up to date on trade unions and other organisations which constituted the political opposition. The most watched, the most spied-upon of all these political gatherings was the commemoration of Bloody Week (*La Semaine Sanglante*) of the Paris Commune in May 1871, studied by Madeleine Rebérioux as one of France's 'Sites of Memory'.[26] In her research she demonstrated how this annual ceremony gradually became an important political occasion in its own right.

The archival files containing the reports about the demonstrations at the Wall of the Fédérés at the Père Lachaise cemetery reveal a growing interest in wreaths laid, banners and streamers unfurled.[27] Thus, 30 years after the events of the Paris Commune, the report of 30 May 1900 stated:

> Surveillance carried out this morning at the Wall of the Fédérés and at the graves of Blanqui and [Vallès].
>
> Two wreaths from the Blanquist Youth organisation were laid at the Wall of the Fédérés at 7h½ by a delegation consisting of six members who hung them on the wall without uttering a single shout. They carried the following inscriptions:
>
> 'Blanquist youth of Paris
> No God, no master[28]
> To the forgotten, victims of Gallifet.[29]
> No compromise – To the victims of Gallifet – May 1871–May 1900.'
>
> As soon as the delegation departed, the words Gallifet were torn from the wreaths by the chief caretaker of the cemetery.
>
> [at 7h15, one member noticed that they had been removed. Protests ensued].
>
> At 9 o'clock, when the police of the 20th arrondissement went on duty, they removed the words 'no compromise' which were on one of the wreaths.

> From 9h½ to 11h½, four small bouquets, two of red peonies and two with sprays of red everlasting flowers (*immortelles*) were laid at the wall by individuals arriving separately. the attached visiting card was pinned on one of the peony bouquets:
>
> Jules Bourgoin – President of the Friendly Society of former students of Cempuis (Oise department), 64 rue Tiquetonne. In pencil 'Orphan of the Commune'.

We see that it was not just a question of faithfully reporting and copying the writings laid in tribute at the wall, but also of suppressing them whenever they were judged to be against the law. The police observed ribbons carrying dangerous slogans in order to destroy them; the act of reading here also implied an act of erasure. This practice continued in the following years. An exhaustive list of inscriptions on banners was drawn up by the police on duty. Thus, on 19 May 1901, '44 wreaths were laid; on some of them could be made out "To the Fédérés" or "To the dead of the Commune".' This description would be accompanied by a wreath-count: there were 54 in 1900, 44 in 1901, 41 in 1902, 43 in 1902, 42 in 1904. In May 1905, the report made it clear that 'All the wreaths were in linen, with beads and red everlasting flowers (. . .) The last two wreaths were in black and white beads.' Perhaps this seems of no importance; but the conscientious habit of noting down all the facts betrayed a concern which drove the police to describe all the details of that strange writing object – the funeral wreath – with its flowers, ribbon and inscription, without in any way trying to prioritise the information gathered. The police observer also noted who laid the wreath, adding up the number of his or her entourage: 'a cortège of 2000 to 2500 people (. . .) with, at its heart, groups of workers from the Belleville workers' cooperative and the inscription "To the defeated of 1871"'.

In May 1907 a new element refined these attempts at description. Henceforth the policeman distinguished between wreaths, bouquets and placards, and reported the exact time to the minute when the wreath was attached to the wall: 'At 13h45, unknown persons laid two bouquets of red roses, at 2h40, a wreath of red everlasting flowers, with a red and black ribbon, carrying the inscription: "Committee for a Monument to the Fédérés. To the Fighters of the Commune".' Later, an unknown woman brought a wreath of yellow everlasting flowers, with a red ribbon bearing the inscription: 'Zionist Socialist Party – to the Victims of the Commune'. On 19 May 1908, two workers fixed a black marble plaque to the Wall of

the Fédérés, one metre high by two metres wide, with an inscription engraved in gilt characters reading:

To the dead of the Commune
21–28 May 1871

The police described the act by detailing the object's size and physical material. Here again, the details are not without significance. The plaque, an object which until that moment had been monopolised by official tributes, now entered the corpus of writings under surveillance.

In the first decade of the century, the Wall of the Fédérés at Père Lachaise was not the only place under surveillance; commemorations at the Montparnasse cemetery also attracted police attention. On 1 June 1902, a policeman noted that at about 15:15, 60 demonstrators carrying three wreaths arrived at the Montparnasse cemetery: 'I had an inscription removed from the cemetery gate: "to the victims of the assassins of the Commune"'. Inside, the wreaths were laid on the ground. The procession was complete. A few shouts of "Long Live the Commune! Long Live the Republic!" No arrests.' The description of the writing is very sparse, and so the policeman perhaps felt obliged to add to his report a hitherto missing element: the soundscape. Since the eighteenth century, the account of any popular uprising had included the songs and other chanted slogans. From disorderly shouting, we have moved on to the writings of the demonstration.

Notes

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28. A slogan commonly associated with the revolutionary socialist Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881) (editors' and translator's note).
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Philippe Artières is Directeur de recherche at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, working within the Institut interdisciplinaire d'anthropologie du contemporain at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He has worked on the autobiographies of criminals imprisoned in late nineteenth-century Lyon (*La Vie des coupables*, 2000), and more recently published *La police de l'écriture: L'invention de la délinquance graphique, 1852–1945* (2013), on which this chapter is based. He has been president of the Michel Foucault Centre since 1995.

CHAPTER 11

QWERTYUIOP: How the Typewriter Influenced Writing Practices

Martyn Lyons

Introduction

In 2006, when Larry McMurtry accepted the Golden Globe award for the screenplay of *Brokeback Mountain*, he thanked his typewriter.[1] Hunter S. Thompson, author of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1972), writing in Colorado, took his typewriter out into the snow and shot it (and later himself).[2] Clearly, the typewriter was more than merely a soulless machine, and it could inspire quite divergent responses from writers. My chapter assesses its contribution to the history of writing practices, quite apart from its success in training us to use a keyboard. I attempt to outline the ways in which we might consider 'the typewriter as an agent of change', to adapt the title of Elizabeth Eisenstein's well-known work on the printing press.[3] If we are to understand more fully the material conditions of textual production between the late nineteenth century and the middle of the

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M. Lyons (✉)
School of Humanities, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: M.Lyons@unsw.edu.au

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twentieth, the impact of the typewriter demands our attention. The range of interactions which developed between the writer and the machine defies attempts to establish a definitive typology. In this chapter, therefore, I seek only to identify a few major trends.

Writers have often reported on how they have responded to the typewriter, and their subjective opinions of the machine are just as important as the practical information they give about how they use it. The place of the typewriter in the cultural imaginary is essential to a study of its use and influence. I aim in a sense for a cultural history of the typewriter, a history of how it was perceived as well as how it might have influenced the way writers, canonical and otherwise, operated. I argue that the typewriter de-personalised the text: on the one hand, the office typewriter became the producer of impersonal bureaucratic texts, and the 'Typewriter Girl' was condemned to perform monotonous and repetitive tasks in a low-paid job.[4] On the other, many literary authors found a new and disturbing distance between themselves and their compositions. At the same time, an undercurrent of authors rebelled against this de-personalisation, and my discussion considers their reactions as well.

My time span is a long one, and I take examples from Mark Twain and Friedrich Nietzsche in the mid-nineteenth century, up to living authors like J.-M. G. Le Clézio. In between, I refer to late nineteenth-century novelists, modernist poets, realist novelists of the interwar period, pulp fiction writers of the mid-twentieth century, the beat generation and a few late twentieth-century writers and poets. My examples are primarily taken from the USA, Australia and France. My approach differs from that of specialists in textual genesis. Instead of scrutinising surviving material versions and drafts of mainly canonical texts, I consider what authors themselves have said or written about their working methods. Authors, of course, are not infallible witnesses, even about themselves; discrepancies sometimes appear between their accounts of their own work and the realities of the creative and publishing processes. This chapter will point out one such discrepancy in the well-known case of Jack Kerouac.

This discussion falls into three parts. Firstly, I will discuss how the typewriter was imagined, and associated by contemporaries with modernity, war and the jazz age. In the second part, I discuss the de-personalising effects of the typewriter. In part three, I turn to individual writers who embraced the machine and in different ways incorporated typewriter technology into their creative projects.

The Typewriter and Modernity

The first commercially marketed typewriter was produced by Remington in New York in 1874. Originally named 'The Sholes and Glidden Typewriter', after its inventors, it was soon re-baptised the Remington no. 1. Remington adopted Sholes' layout, but moved the letter R to the top row, thus forming the sequence QWERTYUIOP. This first machine grew out of Remington's interests in sewing-machine manufacture, and the carriage return was operated by a treadle, similar to the one used on sewing machines. The type bars struck upwards, hitting the underside of the platen, so that the typist could not see what was being printed. The Remington no. 1 only typed upper-case characters. It cost $125, which put it well beyond the budget of ordinary consumers. Improvements were made over the next few years, either by Remington or its many competitors: the typed page became visible, a shift key enabled both upper- and lower-case printing, ribbons would automatically reverse direction when they reached their end, and a hand lever returned the carriage. By 1890, the typewriter had become much more user-friendly, and Remington was producing 65,000 each year.[5]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the typewriter became emblematic of progress and modernity. Imported to Europe from its birthplace in the USA, it was also associated with Americanisation and the tenets of Fordism.[6] The 'typing pool' represented the ultimate in fully technologised and rationally organised office work. Advertisements for the Oliver typewriter in 1910 proclaimed that 'clean, legible, beautiful typewriting is the next great step in human progress'.[7] The machine greatly interested the avant-garde Futurist movement, and painter and writer Giacomo Balla designed a poem and performance piece entitled 'Noise-Making Onomatopoeia Typewriter', in which he proposed that 12 people simultaneously repeat a typewriter exercise as a Futurist activity in sound production.[8] The Futurist aesthetic produced its own version of the technological fallacy. Marinetti's manifesto glorified the motor car, the aeroplane, the factory and the locomotive, and worshipped the beauty of machines in general. Futurism revelled in the speed, noise and destructive power of modern technology.[9]

The literary avant-garde made creative use of typography. In his *Calligrammes*, Guillaume Apollinaire's concrete poetry drew word-images as he experimented with the possibilities of the typed *mise en page*.[10] Poets

like E.E. Cummings explored the typographical effects which a typewriter could produce. Modernist writers like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce were closely engaged with the technologies of their time.[11]

It was, however, the mechanical speed of the typewriter which most impressed early observers and users. This is above all what impressed Mark Twain, who bought his first typewriter out of curiosity in 1873, and was amazed to be told that a typist could produce as many as 57 words per minute on it.[12] When writing by longhand, one could not expect to achieve more than two dozen. Twain is often credited as the first author to use a typewriter, since he claimed 'I was the first person in the world to apply the type-machine to literature.'[13] Twain guessed that the first such novel was his *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), but his memory was faulty – it was in fact *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). The truth was that Twain dictated to a stenographer and never learned to type anything himself beyond 'the boy stood on the burning deck'.[14] For him, the typewriter was an expensive novelty which he used to impress visitors. But before long he was desperate to give it away, and made a present of it to his coachman.

More recently, many fiction writers interviewed by Arthur Hoffman, editor of *Adventure* magazine from 1912 to 1927, reported that only a typewriter enabled them to put their thoughts down on paper as fast as their imagination produced them. Writers were asked which writing method presented the least 'check' on the creative process, or in other words, which instrument slowed them or restrained them the most. Out of the 111 authors who answered, 43 reported that they lost ideas because their means of recording was slower than their imagination, 10 took notes to prevent this loss, and 55 had no trouble with losing ideas. Many of these pulp fiction writers found the speed of the typewriter a great asset. Max Bonter combined the typewriter with shorthand and typed even faster than he could think, which he admitted tended to result in a 'flow of bull'.[15] Another magazine writer, Robert V. Carr, responded: 'When manufacturing literary sausage I naturally want to grind it out rapidly.'[16] Many such fiction writers began as journalists and had become accustomed to fast typing to meet short deadlines, with little time for revision.

Potential speeds increased markedly after touch-typing developed, and after a certain Mrs Longley of Cincinnati, the director of a shorthand and typing institute, daringly proposed in 1882 that typists should use all the fingers of both hands.[17] In the late 1880s, Frank E. McGurrin, a court stenographer in Salt Lake City, typed so fast that he claimed the title of

'World's Fastest Typist' and challenged all-comers to beat him in public contests for a purse of $500. He independently arrived at the same 10-finger technique recommended by Mrs Longley and became invincible on tour. He fought a typing duel against Louis Taub, a typing instructor from Cincinnati, who challenged McGurrin in 1888. This was a significant duel not only because of the considerable personal investment which each man had made in the contest, but also because each duellist chose a different weapon and used a different technique. McGurrin had memorised the keyboard and could type blindfolded when he really wanted to show off. Taub, who was doomed to defeat, used the traditional four-finger 'hunt-and-peck' method – in other words, find your key and then hit it. At the same time, Taub typed on a Caligraph machine, which had a double keyboard: there were separate keys for upper- and lower-case characters, making 72 keys in all.[18] McGurrin, in contrast, used a Remington with a single QWERTY layout.

Following McGurrin's initiative, speed-typing became a spectator sport for years to come, and the World Typewriting Championships reportedly drew significant crowds in the years before the First World War.[19] Typewriter races did not endure for long as a competitive sport, however, because there were drawbacks. Competitors had points deducted for making mistakes, which meant that judges had to read through a mountain of paper after the race to calculate results. The audience meanwhile was kept waiting, and sometimes went home without knowing who the winner actually was. Typewriter racing did attract considerable publicity for brands like Remington and Underwood. The latter hired a coach and trained a select racing squad in a special typewriter gym, and developed its own racing typewriters with particularly fast methods of changing paper. Unbeaten champion Rose Fritz (1905–1909) achieved a speed of 95 words per minute, and by 1915 the Underwood stable reigned supreme.[20]

Analogies were readily drawn between the typewriter and modern weaponry. The speed and sound of a typewriter recalled a machine gun and, perhaps significantly, Remington produced guns and ammunition before it began to manufacture typewriters. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler described the typewriter as a 'discursive machine-gun'.[21] Ernest Hemingway wrote a poem about his typewriter in which its 'mechanical staccato' is seen in military terms, as the infantry of the mind advances over difficult terrain, making the typewriter its *mitrailleuse* (submachine gun).[22] Hemingway, it will be remembered, played a personal role in the First World War, as a stretcher-bearer on the Italian front. In 1939, he posed

for some photographs with his typewriter outside the lodge where he was writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. They make a change from the more macho image of the gun-toting Hemingway on big game safaris which later nourished his public persona. It is not clear for how long he favoured *plein air* typing. When George Plimpton went to interview him in 1963, he discovered that Hemingway customarily wrote standing up at his bookcase.[23]

Even before the First World War, weaponry analogies were rife. The Australian writer Henry Lawson imagined a battleground where writers fought out their own war to the clacking sound of typewriters. This poem, written in 1904, is called 'The Firing Line', and the typewriter here might be said to be 'firing lines' itself.[24] The third stanza reads:

> In the dreadful din of a ghastly fight they are shooting, murdering, men;
>
> In the smothering silence of ghastly peace we murder with tongue and pen.
>
> Where is heard the tap of the typewriter – where the track of reform they mine –
>
> Where they stand to the frame or the linotype – we are all in the firing line.

As the generations succeed each other, Lawson's typewriter becomes the peacetime battleground upon which political machinations take place.

Reversing the metaphor, gangsters of the Prohibition era called their automatic weapons 'Chicago typewriters'.[25] The Oxford historian Alan (A.J.P.) Taylor later put it in typically contentious style:

> Since then [the 1930s] my style (. . .) has changed with my writing instruments. With a pen you write words. With a typewriter you write sentences. With an electric typewriter you write paragraphs. In military terms: bow and arrow, musket, machine gun. I try to keep up a continuous fire.[26]

Taylor was renowned for his aggressive and polemical prose, but he did not live long enough to work on word-processors. Perhaps this was just as well – his metaphor on the evolution of warfare had already gone quite far enough.

At the same time, the typewriter's popularity was part of the jazz age, and musical metaphors described its work as well as gunfire comparisons. As soon as typewriting machines were designed to stand upright, keyboard action was often compared to playing the piano. As early as 1857, Samuel

Francis of New York patented a literary piano, in which the long black and white keys resembled piano ivories.[27] The French poet Denis Roche explained much more recently:

> I have never played the piano, so I can't compare. Having said that, when I type very fast, I have a slight impression of piano-playing and I even surprise myself, you know how these pianists (. . .) draw arabesques with their hands, I don't go that far but sometimes I'm not far off. It's really quite stimulating. The word that comes to mind is spinning around (*virevolter*). I have the impression that my hands are spinning around: 'The dance of the spirit in amongst the words.'[28]

The typewriter could make music as well as war, and this notion associated the machine more closely with creative activity rather than purely mechanical tasks. It also reflected the feminisation of its usage. According to Françoise Sagan (author of *Bonjour Tristesse*, 1954), 'For me, writing means finding a certain rhythm. Which I compare to the rhythms of jazz.'[29] One early Remington advertisement proclaimed that any woman who could play the piano could type.[30]

The Distancing Effect

Typewriter usage must be seen in connection with what it partially superseded – writing by hand. Media theorist Kittler argued that the typewriter produced textual anonymity, removing the personal 'hand' of the writer. He explicitly traced an evolutionary connection between the typewriter and the printing press, both reducing the element of human agency in the writing process.[31] Kittler's view, I would argue, was exaggerated and short-sighted. Like the Futurists already mentioned, he over-played the power of the machine. The widespread availability of the typewriter by no means made handwriting obsolete, any more than the advent of the printing press destroyed scribal culture. Instead, writers adapted each technique at their disposal for different purposes, and applied each writing technology to specific phases of composition. Responses were not uniform. For all those writers who first drafted their texts by hand and then later typed out a fair copy, there were just as many who preferred to type a first draft and subsequently correct it by hand, leaving someone else – presumably a publisher's copy-editor – to decipher the mixture afterwards.

Belgian writer and film director François Weyergans was one of them: 'I quite like to type on the machine first of all,' he said, 'and rewrite by hand afterwards. I prefer to type stupidities on the machine first, then correct in longhand then retype on the machine.'[32] Private correspondence in particular seemed to demand handwriting, since it was conceived as an individual, personal form of communication and not normally intended for publication. And yet a few writers felt a residual guilt about typing personal letters: they gained something in legibility but sacrificed intimacy.

Even the same author could use different implements to compose in different genres. The prolific Georges Simenon, for instance, had begun professional writing at the age of 18 as a reporter on the *Gazette de Liège*, where he became accustomed to typing everything he wrote. Like many other writers, he was forced to re-learn writing by hand while convalescing from an illness. In 1961, he wrote one novel, *Les Autres*, entirely by hand, and his wife Denyse typed it for him.[33] For Simenon, however, writing by hand was not just a temporary necessity brought about by illness. His choice of handwriting was also a deliberate ploy to escape his normal routine, and to enjoy breaking all the rules he had fixed for himself in his life.[34] There were many rules, for he was a man of habit and wedded to working rituals. Simenon wrote 192 novels in all in his own name, of which 75 were Inspector Maigret mysteries, as well as another 190 novels written under pseudonyms.[35] When he wrote a Maigret novel, he knew the formula so well that he typed the text directly onto the page. He could finish a Maigret story in a fortnight at the most, sometimes in nine days and once, in 1970, in seven days. In fact, Simenon seems to have constantly challenged himself to break his own speed record.[36] For his other novels, however, which he called his *romans durs*, the technique was different. He sketched notes on his yellow pad first, and then typed up the chapter the next day.[37] His speed was legendary. According to one story (which I cannot fully substantiate), the film director Alfred Hitchcock once telephoned Simenon, but was told that he could not come to the phone as he was busy writing a novel. 'That's alright,' Hitchcock replied, 'I'll wait.'[38]

Simenon, as has been noted, began his professional career as a journalist, and evidence suggests that typing was most readily assimilated by journalists and pulp fiction writers (like those interviewed by *Adventure* magazine). In contrast, resistance to the typewriter came more frequently from literary authors like Patrick White. Simenon's divergent writing practices seem to bear out this hypothesis. When he was writing to a

formula, as in the Maigret novels, he typed his first draft at great speed, but he employed other techniques for more 'literary' compositions.

Compared to handwriting, the typewriter imposed a new discipline. It distanced the author from the text in a new way, breaking the organic tie which some writers felt existed between themselves, their hand, the writing implement and their paper. This distancing effect was especially striking with the earliest commercial typewriters, in which writers typed 'blind' because the roller was masked. Since the paper was under cover, they could not immediately see the text they had composed. This reminds us that eighteenth-century typewriters had been conceived as prosthetic devices for blind people. Pierre Foucauld, who invented one of several machines in 1851, was himself blind.[39] Until the first visible-page typewriter was designed by Underwood in 1897, the author had to wait to see the text emerge from the machine.[40] The Australian writer (of New Zealand origin) Jean Devanny told of how she lifted the cover after every two or three words to see how she was progressing.[41] This invisibility implied an unprecedented disengagement of the writer from the text.

Dislocation was complete when the text actually *did* appear, five or six lines later. It was tidy and standardised, fit for immediate duplication, often shocking in its neatness and regularity. 'It don't muss things or scatter ink blots around', Mark Twain characteristically remarked.[42] Every line was uniformly straight and its size completely regular, and the spaces between each character were absolutely identical. Of course, the writer could not change the font or font size, and lines could not be centred or right-justified; nor could the typewriter spell.[43] But mechanical production removed traces of the text's idiosyncratic human origins.

Typewritten text had acquired a new objectivity, which could create anxiety. Hermann Hesse bought his first typewriter in 1908 and was disturbed by the immediate confrontation with his own writing in print, noting:

> the coldness of type, which starts to look like printer's proofs, means that you come face to face with yourself in a severe, critical, ironic, even hostile way. Your writing turns you into something alien and forces you to make a critical judgement.[44]

The act of typing gradually imposed a phase of correction and re-formulation, as the text was put into more publishable form. Australian poet Les

Murray composed first in his head or by hand, but then typing intervened, as he explained to his interviewer:

> One more retype the next day will often solve hiatuses and infelicities you didn't even realize were there. Misgivings, too. Sometimes only the appearance of near-finality will let you see something's wrong in a poem and that it needs recasting. You've been too hotly in the aura of it to notice, perhaps.[45]

This 'near-finality' of the typed text was presumably what the French writer Serge Doubrovsky called, apologising for the oxymoron, its 'provisionally definitive status'.[46]

The typewriter thus forced writers to reconsider their texts in a new, more critical light. In any case, from the 1920s publishers began to insist on typescript rather than manuscript submission, because of the enormous costs to be saved on typesetting.[47] In spite of this, some writers could drive their publisher to distraction, including Australian novelist and Nobel prize-winner Patrick White, who produced finely typed, crowded pages on almost transparent paper. According to his biographer, White condensed his script in order to save money on postage. For White too, typing out his novel *Riders in the Chariot* (1961) offered an entirely new perspective. He reported thus on the distancing effect of his portable Olivetti:

> One suddenly sees how to unknot situations which eluded one in a handwritten manuscript; yet one could not have launched into a typescript in the beginning – or I couldn't have.[48]

The use of the impersonal 'one' here was no doubt quite instinctive, but it was entirely appropriate to describe the de-personalising of the text and its separation from its individual creator.

Authors were very conscious that the act of typing transformed their style. Two-finger typing prevented French-Mauritian novelist J.-M. G. Le Clézio achieving a real flow in composition, but he found this beneficial:

> Since I have never managed to type properly, I have to do it, from beginning to end, with two fingers. Also, out of laziness, I end up leaving out words and adjectives, here and there. That's how I improve my style, without wanting to.[49]

Friedrich Nietzsche, partly blind and a migraine sufferer, resorted to a writing ball in 1881–1882, which he bought from its Danish inventor, Pastor Malling-Hansen. He discovered that 'Our writing tools are also working on our thoughts'. Kittler argued that as a result Nietzsche's writing became less rhetorical and more in 'telegram-style'.[50] Nietzsche used this phrase himself, although he may not have been connecting it to the typewriter, merely to the effect of his blindness. Yet the two were certainly linked: the writing ball, a contraption weighing over 70 kilograms, was especially designed for the partially sighted.[51] Kittler claimed something similar for the writing of Kafka's *The Trial* and Eliot's *The Waste Land*. On the typewriter, Eliot found himself 'sloughing off all my long sentences which I used to dote on', and instead writing 'short, staccato, like modern French prose'.[52] Whether one accepts Kittler's arguments fully or not, there is evidence to suggest that the typewriter could induce a leaner and sparer literary style. The empire of the machine already extended to shaping prose and poetry themselves.

Henry James

The process of composition was very important to Henry James, who relied heavily on his Remington, even though he preferred not to use it himself. He wrote in a language he called 'Remingtonese'.[53] Most of what we know about James' later writing practices was recorded by his long-time amanuensis Theodora Bosanquet, who wrote a memoir about her experience and probably had literary ambitions of her own.[54] James developed what we would probably now call repetitive strain injury in 1897, at which point he started to hire typists. He employed Bosanquet from 1907 onwards to type to his own dictation. Most of James' later novels (after *The Ambassadors* in 1903) were dictated to her in the Garden Room at Lamb House in Rye, where he was based between 1898 and his death in 1916. James did not refer to a rough draft – he composed verbally as he strolled up and down the room. He composed precisely and deliberately, verbally indicating commas, full stops and difficult spellings to Bosanquet. 'The slow stream of his deliberate speech played over me without ceasing', she wrote.[55] James, who was spurred into action by the click of the Remington, could compose only by dictation, producing prose with what McLuhan called 'a free, incantatory quality'.[56] He needed the typewriter's clatter in the background: when he exchanged his

Remington for a much quieter Oliver, his inspiration dried up.[57] Even on his deathbed he asked for his Remington to be brought into his room.

Although James, therefore, was hyper-conscious of the intermediary who stood (or sat) between himself and the finished text, he had an unusual problem. As he carefully fashioned his sentences, the practice of verbal composition held an inherent temptation for him. He tended to take diversions and add interpolations. He liked to embroider the narrative too much for his own liking. 'I know', he once confessed to Bosanquet, 'that I'm too diffuse when I'm dictating.'[58] To achieve brevity, he needed to write silently by hand. Plays and short stories, which had to be kept within certain time or word limits, had to be drafted this way. If he started dictating them, the short story was likely to become a novella and grow into what *Harper's Monthly Magazine* would consider an unpublishable length. Henry James was thus one of the most typewriter-conscious novelists of his age. He found the process of dictating to a typist conducive to his concern for formal prose construction, reaching for the exquisite production of 'affect' in his readers. Unlike Le Clézio and others already mentioned, however, he did not use the typewriter to achieve a more economical style. On the contrary, dictation led his prose on unforeseen and over-expansive detours.

Jack Kerouac and the Romantic Typewriter

The romantic typewriter operated quite differently from the accentuated textual objectivity achieved by the machine's distancing effect. In fact, they were polar opposites. Whereas the alienated author found that the typewriter encouraged precision, deliberation and a critical detachment from one's own creation, the romantic typewriter privileged fluency and a more intuitive style of composition. Here I use 'the romantic typewriter' to designate both the writer and his or her vision of how the machine influenced the creative process. Australian novelist Nancy Cato (*All the Rivers Run*, 1958) enjoyed the fluency of typing. 'When I get to the typewriter', she said, 'it just comes straight out through my fingers.'[59] She imagined a process in which words flowed naturally through her body into the machine, without any interruption from her own thought processes or any careful pre-meditation. In stark opposition to what some writers called 'banging something out' on the typewriter, Cato experienced a creative force which in her imagination she did not entirely control.

The paradigmatic case of the romantic typewriter at work, however, remains Jack Kerouac and his Underwood Standard S. Kerouac despised the painstaking technique and what he called the 'craftiness' of writers like Henry James. Instead, he tried to achieve spontaneity and fluidity of composition, with or without the assistance of drugs. In *The Essentials of Spontaneous Prose*, he rejected punctuation in sentences 'already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas'.[60] He recommended no pause for thought, no conscious selection of the appropriate expression, but 'the infantile pile-up of scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained'. Kerouac rejected revision and re-writing. He aimed at a furious style of writing with no agonising over the structure of each sentence, no endless prose polishing of the kind often associated with that archetype of fastidiousness, Gustave Flaubert. Kerouac's typing method was to abandon what he called the inhibition of syntax, and to write freely in a trance- or dream-like state. He compared the writer to a jazz saxophonist, who simply blew an improvised section until he ran out of breath. The ideal to which Kerouac aspired was not always easy for him to achieve. He struggled to get started with *On the Road*, and made several false starts before eventually unleashing a frenzied torrent of prose.[61]

What is interesting here is that Kerouac could only fulfil his vision of spontaneity on a typewriter. It is clear in *Atop an Underwood*, in which he discussed his writing apprenticeship, that for him writing and typing became synonymous at a very early age. At Columbia University he even ran a one-man typing agency.[62] He then foresaw his future life as a fiction writer, inspired by bursts of great passion, fuelled by several packets of cigarettes, even though at this stage he was not a smoker.[63] As a writer, he spoke of building up momentum while what he called 'the locomotive in his chest' accelerated to full speed.[64] Far from detaching him from his text, Kerouac's typewriter made him 'red-hot', sensing 'the flow of smooth thrumming power'.[65] In his piece 'Today', Kerouac described the anguish he felt when he had to return his rented Underwood because he could not afford to pay for another month. 'Hell, they're taking away everything', he wrote. 'Even myself.' As he descended into poverty, he sacrificed food and cigarettes in order to pay for a typewriter, his priority item. 'You see,' he wrote, 'my heart resides in a typewriter, and I don't have a heart unless there's a typewriter somewhere nearby, with a chair in front of it and some blank sheets of paper.'[66] It never seemed to occur to him that he could write with a pen instead.

The typewriter (together with stimulants) gave Kerouac the discipline to compose from inspiration and at great speed. He was already a 'speed typist' (in several senses), with or without Benzedrine ('benny'), amphetamine or other stimulants, and his writing aesthetic required speed at all costs. Just as the contestants in the World Typing Championships had been handicapped by the need to stop typing and change their paper, so too did Kerouac seek a solution to this undesirable interruption to his interminable flow. Hence he produced *On the Road* on a continuous scroll of shelf paper, in one very long paragraph which was 120 feet in length.[67]

At least, that was his story, and it seemed to be confirmed by Beat poet and admirer Allen Ginsberg.[68] Still, it has been disputed. It is not clear what kind of paper he originally used, and different versions exist of how Kerouac put together the enormous scroll he eventually submitted to Viking.[69] According to Ann Charters, he used architects' paper and then taped the sheets of *On the Road* together to make a continuous scroll.[70] The text he produced thus only imperfectly reflected his stated objectives. The publishing process necessitated even further compromises. Kerouac's script was produced on US-letter-sized pages for the publisher because it could not be edited in its original form, as critic Tim Hunt showed when trying to debunk a few myths about Kerouac.[71] Furthermore, *On the Road* did undergo revision before publication. Nevertheless, Kerouac used similar practices to compose *The Subterraneans* in the space of three nights in 1953, aided by amphetamines, and the script of *The Dharma Bums* (1958) was also typewritten onto a scroll.[72] In 1959, Truman Capote dismissed Kerouac's work as typing, not writing, but it is not clear whether Capote was against typing as such, or whether he had some deeper criticism to offer of Kerouac's fast, raw, unrevisable drafts.[73] In fact, Kerouac perhaps realised better than Capote the potential of the typewriter and the way it could assist his unique style of unreflective composition.

Conclusions

Purchasing or renting one's first typewriter was a landmark event in a writer's life. It denoted a serious commitment to a writing career. After the young Jean Devanny had her first story accepted by the *Auckland Weekly News* in the 1920s, the editor advised her to use a typewriter if she wanted to continue to write.[74] Possession of a typewriter was a badge of professionalism. In spite of this, the machine was a source of frustration for many, from Le Clézio tediously writing with two fingers, to Hunter

S. Thompson's attempt to assassinate his IBM Selectric. Hemingway complained at one point that his machine was 'stiff as a frozen whisker'.[75] On his travels, Patrick White faced payments to airlines for excess baggage, typewriter included, and endured the inconvenience of lugging his Olympus up Greek mountain-sides to visit isolated monasteries.[76] At times the typewriter seemed a burden, but an indispensable one. Only a few writers such as, in their different ways, Henry James and Jack Kerouac attuned their writing to the practice of typing, and successfully incorporated the machine into their own aesthetic projects.

Paradoxically, the typewriter brought about a revival of oral communication in the composition of texts. Dictating to another person introduced a new element into the prose. Bosanquet, always an intermediary between speech and writing, felt that James dictated almost as if he was enacting the dramatic scenes of a fictional drama on stage, with himself taking every role.[77] James, we might say, like Mark Twain before him, was one of the great dictators. Twain had found that dictating to a female typist changed the end result because a female presence deterred him from including a number of profanities. In 1904, he felt that dictation would 'save time and language (...) the kind of language that soothes vexation'.[78] Kerouac fancifully imagined that his writing could be as fluent and natural as a man telling a story in a bar.[79] McLuhan argued that typed text gave clear indications of where the reader should draw breath and, since each blank space or interval was exactly measured by the machine, the typewriter had quantified 'acoustic space'. E.E. Cummings, according to McLuhan, used the typewriter to give poetry a musical score: 'The typewriter,' he concluded, 'brought writing and speech and publication into close association.'[80]

The long typewriting century stretched from the early commercialisation of the typewriter in the 1870s, up to the widespread use of word-processing roughly 100 years later. At that moment, major typewriter manufacturers were compelled to adapt or die. Olivetti, which had merged with Underwood in 1963, went into producing personal computers. So did another giant of the machine, Remington, adding electric shavers to its portfolio. Other species did not evolve so successfully. The British Imperial Company ceased typewriter production at its headquarters in Leicester in 1974, and Smith Corona went bankrupt in the mid-1980s. We must bear in mind, however, that even after the demise of typewriter production, some professional writers still refused to abandon the typewriter, which they continued to use out of either necessity, habit or nostalgia.

Today we may indeed be witnessing a partial return to the compositional practices of the typewriter age. Many authors see the Internet and the pervasive influence of social media as a threat, distracting them from the concentrated effort needed to compose creatively. In order to combat the 'fatal attraction' of the Web, with its permanent invitation to procrastination and time-wasting, they prefer a machine that simply types and nothing else. One writing rule recommended by the London novelist Zadie Smith is 'Work on a computer that is disconnected from the Internet'.[81] Smith, born in 1978, is too young to have experienced writing before computers, so she might be said to be 'reverting' to something she never knew.

The question of the impact of word-processing lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but it would be legitimate to ask how word-processing relates to the idea of the de-personalised text. Is the text equally de-personalised when it appears on a screen? Any comparison needs to recognise the facility of textual correction on the screen, which was much more laborious on the typewriter. Word-processed text is endlessly correctable and infinitely unstable. The 'near-finality' of the typescript is perhaps one step further away from the author than is text on the computer screen.

The role of the typewriter has been taken for granted. As Catherine Viollet suggested in her pioneering work, it remains a blind spot in the history of writing practices.[82] It is not merely that it has been underestimated; rather, it has become invisible. And yet it changed compositional practices and left a profound mark on writing history. The typewriter offered writers new opportunities, for speed, critical distance or a revival of orality. At the same time, a new tension emerged between the writer's creative impulse and the limitations of the instrument, which a few writers resolved with spectacular success.

This discussion has taken Viollet's work further in two ways. I have looked beyond the French-speaking world, and I have rejected her unique focus on contemporary or near-contemporary practitioners. In addition, I have extended her suggestions by contrasting two kinds of writing practices, exemplified by James and Kerouac. I have attempted to outline the dichotomy between the detached perspective and deliberate approach to the machine illustrated by James, and the more organic relationship with the typewriter enjoyed by Kerouac. James dictated carefully constructed prose to his writer, while Kerouac advocated and tried to achieve a red-hot fusion of the writer with the keys. My argument thus leads in different

directions at once. While I accept Nietzsche's discovery that writing instruments influence our thoughts and shape writing practices, I argue that the way they do so is neither uniform nor predictable. The typewriter engendered multiple responses from authors, as they cursed it or embraced it, and as they explored ways to reconcile the machine with their professional ambitions and their individual aesthetic preferences. In all cases considered here, the role of the machine was frequently crucial and never incidental.

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Martyn Lyons is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He has published many books and articles on the history of reading and writing in Europe and Australia, including *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (2010) and *The Writing Culture of Ordinary People in Europe, c.1860–c.1920* (2013).

CHAPTER 12

The Future of the History of Writing

Martyn Lyons

'Writing Never Arrives Naked'

This book has aimed to show the importance of writing in different historical and geographical contexts. Writing has been examined as a communications medium, an instrument of power (but at the same time of subversion), a source of esoteric knowledge, a means of self-expression and an educational instrument. The purposes of writing have constantly evolved and it has been adapted for various ends by different social, political and religious groups. We have argued that, to fully understand its meanings, we must borrow techniques of archaeology and anthropology. The cultural historian of writing needs an ethnographic perspective.

One common thread running through the chapters has been the close attention paid to the materiality of writing in the hands of different social actors, whether they are elites, powerful institutions or modest individual peasants. The techniques, instruments and physical support for writing have both limited its possibilities and opened up new opportunities for the wider diffusion of texts. The availability of clay in Mesopotamia, the gradual substitution of paper for parchment in Europe, as well as the era

M. Lyons (✉)
School of Humanities, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: M.Lyons@unsw.edu.au

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of the typewriter, all prompted new approaches to the problem of drafting texts. This is not to say, however, that physical materials had a completely decisive influence. We should avoid falling into the trap of technological determinism in the history of writing, just as historians of the invention of printing must also do, recognising the importance of the social actors and institutions who exploited new techniques and materials for their own objectives.

The physical apparatus of writing certainly needs to be taken much more seriously than has hitherto been the case. We need firstly to understand the physical composition of inks, some of which corroded paper or vellum. This has to be combined with an analysis of what contemporaries in any period thought about those inks, and about paper, vellum, wax and other supports. In the nineteenth century, steel pens, for instance, were at first derided as tools of 'industrial literature' or the mass production of mediocre writing. The steel pen was seen by intellectuals as the attribute of mere clerks, and not worthy of poets. Gustave Flaubert called himself an 'homme-plume', and he meant 'plume' quite literally – he took pride in always using goose quills which he trimmed himself, refusing to stoop to the steel pen. As well as understanding how new writing technologies worked and partially displaced each other, we need to comprehend how they were imagined.

The politics of writing has provided another unifying theme for this collection of studies. The collection of Finnish peasants' autobiographical writing on which Anna Kuismin draws was collected with a view to building a national identity, and the very existence of the corpus thus had a specific ideological inspiration. Collections of ordinary writings do not come together by accident; the archives of popular writing which have come into existence in Europe over the last 25 years have their own agendas, whether it is to preserve and commemorate a regional culture[1] or re-activate a historical memory which has been obscured.[2] The historian must always listen to the discourse of the archive.

Writing is embedded in networks of power relationships. It defines authority and subordination, inclusion and exclusion. Writing, in the words of the Australian anthropologist Penny van Toorn, never arrives naked.[3] Thus we have seen that from the esoteric script of Babylonian scribes to the coded language of nineteenth-century French artisans, writing has been used to define special communities and exclude outgroups. At the same time, writing can challenge and subvert powerful institutions, as in the cases of scriptural delinquency (real or imagined)

which came under police scrutiny in late nineteenth-century Paris. Indeed, Antonio Castillo's contribution confronted within the same chapter writings both of authority and of protest in the urban spaces of the early modern Hispanic world. Perhaps the criminalisation of writing is another indication of its profound importance in specific historical contexts.

Although some common themes run through this book, so too has a diversity of approaches to the subject emerged. The cultural historians represented here have exploited the insights of various disciplines, including those of Petrucci, Goody and Foucault. The history of scribal culture can be situated at a point where many perspectives intersect, but they do not always chime well with each other. On the one hand, Nicolas Adell typified the French approach to the work of Jack Goody, developing his theses about writing as a generator of new ways of logical thinking and a new graphic rationality. On the other, Germaine Warkentin's support for a more inclusive notion of inscription seemed implicitly to deny the exclusive transformative power of what Goody considered true 'writing systems'.

Germaine Warkentin's suggestions are no doubt controversial and further debate would be welcome. They can be situated within a continuing contemporary debate about the centrality of the alphabet. The Western reliance on the alphabet, and the important role commonly attributed by anthropologists to the invention of the Greek alphabet in particular, can produce a narrowly Eurocentric perspective on the history of writing. Today no discussion of the history of scribal culture can exclude from view the world of non-alphabetic scripts, including for example those of East Asia.

There remains the important question of what qualifies as a 'writing system'. Definitions become polarised around narrow, language-bound notions on the one hand, and broader conceptions on the other. A narrow definition is given by Florian Coulmas thus:

> Writing systems are conventionalized techniques of segmenting linguistic utterances in such a way that the resulting units can be interpreted as linguistic constructs such as words, morphemes, syllables, phonemes, as well as higher-level units such as clauses and sentences.[4]

Broader understandings link writing systems directly to the collective uses of signs, contending that each system constitutes, as the Africanist Simon Battestini argues,[5]

> a whole, made up of elements and their possible articulations, produced by a selection of signs, accepted and used collectively (script), in order to leave traces which conserve and communicate a text.

The question of whether even the broad definition covers the Cheyenne Letter remains open. This book has made space for a variety of approaches in order to illustrate the richness of the field and encourage debate.

Research Agendas: Correspondence

In the last part of this conclusion, I consider important aspects of the history of scribal culture which this book has either omitted or treated only cursorily, and briefly suggest a few areas which need further research. Several topics command a place on the future research agenda of the history of scribal culture.

Firstly, the history of correspondence has increasingly become the target of scholarly attention. Although historians have long plundered correspondence as valuable historical testimony, they have been slow to consider all the codes and conventions which have historically conditioned epistolary writing. The basic ingredients of the letter have not changed much, according to Armando Petrucci, who called attention to the enduring multi-secular structure of the epistolary text.[6] Cécile Dauphin, for her part, has emphasised the role of correspondence in perpetuating and shaping family relationships. At the same time, she postulated the existence of a tacit 'epistolary pact', a silent contract governing the terms of the exchange. The unspoken agreement between correspondents covers the length of their letters, the acceptable frequency of the exchange, the language they use, and the formulae of greeting and farewell which they consider appropriate.[7] The material presence of the letter is also a part of the epistolary pact, as correspondents make shared assumptions about the appropriate colour of the ink and the paper, the size and quality of the paper or the use of cross-writing, which was characteristic of letters between close friends or relatives in the nineteenth century. The terms of the epistolary pact usually surface when the agreement is broken and has to be re-negotiated, for example when one correspondent upbraids the other for writing too rarely or too briefly. They also become clearer when letters refer to themselves, which they frequently do, as the writer discusses problems of writing and transmission, emphasising the effort and sacrifice made to maintain a regular flow and implicitly expecting that the recipient

will reciprocate. In the future our scrutiny of correspondence needs to take account of the material qualities of the letters exchanged, as well as the underlying assumptions governing them. Studying the letter's textual form is indispensable to understanding its social function.

It has also been customary for historians to regard correspondence in the modern era as a private means of communication, valued for expressions of spontaneity and personal intimacy. The study of correspondence, and especially love letters, can contribute to the history of emotions, and of expectations of fidelity, romance and marriage in past societies. The assumption that letters are private and personal, however, is often mistaken, even for love letters. In the nineteenth century other norms applied to letter writing, which was rarely free of informal censorship and often open to public or family scrutiny.[8] In nineteenth-century Italy, for a single woman to write or receive letters from a man implied an intention to marry, and this made the exchange a family concern. Middle-class women often showed great ingenuity in carving out some independence for themselves as letter writers, but in spite of their ruses, secret strategies and discreet enlistment of go-betweens, they were subject to an enveloping culture of surveillance. In our future use of correspondence, we need not only to examine the content of letters, but to study them as material objects and as a social practice. The future study of correspondence demands that we investigate the norms, rituals and social grammar which inform letter writing.

In the nineteenth century, many writers acquired what Susan Whyman calls 'epistolary literacy', although she sees this developing earlier in England.[9] The envelope was invented, which made the seal obsolete and provided greater secrecy. Letter writers everywhere learned to use the prepaid postage stamp, instead of paying for postage on receipt, while use of the steel pen became common at mid-century. The space left blank above the text, whose extent was customarily a measure of the deference owed to the addressee, gradually shrank. Letter writers learned to leave margins and to indent paragraphs on a regular basis. Only a close study of original documents can tell us how well any pair of correspondents had mastered the new technologies of writing. Simply transcribing or digitising a disembodied text is not enough: it deprives us of valuable information.

Together with a study of the codes and rituals of correspondence in the modern period, the historian of scribal culture needs to take account of postal services, their cost, frequency, reliability and efficiency. For example, Catherine Golden argued that Victorian Britain witnessed a letter-writing

revolution.[10] This assertion rested entirely on Rowland Hill's introduction of the Penny Post in 1840, and Golden's work had the merit of highlighting the discussions and fears surrounding this important innovation. The Penny Post, she argued, created the Victorian equivalent of the Internet; in other words, it constituted a communications revolution which enabled people to stay connected.[11] Like the Internet, it engendered great optimism as well as great anxiety. Cheap postage, it was thought, would encourage immorality, allowing couples to organise secret rendezvous, fostering clandestine correspondence between unsuitable lovers, now protected by the anonymity of the pillar box. Cheap postage opened up new opportunities for criminal mischief, junk mail, blackmail and slander, spam and scam.

A national postal service, however, can be considered one of the essential nation-building institutions, a communications infrastructure which allowed individuals to identify themselves with new and wider communities. In this sense, the study of the history of writing informs the history of the public sphere and of national consciousness. According to James How, the foundation of a Post Office in England in the 1650s opened up new 'epistolary spaces', in the same way as the Internet opened up new 'cyberspaces' (historians of written culture clearly love their Internet analogies).[12] The growth of postal services created greater traffic in news, which fostered the extension of the public sphere. It enabled individuals to keep in touch with public affairs and created a new space for action. The Post Office made a difference because it was an integrated system, based on a set of advertised routes, offering a continuous service. Of course, it also created a higher risk of government surveillance and mail interception as a result, but the way was open to experiment in all that a correspondence could achieve: it opened up new forms of petitioning the state and the aristocracy; and novels like Richardson's *Clarissa* suggested that a whole life could be lived in an epistolary space.

Konstantin Dierks' study gives us a rich and sophisticated treatment of letter writing and postal communication across the British Atlantic empire in the eighteenth century.[13] He links letter writing and postal communication to a consumer revolution, to middle-class commercial expansion, and at the same time to the operations of empire. American letter writing, according to Dierks, expressed middle-class white supremacy, and its ideologies of self-improvement, imperialism and competitive consumer capitalism. By the early eighteenth century, he stresses, Britain developed a new communications infrastructure, which was an instrument of bureaucratic culture and imperial power. Dierks shows

why the political and empire-building role of postal services deserves to be part of the research agenda.

The further study both of correspondence and of postal services can illuminate processes of nation-building – because a national postal service is an essential building-block of a unified communicative space, and because a study of correspondence allows us to judge how well ordinary people internalised nationalist ideologies. Scholars have studied at great length how nationalist discourses were formulated and disseminated in nineteenth-century Europe, when new nation-states came into being and older ones were consolidated. We need to know more, however, not just about how nationalist discourse was formed, but also about how it was consumed. Nationalism has often been seen as an ideology promoted by European bourgeoisies, but how were ideas of the nation internalised by the urban lower classes and rural masses? By studying the documents that these social classes themselves produced, we may see more clearly their capacity for resistance as well as obedience to dominant ideologies. Studies of the correspondence of Italian soldiers during the First World War, for example, illustrate the shortcomings of nation-building in Italy, when compared with France under the Third Republic.[14] Studying writing 'from below' brings into focus what Tara Zahra has identified as 'national indifference' in Central Europe; namely, the indifference, ambivalence and opportunism of ordinary people when dealing with issues of nationhood.[15] Here the history of ordinary writings can make a contribution to broader political questions of modern history.

Our research agenda needs to bring some particular kinds of writing into focus. The importance of delegated writing (i.e. writing by third parties or 'scribes') in bringing the illiterate and semi-literate into the orbit of written culture needs further examination, although a preliminary synthesis has been attempted.[16] Who, in what historical circumstances and for what specific purposes had recourse to a delegated writer? How did the dynamic collaboration between author and scribe influence the text they produced? How far did an author surrender his or her autonomy when a delegated writer was enlisted? Cultural historians need to follow the lead of Armando Petrucci in uncovering the networks between professional scribes and the unlettered, who might be the urban poor, but could equally be found among social elites. Their interactions produced notarial records and government documents as well as personal communications. As yet these important questions have rarely been touched on by cultural historians.

Lastly, petitions and letters to superior authorities, political and church leaders, colonial governments and powerful employers provide fertile territory for an examination of the purposes of writing in the past. We now have studies of letters written to leaders such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand.[17] To this corpus we can add fan letters to stars of screen and radio.[18] They form a general corpus of 'writing upwards', which was sometimes deferential, sometime supplicatory and occasionally abusive.[19] As James C. Scott has argued, however, expressions of loyalty and obedience to authority could be tactical, hiding a deeper insubordination beneath a show of symbolic conformity.[20] The study of letters seeking welfare benefits and so-called pauper letters shows the way forward in this field of research.[21] In the writings of the poor in this context, the question of agency and resistance in their relationship with authority can be examined, and their rhetorical strategies analysed. The 'portfolio of the poor' often contained a personal narrative and can thus be regarded potentially as a form of life writing.

Research Agendas: The Sites of Writing

The importance of writing in a few well-defined contexts is also being pushed in interesting directions, and should be explored further. Antonio Castillo Gómez's chapter gave us a glimpse of the study of public or 'exposed writing' in the early modern period. The field includes the study of inscriptions on urban monuments, funerary inscriptions, as well as all the literature, printed and handwritten, posted on walls and distributed in the street, which created an early version of the public sphere. These are studied for their graphic characteristics, their permanent or ephemeral nature, their location in the city, and their main functions, whether propaganda, information, protest or a call to action. We need to study such documents in the context of their environment and potential audience, to estimate the nature and impact of their reception among the heterogeneous population of passers-by to which they were addressed. The original inspiration for this work was undoubtedly Armando Petrucci, in his studies of public monuments in late antiquity, as well as his analysis of funerary inscriptions in the West over a long time span.[22] Petrucci's paleographic analysis, however, loses momentum when it leaves its home territory and enters the modern and contemporary period. Our understanding of writing in modern public spaces has been extended more recently by studies of nineteenth-century New York and early twentieth-century Berlin.[23] These examples can

fruitfully be multiplied further, to analyse the discourse, the material forms and the methods of appropriation of publicly exposed texts in different times and settings.

This research agenda embraces the study of graffiti, already touched on in Philippe Artières' chapter. This is a difficult field to research: the ephemeral nature of the inscriptions makes conservation extremely rare, unless descriptions are recorded by the police themselves. Graffiti abound in times of great political ferment like the arrival in power of the Popular Front in France in 1936, or the events of 1968 in Paris and other European capitals. They can be studied for their satirical wit, their anger, and as attempts by the excluded and the marginalised to appropriate public space for their own purposes.

The prison is another site of writing where graffiti proliferate. In today's prisons, like that in Buenos Aires, several urban tribes identify themselves through graffiti: followers of rock bands, supporters of football teams and the *barrio* (the suburb).[24] On the walls they inscribe imaginary messages which they can never send: 'Feliz día, mama. Tu hijo que te ama' (Have a good day, Mum, from your son who loves you). They express the pathos of captivity, sometimes mimicking a prison regulation: 'Aviso/Cuando veas a un preso durmiendo/no lo despiertes/puede estar soñando con su libertad' (Warning/When you see a prisoner sleeping/do not wake him up/he might be dreaming of his freedom). Or prisoners' writings might appropriate the identity of the marginalised, in defiance of the system that imprisoned them: 'La locura es un placer que sol[o] los loco[s] comprendemos. Un loco' (Madness is a pleasure that only we crazies understand. A crazy) – this appeared underneath a large drawing of a marijuana plant. The discourse of prison graffiti expresses the ethos of a place which is not one's own and where one does not belong, the place of the excluded.

Exposed writings play a role in sites of collective mourning, which have become disturbingly familiar in recent times. Improvised memorials spring up at sites like the destroyed World Trade Center in New York or the Bataclan theatre in Paris, where there is a need to assimilate a profound collective trauma which has had an extraordinary media impact. Ordinary writings are vital here to express collective solidarity or hope for the future, to join others in prayer, as well as to commemorate the lives of the dead. A large field of inquiry is open into such passing but complex writing events, for the historian, linguist and anthropologist.

The city street and the prison are 'graphic universes', which generate writing of specific kinds and where writing is essential to their life, vigour

and working operation. Other graphic universes or laboratories of writing also invite study. The writing universe of intercontinental shipping in the nineteenth century provides a fascinating study of writings in transit, as Joanna Schmidt and her fellow scholars are already finding at the 'Floating Spaces Cluster' research group at Heidelberg University. Long voyages depended on an intense documentary effort: they needed captains' logs, cargo manifests, charts and regular doctors' reports on the health of crew and passengers. Writing was necessary to navigate the ship and to administer its enclosed existence. Writing was also necessary to entertain the ship and to commemorate it, as is apparent if we catalogue the writing activities of passengers and transoceanic migrants. To mark a significant journey and to pass the time on a long and tedious voyage, they produced their own diaries, journals and handwritten newspapers, which were often reproduced in print at their destination and sold to passengers as souvenirs. Shipboard periodicals chronicled a rite of passage, but they also created a temporary community. Writing and reading a humorous newspaper held the group on board together, and also separated it from other groups, in first or second or steerage class, because ships were very hierarchical societies. The study of the role of writing in these and other 'graphic universes' is only just beginning.

Research Agendas: Historical Socio-linguistics

Furthermore, there is a need to bridge the gap between a cultural approach to writing, as practised by historians of scribal culture, and the language-centred approach developed by historical socio-linguists. Research in historical socio-linguistics is also dependent on documentary sources left to us by past societies, but it focuses on a significant process which surfaces through such sources and at the same time shapes them. This process is that of change and variation in the long history of linguistic systems. Language change and variation emerge from the great diversity of uses which written sources exemplify, and historical socio-linguists seek to connect this diversity systematically with social, economic and political contexts. Topics covered by historical socio-linguists range from the micro level (where gender, age, region, social status and education are variables triggering differences in the way members of social groups used to speak or started speaking in the past) to the macro level. At the macro level, historical socio-linguists consider the depth of political tensions in linguistic communities, and therefore concentrate on multi-lingualism, language

contact, attitudes to language and language standardisation.[25] The micro method relies heavily on quantification applied to linguistic structures that are recognisable in written data, especially if the data is preserved in its original form and can be connected to well-identified speakers representing a wide range of social strata. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg provided a model study of this method in their work on early modern English.[26] The macro method, on the other hand, relies more on the qualitative evaluation of discourses left to us by social actors in the past, who wrote down their beliefs, perhaps strongly held, about the identity of speech communities, their own languages and their own identities as speakers.[27]

The interests of historical socio-linguists and historians of scribal culture increasingly converge. Both, after all, rely on the close examination of the same types of documentary sources. Today they both collect as many examples of lower-class writings as possible, and invest considerable effort in connecting written sources both with contemporary social discourse about them and with the social contexts which generated them. It seems natural that each should accompany the other's discoveries, and that they should both seek to understand each other's theoretical assumptions, in order to arrive at a better, mystification-free knowledge of the individual and collective practices of readers and writers throughout history.

All the pathways for future research indicated here require a multidisciplinary perspective that is at the same time historical, palaeographic, literary, linguistic, sociological and anthropological. They also demand a global approach, to establish comparisons and investigate contrasts. As we have seen, the history of paper or of the typewriter transcends national boundaries, as does the history of shipboard newspapers or the correspondence of transoceanic emigrants. The 'world inscribed' is expanding in many directions – socially, to embrace the writing of the poor and partly educated, and to include even the illiterate within the story of scribal culture; and geographically, to study the older inscribed worlds of Korea, China and Japan, the Arab world, Africa and Native America north of the Rio Grande. This book envisages a range of exciting possibilities.

This discussion has come a long way from Lorina Bulwer's sewn autobiography in the female lunatic ward of the Great Yarmouth workhouse. The spelling and grammar of her embroidered text were good. If we make a reasonable guess that she could compose about

three and half lines per day, she would have taken about 110 days to make one sampler scroll of this length.[28] She was an assiduous and determined writer, and the two scrolls which survive may not have been the only ones she produced. Perhaps she composed the text as a supervised therapeutic exercise. We can only speculate about this, and about the source of her hand-stitched materials. There are many enigmas to be resolved in the history of scribal culture, and many extraordinary authors writing their lives with whatever resources came to hand.

Notes

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Martyn Lyons is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He has published many books and articles on the history of reading and writing in Europe and Australia, including *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (2010) and *The Writing Culture of Ordinary People in Europe, c.1860–c.1920* (2013).

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