

Chapter Title: PLAUSIBLE NARRATIVES AND CONVINCING (HI)STORIES

Book Title: Forgeries and Historical Writing in England, France, and Flanders, 900-1200

Book Author(s): Robert F. Berkhofer <suffix>III</suffix>

Published by: Boydell & Brewer, Boydell Press. (2022)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv24tr8rg.15>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*Boydell & Brewer, Boydell Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Forgeries and Historical Writing in England, France, and Flanders, 900-1200*

## PLAUSIBLE NARRATIVES AND CONVINCING (HI)STORIES

### AFTERLIVES OF ARGUMENTA

Monks used various forms of textual organization to structure their pasts, including charters, copies in gospel books, booklets, cartularies, or narratives which were not primarily historical. By describing these arrangements as “stories,” I argue that they represented the past in usable ways, even though they have not generally been regarded as “histories” by conventional medieval or modern definitions. Yet because these “stories” did rewrite the past, it is useful to think about them as historical writings. Here one should recall Isidore of Seville’s tripartite distinction of *historia*, *argumentum*, and *fabula*. *Argumentum* (plausible narration) was between *historia* and *fabula*, since it described events which could have happened, but neither had actually happened nor were impossible. Although none of the eleventh-century monks studied here used the word *argumentum* in this manner, it is worth considering their “stories” – either expressed or implied – using the concept of plausible narration. This way of looking at the stories of Saint-Peter’s, Ghent, Saint-Denis, and Christ Church, Canterbury helps make sense of the forgeries invented by these monks. Their stories were *argumenta* in that they rewrote the past plausibly because their composers hoped to convince various audiences. They were attempts by monks to create a usable past, either for themselves or close associates, often in response to specific crises or local circumstances.<sup>1</sup> But after their immediate use, were they simply forgotten? In some places, this must have happened, as stories became irrelevant or were superseded as new circumstances demanded overwriting them. Thus, they were forgotten, either through omission or deliberately.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ugé, *Creating the Monastic Past*, 9–15.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 7–20; compare Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*, 14–30, on “social forgetting.” For the “memory–oblivion” dichotomy,

Yet monastic *argumenta* could persist or be adapted and so had potential utility for later historical writing in recognized genres (*historia*, *gesta* or *chronicon*). Indeed, the very selectivity of these “stories” has influenced how modern scholars regard monastic historical writings in the Middle Ages. So, it is worth investigating the afterlives of *argumenta*, especially if they were incorporated into house histories.

While “Twice Told Tales” explored monastic stories at moments in time (or over a narrow span of years), this chapter offers a broader temporal view. It traces “stories” or plausible narratives forward in time, examining if (and how) textual production became more overtly historicizing. To reveal wider trends, it considers other houses and especially their cartularies to show how monks presented their archives as preparation for writing (or rewriting) histories. It also treats narrative histories themselves, using insights about forgeries and cartularies, to explore how convincing medieval monastic historical writing might have been. Composers of monastic stories had considerable flexibility in writing; however, their choices were also constrained by important limits. Some events or subplots were fixed (or less mutable) because they had already become accepted, which meant that changing them strained the plausibility of an alternate view. Events already widely known from authoritative histories were difficult to rewrite in a convincing way. This tendency was pronounced in foundation stories. So, for example, the monks of Saint Peter’s were quick to claim foundation by Saint Amand because he was widely revered in and around Ghent, though almost all the specifics were borrowed from other churches’ narratives. Likewise, the monks of Saint-Denis would have been foolish to deny that Denis had been missionary to Gaul, though this did not stop the monks from claiming extensive patronage from King Dagobert to burnish his (and their) reputation. For similar reasons, the monks of Christ Church would have been dismissed if they had contradicted Bede’s version of Saint Augustine’s mission, though they stressed some aspects or invented others. Of course, foundation legends could be rewritten – they often were – but how it was done meant some versions would be more convincing than others. Monks’ stories about their past required faith, but they were easier to believe – and make others believe – if the stories were plausible.

An important factor in the plausibility of monastic stories was anticipated competition from other storytellers, especially rival houses or diocesan bishops who stood to lose influence if monastic *argumenta* about property or independence became accepted as authoritative. Telling a selective story highlighted key features of a house’s past for partisan and

---

Marie Claire Lavabre, “Historiography and Memory,” in *Companion to the Philosophy of History*, ed. Aviezer Tucker (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 362–70.

pious purposes. Indeed, this was one of the dominant motives, so that the story could be used to promote the house, either against rivals or to garner favor from powerful patrons. Unsurprisingly, other religious pushed back if a house's claims became too intrusive into their perceived (or actual) domains. At Saint Peter's, the refoundation of Saint Bavo's in the 940s had created a powerful local rival and, almost immediately, a struggle began over their shared legacy in Ghent. By the time of Abbot Wichard's efforts in the 1030s, the adversarial exchanges between the houses exerted ongoing and heavy influence. Consequently, the deliberate appropriation and erasure of Saint Bavo's ancient past was integral to the story of Saint Peter's. Such contestation could become fiercer once creative invention was involved in the storytelling. Simply put, if a story diverged from what had actually happened, others could remember differently or might have texts which read differently, and so had the material to craft an alternative story. Moreover, even if divergent memories or texts were not available, as long as others were sufficiently motivated, fabricating a competing story was possible if they were resourceful. Thus, monastic "stories" could have significant afterlives in later histories. A dramatic example is provided by Christ Church, Canterbury.

AN AFTERLIFE AT CANTERBURY: "BUT THE THING  
IS AS TRUE AS IT SEEMS FALSE"

In analyzing the "story" of Christ Church in the lost Anglo-Norman cartulary, chapter four focused on the years when it was composed (1073–83) and revised (c. 1089–1100). It also traced connections to charter forgeries and two texts written around the turn of the twelfth century: the bilingual *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* F version and *Domesday Monachorum*. Through such writings, the monastic community increasingly asserted its collective identity and privileges by fabricating a more suitable pre-Conquest past. The "story" of Christ Church was thus a plausible narrative (an *argumentum*), but it was not yet a history. But the "story" soon had an afterlife, as both fabrication and historical writing flourished in the early twelfth century at Christ Church. This afterlife included two distinct, but related, writing projects: the so-called "Canterbury forgeries" about the primacy of the archbishop and, starting in the 1110s, Eadmer's history, the *Historia novorum in Anglia*. These two projects demonstrate the enduring relevance of the early cartulary's "story" in shaping the monastic past.

In his *Historia novorum*, Eadmer narrated the Archbishop of Canterbury's failure to assert primacy over the Archbishop of York before the royal court in 1120. Immediately following this episode, he described how the partisans of Canterbury searched the archives and discovered important

papal letters.<sup>3</sup> Eadmer then inserted full copies of ten papal bulls into his history. However, these documents were forgeries. But nonetheless copies of the bulls (in a booklet) were presented before the papal curia in 1123 and, according to a hostile witness, Hugh the Chanter of York, were laughed out of court:

Some of the Romans asked the Canterbury party whether the privileges had bulls attached. But they said that they had left the originals with their bulls in their church and brought copies with them. And because privileges and charters are not valid evidence unless they have bulls or seals attached, they were asked whether they would swear that they had originals in their possession with bulls. They retired, and consulting together said among themselves that they had no bulls. One tried to persuade another to swear for the sake of their church: sound and canonical advice indeed! But they were by no means willing and were afraid to attach the missing bulls by perjury. They made up their minds to come back and say that the bulls had either perished or were lost. When they said this, some smiled, others turned up their noses, and others laughed aloud, making fun of them and saying that it was a miracle that lead should perish or be lost and parchment survive. Some may think that this story is made up, and the writer trifling with him, but the thing is as true as it seems false.<sup>4</sup>

This spectacular, high-profile failure of the primacy forgeries at the papal curia is the end of a messy afterlife to the cartulary's "story;" but where did it begin? Where did these forgeries come from?

This failure of forgers in 1123 had its roots in the generations before 1109. The primacy forgeries depended on specific claims about the early history of Canterbury, which were woven into the "story" promoted by the cartulary. While the cartulary was being compiled, the monks were already drafting some of the "Canterbury forgeries" about the primacy. Although the ten forgeries were not assembled in a booklet until relatively late (after

<sup>3</sup> HN, 261, bk. 5, a. 1120.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York, 1066–1127*, ed. and trans. Charles Johnson, rev. by Martin Brett et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 194–5: "Et quia privilegiis aut cartis non bullatis vel non signatis non necesse est fidem adhiberi, sciscitati sunt si vellent iurare horum exemplaria bullata habere. In partem cesserunt. Consultantes inuicem dixerunt inter se bullis carere. Aliquis tamen alicui persuadere uoluit ut pro causa ecclesiae sue iuraret. Sanum quidem concilium et legale! Cui nequaquam adquiescentes, priuilegia illa periurio bullare timuerunt. Consilium eorum fuit ut coram redeuntes dicerent bullas consumptas vel perditas esse. Quibus sic dicentibus, alii subriserunt, alii nares corrugauerunt, alii cachinum emisierunt, illudendo dicentes mirum esse plumbum consumptum fore vel perditum, et pergamenum durare. Fortasse ficticium hoc esse cuiquam uideatur et qui scripsit hoc nugator, set tam uerum est quam ficticium uidetur." Note one might translate "fiction" instead of "false."

1120 and certainly before 1123 when they were reviewed at the papal curia), fabrication had begun earlier. The booklet of forgeries is now BL Cotton Cleopatra E i, ff. 40v–47v, a manuscript also containing (in subsequent quires) dossiers of letters relating to the primacy disputes under Lanfranc (1070–1075), Anselm (1107–1109), and from 1117 to 1120 as well as extensive lists of episcopal professions made to the archbishops.<sup>5</sup> The very large size of the leaves, the generous margins, careful layout and execution of the script, as well as consistent decoration with colored initials and rubrics all indicate a fair copy for presentation.<sup>6</sup> A large illuminated “R” on f. 40r, occupying the first twelve lines of the left column across its entire width and into the left margin, showing a man grasping the legs of an animal surrounded by foliage, suggests that it was the intended first page.<sup>7</sup> So does the first item, a “constitution” of Pope Gregory I, which is followed by the primacy forgeries. This booklet was significant and understanding its creation has puzzled many historians.

The most discussed aspect of the ten Canterbury primacy forgeries has been their dating. At least some of the forging began quite soon after the Conquest. Indeed, the first document in the series was achieved probably before 1073: the Boniface IV letter first written in the Æthelstan gospel, which had headed the Anglo-Norman cartulary in lieu of a foundation charter. Although scholars have tried to pin these forgeries on particular famous creators working at various moments in time (notably Lanfranc and Eadmer), or to exonerate others (Anselm) by excluding various periods, it is more likely that they accumulated in stages over the years and were the work of several fabricators.<sup>8</sup> But what were the connections between these forgeries and other projects at Christ Church before 1109, especially the cartulary? As we shall see, the Canterbury forgeries presumed the cartulary’s “story” and tried to enlarge it.

How, when, and why were the forgeries composed? Keeping the larger context in mind, it is helpful to return to the “Æthelstan Gospels” (BL Cotton

<sup>5</sup> The quires were moved by Cotton, c. 1604; a speculative reconstruction of the order is ff. 40–47, 48–55, 56–57(?), 17–22, 23–30, 30–37, and one added leaf, 38. There are some mid- to late twelfth-century additions at the ends or beginnings of quires.

<sup>6</sup> The pages were trimmed by Cotton except f. 30, which preserves marginal notation and shows the original pricking and is 325 x 245mm. Both the privileges and the professions are double columned and ruled 31 lines to a page, with a writing area of 245 x 165mm.

<sup>7</sup> BL Cotton Cleopatra E i, f. 40r; C. Martin Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190* (London: Harvey-Miller, 1975), 63, no. 20, illustration 55.

<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer III, “The ‘Canterbury Forgeries’ Revisited,” *Haskins Society Journal* 18 (2007): 36–50, which attempted to outline (probably overzealously) various stages from a codicological perspective.

Claudius A iii), in which most of the primacy forgeries first appeared. The forgeries written in the Æthelstan gospels consisted of nine (out of an eventual ten) papal letters, purportedly from the seventh to the ninth century, designed to support the claims of the Archbishop of Canterbury to primacy over the church of England, and even the whole of Britain. They were added after the fabricated pre-Conquest royal charters already analyzed. Unlike the royal charters, which were a recognizable set, the papal forgeries were scattered across the codex. The first efforts were placed on blank leaves at the beginnings or ends of Gospel books. When the scribes ran out of blank leaves between the gospels, the book was un-bound and other sheets were inserted as needed. Analysis is complicated because some of the leaves are now detached in two other manuscripts (BL Cotton Tiberius A ii and Cotton Faustina B vi).<sup>9</sup> The earliest act, the forged Boniface IV privilege dated 615, was added on a single original leaf available between the chapter list and gospel of Luke in a distinctive hand.<sup>10</sup> A draft of this letter was probably in existence before 1072, when Pope Alexander II confirmed a forged privilege of Boniface IV for Saint Augustine's which used the same phrasing.<sup>11</sup> As argued in chapter four, the Boniface privilege was present in the gospel along with the pre-conquest royal charters before the composition of the cartulary (1073–1083), which included copies of all of these texts. The royal charters had used up the largest space available, the five leaves between the gospels of Luke and John, and part of one leaf before the gospel of Matthew. The Boniface IV forgery used up the remaining recto and part of the verso of this leaf (BL Cotton Tiberius A ii, f. 73r–v). Subsequently – and when this was done between 1073 and 1123 is disputed – other fabricated papal letters were added.

Let us first review the papal letters copied in the gospels and where they were written. Starting on the verso of a lone empty leaf at the head of the gospel of Mark, and continued onto an inserted sheet (BL Cotton Faustina B vi, f. 95), were two papal letters by Popes Boniface V (619–25) and Honorius I (625–38), which addressed two early archbishops of Canterbury as “metropolitan” of all Britain and as “primate” of all the churches of Britain.<sup>12</sup> These two letters share stylistic similarities, drawing extensively on

<sup>9</sup> Ker, “*Membra Disiecta*,” 130–1

<sup>10</sup> BL Cotton Claudius A iii, f. 7r–v (JL 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Kelly, “Some Forgeries,” 366: “There was a valid historical context for the joint fabrication of privileges by St. Augustine's and Christ Church in the years before the arrival of Lanfranc.”

<sup>12</sup> Boniface V, “*Susceptis vestrae*” (JL 2007); Honorius I, “*Susceptis vestrae dilectionis*” (JL 2021).



language from Bede.<sup>13</sup> In order to fit these two letters in, a scribe had to write the first five lines of the Boniface V privilege in some blank space at the end of the previous gospel leaf. This transgression onto the gospel page fixes the position of the inserted leaf (now detached) precisely. Another bifolium was then inserted between the chapter list and Gospel of Luke, now BL Cotton Claudius A iii, ff. 7 and 9\*.<sup>14</sup> Here were written two letters in the name of Pope Sergius (687–701), one addressed to the English bishops and another to the kings of Mercia and Northumbria, saying that the pope has granted Archbishop Berhtwald a *pallium* and asking them to acknowledge and obey him.<sup>15</sup> This bifolium also had a later copy of a genuine bull of Pascal II from 1103 relating to the investiture controversy between Henry I and Anselm, which had to be written around (before and after) the second Sergius letter.<sup>16</sup> Such insertions were cumbersome in such a deluxe and precious manuscript; for further additions, it proved easier to add three leaves to the end of the book (now Cotton Faustina B vi, ff. 98–100). These three leaves provided enough space for four more papal letters, of Popes Vitalian (657–72), Gregory III (731–41), Leo III (795–816), and Formosus (891–6), all stressing that the archbishop of Canterbury was “metropolitan” or “primate.”<sup>17</sup> Before the Formosus letter, under a separate rubric, “*Memorabilem factum*,” there was also a fabricated account of the consecration of seven bishops by the Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury at Crediton in 905, designed to reinforce the Formosan bull asserting primacy.<sup>18</sup>

Nicholas Brooks and Susan Kelly undertook a detailed analysis of the hands and the inserted leaves and reconstructed the order in which the gospel entries were made (24 items in all).<sup>19</sup> They argued convincingly that the royal acts and papal letters were added on two separate occasions, when

<sup>13</sup> Helen Clover, “Alexander II’s Letter *Accepimus a quibusdam* and Its Relationship with the Canterbury Forgeries” in *La Normandie bénédictine au temps de Guillaume le conquérant (XI siècle)*, ed. Louis Gaillard (Lille: Facultés catholiques, 1967), 417–72 at 424–7.

<sup>14</sup> Older works use 7\* but *Charters of Christ Church* uses 9\* and I follow this practice.

<sup>15</sup> BL Cotton Claudius A iii, f. 7v, Sergius I “*Sciut nobis*” (JL 2133), f. 9\* Sergius I “*Donum gratiae*” (JL 2132). Both letters draw heavily on the language of Alcuin, see Clover, “Alexander II’s letter,” 424–7.

<sup>16</sup> BL Cotton Claudius A iii, f. 7\*v, Pascal II “*Fraternitatis tue*” (JL 5955).

<sup>17</sup> BL Cotton Faustina B iv, ff. 98–100; Vitalian “*Inter plurima*” (JL 2095); Gregory III “*Dei omnipotentis*” (JL 2243); Leo III “*Pontificali discretioni*” (JL 2510); Formosus “*Audita nefandorum*” (JL 3506).

<sup>18</sup> BL Cotton Faustina B iv, f. 99r–v (S 1541a), Dorothy Whitelock et al., eds, *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church I: A.D. 871–1204*, part 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 167–9, no. 35; Brooks, *Early History*, 211–3.

<sup>19</sup> *Charters of Christ Church*, 87–94.



the Æthelstan gospels were rebound. The vast majority of the royal grants to Christ Church were added in the first intervention, on five leaves between Luke and John, in the early eleventh century (their items 1–10).<sup>20</sup> In a subsequent rebinding, six leaves (and possibly a lost seventh) were added around each of the other gospels, as related above (their items 11–24). Item 11 was the Boniface IV forgery, composed in a hand which also recorded a series of Christ Church annals down to 1073.<sup>21</sup> The remaining primacy forgeries were written in three different hands, which they dated xi/xii (items 15–16, the bulls of Sergius), xi/xii (items 17–19, a genuine bull of Pope Paschal II to Anselm from June 1103, and the Boniface V and Honorius I forgeries), and xii<sup>1</sup> (items 20–24, the remaining five primacy forgeries).

Some evidence is also provided by uses of the forgeries in other manuscripts. The fabricated Sergius letters may have been in the cartulary, or at least copies exist in one later version, where they were added (in chronological order) to the first part of the “story,” after Wihtrred’s supposed privilege of 694.<sup>22</sup> This version, Lambeth ms. 1212, was written in the 1270s supposedly as a “Transcript of the Ancient Book of Canterbury,” and also contained later materials from Lanfranc’s time, two entries about Henry I and Anselm, and a copy of the *Domesday Monachorum*.<sup>23</sup> However, the Sergius letters do not appear in the other two surviving versions of the lost cartulary. Moreover, none of the other primacy forgeries appear in any of the cartulary’s versions. Because these Sergius letters refer to Archbishop Berhtwald’s *pallium* and make more circumspect claims to primacy over England than the later forgeries, Brooks and Kelly viewed them as emerging from monastic concerns about the archbishop of York’s flawed profession in 1093.<sup>24</sup>

Scholars have also tried to use references to the forgeries in surviving letters. These include a letter of Lanfranc to Pope Alexander II in 1072, which seems at first glance to refer to at least six of the forgeries, and which led some scholars to conclude (erroneously) that some forgeries dated to

<sup>20</sup> BL Cotton Tiberius A ii, ff. 2r–6v.

<sup>21</sup> BL Cotton Tiberius A ii, fol 7v; *Charters of Christ Church*, 90–1, they argued this was entered prior to the final Old English royal acts on fol. 6v (their items 12–13), one of which is in the same hand.

<sup>22</sup> London Lambeth Palace Library, ms. 1212, 334–5; see CC Cart., 153 for the order of entries.

<sup>23</sup> London Lambeth Palace Library, ms. 1212, 286 provides a chapter list of 103 items which follow (304–39) entitled, “Capitula memorandum transcriptorum de veteri libro Cant.” The items include the cartulary through Anselm’s reign (304–33); items from Lanfranc’s time, including Pope Alexander II’s “Accepimus a quibusdam” of 1072 (334–39, including some later additions from Becket’s time); and a rough transcription of *Domesday Monachorum* (340–54).

<sup>24</sup> *Charters of Christ Church*, 93.

the 1070s.<sup>25</sup> In 1093, the precentor Osbern wrote to Archbishop-elect Anselm urging him to defend the privileges of the church, and he seemed to refer to letters by Boniface IV, Honorius, and Vitalian.<sup>26</sup> This Osbern letter caused some scholars to assert that the forgeries had existed by 1093 and were perhaps presented to the royal court in 1109, in response to Thurstan of York's refusal to make profession to Canterbury after Anselm's death in that year.<sup>27</sup>

The idea that the primary forgeries existed between 1073 and 1109 was never accepted by R. W. Southern, who raised substantial objections to the inferences made from these letters. Southern forthrightly gave his reasons for rejecting Lanfranc or the monks before 1109 as the forgers.<sup>28</sup> Southern asked, if these forgeries were available previously, why weren't they used by Lanfranc or Anselm, or mentioned earlier in Eadmer's *Historia novorum in Anglia*? Southern's answer was simple: because what existed in the Canterbury archives were routine letters granting the archbishop's *pallium*, which did not (yet) contain the crucial interpolations about the primacy. These were the documents referred to by Lanfranc's and Osbern's letters and used at royal courts in 1072 and 1109, which he thought forgers later destroyed to prevent detection. In particular, Southern pointed to the tenth forgery, a letter of John XII (955–64) sending Archbishop Dunstan his *pallium* and referring to him as primate, found at the end of the booklet presented to the papal curia in 1123, but not in the Æthelstan gospels.<sup>29</sup> An un-doctored earlier copy of this letter survived, which shows that the reference to the "primacy" was interpolated in an otherwise standard *pallium* document.<sup>30</sup> Southern argued that similar interpolations were made in other primacy

<sup>25</sup> Helen Clover and Margaret T. Gibson, eds., *Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 52–3. no. 4, ll. 66–71. The earliest version is BL Cotton Nero A vii, probably written 1093–1107. See Berkhofer, "The 'Canterbury Forgeries' Revisited," 36–37.

<sup>26</sup> Schmitt, ed. S. *Anselmi...Opera Omnia* 4:8, no. 149, ll. 52–6. The earliest version is London Lambeth Palace Library, ms. 59, the dating of which is disputed; Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 459–61, argued (revising his earlier position) for a date of c. 1125–30.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 231–7 and with refinements in "The Normans and Angevins," in *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, eds. Patrick Collinson, Nigel Ramsay, and Margaret Sparks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 38–68, esp. 49–51.

<sup>28</sup> Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 330–64 on the primacy, esp. 352–62; see also his "The Canterbury Forgeries," *English Historical Review* 287 (1958): 193–226.

<sup>29</sup> BL Cotton Cleopatra E i, ff. 46v–47v, John XII "Si pastores ovium," (JL 3687).

<sup>30</sup> Preserved in a late tenth-century pontifical, BnF lat. 943, f. 7. Levison, *England and the Continent*, 201 n4.

forgeries. Ultimately, Southern's explanation seems to be a good reconstruction of *how* the modifications were made.

So, when were the primacy forgeries concocted? Southern argued that interpolations in the *pallium* letters occurred after 1120, when the monks and archbishop were reduced to forgery as a "last resort" because of setbacks in their continuing disputes with York and the monastery of Saint Augustine's in that year.<sup>31</sup> In particular, he emphasized Eadmer's account of a search of the archives for privileges in 1120, which Eadmer related in book four of *Historia novorum*:

In these days [the time he is referring to is 1120] the anxiety of many stirred them to seek out the authorities and ancient privileges regarding the primacy which the church of Canterbury claims over the church of York....There was great anxiety among many to look into this; and, confiding in the justice of the church of God, the hidden places of ancient cupboards and ancient Gospel books, which had been looked on only as ornaments in the house of God, were diligently searched. And behold, the desire for justice was not deprived of its result, for by God's guidance certain privileges were found, by which everything was given firm and apostolic authority.<sup>32</sup>

It was this search for (and invention of) the needed documents that was the fatal step towards failure at the papal curia in 1123, which Hugh the Chanter later derided. Indeed, the two monks' accounts mirror each other remarkably, though each has its own partisan perspective.<sup>33</sup> For Southern, Eadmer's explanation exonerated Anselm and earlier generations of monks.<sup>34</sup>

Southern's argument is in many ways persuasive. There is also an additional point in its favor. If the F-scribe of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was more than happy to use the Boniface IV forgery, why didn't he make use of any others (if they existed) when he was working in 1100–1107? But there are still remaining problems. The evidence of paleography and codicology

<sup>31</sup> Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 259–60.

<sup>32</sup> HN, 260–1: "His diebus excitata est sollicitudo multorum ad investigandum auctoritates et antiqua privilegia primatus quem ecclesia Cantuariensis, quae est Dorobernensis, sibi vindicat super ecclesiam Eboracensem....Ex his ergo ad haec investiganda multorum sollicitudo, ut diximus, evigilavit, et confisa iustitiae ecclesiae Dei, antiquorum scriniorum abdita, sacrorum evangeliorum volumina, soli decori domus Domini eatenus inservientia, diligentius perscrutata est. Ecce autem ut voluntas iusti amans optato effectui non privaretur, quae subscribimus, revelante Deo, privilegia quaedam reperta sunt, firma undique et apostolica auctoritate subnixa." Trans. Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 359–60, including the bracketed remark.

<sup>33</sup> Brett and Brooke, eds., *Hugh the Chanter*, vv–xvi discussed the parallels.

<sup>34</sup> Southern, *Saint Anselm*, 361, admitted there may have been some "experiments" in the fifty years before 1120.

all seem to argue for bouts of fabrication over considerable time. Also, why did Osbern only refer to some of the letters? And why did the cartulary only use a couple of others (the rather tame Sergius pallium letters)? We know that drafts existed in the Æthelstan gospels and they certainly pre-date the presentation copies in BL Cotton Cleopatra E i. Decisions about preservation, invention, and destruction of archival documents were clearly ongoing. Some of these may have had other purposes, such as assuring Christ Church's preeminence (the two Sergius letters) or refuting the monks of Saint Augustine's claims of independence (the Boniface V, Honorius, and Vitalian letters). However, these five letters all also purported to be from before 735, the date when York first received a separate *pallium* in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>35</sup> That is, they constituted a useful group to support Canterbury's self-serving "story" of primacy. But in the early 1120s the monks went too far with their new booklet. When asked to produce charters with bulls by the papal curia, they could not (or dared not). So, their *argumentum* failed because increased scrutiny meant that their story was no longer plausible; worse still, it was laughably inept.

So, what can one conclude about the relationship of the primacy forgeries to other projects (especially historical writings) undertaken in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries? It seems that rewriting occurred from 1073 to 1120 to support a revised *argumentum*. Furthermore, clearly forgery and historical writing were related activities. For the primacy forgeries to be useful they had to be closely tied to interpretations of the past favorable to both the archbishops and chapter of Christ Church. I view the forgeries as responses to changing needs over time. First, the Boniface IV letter was crucial to the "story" told by the cartulary: it provided evidence of an alleged monastic foundation by Saint Augustine. This back-dating overwrote the actual creation of a monastic chapter by the expulsion of clerics during the tenth-century Benedictine reform and reflected later eleventh-century anxieties. Next, the Sergius letters addressed concerns about the archbishop's (and by implication the chapter's) status arising during the long vacancy of 1089–1093, just as the cartulary's sequel and the compilers of *Domesday Monachorum* were trying to protect monastic lands and privileges. A third concern can be found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s F version, embellished to support a pro-Canterbury interpretation which insisted on the archbishop's primacy.

Various crises over the archbishop's status provoked fabrications using otherwise routine *pallium* letters. In particular, the consecration of Anselm in December 1093 by Thurstan of York may have been a crucial turning

<sup>35</sup> Colgrave and Mynors, eds., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 572–3.

point: for as Eadmer related in his *Historia novorum*, this was when the attempt to have Anselm consecrated as “primate of the whole of Britain” (*totius Britanniae*) first failed.<sup>36</sup> Brooks and Kelly observed that the cartulary and the F-Chronicle both consistently make claims to pan-Britannic authority, though no pre-Conquest version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does, nor does any single-sheet charter from surviving pre-Conquest manuscripts.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, they point out that the works of the precentor Osbern (d. 1093) only claim primacy over the “English,” whereas Eadmer insists on Canterbury’s authority over the whole of “Britain.” Furthermore, the professions to Archbishop Anselm increasingly use the formula “*totius Britanniae primas*” after the failure to assert primacy at York in 1093.<sup>38</sup> For them, such insistence on greater British primacy marks an important shift distinguishing the time of Lanfranc and Osbern (pre-1093), from that of Anselm and Eadmer (post-1093).<sup>39</sup> Of course, some of this might reflect writers’ personal views.<sup>40</sup>

As distinctive house traditions were invented and texts fabricated, more assertive “stories” and even elaborate histories could be undertaken. Eadmer’s *Historia novorum in Anglia*, a narrative history of recent events, could be viewed as the logical outcome of these ongoing archival and scribal processes. First, the old pre-Conquest archives had been (re)organized and key documents were selected and placed in chronological sequence (the cartulary). Second, land claims were affirmed and enshrined in a possible companion text (*Domesday Monachorum*). Third, a pro-monastic and pro-Canterbury spin was given to well-known events in the history of the realm and the church (the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* F-version), reinforced by forgeries which supported a particular interpretation of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*. The next step would be a history of the house itself. In many ways, the *Historia novorum* was a house history that reinterpreted the not-so-distant past, along lines sketched by these earlier projects. Of course, the work bore strong traces of its author (Eadmer), his hero (Anselm), and events of its day. We are fortunate indeed to know such details about Eadmer, thanks to a surviving autograph manuscript and his own descriptions.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> HN, 42–3.

<sup>37</sup> *Charters of Christ Church*, 64–5.

<sup>38</sup> Richter, *Canterbury Professions*, 34–7, nos. 50a–61.

<sup>39</sup> *Charters of Christ Church*, 65–6: “The Christ Church Anglo-Norman Cartulary may reflect the assertiveness of Anselm and Eadmer’s world rather than the more tolerant attitudes of Lanfranc and Osbern.”

<sup>40</sup> Rubenstein, “The Life and Writings of Osbern,” 27–40 argues that Osbern had different (even opposing) views from some contemporaries, especially Prior Henry.

<sup>41</sup> CCCC ms. 452 containing Eadmer’s revised version.

If the *Historia novorum* had been written anonymously, like many other narratives, modern historians could not ascribe its views to an individual; rather they would consider it a product of its milieu: the monastic house at Christ Church.<sup>42</sup> This communal approach is a revealing way to read the *Historia novorum* even though Eadmer's autograph manuscript lends weight to interpretations of authorial intention.

Furthermore, because Eadmer revised the *Historia novorum* and his copy survives, we know a lot about its creation. Moreover, the *Vita Anselmi*, which also survives in a partially autograph manuscript of Eadmer's hagiographic works, provides more information still.<sup>43</sup> Recently, Benjamin Pohl has systematically revised scholars' understanding of the composition of the *Historia novorum* from its earliest manuscripts. Eadmer began composing (either mentally or in drafts) perhaps before, and certainly after, Anselm's death in 1109. Pohl demonstrates there had been a recension of the *Historia novorum* treating events through the Council of Salisbury in March 1116 (in what is now Book V) and completed in that year.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the revised and expanded version we now have was composed after Eadmer returned from his Continental travels after 1119.<sup>45</sup> This expansion was composed under different circumstances and with new purposes. Added material, the post-1116 part of what is now Book V and Book VI, dealt with the remainder of the rule of Archbishop Ralph (to 1122) and Eadmer's own struggles into the early 1120s. The work also adopted a particular narrative style. Charles Rozier argues that even though Eadmer called his work the *historia novorum*, it was different from contemporary *historiae* of other monks because it avoided using previous historical narratives, some of which were available.<sup>46</sup> Instead, it was written to offer a direct (eyewitness) relation of Anselm's deeds.

<sup>42</sup> Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, 5–6 about the dangers of personality.

<sup>43</sup> CCCC ms. 371 in Eadmer's hand, ed. R. W. Southern, *The Life of Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Pohl, "The (Un)making of a History Book: Revisiting the Earliest Manuscript of Eadmer of Canterbury's *Historia novorum* in Anglia," *The Library*, 7<sup>th</sup> series 20, no. 3 (2019):340–70 at 363–8 demonstrated that the version in CCCC ms. 371/341 ended with the events of the Council of Salisbury of March 1116 and was likely composed as early as April 1116, before Eadmer and Archbishop Ralph left England.

<sup>45</sup> Pohl, "The (Un)making of a History Book," 369: "The most likely explanation, therefore, is this: like most twelfth-century writers of history, Eadmer did not compose his HNov in two sessions separated by half a decade or so of inactivity, but rather in a series of redactions which he wrote, rewrote, and revised over extended periods of time."

<sup>46</sup> Charles C. Rozier, "Between History and Hagiography: Eadmer of Canterbury's Vision of *Historia Novorum* in Anglia," *Journal of Medieval History* 45, no. 1 (2019): 1–19.



Helpfully, Eadmer's preface to the *Vita Anselmi* contrasted the two works, and so explained what he thought the method and purpose of the *Historia novorum* was:

Since we have seen many strange changes in England in our days and developments which were quite unknown in former days, I committed to writing a brief record of some of these things, lest the knowledge of them should be entirely lost to future generations. This work was chiefly concerned to give an accurate description of those things which took place between the kings of England and Anselm archbishop of Canterbury. It described in rough and unadorned language events which were open to the inspection of any contemporary who wished to know the truth about them, but left out anything which seemed to belong merely to Anselm's life, or to his character, or to the setting forth of his miracles.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, Eadmer's preface used common tropes of monastic historians, including preserving the knowledge of events, relating the "truth" about them, and using simple (that is, unrhetorical) language, so one must question if his description reflects the contents.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, books one to three of the *Historia novorum* did this fairly well, but books four to six, revised later and treating post-Anselm events, seem to have a different approach. In the later books, Eadmer drew very heavily on documents and letters, often providing full copies of them which inflated the size of his work.<sup>49</sup> One also finds themes in Eadmer's preface to the *Historia novorum* familiar from cartulary prologues: he claimed to be recording events for posterity; he bemoaned the lack of documents from predecessors which consigned earlier deeds to oblivion; and he hoped the work would provide instructive precedents for successors. He also employed truth-telling tropes used by other historians: he insisted that he would only record things he had seen

<sup>47</sup> R. W. Southern, ed. and trans., *The Life of St Anselm*, 1: "Quoniam multas et antecessorum nostrorum temporibus insolitas rerum mutationes nostris diebus in Anglia accidisse et coaluisse conspeximus ne mutationes ipse posterorum scientiam penitus laterent, quaedam ex illis succincte excepta, litterarum memoriae tradidimus. Sed quoniam ipsum opus in hoc maxime versatur, ut ea quae inter reges Anglorum et Anselmum archiepiscopum Cantuariorum facta sunt inconcussa veritate designet, quaeque omnibus puram illorum historiam scire volentibus tunc temporibus innotescere potuerunt licet inculto plano tamen sermone describat, nec adeo quicquam in se contineat quod ad privatam conversationem, vel ad morum ipsius Anselmi qualitatem, aut ad miraculorum exhibitionem pertinere videatur."

<sup>48</sup> Michael Staunton, "The *Vita Anselmi*: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of Medieval History* 23, no. 1 (1997): 1–14.

<sup>49</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer III, "Use of Evidence in Eadmer's *Historia novorum in Anglia*," in *Eadmer of Canterbury: Historian, Hagiographer, and Advocate of Canterbury*, ed. Charles Rozier et al. (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).



and heard himself and that he would do so with brevity (*brevitas*).<sup>50</sup> One might regard his assertions as conventional postures; for instance, though putatively written with *brevitas*, the *Historia novorum* was structured to highlight parallels between Anselm–Henry I and other archbishop–king pairs.<sup>51</sup> Although a testimonial approach is more common in hagiographic works than contemporary *historiae*, Eadmer still offered an interpretation of the past (even if a personal one) to further his and Canterbury’s purposes. Moreover, it was recognized as historical writing. Some contemporaries used Eadmer’s work, especially William of Malmesbury, who refers to Eadmer as “*historicus*.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, because *Historia novorum* offered a unified story which can be attributed directly to Eadmer as author, modern historians have tended to over-identify the work as a “history” and accorded Eadmer high status as a historian.<sup>53</sup>

However, when viewed from the eleventh century, Eadmer’s work fits within a continuum of monastic efforts to rewrite their past. While his work may have been a more coherent narrative, it was not unique in its approach, especially in books five and six. It possessed many traits shared by the monastic stories analyzed above: a selective use of archival material, including creative inventions; the reframing of the not-so-distant past to create a more favorable story; and a generally revisionist perspective which involved renewal of past greatness. Such traits include anticipating resistance to its message. Crucially, Eadmer’s revised *Historia novorum* copied the primacy forgeries from the presentation booklet in its narration of the Canterbury–York dispute of 1120 to 1123. Even though these forgeries had failed to achieve papal confirmation, they nonetheless became entrenched as an *argumentum* at Christ Church. And this interpretation was followed

<sup>50</sup> HN, I; Trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet, *Eadmer’s History of Recent Events in England* (London: Cresset, 1964), I: “Accordingly, having this consideration in mind I have determined, while aiming at brevity (*brevitati studendo*), to set down in writing the things which I have seen with my own eyes and myself heard.”

<sup>51</sup> Sally Vaughn, “Do Eadmer’s “Eyewitness Accounts” in *Historia Novorum* Reflect Literary Sources Other than Anselm Himself?” in *Eadmer of Canterbury*, ed. Rozier et al. (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, eds. R. A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson, and Michael Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 1:572, iv.332. See Emily J. Ward, “Verax historicus Bede: William of Malmesbury, Bede, and Historia,” in Rodney M. Thomson et al., eds. *Discovering William of Malmesbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 175–88.

<sup>53</sup> Southern in forward to Bosanquet, trans., *Eadmer’s History of Recent Events*, vii lamented the lack of a “historian of undisputed merit” after Bede and asserts: “Of genuine history – history with a theme of some magnitude and a certain elevation of view – there was nothing. It was this that Eadmer was to supply.”

beyond Canterbury; indeed, it was spread much more widely by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta pontificum anglorum*, which drew heavily on Christ Church materials, including Eadmer and the primary forgeries.<sup>54</sup> Already by the late 1120s, this interpretation had moved beyond house tradition to become something else: a larger claim about the history of England and its church. Consequently, the “story” of Christ Church’s cartulary had an afterlife, which would continue to be contested throughout the twelfth century, as some thought it true and others thought it false.

## RE-PRESENTING THE ARCHIVE

For many reasons, the chapter of Christ Church was unusual – not least because the monks lived in the shadow of the archbishops. Its early cartulary was also unusual, at least as compared with other early English monastic cartularies. Even given post-Conquest concern for monastic land (a motive often given for cartulary production), the Anglo-Norman cartulary of Christ Church appears distinct, since it did not produce full text – or even vaguely accurate copies – of genuine charters from its archives as others did.<sup>55</sup> At Saint-Denis and Saint Peter’s, Ghent, the making of cartularies often entailed nearly complete copies of charters, sometimes including signs of validation. Of course, the ordering, framing, and accuracy of the copying could be adjusted based on the “story” the organizer sought to create out of pre-existing texts. New materials could even be invented to fill gaps in the desired “story.” It was the very flexibility of such stories which made them useable.

But one should not forget that it was a lot of work and expensive to produce cartularies, especially if designed for presentation or in imitation of altar books. Such efforts have seemed disproportionate to institutional historians because mere copies were not sealed originals. But such a view is too rigid. Legal proof was not the main goal of such productions; rather it was to highlight archival materials selectively to emphasize key features of the monastery’s past. In England, monastic themes often derived from tenth-century Benedictine reform, which, among other things, replaced clerics at cathedrals with monks.<sup>56</sup> Unlike on the Continent, where provi-

<sup>54</sup> Rodney Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, rev. ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 21, 133.

<sup>55</sup> *Charter of Christ Church*, 59: “Unlike other medieval English cathedrals with monastic chapters, Christ Church, Canterbury did not meet this threat by producing a cartulary that copies full texts of the bulk of its Anglo-Saxon charters.”

<sup>56</sup> Cubitt, “The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform.” Julia Barrow, “The Chronology of the Benedictine ‘Reform,’” in *Edgar, King of the English, 959–975: New Interpretations*,

sions for monks' portions were regulated by the Council of Aachen of 816 and further defined by subsequent conflicts between monks and lay abbots, provisions for monks in English cathedral chapters were supplied from episcopal holdings. There may well have been no strong separation of such estates but rather a series of working arrangements. It made sense for monks to insist on formalizing or preserving such support, especially when bishops changed. Of course, such arrangements were dramatically challenged by the Norman Conquest, as bishops and their chapters negotiated new ways of coexisting. Sometimes, early English monastic cartularies can be read as monks' self-defense against either episcopal control (as at Sherborne) or exploitation by kings during vacancies or exiles, or even from rival houses (such as the competition between New and Old Minster at Winchester in the 1130s and 40s). Fabrication was only one response to such concerns. Another was contextualizing the message through presentation: by inserting clear dates, using explanatory titles or rubrics, interpolating key words and themes (such as *libertas*), or using illuminations to tell the story, and so on. Thus, both genuine and fake archival materials could help create a revised past usable for present purposes.

Taken together, the earliest English monastic cartularies show a pronounced tendency towards display and presentation, including imitating (or being incorporated into) books intended for the altar. Unsurprisingly, many of these contained interpolated or invented charter copies designed to support monastic claims. One need not allege duplicitous intent to show that monks were seeking to tell partisan stories about the past: that is, put forward interpretations (or *argumenta*) which they sincerely believed represented the right ordering of their world. Just as charters copied in gospel books were associated with authority, cartularies could ape the authoritative features of these books. We can see attempts at such authoritative presentation in some English monastic cartularies of the eleventh and early twelfth century, many of which were laid out in large formats for display and even elaborately bound, in contrast to later, more functionalist cartularies. The earliest examples are the three eleventh-century cartularies at Worcester: the *Liber Wigorniensis*, begun c. 1002–23 (BL Cotton Tiberius A xiii, ff. 1–118); Hemming's cartulary, c. 1090–1100 (BL Cotton Tiberius A xiii, ff. 119–31); and the fragmentary "Oswald Cartulary" (also called the "Nero–Middleton Cartulary"), also from the end of the eleventh century (BL Cotton Nero E I, part 2, ff. 181–4, and BL Additional 46204).<sup>57</sup> They also show considerable attention to the ordering of

---

ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 212–23.

<sup>57</sup> Davis, 217–18, nos. 1068a and b, and 1069. Francesca Tinti, *Sustaining Belief: The Church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 75–151.

entries and format. A somewhat different example is the cartulary in Rochester's *Textus Roffensis*, completed before 1125.<sup>58</sup> Peter Sawyer suggested that the later fourteenth-century inscription called it a "*Textus*" (a word normally reserved for Gospel books) because of its layout and because it was kept in the church rather than the library.<sup>59</sup> More elaborate still was a later codex produced at Winchester: the "*Codex Wintoniensis*" of Old Minster (BL Additional 15350), the first recension of which was produced c. 1129–1139.<sup>60</sup> This book was carefully ordered and arranged, suggesting potential ceremonial uses to some scholars.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Jennie England argues that the large format of this volume was intended to mimic the Domesday Book, which was lodged nearby in the Exchequer at Winchester and with which Bishop Henry would have been familiar.<sup>62</sup> Most grandly, the *Domesday Monachorum* of Christ Church, Canterbury had extremely large leaves (530 × 400mm) – the largest dimensions of a book in Anglo-Norman England, much larger than Great Domesday Book. All of these early English monastic cartularies were impressive, required considerable effort to produce, and demonstrate careful planning. It is perhaps not surprising that important houses, such as Winchester, Christ Church, and Worcester, went to the effort of framing their cartularies grandly. But such early monastic cartularies may well be atypical, as the majority of surviving twelfth-century cartularies were written in smaller formats, with little to no decoration, and in less formal (or at least more cursive) scripts.<sup>63</sup>

Careful structuring and presentation of cartularies was also an important way to grant credibility, coherence, and even authority to the "story" monks sought to tell, and so was an important means of shaping a house's past. Thus, the communicative function of cartularies lies as much in their appearance as their content and was strongly related to the external qualities and functions of documents on which they were putatively based.<sup>64</sup> I call this process re-presenting the archives: as cartularists transcribe the documents drawn from their archives into another format, they also

<sup>58</sup> Strood (Rochester), Medway Archives and Local History Centre, DRc/R1, ff. 119–235; Sawyer, ed., *Textus Roffensis*. For construction, O'Brien, "*Textus Roffensis*: An Introduction."

<sup>59</sup> Sawyer, ed., *Textus Roffensis* 7:19 and 11:17.

<sup>60</sup> Rumble, *Property and Piety*, 5–9 argued for composition 1129 x 1139.

<sup>61</sup> Rumble, "The Purposes of the *Codex Wintoniensis*," 162.

<sup>62</sup> Jennie M. England, "The *Codex Wintoniensis* in its Twelfth-Century Context," *Haskins Society Journal* 29 (2018): 132–3.

<sup>63</sup> Stokes, "The Problem of Grade," 42.

<sup>64</sup> Barenbeim, *Art of Documentation*, 44–69.

transform their meaning.<sup>65</sup> For cartularists, part of their message was the medium. So, they often mimicked the physical features of original or pseudo-original single sheets. In order to impart credibility to copies, pancartes and cartularies often reproduced documentary scripts (rather than book hands), the layout of charters, and even their external signs of validation. Therefore, as Olivier Guyotjeannin has argued, cartulary copies were not just about preservation, but also employed signs of validation as a “locus of credibility.”<sup>66</sup> Symbolic reproduction of signs of validation included monograms, *rotae*, elongated letters, subscriptions, drawings of seals, or the columns of witness lists. Forgers could take advantage of such features to impart a genuine flavor to their doctored copies. So, for example, the invented letter of Bishop Transmar of Noyon, used to contextualize the reforms of Count Arnulf at Saint Peter’s, had an extensive witness list and subscription adapted from a genuine comital charter of 941. The copy of the forged 1049 Leo IX privilege in the Saint-Denis dossier had drawings of a *rota* and *benevaleta*, though no drawing of a bull, which apparently did not impair the monks’ case in 1065. *Rotae* and *benevaletae* were increasingly copied into other French monastic cartularies in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries, for example at Saint-Cyprien of Poitiers, St. Maur-sur-Loire near Angers, and the nunnery of Sainte-Madeleine of Vezelay.<sup>67</sup> All of the royal and episcopal acts copied in Saint-Denis’ dossier had extensive witness lists and dating formulae. But the forgers there operated on multiple levels, since the pseudo-original papal letters on which the dossier’s copies were allegedly based *did* have bulls, including the critical charter of Leo IX. At Christ Church, the Anglo-Norman monks systematically recast all their pre-Conquest “sources” into Latinate charter forms (whether the source had been a charter, writ, will, or anything else), which was done deliberately to make it appear as though the chapter’s portion of the estates was based on written land grants, or booked land. Such insistence on transforming older sources into charter-esque copies demonstrates the expectations of contemporary documentary culture and the desire of monastic scribes and forgers to conform to them.

<sup>65</sup> Compare Laurent Morelle, “Diplomatic Culture and History Writing: The Folquin’s Cartulary-Chronicle for Saint-Bertin,” in *Representing History, 900–1300: Art, Music, History*, ed. Robert Maxwell (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 53–66.

<sup>66</sup> Guyotjeannin, “*Penuria scriptorium*,” 30.

<sup>67</sup> St Cyprien: BnF lat 10122, f. 7 (late eleventh century, see gallica.bnf.fr for digital reproduction); St. Madeleine, Auxerre BM ms. 277, f. 45 (twelfth century); St. Maur: Angers AD Maine-et-Loire H 1773, ff. 7v and 9r, Stein 3491, which also includes drawings of bulls (1130s). My thanks to Laura Cleaver for these references.

Replicating physical features was an important aspect of re-presentation, but not the only one. Re-presenting the archives in an orderly fashion was itself a message. Some cartularies show strong concern with order, including a uniform script, layout (in either single or more usually double column), rubrication, writing area, quality of parchment, and trying to avoid blank spaces. In other words, they were planned productions which sought to inspire confidence in a reader through their orderly appearance. Such planned cartularies were usually done under the direction of a supervising authority (such as a cantor, a librarian, or an abbot) in a single campaign, rather than accumulated gradually over time, as was more typical of multi-scribe, administrative cartularies.<sup>68</sup> This planning was certainly crucial for the *Liber traditionum* of Saint Peter's and the dossier of Saint-Denis. The early English monastic cartularies mentioned above exhibit some of these features as well. There are also continental examples, such as the *Becerro Gotico*, a cartulary of 994 entries composed largely in a single campaign by the monks of Sahagún in León under the direction of their Abbot Diego (1087–1110). This cartulary used several features to enhance its credibility: the symbolic reproduction of signs of validation; graphic homogeneity in its dual column layout, script; uniform quality of parchment; and lack of blank leaves – all of which inspired a sense of confidence in the reader.<sup>69</sup>

Ultimately, one feature which monastic cartularies shared was a desire to re-present documents, which came from (or could be made to look like they came from) their archives. Such re-presentation allowed cartularists to add new layers of meaning. Forgers were able to exploit this process of re-presentation, but monks seeking to tell stories about the past could do so as well. Selecting – including omitting and inventing – organizing, and ordering were all useful tools for shaping the monastic past. Cartularists could also create short texts which explicitly rewrote the past and include them in their works. Often, it is through these companion narratives that cartularies most closely approach histories.

<sup>68</sup> Joanna Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies: Multi-Scribe Manuscripts and Their Patterns of Growth* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), esp. ch. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Leticia Agúnez San Miguel, "Analysis of the Dynamics of Formal and Functional Production in a Late Cartulary: The Example of the *Berecco Segundo* de Sahagún," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 47, no. 2 (2017): 499–531. The cartulary was composed as the archives were rearranged 1088–96.

## CARTULARIES AS (HI)STORIES

Although the cartularies produced at Saint Peter's, Saint-Denis, and Christ Church were local, they were not isolated examples of rewriting the past for they did so in ways other monks would recognize. Indeed, they promoted *argumenta* which could be precursors to overtly narrative histories. Scholars have noticed such historicizing tendencies of cartularies before but deemphasized them for various reasons. Sometimes they were diplomatists seeking "original" versions of acts rather than mere cartulary copies. Or they were ecclesiastical historians, who saw cartularies as potentially misleading *post facto* sources for the early churches they studied. Or they were administrative historians, who viewed early cartularies from the viewpoint of later, more functionalist cartularies, in which bulk copying of documents, rather than historicization, was the overwhelming attribute of the collection. For example, G. R. C. Davis' *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain* defined them in such a way: "Cartularies are registers of muniments, that is to say of the title deeds (*carte*), charters of privilege (*privilegia*), and other documents which were kept by landowners as evidence of their personal or corporate rights."<sup>70</sup> One finds also problems of typology in the *Télma* database descriptions of early cartularies in the use of hyphenated categories such as "cartulaire-chronique" or "cartulaire-dossier."<sup>71</sup>

Of course, the best scholars escaped disciplinary blinders and perceived the multiple functions of these cartularies more deeply. Patrick Geary pointed out that the historicizing function of cartularies, especially early ones, was underestimated in comparison to their other functions.<sup>72</sup> Constance Bouchard stresses the complex relationship of cartularies to chronicles, memory, identity, and the past. However, Bouchard sees most twelfth-century chroniclers as conscientiously using their sources, even if those from earlier ages could be hard to understand.<sup>73</sup> She also views most

<sup>70</sup> Davis, xiv.

<sup>71</sup> "Typologie des cartulaires," *cartulR - Répertoire des cartularies médiévaux et modernes*, <http://www.cn-telma.fr/cartulR/glossaire/>.

<sup>72</sup> Patrick Geary, "From Charter to Cartulary: From Archival Practice to History," in *Representing History*, ed. Maxwell, 181–6 at 186: "If in time the compilation of cartularies became routine, a simple part of *pragmatische Shriftlichkeit*, this was certainly not true at their origins. They were born out of conflict and expressed – implicitly or explicitly – claims not only about the specific elements that were copied into them but, as a whole, about identity and memory. As such, they were an integral part of writing and creating history, and it is unlikely that this historical role ever disappeared."

<sup>73</sup> Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors*, 52: "Yet even though they knew how the story ought to run, chroniclers were not creating a fictive past, for they did their best



cartularists as accurate copyists and the interventions of forgers, such as those at Saint-Denis, as rare.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, she recognizes the important memorial role forgeries could play: “To re-remember the past, even to the extent of creating documents that *should* have existed, was to engage in activities that, for them, were true.”<sup>75</sup> I agree with much of this argument, though I would prefer to say “sincere” rather than “true,” or perhaps that these were “pious” activities. Such qualifications are important because by stressing accurate copying Bouchard evaluated medieval monastic writings using modern historical terms. Indeed, this was the point, since she wanted to assert the value of cartularies as evidence (and therefore worth reading), following normal historical practice. This point matters, of course, but it is different from (though related to) the one which I am making: that forgeries can be good evidence for what monks *thought* should have happened. Forgeries, cartularies, and histories all involved remembering and rewriting the past for present purposes. We can read early cartularies as (hi)stories or even lessons, by analogy with gospel books, whose form they sometimes mimicked. One can focus on what monks were seeking to communicate, especially how they were telling stories about the past through re-presenting archival documents in codices.

Furthermore, once the communicative aspects of cartularies are studied comparatively, interesting patterns emerge. One pattern is that devotional, commemorative, and historicizing tendencies are much more common in early cartularies than later ones. Paul Bertrand, who has analyzed Continental cartularies from 900–1400, has observed that such tendencies were more common in the period before 1200 (and especially 1100) than after, when fiscal, administrative, and legal purposes became dominant. By the thirteenth century, he argues, two writing revolutions had transformed documentary culture: one was a massive increase in production of charters (long known) but paralleling it was more frequent rote copying in cartularies. Thus, cartularies became what Bertrand calls “*écritures ordinaires*.”<sup>76</sup> For Bertrand, the twelfth century was a period of transition in the making of cartularies, before their use had become more routine and ordinary. By the thirteenth century, cartularies became functionalist copy books for

---

to base it on the written word.” She noted that Merovingian scripts and the context of Carolingian polyptychs were especially challenging for twelfth-century monks.

<sup>74</sup> Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors*, 16: “Cartulary scribes rarely attempted to improve what they found in their archives. Although most cartularies ended up with at least a few forgeries in them, generally these were created well before the cartulary itself.”

<sup>75</sup> Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors*, 4, emphasis hers.

<sup>76</sup> Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires*, esp. 17–27.

record-keeping and management, although older uses persisted alongside the new ones. Interestingly, a fifteenth-century inventory at Saint-Denis placed cartularies in the section with historical writings, suggesting that they were still seen as related.<sup>77</sup>

Likewise, Nicholas Karn has argued that shifts started to occur in English cartularies in the second half of the twelfth century. In particular, Karn identifies several features which changed from the early twelfth to the later twelfth century. He characterizes earlier twelfth-century cartularies as more informally organized, having miscellaneous (or more varied) contents, and lacking indices or other organizational aids. In contrast, in the later twelfth century he observes more formal organization, use of indexing, and the rise of dedicated uses and, consequently, more narrowly focused content. Such changes included the rise of “sub-genres,” in which the “cartulary proper” (transcriptions of documents involving property) were separated from letters or other business affairs, which were assembled in their own booklets or books, intended for use in particular courts or for administering certain offices.<sup>78</sup> Another change was increasing standardization of organization in relation to authorities. A common pattern emerged: first, a “royal” section that outlined a church’s rights and responsibilities; next, a section devoted to ecclesiastical authorities (papal or episcopal); and then a section devoted to “resources” usually topographically organized, with sub-sections on particular locales often beginning with a fundamental document followed by supplementary entries explaining lordship or revenues. Furthermore, Karn argues that external pressures led to these monastic responses in cartulary structure, especially the process of manorialization and the rise of the common law. Anglo-Norman rule changed how resources were exploited, as lordship was made concrete around land, creating manors and manor courts as places to express lordship. Meanwhile, the rise of the Common Law shifted how legal proceedings resolved disputes over possession/ownership of land, which made discussion of complex “customs” (which had characterized pre-Conquest arrangements) harder.<sup>79</sup> The rise of topographic organization of resources in cartularies was a response to these legal changes, especially in the last two decades of the twelfth century, as the king’s courts enforced the view that lands and their appurtenances were key, rather than older rights and customs. Furthermore, these cartulary forms remained fairly stable through the fifteenth century and early cartularies

<sup>77</sup> Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, *Bibliothèque de Saint-Denis*, 121.

<sup>78</sup> Nicholas Karn, “Cartularies and Legal Change in the Later 12<sup>th</sup> Century,” (paper, International Medieval Congress, Leeds, July 2016).

<sup>79</sup> Nicholas Karn, *Kings, Lords, and Courts in Anglo-Norman England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), esp. ch. 6.

were supplemented to make then more useful in the new context of lordship and law. Of course, such changes in lordship and especially in law were peculiarly English, though elsewhere papal and episcopal documents became distinct groupings as canon law courts developed over the twelfth century. Cartularies were ordered (or reordered) depending on external authorities with whom monks were interacting. So, later cartularies' organizational schemes provide evidence of monastic responses to shifts in legal and lordly authority.

English cartularies may have changed earlier because of the pressure of royal law courts. Nonetheless, English monastic responses parallel shifts observed on the continent. Indeed, my previous study of monastic accountability in Capetian France could be read as the twelfth-century growth of distinct written instruments of administration out of more miscellaneous early cartularies.<sup>80</sup> The rise of new legal or administrative sub-genres and de-emphasis of commemorative or religious functions in cartularies also informs us about cartularies as histories. Although the three "stories" examined in part II (and comparable ones in England, France, and Flanders) clearly had historical dimensions, none could be described as a "*historia*." Indeed, the rise of more specific functions for cartularies meant that historical features were increasingly excluded – or rather expressed in texts tailored to this purpose. In other words, the de-emphasis of certain types of "stories" (commemoration or communal identity) in cartularies may be mirrored by the rise of "histories" (narratives about the past) as separate texts. Narrative histories had existed previously, but the relationship between copying documents and writing about the past was shifting in ways that promoted increased articulation of cartularies and histories as distinct works.

Many early cartularies combined short narratives with their re-presentation of documents. Most often, these narratives were at the beginning and were either a foundation story or some form of prologue. Less often, they explained sections of the work or they concluded it. I refer to these texts as "framing narratives" for two reasons. First, they often delineated blocks of the charter copies, physically demarcating the start, internal sections, or end of the cartulary. But second, and regardless of position, they usually also provided an explanation, justification, or celebration of the work, thus "framing" an audience's expectations about the contents. An obvious example from part II was the *Ratio foundationis* of Saint-Peter's, Ghent, which introduced the *Liber traditionum* and provided a historical (and hagiographical) introduction to the house's patron saint, his cult, and

<sup>80</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer III, *Day of Reckoning: Power and Accountability in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

the community. One wonders if the cartulary had a similar ending text, now lost to revision and continuation. A possible example of an ending narrative is the *Enucleatio libelli* in “Hemming’s Cartulary” from Worcester, which provided an explanation of why and how Bishop Wulfstan ordered a cartulary compiled from the archives. This explanation was inserted at the end of the first (and separate) booklet of the cartulary, the *Codicellus possessionum*, in order to explain further work that Hemming would undertake after Wulfstan’s death. The *Enucleatio* related that Bishop Wulfstan desired memory of the lost lands to be preserved and so encouraged the monks to produce the *Codicellus*, but also that Wulfstan went through the chest (*scrinium*) of the monastery and personally divided the documents into two groups, original charters (*primitiva testamenta et privilegia*) granting land to the monks and chirographs (*cirographi*) of land which had been leased.<sup>81</sup> (Many of the surviving single-sheet charters of Worcester bear endorsements in a late eleventh-century hand.<sup>82</sup>) He then ordered these groups copied into the Bible of the church. Finally, he ordered that all the *privilegia* and *cirographia* which pertained to the monks provisioning be copied (in two separate volumes), which is what Hemming claimed he had done in “this booklet” (*in hoc codicello*).<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, the goal was to prevent despoliation and preserve memory of lost holdings.

Quasi-foundation stories were the most common, and often the only, “framing narrative” of a cartulary. Two further examples, widely separated in time and space, reinforce this point. Charles Rozier has analyzed a short narrative from Durham, usually called the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which may have been composed in the very late eleventh century, although

<sup>81</sup> Francesca Tinti, “‘Si litterali memorie commendaretur’: Memory and Cartularies in Eleventh-Century Worcester,” in *Studies in Early Medieval History in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 475–97 at 492–7 provides an edition and translation of the *Enucleatio*.

<sup>82</sup> Tinti, *Sustaining Belief*, 136 n163.

<sup>83</sup> BL Cotton Tiberius A xiii, ff. 132v–133v: “Hoc quoque iuxta velle et imperium suum patraro, precepit adhuc Omnia privilegia et cirographia terrarium que proprie ad victum monachorum pertinent separatim ex his congregari, eaque similiter in duobus voluminibus eodem ordine adunari, quod in hoc codicello eius, ut predixi, imperio pro modulo mee parvitatibus studiosus lector fecisse me animadvertere potest.” (“Having thus accomplished this too, according to his will and command, besides he ordered all the privileges and chirographs of the lands properly belonging to the monks’ sustenance to be gathered separately from the others, and, similarly, ordered in two volumes, which the attentive reader can see I have done in this booklet, as I said, according to his order and through my modest means.”) Trans. Tinti, “‘Si litterali memorie commendaretur,’” 494–7.

it only survives in three later copies.<sup>84</sup> As Rozier argues, this text can be read (at least) two ways: first, as supporting the community's claims to property and, second, as historical context (and justification?) for copying documents. Furthermore, the manuscript copies of the text have no chapters or decorations, suggesting that the text was regarded as a unitary narrative in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>85</sup> Creating such a "framing narrative" might have been especially useful at Durham, which was (like Rochester) an existing episcopal see converted to a monastic chapter soon after the Conquest, and so needed a new, more appropriate backstory.<sup>86</sup> Another example is the *votos* from the *Becerro Galicano* of the monastery San Millán de la Cogolla in Navarre: the introductory (and only) narrative in a cartulary composed around 1195. As David Peterson has demonstrated, contrary to previous scholarship, this short narrative was originally placed at the front of the cartulary, which contained numerous forged charters, and was integral to its design.<sup>87</sup> It served as a prologue and historical justification for a major message of the cartulary: the domination of Castile over Navarre. As such, it was a "framing narrative" that structured a reader's subsequent expectations of the book.

Some scholars have studied the prologues of cartularies as a genre and discovered interesting patterns. The team which produced the *Télma Cartul-R* database noted shared features after comparing over 200 French cartulary prologues and equivalent opening texts. They observed that prologues were often the only new composition in a cartulary (barring forgeries). They usually featured one or both of two themes: justification of the enterprise and/or glorification with a memorial or ideological purpose. Justifications included *topoi* such as fear of oblivion, preservation against fire, and defense of lands of privileges. Cartulary prologues also tended to glorify the patrons and benefactor of the monastery, or the saints, or all of them. They also noted that non-narrative texts might act as virtual prologue, especially a first charter, foundation story, list of abbots, or even a miniature, and found that many initial acts or texts were

<sup>84</sup> Cambridge University Library, Ff.1.27; Oxford Bodleian Library, Bodley 596; London, Lincoln's Inn Hale 114.

<sup>85</sup> Charles C. Rozier, *Writing History in the Community of St. Cuthbert, c. 700–1130: From Bede to Symeon of Durham* (York: York Medieval Press, 2020), 50–62.

<sup>86</sup> Martin Brett, "Gundulf and the Cathedral Communities of Canterbury and Rochester," in Eales and Sharpe, eds., *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> David Peterson, "Mentiras Piadosas. Falsificaciones e interpolaciones en la diplomática de San Millán de la Cogolla," in *Las donaciones piadosas en el mundo medieval*, ed. Alfonso García Leal (Oviedo: Alfonso García Leal, 2012), 295–314.

interpolated or fabricated.<sup>88</sup> Analysis of early French monastic cartulary prologues has reinforced this characterization, including the importance of memorial and historical functions. Laurent Morelle found such patterns in the earliest known prologue, in the “cartulary-chronicle” of Folquin of Saint-Bertin, which he argued was inspired by historical writings, especially *gesta abbatum* or annals.<sup>89</sup> Olivier Guyotjeannin identified monastic “myths” about scarcity and neglect in scriptoria using the framing narrative written by the monk Paul of Saint-Père-de-Chartres in his cartulary during the final years of the eleventh century.<sup>90</sup> Even lay cartulary prefaces could adopt similar *topoi*, as Pierre Chastang observes.<sup>91</sup> Such patterns are widely evident in the eleventh- and twelfth-century cartularies.

A similar “framing” effect might also be achieved by placing a cartulary or dossier alongside narrative texts in a codex, especially hagiographic narratives. For example, the oldest forgeries created by monks of Saint Augustine’s, Canterbury – to support their request for an exemption in 1120 – were written in a volume containing Goscelin of Saint-Bertin’s lives of their most important saints.<sup>92</sup> These entries began with a full-page, historiated initial I (f. 277r), depicting the donor (supposedly King Æthelberht), holding a sword in his right hand and a document (presumably the grant) in his left. Moreover, these charters (the very ones that Guerno might have influenced) were part of a small booklet, which featured extracts from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* about Augustine’s questions for Pope Gregory and a copy of Goscelin’s pro-monastic *Libellus contra inanes sancta virginis Mildrethe usurpatores*.<sup>93</sup> This grouping of narratives and charters supported monastic claims based on a partisan interpretation of the past, including possession of the relics of Saint Mildreth, hotly contested with the

<sup>88</sup> Paul Bertrand et al., “Vers une typologie des cartulaires médiévaux,” in *Les Cartulaires méridionaux*, ed. Daniel Le Blévec (Paris: École des Chartes, 2006), 7–20.

<sup>89</sup> Morelle, “Diplomatic Culture and History Writing,” 54–5.

<sup>90</sup> Guyotjeannin, “*Penuria scriptorium*,” 12.

<sup>91</sup> Pierre Chastang, “La préface du *Liber Instrumentorum Memorialis* des Guilham de Montpellier ou les enjeux de la rédaction d’un cartulaire laïque méridional,” in *Les cartulaires méridionaux*, ed. Le Blévec (Paris: École des Chartes, 2016), 91–111.

<sup>92</sup> BL Cotton Vespasian B xx, ff. 277r–84v; Richard Emms, “Historical Traditions of St. Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury,” in *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest*, eds. Eales and Sharpe, 161–4.

<sup>93</sup> BL Cotton Vespasian B xx, ff. 251v–59v, Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, i.27 and iii.2; ff. 260r–276r, Goscelin on Mildreth (BHL 5962), ed. M. L. Colker, “A hagiographic polemic,” *Mediaeval Studies* 39 (1977): 60–108. Julian Harrison in the BL *Manuscript Catalogue* (only partially online) noted the ruling of the Bede and charter sections were the same and that this booklet must have dated after 1114 and was created XII<sup>m</sup> with the bulk of the manuscript. My thanks to Dr. Harrison.

neighboring archbishop and monks of Christ Church in 1087–9.<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the monks of Saint Augustine's did not hesitate to consult continental specialists, such as Goscelin (in England 1058–78) and Guerno (prior to 1119) to improve both their narratives and charters.

In the end, eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic cartularists employed a variety of means to “frame” their charter copies. Some of these were graphic features, from the layout of a single entry to the organization/presentation of the cartulary as a whole. Others were “framing narratives” designed to structure a reader's (or listener's) expectations about the cartulary. Overall, such framing processes in cartularies could be steps toward producing histories, since they often involved monks re-presenting their archives in accord with their contemporary needs. And although monks could accomplish their goals just through the selection, arrangement, and framing of charters, clearly interpolation and even fabrication were also tools some were willing to use. For some, such invention of tradition was what being faithful to their communal past meant. Is it any wonder, then, that similar approaches were used once separate house histories began to be written?

## FROM STORIES TO HISTORIES

How do insights about forgeries and the historicizing tendencies of cartularies inform our understanding of monastic historical writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries? Because traditional analysis of cartularies has usually treated individual entries or the ordering of the entries, their overall meanings have been understudied. Yet comparison of cartularies reveals significant patterns in meaning and function. Johannes Waldschütz, analyzing twelve different Swabian cartularies spanning the twelfth century, outlined five typical “discourses” in which these cartularies participated.<sup>95</sup> The patterns he noticed are also reflected in cartularies from England, France, and Flanders examined here. The first was a discourse about property, in which the location and donors were almost always highlighted. This property discourse was not merely about protecting land but also about expressing “wealth,” an important aspect of traditional Benedictine spirituality. Such concerns were strongly emphasized, for example, in the *Liber traditionum* of Saint Peter's, Ghent. A second discourse was memorial and

<sup>94</sup> Richard Sharpe, “Goscelin's St Augustine and St Mildreth: Hagiography and Liturgy in Context,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, 41, no. 2 (1990): 502–16.

<sup>95</sup> Johannes Waldschütz, “Cartularies as Narrative Texts: The Monasteries of the Hirsau Reform Movement in South-Western Germany during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century” (paper, Leeds International Medieval Congress, July 2016).



social, involving the monks praying for benefactors. Such commemorative functions were significant in the composition of the Anglo-Norman Christ Church cartulary which mirrored the liturgical calendar. A third discourse was hagiographic, praising the saint(s) or sometimes a blessed (*beatus*) aristocratic or royal founder figure. For the monks of Saint-Denis, this involved the twin praise of Denis and Dagobert, who were both regarded as founders and patrons. Similar approaches could be used for re-founders, as the Saint-Denis monks did with Charles the Bald (or even Robert the Pious). Another discourse, more prominent in the twelfth century, was legal or administrative, shown by the shifts in structure, content, and function discussed in the previous section. One might read Suger's twelfth-century *Gesta* of his managerial deeds at Saint-Denis in this way.<sup>96</sup> Finally, there was historical discourse, often concerned with the shaping of communal identity. Such concern with identity can be detected even in the use of small phrases like "our monastery," "our founder," "our saint," or "our patron" to proclaim control over the interpretation of the past and community. The three "stories" examined in part II all offered a historical view of the monastery and people associated with it, even if (or perhaps especially if) it was an invented tradition. The traces of such monastic communal self-fashioning existed at every level of text in these "stories": from small turns of phrase in charters (interpolation of "we" or "ours" instead of "mine" or "his") to organizational schemes, including selecting and arranging chronologically from the foundation to the present. Of course, early monastic cartularies reflected various imperatives and so were multi-functional.<sup>97</sup>

An eloquent example of such processes in miniature can be found in pancartes, especially Norman ones during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Pancartes were large single sheets, consisting of copies of multiple pre-existing acts. As Thomas Roche shows for Jumièges, the selection, ordering, and even modification or fabrication of entries in a pancarte can indeed be read as a mini "story." In particular, he focuses on a very large pancarte composed in the time of William the Conqueror, but which also copied various acts from four previous dukes.<sup>98</sup> He argues this pancarte provided an alternative to the genealogical treatment of the dukes of Normandy written into William of Jumièges' history of the dukes, the *Gesta normannorum ducum*, composed around the same time. In this way, the pancarte performed similarly to a cartulary, providing, in effect, its own historicization. Significantly, this prominent pancarte was not

<sup>96</sup> Suger, *Gesta Suggeri abbatidis*, ed. Françoise Gasparri, *Oeuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1996), 54–155 and see Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning*, 90–122, ch. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Barenbeim, *Art of Documentation*, 50–1.

<sup>98</sup> AD Seine-Maritime 9 H26; Bates, ed., *Acta of William I*, 535–47, no. 164.

copied into the later cartulary of Jumièges, and so Roche stresses that it offered an alternate and parallel history to which the monks could resort if needed.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, other Norman monks, including Orderic Vitalis, drew on pancartes as suggestive models and they remained sources of both information and inspiration for later monastic historians.<sup>100</sup> Such bursts of compiling, either in pancartes or cartularies, demonstrate that monks were adept at switching between stories and maintaining several at once, so that they could pursue multiple agendas. Such continuing maintenance of alternate stories kept options open, which perhaps best explains the complex gestation of the primacy forgeries at Christ Church, Canterbury.

Although early cartularies were malleable in their contents, structure, and meaning, the rise of cartularies dedicated to particular purposes in the twelfth century enhanced some “discourses” (such as legal or administrative) at the expense of others. At the same time, separate narratives serving primarily historical purposes arose. One lesson about historical writings which can be drawn from early cartularies is that historical discourse, even as it became more distinct, was rarely fully detached from these other discourses. Furthermore, for monks, “history” was inherently linked to communal identity, though it varied depending on when, where, and what kind of monks were writing. Unsurprisingly, modern historians seeking to analyze medieval historical writing have been drawn to narratives which announce their interest in the past overtly, including histories, chronicles, and annals. Often, these analyses perpetuate disciplinary assumptions dividing documentary from narrative sources, a distinction that was much less important for monastic writers before 1200. However, perspectives gleaned from monastic cartularies can be applied usefully to narrative histories. So, for example, rather than regarding copies of documents as intruding on narrative, one can analyze them as integral to historical understanding. Moreover, such a perspective also allows one to understand the role of “forged” documents more completely: not merely as deviations from historical “truth,” but as a form of faithfulness and advocacy, participating in rich discursive patterns. Such patterns have often been downplayed or reduced to “variations” by modern editors, who contrast document “copies” with “originals” to determine what actually happened. Yet monastic self-fashioning,

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Roche, “The Pancarte of Jumièges and Beyond: Parallel Histories and Authority,” (Paper, International Medieval Congress, Leeds, July 2016).

<sup>100</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, “Charter and Chronicle: The Use of Archive Sources by Norman Historians,” in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages*, eds. C. N. L. Brooke et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1–18; Elisabeth Van Houts, “Historical Writing,” in *Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth Van Houts (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 103–21 at 117.

including rewriting their communal past, was a goal of many monastic historians operating in the early twelfth century. So, it is worth rereading monastic narrative histories from a cartulary-informed perspective.

One revealing example comes from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum Angliae*, which drew heavily on Eadmer's *Historia novorum* in its treatment of the Canterbury–York dispute over primacy. This example is especially pertinent since the rich documentary and cartulary context of the “Canterbury forgeries” is already apparent to a reader of this chapter. Furthermore, William of Malmesbury has long been regarded as a great, if not the greatest, monastic historian of twelfth-century England.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, since many manuscripts of William's work survive (including an autograph), William's writing and revising have already been thoroughly analyzed by modern editors.<sup>102</sup> William treats the Canterbury–York affair in three locations within the *Gesta pontificum*: in book one (concerning Kent, including Canterbury), chapters 25 to 42, in an extensive discussion of Lanfranc's attempt to gain the written profession of Thomas of York during 1070 to 1072; at the end of book one, chapters 68 to 70, where he related the disputes of 1120 to 1123; and in book three (concerning Northumbria, including York), chapters 122 to 125, also treating the disputes of 1120 to 1123 arising from the election of Thurstan of York. These sections reveal much about William's practice of historical writing and his reuse of previous documents and narratives.

In book one, chapter 25 of the *Gesta pontificum*, William relates the coming of Archbishop Lanfranc to England in 1070 and his desire to obtain a written profession and oath of obedience from the new Archbishop of York, Thomas. William narrates at length, treating the origin of the dispute, the two archbishops' travels to Rome, Pope Alexander II's return of the case to England, William the Conqueror's intervention, and the resolution of the dispute before the royal Easter Council of 1072. At the close of chapter 25, William then explains that two documents were sent to the Pope. The first was the king's report of the outcome at the Council of 1072. In the other, “Lanfranc sent Pope Alexander a letter in which he gave him a brief and accurate (*breviter et veraciter*) account of the entire business.”<sup>103</sup> William then leaves off his narrative and provides the written profession of Thomas (c. 26) and the court's decision (c. 27). But in chapter 28, William explained that he was including relevant excerpts of Lanfranc's letter (c. 29) and also

<sup>101</sup> Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge, 1974), 166–85, accorded an entire chapter to William.

<sup>102</sup> GP 1:xi–xxv.

<sup>103</sup> GP 1:54–5, 1.25: “Lanfrancus Alexandro papae direxit epistolam, in qua eit totius negotii gestionem breviter et veraciter enarravit.”

the pertinent privileges (that is, the ten “Canterbury forgeries,” c. 30–39). Thus, chapter 28 provided a “framing narrative” for the subsequent documents, which rewards close reading:

If I put down here the whole of Lanfranc’s letter to Pope Alexander, it will undoubtedly prove burdensome. I shall therefore cite only what is relevant to the matter in hand, adding besides the privileges from the apostolic see that Lanfranc avers to have been of such assistance to him in proving the case. It will thus not be open to anyone to make just complaint that I am stealing another’s thunder by filling out my volume with such documents. Rather, he will, if he is fair-minded, look with forgiveness on the unavoidable demands made by the history (*historiae*) I have undertaken. Indeed, a reader who is anxious to learn should be grateful to the writer, because he will find brought together here all the material it would have been laborious for him to track down in many different volumes: indeed it might be doubted if he could discover it all. Further, the differences between the two metropolitans have still not been settled, but are the subject of fierce controversy even now; and when I come in their turn to the disputants of today, I shall not need to show which side has the truth on its side (*pars veritate*), because I shall have anticipated the point in my discussion of Lanfranc now.<sup>104</sup>

There are several points worth noting here before analyzing William’s justification. First of all, this passage comes from the first recension of the *Gesta pontificum*, composed by mid-1125, just two years after Canterbury’s failure in Rome in 1123, although William may have edited the subsequent documents when revising as late as 1140–3.<sup>105</sup> Second, William allowed his first recension to be copied almost immediately after he wrote it; thus it was likely intended for a wider clerical and monastic audience beyond his house.<sup>106</sup> Third, he had consulted various Christ Church manuscripts and

<sup>104</sup> GP 1:58–9, I.28: “Hic si epistolam Lanfranci ad Alexandrum papam totam posuero, erit onerosum profecto. Quapropter quod ad rem tantum attinet supponam, adiutens etiam privilegia sedis apostolicae, quae ad suam causam firmandum magno fuisse suffragio ipse asseuerat. Vnde nullus me iure criminari debet quasi talibus scriptis volumen implendo alienam in me transferam gloriam, sed dabit potius, si aequum iudicat, necessitati susceptae historiae veniam. Quinimmo a studioso lectore habendae sunt scriptori gratiae, quod omnia hic congesta inveniet quae et labori esset per multa volumina scrutari et dubietati si umquam forte possent inveniri. Simul, quia nec adhuc controversia inter duos metropolitanos conquieuit, sed in magno etiam nunc versatur litigio, cum ad istos qui modo dissident ordine uenero, non habebo necesse ostendere quae pars veritate nitatur, cum iam tempore istius Lanfranci preoccupauero.”

<sup>105</sup> The first recension is known from ultra-violet examination of erasures in the autograph manuscript (A), Oxford Magdalen College ms. 172 and correlating with independent witnesses to the earlier draft, dubbed β by Michael Winterbottom, GP 1:xii–xiv. Alterations to the Lanfranc dossier are known from later witnesses, GP 1:xxi–ii.

<sup>106</sup> As Rodney Thomson argued, GP 2:xxii–iii.

documents at Canterbury and, in particular, drew on Eadmer's *Historia novorum*, including the documents it contained.<sup>107</sup> Of course, William was also a Canterbury partisan.

William's justification reveals several (contradictory) expectations about the relationship of documents to narrative history. First – and though obvious worth emphasizing – William himself chose to include very extensive copies of documents in his narrative. He clearly desired to use his sources from Canterbury. While he averred a desire for brevity (and hence why he redacted Lanfranc's letter), he ironically also provided long, complete versions of the ten papal privileges. Furthermore, even though William was just copying the charters, his positioning of them was transformative. It was William's choice to move the ten papal privileges (the "Canterbury forgeries") to an earlier part of his chronological narrative. Eadmer had copied the charters in his *Historia novorum* as part of his description of the affair of 1120 to 1123.<sup>108</sup> William, however, backdated them chronologically to 1072. Although various modern historians have worried about if William knew these documents were forgeries, nonetheless he chose to backdate them and he clearly understood the consequences. By moving the privileges, he was anticipating the dispute of 1123 but also demonstrating that Canterbury had the *pars veritate*, or "the truth on its side." That is, he was offering the documents as proof of Canterbury's claims. Furthermore, William expected his readers to care about these documents – indeed he represented their inclusion as a service to his readers, suggesting they should be grateful because these hard-to-find documents were otherwise scattered. Thus, William not only cared about using documents himself as a historian, he expected his readers to care as well.

Besides his overt justification, there were indirect indications that William presumed that one should include full documents in otherwise narrative histories (and that his readers expected them). In chapter 42, William related how Archbishop Thomas gave way to Lanfranc's arguments at the Council of 1072. William then explained Lanfranc's reaction as follows:

Lanfranc was transported with joy, and relying on the victory of his cause had all the proceedings recorded in writing; otherwise, if recent events slipped out of sight, posterity would be deprived (*fraudentur*) of vital information. But he followed a middle course, so as neither to leave out things that needed to be known nor to be over-effusive, for it is a disagreeable kind of boastfulness to employ wit to sing one's own praises.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Thomson, GP 2:xxxvi–ix and xli, and commentary on I.30–39, GP 2:40–1.

<sup>108</sup> HN, 261–76.

<sup>109</sup> GP 1:88–9, I.42: "Emicat Lanfrancus tripudio, et victrici causa fretus gesta scriptio excepit, ne, si preterirent et laberentur recentia, rerum necessarium posterio

Here we see a commonplace theme monastic cartularists used: the power of writing to prevent future forgetting of successfully acquired privileges. Interestingly, though, William then feels it is necessary to explain why Lanfranc wrote to the Pope, as he had put it earlier, *breviter et veraciter*: “briefly and truly.”<sup>110</sup> The problem wasn’t truthfulness, but rather why had Lanfranc been so brief about such an important matter? Of course, William ascribed the virtue of humility as an explanation. But though brevity was deemed a good quality in narrative history-writing, this seems not to have been so for documents, at least by implication. Perhaps the contrast between the brevity of the letter and the complete charter copies seemed too glaring, and so required some further justification. Interestingly, William chose to make the letter briefer still by relating only a part of its content.<sup>111</sup>

In addition, William revealed how a critical eye might be turned to documents within a narrative. Such close reading is evident from his explanation of the Canterbury–York dispute of 1120 to 1123 at the end of book one. In the course of explaining the continuing contestation between Archbishops Ralph of Canterbury and Thurstan of York, William includes the full text of a letter sent by Pope Paschal to Ralph on March 24, 1122, which was derived from Eadmer’s *Historia novorum*.<sup>112</sup> One of the key phrases of this letter was:

The dignity therefore which the church of Canterbury received from him (Pope Gregory) through the blessed Augustine, and which our brother Anselm of holy memory is known to have held by right and lawful possession, we are indeed diminishing in no way; rather we wish the church of Canterbury to remain in the same state, so that its authentic privileges (*autentica eius privilegia*) may in accordance with the canons be undisturbed and inviolate.<sup>113</sup>

---

fraudarentur notitia: modeste sane, ut nec scienda pretermitteret nec dicendo effluerat, quia in proprias laudes facietari odiosa iactantia est.” “Fraudarentur” (“defrauded”) suggests more wrongdoing than the edition’s “deprived.”

<sup>110</sup> The Winterbottom translation prefers “accurate” for *veraciter*, but “truly” is more literal and better here given the distinction between truth and accuracy drawn in ch. one.

<sup>111</sup> For the medieval assumption that *compilatio* meant abbreviating, especially before 1200, Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires*, 103–9.

<sup>112</sup> Eadmer, HN, 242–3.

<sup>113</sup> GP 1:208–9, I.69: “Illam ergo dignitatem quam ab eo per beatum Augustinum Cantuariensis suscepit aecllesia, et quam sanctae memoriae frater noster Anselmus iure ac possessione legitima tenuisse cognoscitur, nos profecto nullatenus imminuimus, sed in eodem statu esse Cantuariensem aecllesiam volumus, ut autentica eius privilegia iuxta canonum sanctiones nullis perturbationibus violenter.” For various meanings of *authenticus*, see chapter five.

Immediately after the letter, William proceeded to analyze it, arguing that by phrasing the matter in this way, the pope had perpetuated the dispute:

If the pope had at this point said expressly ‘the church of Canterbury has such and such dignities, and I confirm them to it,’ he would have resolved the dispute and put an end to the controversy; but by saying ‘we do not in any way diminish whatever authentic privileges it has,’ he left the matter in the air, as undecided as before.<sup>114</sup>

William then derided this choice:

This is typical of the way in which the clever Romans resort to rhetorical ploys, and use empty ambiguities to keep their meaning in suspense, causing as much trouble as they like to others so long as they forward their own advantage.<sup>115</sup>

Overall, it is a remarkable sequence. William introduced a complete document (copied from Eadmer), explained its meaning for his reader, and then criticized the papal chancery’s phrasing. It is not surprising to find such textual criticism coming from William – a member of the monastic literate elite familiar with the controversy – but he also seems to have expected his readers to follow it. Indeed, knowing that the matter was contentious, he was anticipating resistant readers. Later on, William became more cautious: he revised book three, chapters 122 to 125 (on York) in the 1140s to tone down what he had taken from Eadmer.<sup>116</sup> After initially taking a scathing partisan line, even accusing Thurstan of York of oath-breaking and ambition, William ultimately gave a shorter and less vicious account.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, William still included in both versions a full copy of the letter of Pope Paschal. The document remained unchanged.

Of course, using sources to construct a story is not the same as using those sources critically. In the end, William of Malmesbury wove his story together using both previous documents and narratives, as well as what he knew personally.<sup>118</sup> As a historian, he was also remarkable for his atten-

<sup>114</sup> GP 1:208–9, I.70: “Hic si pape expresse dixisset ‘had et has dignitates habuit aecllesia Cantuariensis, et easdem illi confirmo,’ absoluiset litigium, controversiis imposuisset modum; sed dicens quecumque autentica habet nos nullatenus imminuimus,’ indeterminatum rem, ut erat reliquit in medio.”

<sup>115</sup> GP 1:209, I.70: “Sic callidus lepos Romanorum novit se ad oratorum conuertere uersutias, et quae vult cassa suspendit ambage, non parcens alienis laboribus dum modo consulat suis profectibus.”

<sup>116</sup> GP 2:181–2.

<sup>117</sup> GP 1:400–3, III.122; the edition allows side-by-side comparison of the initial composition and the later revisions.

<sup>118</sup> Thomson, GP 2:15, lists instances in which William likely received information from Anselm and Eadmer directly.



tion to material sources, especially church buildings and inscriptions.<sup>119</sup> Yet he clearly analyzed texts, and indeed, many monks trained to write in this period would have had similar critical tools. But these tools were not deployed as modern historians would use them, since the ultimate purpose of historical writing was different for medieval monks, so they treated sources differently.<sup>120</sup>

Significantly, William was consciously attempting to write what he considered a *historia*, not an *argumentum*. His notions of history heavily shaped the *Gesta pontificum*. In his general prologue to the work William explained his labors – a rewritten opening placed over a substantial erasure and probably composed after the bulk of the initial recension was finished.<sup>121</sup> Drawing heavily from the introduction to Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, William bemoaned the lack of previous histories to guide him, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which he had used for his *Gesta regum*.<sup>122</sup> Then, he contrasted his previous work with writing *Gesta pontificum*:

But *here* I am devoid of almost all help. I grope my way through a dense fog of ignorance, and no lantern of history (*lucerna historiae*) goes before to direct my path. But, as I hope, the Light of minds will not fail me, ensuring that the truth in its fullness (*integra...veritas*) does not waiver and that the principle of concision (*brevitas*) is preserved.<sup>123</sup>

For William, the light of God replaced the “lantern of history” and assured the desired traits of truthfulness and brevity, which were expected in historical writing. Indeed, there were ethics to history-writing for William, which included moral lessons and a commitment to exemplifying higher truths.<sup>124</sup> But William, like other monastic historians in their prologues, may have

<sup>119</sup> GP 2:xxxix–xl.

<sup>120</sup> Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), 2–3, 265–6 makes the distinction clearly. Compare Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 37 and John O. Ward, “William of Malmesbury: Chronicler, Antiquarian, or Historian?” in *The Creation of Medieval Northern Europe: Christianization, Social Transformations, an Historiography*, eds. Leidulf Melve and Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (Oslo: Dreyer, 2012), 271–313.

<sup>121</sup> GP 1:xii, xxv, and GP 2:10–11; the general prologue is written in the smaller, more informal autograph hand and made to fit in the space of Magdalen College, Oxford, ms. Latin 172, f. 1r before the pre-existing prologue to book one on 1v.

<sup>122</sup> GP 2:xxxiii–iv, 13–14.

<sup>123</sup> GP 1:2–5, prologue: “Hic autem, pene omni destitutus solatio, crassus ignorantiae tenebras palpo, nec ulla lucerna historiae previa semitam dirigo. Aderit tamen, ut spero, Lux mentium, ut et integra non vacillet veritas et instituta conseruetur brevis.” Thomson, GP 2:14 explained that *Lux mentium*, meaning God, derived from Augustine.

<sup>124</sup> Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury*, 263.

protested too much about a lack of sources. He had important models of general church history (Eusebius) and even substantial narratives for ancient (Bede) and recent (Eadmer) English church history available – and he used them. Furthermore, while William was an exceptionally prolific historian, he was certainly not alone in writing (or reading) history in the twelfth century. Indeed, William seems to have assumed that his readers would be familiar with interpreting both documents and narratives. For example, in the course of relating the events of the Council of 1072, William put speeches in the mouths of the two archbishop antagonists. In particular, they quarreled over how Pope Gregory I intended to set up the English church in the time of Augustine. So, at the conclusion of their debate, in what was intended to be a definite rebuttal, William had Lanfranc exclaim “Anyone ignorant of this can instruct himself from the *History of the English*,” meaning that they should read Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*.<sup>125</sup> For a monastic or clerical audience, such a remark spoke volumes about the utility of histories in advancing one’s cause.

### CONVINCING HISTORIES?

To return to the issues with which this chapter began, it is clear that there were various ways in which cartularies could aid or inspire historical writing. One response was historical writing proper, that is, a narrative interpretation of the past in one of several recognized medieval formats. But one should not adopt an overly rigid typology, including using categories such as *historia*, *argumentum*, and *fabula*. Even if the goal was to produce “history,” such as William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta pontificum*, there was still room for *argumentum*, plausible narration of events which could have occurred. Perhaps it is best to regard William’s story of the Canterbury–York dispute over primacy, especially the Easter Council of 1072, as a form of *argumentum*. After all, Lanfranc *might* have possessed the relevant papal bulls to support his claims to primacy (or at least his letter to the pope could be cited to imply that he did). What William was doing was historicizing Canterbury’s claims in a new way, which he hoped would be more convincing, not just plausible.

The spectacular and even laughable setback of Canterbury before the papal curia in 1123 was the failure of one *argumentum*. While Eadmer still faithfully made it in his *Historia novorum*, he had distanced himself (and his hero Anselm) by describing the frantic search through the ancient cupboards and trunks in 1120. One can easily see from Hugh the Chanter’s

<sup>125</sup> GP 1:84–5, I.41: “Nescientem gesta Anglorum docebunt quod dico.” Colgrave and Mynors, eds., *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, 9, c.2.

version of events at Rome that the curia was beginning to apply new evidentiary criteria in such cases, especially the requirement that only privileges bearing bulls would be recognized. Previously effective cover stories, such as the loss of documents in a fire, were deemed insufficient. Thus, this *argumentum* had failed to gain acceptance, since it was hotly contested by the York partisans, which William would have known. Therefore, when William was writing, in the immediate aftermath, he constructed a new and better argument. In particular, the key documents were backdated to 1072, in order to make the “truth” (Canterbury’s) more evident. This backdating effectively imparted greater authority (and authenticity) to the privileges. In such a dispute, it was not sufficient for a narrative to be merely plausible; it also needed to be convincing, and ideally use its sources to present the most “truthful” version possible.<sup>126</sup> For William, the lessons of history needed to be clear.

But for modern historians, there is another lesson. While William of Malmesbury was an exceptional monastic historian, his work shows that the relationship between forgeries and monastic historical writing was transforming in the twelfth century. The stories which had worked for Saint Peter’s Ghent, Saint-Denis, and Christ Church before 1100 no longer worked as well in the age of Guernon’s confession. In this new age – of increased scrutiny and contestation – documents (including forgeries) were still integral to formulating an *argumentum*. However, in order to convince, they required better framing, a “story” that was more like a history, in which criteria like brevity and even accuracy in copying mattered. *Argumenta*, and the stories they supported, had to be adapted to meet the demands of a more rigorous historical discourse. Inconvenient inconsistencies now had to be explained before the past could be convincingly rewritten into convenient historical “truths.”

<sup>126</sup> Sönnensyn, *William of Malmesbury*, 271: “There was therefore no necessary opposition between regarding history as part of ethics, and the desire to give as truthful an account of things that had happened as the source material would permit.”