

Chapter Title: [PART II: Introduction]

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PART II

TWICE TOLD TALES

Medieval monks deployed narratives, documents, and objects to craft stories about the pasts of their houses. Such stories were frequently retold or rewritten as local conditions changed. Thus, they present a moving target for modern scholars interested in reconstructing past realities – what actually happened. But they are very useful for studying monks' ideas and beliefs about their pasts. Sometimes, such ideas and beliefs crystallized around the creation (or performance) of texts to present a powerful (re)vision of the past. What follows are micro-histories of such revisioning at three monasteries where significant amounts of forgery took place: Saint-Peter's, Ghent, Saint-Denis near Paris, and Christ Church, Canterbury. Furthermore, these studies span the eleventh century, a crucial period associated with monastic reforms and transitions in scribal culture. For convenience, they are treated chronologically in the following three chapters: early, middle, and later eleventh century.

These three chapters have a common format. In each case, I introduce a medieval work and begin by telling its "story" as a constructed narrative – as it was written or as strongly implied by its medieval organization. I deliberately adopt story-telling conventions to give a feeling for the story to a modern reader. Although constructed, these stories are closely based on what monastic composers wrote and I often translate their words directly. These tales are not offering a "history," that is, a factual narrative of events which happened; rather, they seek simply to relate monastic stories at a juncture in time. For ease of readers' comprehension, I have divided the stories into parts – using the overt or implicit arrangement of the work. Furthermore, I stress features which were selective, partisan, or deliberately fraudulent. Next, after providing context for the work, each chapter has a section called "revisiting the story," which analyzes the monastic story and explains how (and why) it was written. Thus, all the tales are told twice. I consider how their messaging was used for present purposes and I focus on forgeries and inventions and how they supported or suppressed past events. The goal is to highlight the process of fabrication and what historical views they encouraged. Then, I consider distinctive features of the story and any further efforts at the house, which I call "sequels."

The goal of such close reading is to illustrate intertextual processes of composition and how each story was deeply embedded in local circumstances. In addition to spanning the eleventh century, these micro-histories also proceed from more easily analyzed sources to more difficult ones. I

begin at Saint Peter's in the 1030s with a book clearly planned as a unified work. Next, at Saint-Denis in the 1060s, I treat a dossier of charter copies later incorporated into a codex. Then, at Christ Church, Canterbury in the 1070s and 1080s, I consider a lost cartulary using a reconstruction based on later copies. In other words, the studies proceed from a case in which composition is more obvious to ones in which it is harder to understand. A concluding section, "Learning from Twice Told Tales," highlights shared aspects of the three stories. These features include patterns of fabrication and storytelling, which reveal how their composers rewrote the past, as well as the persuasiveness of their efforts.