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## CATALOGING MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE MANUSCRIPTS: A REVIEW ARTICLE

Richard W. Clement<sup>1</sup>

*Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries. Vol. 3: Lampeter-Oxford.* By N. R. KER. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Pp. xxxvi + 735. \$84.00. ISBN 0-19-818195-7.

*Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Vol. 1: MSS 1-250.* By BARBARA A. SHAILOR. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, vol. 34. Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1984. Pp. xxii + 420. \$26.00. ISBN 0-86698-065-2.

Until recently it could have been argued with much justification that the cataloging of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the United States began and ended with Seymour De Ricci's *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1935-40) and *Supplement* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1962). Of course, many excellent catalogs were produced before the *Census* and have been produced since (although most are of a specialized nature), yet the *Census* and its *Supplement* must be regarded as the one great landmark in cataloging in this country. It was the first, and so far is the only, union catalog of all the medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the United States and Canada, and it has undoubtedly stimulated primary scholarship by bringing many unknown or unnoticed manuscripts to general notice. Yet at the same time the *Census* has discouraged cataloging at individual institutions. Invariably the further cataloging of manuscripts already listed in the *Census* receives the lowest priority: it simply is not done. The cataloging of manuscripts acquired since the publication of the *Supplement* to the *Census* (1962) has

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fared little better in most institutions. The *Census* thus has unfortunately been something of an obstacle to further cataloging.

Seymour De Ricci would no doubt have objected to this unforeseen consequence of his monumental *Census*. Certainly it is not an inevitable result of such union catalogs that little further cataloging follows. Often new catalogs are stimulated by the perceived deficiencies of the old ones. For example, each of the distinguished series of union catalogs produced in Britain (or at least concerned in some part with British manuscripts) derived in some degree from its predecessor, beginning with Thomas James's *Ecloga Oxonio-Cantabrigiensis* (1600) [1], followed by E. Bernardus's *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae* (1697) [2], (in part) G. Haenel's *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum qui in bibliothecis Galliae, Helvetiae, Belgii, Britanniae M., Hispaniae, Lusitaniae asservantur* (1830) [3], H. Schenkl's "Biblioteca patrum latinorum Britannica," (1891–1908) [4], and ending with N. R. Ker's continuing *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* [5].

Indeed it is from the recent British catalogs of Ker, Mynors, Parkes, and others that Americans have derived some guidance for several new cataloging projects. The *Census*, though, falls outside this tradition, no doubt as a result of De Ricci's French background. Certainly in terms of comprehensiveness, the *Census* entries represent a step backward from the level of cataloging achieved by M. R. James in his series of catalogs of the colleges of Cambridge of several decades earlier, with the single exception of provenance, at which De Ricci excelled. A typical *Census* entry contains four sections: (1) contents—author, title; (2) physical description—material, date, number of leaves, size, place of origin, ornamentation, binding; (3) provenance; and (4) bibliography. As an outline for organizing an entry, this is a fairly standard schema. The fault is in the brevity and in the inaccuracies of the descriptions, which resulted from the lack of research on the part of many of the contributors, who often simply copied booksellers' descriptions and sent them to De Ricci, though certainly one can sympathize with De Ricci's dilemma in balancing the need for full cataloging and accurate research against the practical requirements of keeping the total length of the *Census* manageable and completing the project within his lifetime. It was simply not possible for him to visit every library and check each description. De Ricci certainly understood the preliminary nature of the *Census*, and he hoped others would "take to heart the continuation and improvement of our *Census*" (p. xiv). Certainly Faye and Bond have continued the *Census* in the *Supplement* and improved it, yet the *Supplement* follows the original *Census* and shares its limitations. Administrators and curators have been content to point to the *Census* as a finished

project, thus obviating the necessity of further cataloging, which is after all a very expensive undertaking.

The initiation of large cataloging projects seems often to require the intervention of catalogers who are willing to devote many years to a project. Certainly M. R. James, Seymour De Ricci, and N. R. Ker were willing to do so. No single American scholar has done more to encourage the cataloging of medieval manuscripts than Richard H. Rouse of the University of California, Los Angeles. Barbara Shailor, in her *Catalog of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University*, acknowledges Rouse's direct advice "in designing and implementing the format" of the entries (p. xviii). Rouse has been instrumental in a similar way in Paul Saenger's forthcoming catalog of the medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the Newberry Library and in the forthcoming catalog of the medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the Huntington Library by Consuelo W. Dutschke. The cataloging of manuscripts is once again moving forward in a significant manner. That this is so is in large part a result of Rouse's efforts.

In some ways Ker's *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* is for Britain all that the *Census* never was for this country. Ker's purpose, though, was not to produce a *Census* for Britain but to catalog the very many small holdings of medieval manuscripts in out-of-the-way places that might never otherwise be cataloged: he generally refused to concern himself with collections that were in the process of being cataloged or had previously been cataloged. Even though it is less comprehensive as a union catalog than is the *Census* (the collections of such major institutions as the British Library, the Bodleian Library, and the Cambridge University Library, even often less adequately cataloged than Ker's new descriptions, are not included), each entry is of itself comprehensive. Ker's entries are organized into four large sections: (1) short title and date, (2) contents and bibliographical references, (3) physical description, and (4) provenance. As an overview, each volume is prefaced with a short title list of all the libraries and manuscripts cataloged, which also serves in place of an index (which will appear as vol. 5).

The first section, actually the heading of the entry, initially consists of the call number and a short title. For example, MS M.1.10 of the Allestree Library at Christ Church Oxford bears the short title "Augustinus," which strictly speaking is an attribution of authorship and not a short title at all (pp. 596-97). In this instance the short title is the author as the manuscript contains four works by Augustine. This is a common principle of the catalog, although never explicitly stated: to assign a short title according to a single common attribute, in this case authorship. A more standard form of short title is that which indicates both

author and title for a single work, as in Norwich Public Library MS TC 28/4 (S.D.4.3), "P. Lombardus, Sententiae" (pp. 560–61). Anyone who has dealt with manuscripts will know the difficulty of assigning concise yet meaningful short titles to composite or miscellaneous codices. Often the best one can do is to enter the codex under a formal rubric such as "Sermones" (pp. 214–15), "Preces, and so forth" (p. 12), or "Miscellanea" (p. 77). If the manuscript is written (wholly or partly) in a vernacular language, this is indicated in parentheses following the short title. Whatever imprecision may exist in Ker's short titles is quickly rectified in his copious and generally exact treatment of the contents of each codex. The second part of the heading consists of a date in the standard notation familiar to all who work with manuscripts. It is worth noticing that Ker changed this notation slightly from that used in volume 1. He originally indicated that "'s. xiii' by itself denotes the middle of the thirteenth century" (1:vii). However, in volume 2 he altered this: "I think now it was a bad mistake to have left out the word 'med.' when assigning dates to manuscripts written probably in the middle of a century" (2:vii). Although this has resulted in an inconsistency in the dating formula between volume 1 and the subsequent volumes, Ker's change illustrates his willingness to adapt his usage and not simply to follow blindly a set pattern for entries.

The second section of Ker's entries is usually the most copious, and here we see most clearly their distinct superiority to the entries of the *Census*. Each item in a manuscript is treated separately, although occasionally a note concerning the manuscript as a whole may precede the individual treatments. First the number of folios occupied by the text is noted. Next follow the opening lines (the incipit) and the closing lines (the explicit). Finally there is a variety of notes and bibliographical references dealing with such things as the subject matter of the text, any unusual features of the textual layout on the page, any glosses or marginalia, and so forth. An example is Leeds University Brotherton Collection MS 102, a collection of sermons, article 2:

2. ff. 6<sup>v</sup>–76 Dominica 16. Cum vocatus fueris . . . luc. 14. Karissimi habetur Ione 1<sup>o</sup> quomodo ionas fuit in mari . . .

Sermons, mainly of the temporale. The "processus" and other heads of each sermon are set out in the margins, where, too, there are cross references. Some notes are in German, e.g., on ff. 10<sup>v</sup>, 33<sup>v</sup>. [P. 64]

Thus, although each particular sermon has not been described, this distinct group of sermons has been identified by the incipit and explicit. We are also informed of the style of rubrication, the presence of an apparatus, and the nature of the vernacular glosses. In most instances Ker identifies each specific item in a manuscript, but in this particular

case, as with sermons generally, he has identified only a body of sermons. Obviously for Ker, as a single scholar working alone with no institutional support, this was a judgment that his time would be better spent on other matters, and so he has left these identifications as work for a future cataloger.

In dealing with Bibles, Ker has described fully the prologues of one particular codex in each volume of the catalog, which then serves as a single reference for all the other similar codices described in each volume. "The many Bibles which contain [the prologues] are in all respects produced to a pattern and the number of books and their order does not vary" (1:vii). This, at the cost of little inconvenience to the user, has increased the efficiency of cataloging and avoided needless repetition.

The third section, concerning the physical description, perhaps best illustrates the great strides that cataloging has made in recent decades. The catalogers of the last century were content to include the number of leaves, the nature of the material written on (that is, parchment or paper), the size of the leaf, perhaps the number of lines, and finally the number of columns. Occasionally the collation might be provided. Here, though, we find a much more complete entry. Ker first gives the foliation, carefully distinguishing between flyleaves (supplied with the binding) and the manuscript itself. He uses the standard notation of arabic numerals for the manuscript leaves and roman numerals for the flyleaves. Only pre-1600 or incorrect post-1600 foliations are noted. The material is assumed to be parchment; thus only paper is noted. One omission is a description of watermarks. Here again is future work. The dimensions of both the leaf and the writing frame are indicated (in millimeters, height by width), as are the number of lines per folio and the number of columns. Ker notes the presence of prickings (pricking marks used to guide the scribe in ruling a gathering) only if they appear in the inner margin, or gutter, as well as in the outer margin, a somewhat rare occurrence. This is unfortunate as the type and style of pricking (if extant) may tell us much about the scriptorium in which a manuscript was produced. One wishes that information on the prickings had been included as a matter of course for at least the oldest manuscripts and certainly for any later codices bearing anomalous patterns. Likewise the information included on the mode of ruling is provided only in special cases: for manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries when a shift from dry point to lead plummet was underway; for manuscripts of the early thirteenth century when a shift from an open top line to an enclosed top line was occurring; or for manuscripts of the fifteenth century, which were designed with a writing frame but lacked rulings inside that frame. Hair/flesh sequences are noted only occasionally, but

again these ought to be indicated in every anomalous case. Such information on the format and mode of production need not be included in every instance, thus simply slavishly recording useless information to fill out a cataloging form, but whenever scribal practice departs from the norm it ought to be noted. The collations are accurate and complete: using a standard formula (outlined only in 3:vii), Ker is able to note every variation and anomaly in the quiring. Quire signatures and leaf signatures are usually noted, but catchwords are noted only in manuscripts of the mid-twelfth century or earlier (as they are ubiquitous in the later manuscripts and rare in the earlier).

The description of script has always been a troublesome task for catalogers. Finding the appropriate compromise between such broad terms as "cursive" and "gothic" and too-narrow technical terms such as *fere-textura rotunda facilis* is difficult. Ker has quite properly eschewed minute description, using instead the broad yet fairly well defined terms "caroline minuscule" and "textura" (both of which are assumed if no script is specified, the date thus distinguishing between the two), "cursiva" and "hybrida" for Continental manuscripts, and "anglicana" and "secretary" for English manuscripts.

In describing the decoration and the pictures, Ker has failed to fully distinguish between the two. As he notes, "no attempt has been made, as a rule, to describe scenes in initials of Bibles and service books, nor pictures in Books of Hours, if they are the pictures commonly found," yet "the main types of decoration are recorded, pictures, initials, borders, line-fillers, and coloured strokes or fillings to emphasize capital letters in the ink of the text, but not paragraph marks and coloured running-titles and headings" (1:xii). Ker seems to consider pictures, certainly a major aspect of an entry, as a type of decoration (such as a line-filler) to be considered only as a part of the physical description. There is an unfortunate absence of references to works on artists and iconography. Finally a succinct description of the binding is provided, but only if it is pre-1600. For example, the medieval binding of MS BRm. 360 Py. 35 in the Manchester Public Library, a psalter, is described as follows: "Contemporary German binding of wooden boards covered with stamped pigskin: five small bosses removed from each cover: central clasp missing: offset of manuscript pastedowns" (p. 387).

Flyleaves and pastedowns from other manuscripts have always been something of a problem for catalogers. They have often been ignored or, conversely, treated as completely separate. Ker has recognized that, even though these leaves are certainly separate and require their own full descriptions, they are nonetheless a part of a larger codex. He thus describes them as a separate article of a composite codex.

The final section in each entry is concerned with the provenance of

the manuscript. Such items as ex libris notations, book marks, notices in sale catalogs, bookplates, and slips from booksellers are noted. In each instance Ker has attempted to trace the history of the manuscript as best he can. Finally, as an aid mostly for future investigators, the "secundo folio" (the opening words of the second leaf) has been supplied. This may well allow library historians to identify specifically many of the entries in medieval library catalogs, often differentiated only by short title and secundo folio.

Although neither volume 2 nor 3 contains plates, volume 1 has 10 excellently reproduced plates on good-quality coated paper. It is, however, not entirely clear what purpose they serve. Two are referred to in the preface on script, but in none of the descriptions of the particular manuscripts are the plates mentioned. As notes to several of the plates preface them, they appear to be an afterthought discontinued in the later volumes.

Ker began the project at the invitation of the Manuscripts Subcommittee (now the Manuscripts Advisory Committee) of the Standing Conference of National University Libraries (SCONUL) in the early 1960s. Originally, it was hoped that the catalog would comprise 3 volumes of about 500 pages each. This estimate, however, has proven too limited. Volume 1 (1969), comprising the collections in London alone, fit the estimate very well at just under 500 pages. It was still hoped that only 2 more volumes, the first comprising the collections of Aberdeen-Liverpool and the second comprising the collections of Maidstone-York, would complete the project. With the appearance of volume 2 (1977), comprising the collections of Abbotsford-Keele, Ker was forced to abandon his aim of completing the catalog in 3 volumes. Not only did volume 2 cover less ground than anticipated, but it took up over 1,000 pages. The present expectation is that 4 volumes will be necessary for the catalog, followed by 1 volume of indices, thus amounting to 5 volumes in all. This scheme seems quite likely to be achieved. Volume 3 (1983), Lampeter-Oxford, composed of more than 700 pages, has now appeared, and volume 4, in rough draft before Ker's death in August 1982, exists in typescript and is being completed by Allan Piper of Durham University with the support of the British Academy. Thus we may be sure that *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, to be continued under SCONUL sponsorship and the very able editorship of Andrew Watson and Allan Piper, will certainly be completed and will stand as a memorial to Neil Ripley Ker.

Barbara Shailor's *Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University* has had a very different genesis. Unlike Ker, who did his original cataloging alone with no financial support and no immediate reference collection at



hand, Shailor, working in a single location, had Cora Lutz's finished catalog on which to begin. She was also able to draw on the work done by W. Cahn and J. Marrow on illumination, on the Greek language skills of W. N. Nichipor, and on the expertise of J. Greenfield on bindings. The catalog is in many respects a team effort directed by Shailor, made up of experts and research assistants, and finally produced by computer, all financed by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Nothing could contrast more in method with Ker's solitary peripatetic cataloging produced on an ancient typewriter.

Shailor has adopted Ker's format and her entries are organized into 5 large sections: (1) probable country of origin, date, and short title; (2) contents; (3) physical description; (4) provenance; and (5) bibliography. With the exception of a formal section for bibliography, this is very much the same as Ker's organization.

The first section of the entry, the heading, consists of the call number, followed by the probable country of origin, the date, and a short title. The probable place of origin is generally identified by the modern country's name, without further subdivision. In several instances, however, a geographical subdivision or a regional name is substituted, for example, Bohemia (MS 225), Crete (MS 236), Flanders (MSS 16, 110, 129 and so forth), or Lower Rhine (MS 196). Usually the precise place of origin, if known, is identified later in the entry. For example, MS 55 is identified as having originated in Yugoslavia, but in the section on provenance it is identified as having originated at the Church of Saint Gregory in Sebenico, Dalmatia (pp. 80–81). It may seem a small point, but it would certainly have been more precise and less confusing to have given Dalmatia as the place of origin in the heading. Yugoslavia, a modern creation, encompasses several distinct geographical regions and nationalities not usually associated in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance in the same way that the various subdivisions of Germany and Italy have been. Thus the use of Germany when we really mean Cologne may be logical, but the use of Yugoslavia when we mean Sebenico, Dalmatia, seems incongruous. When the exact location is known, the initial use of a larger geographical category, modern or contemporary, adds nothing to the clarity of the entry and may well cause the user some little confusion. The place of origin for MS 225 is identified in the heading as Bohemia, yet most of this codex was written in Krakow, the other part in Erfurt (pp. 314–16). As MS 55 is entered under Yugoslavia, might we not expect MS 225 to be entered under Czechoslovakia which includes modern Bohemia; or Poland, which includes Krakow; or Germany, which includes Erfurt? Yet if modern Bohemia is meant, how can one reconcile this with Krakow or Erfurt? It would have been better simply to have indicated Krakow and Erfurt and nothing more.

The dating formula, the next element of the heading, is standard and quite satisfactory. The short titles are as precise as brevity will allow: as Ker managed in different ways (author, title, or some other appropriate rubric), so has Shailor. Here, because of the need for brevity, it is possible to use a more general appellation when necessary, which is then later specified in the body of the entry.

The second section of an entry details the contents of each manuscript. Composite manuscripts bound together in one codex are indicated by roman numerals; each textual item is then indicated by an arabic numeral. The usual mode is first to note the number of folios occupied by the text and next to identify a text by title, rubric, and/or author and then by incipit and explicit. A bibliographical note may follow. An example is MS 37 (a composite manuscript):

III. ff. 54r–89r [Frederico Borromeo, *Vita S. Caroli Borromei*:] *Antonio Caraffae Cardinali Amplissimo*. Historiam esse ueritas testem, nuntiam uetustatis, et magistrum uitae optime nosti . . . [text:] *Caroli Cardinalis Borromei uita*. Quae est naturae humanae peruersitas ut quae imitari nos posse diffidimus falsa putemus . . . qui uiuunt quos sanctissimis suis donis in dies magis dita et pro tua benignitate ditabit. f. 89v blank. [P. 65]

Entry III indicates that folios 54–89 compose a discrete manuscript bound into this composite codex (MS 37). The author and title have been supplied in square brackets, the rubrics in italics. The orthography of the manuscript is always followed even when it is obviously faulty. Had this text been edited, a bibliographical reference would have followed. Normally every distinct text is identified, if only by incipit/explicit, but unfortunately there are some exceptions. For example, article 8 (fols. 77r–92r) of MS 146 (“Theological and Pastoral Tracts”) is identified as “Various passages from the Bible and patristic excerpts” (p. 197). A single example of a quotation from Cyprian is given but is not identified further. The other excerpts are left to the imagination of the user. Overall more might have been done in the identification of recensional and variant versions of texts, in the differing layouts and organizations of texts, in punctuation, and in the description of marginalia.

The third section, the physical description, is divided into 6 subsections.

1. The physical material is identified and qualified; if it is paper, the watermark is identified. Like Ker, Shailor uses a standard formula for the foliation: roman numerals for flyleaves (contemporary with the binding) and arabic numerals for the leaves of the manuscript itself. The dimensions of the folio and of the writing frame are indicated in millimeters (height by width). The number of lines per folio and the number of columns are also given. The ruling pattern is described in

full, the instrument used to make the rulings is indicated, and the nature of the prickings is recorded. An example is MS 104:

Parchment, ff. 14 + i (original parchment flyleaf), 220 × 146 (172 × 113) mm. Written in 29 long lines; vertical bounding lines in hard point; guide-lines for text in ink; remains of prickings for bounding lines only. [P. 145]

2. The collational formulae are of the standard type used by Ker and are fully satisfactory. The presence and arrangements of quire and leaf signatures, and of catchwords, are indicated.

3. Like Ker, Shailor has eschewed the use of highly technical paleographical nomenclature. She has, though, tried to be more specific than Ker when this has proved possible. She often qualifies major types of script (for example, gothic, uncial, caroline minuscule, square capitals, bâtarde, secretary, and so forth) with terms such as "neat," "bold," "round," "well formed," "late," "modified," "elegant," "careless," "informal," "small," and so forth.

4. Where Ker declined to describe every single aspect of the pictures or provide secondary references, Shailor (drawing heavily on the expertise of W. Cahn and J. Marrow) has noted and described the major aspects, producing relatively complete and thus in some instances very long entries.

5. Imperfections, damage, and subsequent repairs to the codex are also noted.

6. Finally, bindings (by J. Greenfield) are described fully. One of the plates accompanying the catalog illustrates a typical binding and details various binding terms used in the descriptions. Unlike Ker, who treated manuscript pastedowns as separate articles, Shailor has included their rather too-brief descriptions as part of the bindings.

The fourth section is concerned with the provenance of a manuscript. Like Ker, Shailor presents every possible kind of evidence, even, as she admits, "if its importance is unclear" (p. xx). The *secundo folio* is also indicated, but only for pre-1500 manuscripts (but not for *Horae* of course as all similar volumes have the same *secundo folio*).

Finally, certain standard bibliographical sources (the *Census*, *Supplement*, and several other specialized Yale sources) are cited. Other pertinent citations, if not placed in the body of the entry, are listed here in the order of year of publication.

Seven indices are provided at the end of the volume: (1) manuscripts arranged by country or region of origin and by century; (2) dated manuscripts; (3) general index of persons, places, authors, and so forth; (4) illuminators and scribes; (5) provenance; (6) other manuscripts cited; and (7) incipits. These computer-generated indices provide the user with a number of substantial access points to the Beinecke collec-

tion. Such indices are essential to any catalog. Following them are 32 halftone plates (unfortunately of very poor quality) illustrating many of the decorations, pictures, and scripts, which are often difficult to describe verbally in a completely satisfactory manner.

Volume 1 of the *Catalogue* covers 250 manuscripts in the general collection. Volume 2 will cover another 250 manuscripts (MSS 251–500) in the general collection. Volume 3 will cover the Thomas E. Marston Collection of 234 items. Shailor also promises to catalog the manuscripts in the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection. The completed *Catalogue* will stand as a tribute not only to one of America's finest collections of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts but also to the revitalization of American cataloging.

With the appearance of the Yale *Catalogue*, the future of cataloging in this country appears to be improving. The Beinecke catalog will soon be joined by the Newberry and Huntington catalogs, and, it is hoped, the catalog of the Walters collection. It can now be said with some hope that American manuscript cataloging is coming of age.

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