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Letters, Schools, and Written Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

Between 1157 and 1162 Peter of Celle received a “little jug” of letters (*vasculum litterarum tuarum*) from John of Salisbury. Reading through them so delighted this Benedictine abbot, so quenched his parched thirst, that he felt moved to respond at once with overflowing thanks.¹ What he was reading is unclear: John’s “jug” may have contained the entire first volume of his collected letters (135 from Archbishop Theobald’s time), as Brooke ingeniously proposed², or a single letter, as Southern suggested³, or a smaller collection of more personal and literary epistles, for which evidence also exists.⁴ In any case, the letter(s) in this “vessel” stirred Abbot Peter to eloquence. He had already, so he claimed, read some passages two and three times, especially those in which the contents (*materia*) set forth the desired matter (*optatam narrationis seriem*) in an elegant style (*styli iucunda lepeditate*) delightful to the spirit (*gratitudine dilecti animi*). Seasoned with philosophical musings, garbed in the *colores rhetorici*, bedecked in the most fitting ornaments of the law, and firmly grounded in the Gospels, John’s letters were as well, when addressed to friends, savoured with honey. Whatever a person might seek out – the profit of teaching and doctrine, pleasure and facility with words, fidelity and sweetness in love – all this, the abbot claimed, he found in abundance in John’s letters. They were like, he continued, a seaworthy ship, a garden of delights, a wellspread table, an inviting bed, a school for philosophy.

The abbot’s decorous language presupposed a bond that was deep and personal. In early days, at school or shortly thereafter, John may have served Peter as clerk

¹ Petri Cellensis epistolae 70: PL. 202, 515–17.

² W. J. Millor-H. E. Butler-C. N. L. Brooke, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, Vol 1 (London 1955) ix–x.

³ See Richard W. Southern’s important review, in: EHR 72 (1957) 495–97.

⁴ “...quod ad amicos attinet, mellito sapore decentissime dulcorantur [litterae tuae].” PL. 202, 516. For the existence of such a collection of more personal letters, see now Alan Piper, *New Evidence for the Becket Correspondence and John of Salisbury’s Letters*, in: Michael Wilks, ed. *The World of John of Salisbury* (Oxford 1984) 439–44.

or even teacher⁵; but over time their relationship matured into a friendship between literary equals, with several of John's most intimate and playful letters addressed to Abbot Peter.⁶ Learned men who first acquired that learning in the new schools, both, the Benedictine abbot and the professional courtier, distanced themselves from "professionalized" pedagogy, while retaining in common a love for Latin rhetoric. Each composed treatises directing learning to its "rightful" ends, John employing classical rhetoric and morality for his *Metalogicon*, Peter proposing monastic purposes in his *School of the Cloister*. But for both their learning came most fundamentally to literary expression in letters, Peter the author of some 185 still extant, John of some 325. And that predilection extended to letters written by others as well: In 1157 John asked Peter for the letters of Saint Bernard, along with selections (*flores*) from his works; Peter possessed, and sent immediately a copy of the letters, but not, intriguingly, the Cistercian spiritual selections.⁷

If John's "little vessel" (*vasculum*) full of letters was indeed, as Brooke argued, a first gathering of John's correspondence spanning eight years (1153–61), Abbot Peter's reaction deserves all the more attention. For of the 135 letters, only 37 were written in John's own name; all the rest he composed for Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. And more than half his personal letters treated routine ecclesiastical business, messages sent in behalf of superiors and petitions addressed to the English pope Hadrian IV. Only about a dozen were more philosophical in character, all of them addressed to other masters or products of the schools, with his most reflective and sophisticated discourse reserved for Peter himself, musings on the ways of God and the waywardness of fortune penned during a period when he had fallen out of favor at the royal court.⁸ But whether Peter's extravagant thanks pertained only to a single letter or to all 135, the question remains: What did a Benedictine abbot – or any other cleric who chanced to read or copy them – find so attractive in a courtier's letters? Their style, certainly.⁹ Yet in this same letter of thanks Peter noted first their urbane thought (*Sensibus philosophicis, lucrum sententiarum, doctrinam*) and last their portrayal of human relations or friendship (*et quod ad amicos attinet mellito sapore decentissime dulcorantur, amoris ueritatem et dulcedinem*)¹⁰ – a fitting balance, whichever member (the first or the last) was

⁵ See Brooke (n. 2 above) xvi–xvii. The letter of thanks was addressed to John as master (*magistro suo*), as were several others.

⁶ See the masterful analysis of Letter no. 112 in Brooke (n. 2 above) xlvii–lii. The original edition of Peter's letters by Jacques Sirmond organized all of those addressed to John into a single book (the fourth in a total of nine).

⁷ Letters nn. 31–32, ed. Millor-Brooke (n. 2 above) 51, 54.

⁸ See Letters nn. 19, 31, 32; ed. Millor-Brooke (n. 2 above) 31–32, 49–54.

⁹ In another (probably earlier) letter addressed by "frater Petrus" to "magistro Ioanni", he observed: "Ut uidi litteras tuas, cor meum iubilo, os meum impletum est risu. Miscuistis siquidem iocos seriis, sed temperatos et sine detrimento dignationis et uerecundiae. ...Sic decurrit oratio tua, tanquam illa quae aliquando nubes capite tangit, aliquando autem uultum in terra demittit. ...Est namque uox tua dulcis in auribus meis, et monitus tui satis amabiles in faucibus meis." Epistola 69: PL. 202,515.

¹⁰ PL. 202,515–16.

understood to receive the greater emphasis. As for all the routine business John had conducted, one hundred letters written in eight years for Archbishop Theobald, readers would have taken most of that for granted, including its property disputes and its reprimands for miscreant clerics, though Peter must have been moved and intrigued, as subsequent readers have been, by the last several letters written for a dying Theobald in conflict with the king and in turmoil over the papal schism. It was hardly the particulars of commonplace cases that fascinated Abbot Peter; it was the way in which John said what had to be said.

How should one, for instance, tell an abbess to stop carrying on with her officialis, how impress upon her the gravity of her situation? John began delicately, "Your negligence, to call it that for the moment, he says, (*Negligentiae tuae, ut interim sic dicatur*), its manifold and grave excesses [his language is building] we can no longer dissimulate, [and then his reason] since your offences have reached the ears of the Roman pontiff, [and then the archbishop's real problem] and against our innocence have provoked the Roman church's wrath." Thus, in a single opening sentence John had captured the whole situation and conveyed the archbishop's tone; then he proceeded to business: "You indeed we have often warned" (*Te quidem saepe monuimus*). And on he went, culminating in an order to separate herself from the officialis and him from the abbey's goods or stand condemned by Rome (*ne...te domini pape auctoritate sentias condemnatum* – John's last two words being "what she would feel" and "condemnation").¹¹ Or, again, how to turn down someone petitioning in behalf of one of John's own friends? Begin with thanks (*Gratiae vestrae congratulor*), insert a verbal question mark into the assumption of profit for this friend (*dum amicorum meorum, ut creditur, profectum quaerit*), and then express resistance in a sentence made up of two double negatives: While he was not able not to approve the affection, so he was not able not to reprove the naive counsel.¹² On a more positive note, in the *exordium* for a letter authorizing monks to proceed with the election of a new abbot, John sketched out in ninety well-chosen words what happens to a religious house bereft of spiritual and temporal leadership, before he proceeded to set the election.¹³ The monks would have read out in chapter the fine rhetoric and good sense, with its implicit warning to get on with the election and keep their house in order.

And yet one more example, this time Theobald constrained to explain that the king had been intentionally misled against his archbishop. John began with that which needed soothing, the royal majesty (*Maiestatem regiam*), then described the deception (*excogitatis circumvenire fallaciis*), likened such guile – this is his punchline – to sacrilege (*sacrilegii instar est*), and led on finally to its sorry consequences, the wrath of the powerful provoked against the innocent (*praesertim ubi indignationem potestatis aduersus innocentiam procurat dolus*). In this case

¹¹ Epistola 69: ed. Millor-Brooke (n. 2 above) 111.

¹² "Ceterum sicut non possum non approbare caritatis affectum, sic non possum simplicitatis non reprobare consilium." Epistola 94: ed. Millor-Brooke (n. 2 above) 144–45.

¹³ Epistola 109: ed. Millor-Brooke (n. 2 above) 173–74.

Theobald had enlisted John's epistolary eloquence to counteract the effect of forged letters, and in the letter – presumably read out and translated before the king – John has Theobald speaking directly into the king's ear, swearing before God that he had not written the false letters, nor had had them written by any of his people.¹⁴

Implicit in this letter are many of the issues pertinent to this conference: Written communication as an instrument of routine business and of persuasion, that is to say, the eloquence of the schools employed by forgers and public servants alike to effect ends that reached far beyond schoolboy training in rhetoric and dialectic. At issue are the links discoverable between schooling and mental formation, and then more particularly between mental formation and human action: If between the ninth and twelfth centuries formal learning meant exercising the mind, structuring its patterns of thought and language according to a relatively narrow and set curriculum of study, should that not have made itself manifest in the larger world of human activities and relationships? If nearly all literate people learned to make distinctions by way of Aristotle's categories or to write persuasive prose by way of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, should not the subsequent acts and expressions of those so schooled reflect the outworkings of those same categories of understanding and discourse? The point seems intuitively evident, yet turns out in practice to be one of those insights historians find easier to express than to prove. Did John's letters, written on behalf of the archbishop, mirror the realities of the court, or give those realities verbal shape? In what way did his acknowledged command of rhetoric and dialectic enter into his personal perception of those realities and his written projection of them to others?

Few texts permit scholars any glimpse of the interaction between mental formation and human action, say, of Charlemagne learning rhetoric and dialectic from Alcuin (if that is not indeed a literary fiction), and fewer still lift the veil of silence that surrounds princes and their clerical advisors operating at court in both Latin and the vernacular. Historians are driven back therefore to the learned themselves, tracing out the pattern of teaching they fostered (as in several papers in this conference) or its application in disputes and treatises (especially the Investiture Contest). This paper too will remain essentially within the realm of the literate (those thinking and writing in Latin), and will presume without further investigation the world and work of the schools. But the question it poses is this: Did this mental formation come to any distinctive literary expression, and did that expression play any distinctive role in human relationships?

About 1142 Peter of Poitiers addressed a letter to Abbot Peter the Venerable, almost certainly, as Constable has it, in response to a first gathering of the abbot's letters. This Peter, his "soul drawn ever more delightfully into the subtle dis-

¹⁴ "Ecce, Deo inspectore et iudice, loquar in auribus uestris quod uerum est. Litteras istas nec scripsi nec scribi uolui nec ab aliquo meorum scriptas noui. Falsae sunt, et eis ad delusionem uestram et sui dampnationem solum falsarius scienter usus est, quisquis sit ille." Epistola 88: ed. *Brooke-Millor* (n. 2 above) 137.

course" of the abbot's letters, asserted that those letters bore witness to his command of the liberal arts (*omnium liberalium disciplinarum scientiam uos assecutum uidemus*), and proved that no one alive was better instructed in grammar, more decorous in rhetoric, more powerful in dialectic, und so on.¹⁵ Urging the abbot of Cluny to leave posterity still more "monuments of his outstanding genius," Peter enjoined him to do so in "sermons, letters, and various treatises" (*in sermonibus, in epistolis, diuersisque tractatibus*) – naming the basic prose genres whereby a schooled cleric could display his mind in writing.

The earliest lessons in composition for young clerics taught them mostly to write verse. Standard manuals on *dictamen* began with basic definitions taken over from antiquity distinguishing forms of writing, thus verse (metered), verse and prose (*prosimetrum*: best known through Boethius), and unmetered prose; or more simply, either verse or prose.¹⁶ Verse and prose letters were in fact interwoven in two eleventh-century letter-collections from Tegernsee, one of them preserved still in the original manuscript,¹⁷ and Udalrich of Bamberg introduced with verse both his famous collection of letters and a lesser-known gathering of rhetorical treatises.¹⁸ So too an early manuscript (Douai 381) of Peter the Venerable's letters (and of Peter's response) contains poetry from both authors and a treatise from the abbot of Cluny, his *Contra Petrobrusianos*.¹⁹ And Peter of Blois, one of the most famous and (subsequently) most emulated writers of the later twelfth century, described his education as learning first to compose verse, with materials taken over from antique historians, and then to compose letters, patterned on those of Hildebert of Le Mans.²⁰ But few authors composed regularly in

¹⁵ "Nam ut de diuinis litteris taceam, quas utrumque testamentum memoriter retinendo in promptu semper habetis, quis unquam Plato subtilius, quis Aristoteles argumentosius, quis Cicero pulchrius aut copiosius aliquando quicquam disseruit? Quis grammaticus instructor, quis rethoricus ornatior, quis dialecticus fortior, quis arithmeticus memoriosior, quis geometricus regularior, quis musicus cantileniosior, quis astronomicus perspecator extitit?" Giles Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge, MA 1967, 1.1-2 (text), 2.16-17 (commentary)).

¹⁶ Thus Hugh of Bologna, in Ludwig Rockinger, *Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte 9, Munich 1863; rpt. 1961) 1.54–55. See Martin Camargo, *Ars dictaminis, Ars dictandi* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 60, Turnhout 1991) 17–18.

¹⁷ Carl Erdmann, *Studien zur Briefliteratur Deutschlands im elften Jahrhundert* (MGH Schriften 1, Leipzig 1938) 7–9, 12–23; see Karl Strecker, *Die Tegernseer Briefsammlung* (MGH Ep. Sel. 3, Berlin 1925).

¹⁸ E. Dümmler, *Zu Udalrich von Babenberg*, in: NA 19 (1894) 222–27 (with n. 1).

¹⁹ Constable (n. 15 above) 2.16, 48–55.

²⁰ "Scio mihi plurimum profuisse, quod cum in arte versificatoria parvulus erudirer, praecipiente magistro, mihi materiam non de fabulis sed de historiarum ueritate sumebam. Profuit mihi quod epistolas Hildeberti Cenomanensis episcopi styli elegantia et suauis urbanitate praecipuas firmare et corde tenus reddere adolescentulus compellebar." Epistola 101: PL 207.314. The entire letter represents a plea for education in grammar and classical authors before proceeding to logic and natural philosophy; see Richard W. Southern, *Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?* in his: *Medieval Humanism and Other Essays* (New York 1970) 105–32.

verse after leaving the exercises of the schools. About 1127 Rupert of Deutz described his personal breakthrough, twenty years earlier, from composition in schoolboy verse to writing mature prose, which took for him the form of self-consciously original scriptural commentaries. In controversy with schoolmasters, he polemically ascribed his prodigious faculty for writing more to a visionary call than to any training in the liberal arts, more to the “cane” of the Spirit than to that of the schoolmaster²¹ – confirming indirectly that prose was presumed to derive from the arts.

Yet to compose sermons or treatises in unbound prose was no less difficult and uncommon a task than to bind words together in metered lines. Down to the later twelfth century only a few literate men preached, an office still reserved mainly for bishops and abbots, and fewer still chose to publish in written prose what they had preached in chapter or cathedral. Neither Peter the Venerable nor Rupert of Deutz published sermons, though Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter of Celle did. Peter of Blois, a man extraordinarily self-conscious about his literary production, referred his works to two genres, either “letters or sermons”,²² though some later editors falsely separated certain letters out as treatises. Medieval treatises, in a strict sense, sprang mostly from specific situations (such as the eucharistic and investiture disputes) and were directed to an “anonymous” public or reader. Before the later twelfth century, authors rarely turned to such treatises, as modern authors would to the book or article, as the accepted vehicle for learned self-expression. Gerbert, for instance, chose to “publicize” his one major philosophical discourse in the form of a letter to the emperor.²³ Peter Damian carried on all his

²¹ *Rupert, De gloria et honore filii hominis super Mattheum 12*, ed. *Hrabanus Haacke*, CC CM 29.381: “Sic incipiens magnam intus uersabam materiam per angustum foramen ubertim prodire non ualentem cum metricis pedibus uerba ligando ut in scholaribus assuetus eram, longum in paucis sermonibus laborem assumerem.” Rubert ascribed his ability to write to a visionary/mystical experience that came after his ordination to the priesthood (384): “...cito subsistit inundans illa uis amoris paulatimque decessit. Ego autem extunc os meum aperui, et cessare quin scriberem nequaquam potui, et usque nunc, etiam si uelim, tacere non possum.” In polemic with contemporary schoolmen, he ascribed his ability to write prodigious treatises on Holy Scripture to this vision rather than to his training in the liberal arts, that is, to the expected source of skill in prose composition (385–86): “...non ex tumore spiritus, non ex praesumptione proprii cordis, sed ex dono mihi accidisset gratiae Domini, ex dignatione Spiritus sancti, fiduciam talem habere tractandi sanctarum Scripturarum sacramenta, et quod nullo modo facultatem hanc assequi potuissem nisi per spiritum bonum, de quo uel a quo bona cuncta procedunt. Confiteantur ergo sapientes illi quantum uolunt, nec abscondant patres suos quibus solis, ut aiunt, data est terra, idest Scripturarum artiumque liberalium scientia. Ego quamuis et ipse nonnullos in disciplinis scholaribus patres habuerim et in libris artium liberalium non segniter studiosus exstiterim, hoc profiteor, quia uisitatio ab altissimo melior mihi est quam decem patres eiusmodi, cuius sub uirga saepe in labiis percussus, nonnumquam etiam toto corpore concussus....” That is, he was urged on by the “mystical” cane of the Spirit’s inspiration rather than the literal cane of the schoolmaster.

²² “Me compilatorem aemulus vocat eo quod omnia quae in epistolis aut sermonibus meis scribo, historiarum exemplis aut sacrae scripturae auctoritatibus firmo.” Peter of Blois, *Epistola* 92: PL. 207,289.

²³ His “De rationali et ratione uti” in PL. 139,159–68, which begins “Domno et glorioso Ot-

extensive reforming (and literary) activities by means of letters.²⁴ And in the case of Saint Bernard too, the distinction in the new edition between *tractatus* and letters is essentially false, for all but one of his treatises was explicitly introduced as a letter.

There were, to be sure, other prose genres not mentioned by Peter of Poitiers. Hagiography in particular attracted the talent of many learned clerics; Peter the Venerable moved in that direction with his *Two Books on Miracles*. But hagiography aimed to memorialize a saint or a shrine, not to project the learning and literate expression of a self.²⁵ Similarly, biblical commentaries (sometimes listed as "treatises"), though important as bearers of authoritative tradition, aimed to expound the divine word, not to articulate individual "genius". When Rupert of Deutz devoted his life to writing commentaries in the 1110's and claimed to turn over the field of scripture with the ploughshare of his own genius, he encountered stiff opposition from those who regarded his works as an arrogant offense to the received works of the fathers.²⁶ Learned schoolbooks (sometimes also counted

tono Caesari semper Augusto Romanorum imperatori" and ends "si allaborauerim effecisse quod sacris auribus potuerit placuisse", was omitted in Fritz Weigle, *Die Briefsammlung Gerberts von Reims* (MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 2, Weimar 1966), and published only in fragmentary form as an appendix in Julien Havet, *Lettres de Gerbert* (983–997) (Paris 1889) 236–38.

²⁴ Kurt Reindel, *Petrus Damiani und seine Korrespondenten*, in: *Studi Gregoriani* 10 (1975) 204–19.

²⁵ That does not mean people were not self-conscious about style in the *vitae*, only that such *vitae* were rarely thought the proper avenue for self-expression. Thus Abbot Reinhard of Siegburg turned to Meinhard of Bamberg as a "professional writer" to improve (Americans might say "copyedit") the abbot's recent life of Anno: "Cum enim vitam et miracula sacrosancte memorie domni A. patroni vestri singulari aliquo et egregio opere illustratam et expressam cuperetur, ut scilicet virtuti et magnificentie rerum dignitas et venustas responderet eloqui, nostra persona, que nonnulla litteratorie professionis aura aliquando percipuit, vobis occurrit, cui id negotii potissimum crederetur." Meinhard then read it and declared that for a work of its type Reinhard's original could hardly be improved upon: "Nam neque id rerum alio dicendi genere fere competentius poterat explicari neque hunc modum scribendi alia materia tam familiariter reciperet, apteque omnino hec tunica huic se corpori concinnat. Grandius quidem et longe ambitiosius nonnulla dici possunt. Quis negat? Sed thematum hoc varietas facit. ... Vita enim sanctorum vel miracula, que sunt presentissima quedam divinitatis ad homines verba ... nolunt seculari fuco deformari, ossaque illa virtutum pompaticam verborum opulentiam quasi superfluum... adipem gravantur." Hannover Briefsammlung no. 105, ed. Carl Erdmann, in *Carl Erdmann/Norbert Fickermann, Briefsammlungen zur Zeit Heinrichs IV.* (MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 5, Weimar 1950) 174, 175–76.

²⁶ "Sed dicit aliquis: Iam satis est, quod alii meliores et sanctiores nihilominus et doctiores inuenerunt atque scripserunt. Illicitum est, temerarium est, adicere quidpiam ad ea quae a nominatis catholicisque patribus dicta sunt, atque ita fastidium legentibus facere, augendo multitudines commentariorum. Ad haec inquam: Nimirum sanctarum spatiosus ager scripturarum omnibus Christi confessoribus communis est, et tractandi illas nulli iure negari potest licentia, dummodo salua fide quod sentit dicat aut scribat. ... Itaque iuxta hanc regulam nobis quoque concedant, post illos puteos quos foderunt [cf. Gen. 26:18–19], idest, post illos tractatus quos tractauerunt patres et priores nostri, et alios fodere puteos proprii uomere ingenii, dummodo uiuam, et nos aquam reperire possimus que nulli noceat bibenti, nulli scandalum uel errorem faciat legenti." In *Apoc. Prologus*, PL. 169,825–28.

among “treatises”) represented still another form of prose composition. Yet the books produced by professional schoolmen (glosses, commentaries, disputed questions, and the like) were slow to gain recognition as distinct prose genres.

What remains is the letter, the essential form of literate self-expression among the learned. What was learned in schools came to prose literary expression primarily in letters. Or, to put it actively, people learned grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic to express themselves, in literary prose, in letters.²⁷ Peter Damian, who employed the letter mostly to effect ecclesiastical reform, acknowledged that when his letters fell into the hands of “worldly men” they were read critically for displays of rhetorical and dialectical skill – matters which Damian, himself a master of rhetoric, dismissed as so much frivolous ornamentation and even as “dung”.²⁸ Alberic of Monte Cassino, compiling materials that shaped the early *ars dictaminis*, noted simply that “prose” and “letters” were often taken to mean the same thing.²⁹

By the early twelfth century, demand for expertise in the art of writing prose letters seems to have outdistanced access to the requisite schooling. Hence, three of the main purposes served by learning to compose in Latin became separated off from the passive mastery of school rhetoric to establish themselves as distinct “arts”, the skills, that is, of composing verse, documents, or letters.³⁰ Letter-writ-

²⁷ The manuals of letter-writing presupposed it, and a few of them stated it, thus Adalbert’s *Praecepta dictaminum*: “Primum itaque dictatorem oportet cognoscere grammaticam, rhetoricam, dialecticam, eloquentie studia huic operi necessaria. *Grammatica* enim, cum sit *recte loquendi scientia* [Isidore, *Etym.* 1.5.1], verba cum nominibus docet coniungere ceterasque dictiones congrua ratione disponere. Hec autem sunt fundamenta et huius artis initia et primordialia indicia. Rhetorica vero distincte, ornate, expolite componere, unicuique persone, necnon ordini et dignitati congrua accidentia distribuere, ordinem et modum discernere. Dialectica autem proponere et assumere monstrat et concludere. Que omnia, qualiter dictatori sint necessaria, in sequentibus monstrabo per singula. Absque harum igitur aliquantula saltem scientia nulla erit dictandi notitia.” ed. *Franz-Josef Schmale* (MGH Geistesgeschichte 3, Weimar 1961) 31–32.

²⁸ “Non ignoro, frater, quia, cum mea epistola saecularium manibus traditur, mox eloquentiae nitor curiose perquiritur, quam consequens sit dispositionis ordo tractatur, utrum rhetoricae facultatis color eluceat, an et sententias argumenta dialecticae suptilitatis involvant. Quaeritur etiam, utrum categorici an potius ypothetici, quae proposita sunt, per allegationes inevitabiles adstruant syllogismi. Sed haec et huiusmodi falerata ludibria hii, qui spiritu Dei vivunt, ut revera frivola et vana contempnunt et, sicut apostolus ait, arbitrantur ut stercora [cf. Phil. 3:8].” Letter no. 23, ed. *Kurt Reindel*, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani* (MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 4, München 1983) 1.217–18.

²⁹ “Sciendum est autem multum interesse inter prosam et epistolam, licet unum pro alio ponatur sepiissime.” Alberic, *Ars dictandi* 2.2, ed. *Worstbrock* (n. 31 below) 34.

³⁰ There is a general description of this process by *Rolf Köhn*, *Schulbildung und Trivium im lateinischen Hochmittelalter und ihr möglicher praktischer Nutzen*, in: *Johannes Fried*, ed. *Schulen und Studium im sozialen Wandel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Sigmaringen 1986) 265–81. See also *Camargo* (n. 16 above), and *Douglas Kelly*, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (*Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental* 59, Turnhout 1991), *James J. Murphy*, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley 1974); and for bibliography, *James J. Murphy*, *Medieval Rhetoric: A Select Bibliography* (Toronto Medieval Bibliographies 3, Toronto 1971).

ing had proved so central to the mastery of Latin rhetoric that it required its own manuals.³¹ Put in terms of social exigencies, as soon as letter-writing and document-preparation assumed anything like a routine function practiced outside a few select courts, separate manuals appeared. From the beginning those manuals offered a practical alternative to the full rhetorical training of the schools; they were aimed especially at the *rudes* or *simplices*, and contained in brief the essentials of grammar, rhetoric, and epistolary structures or models. The attraction lay precisely in their separability from schools, providing instruction suitable for apprentices and professional clerks in almost any setting.³²

In the earlier eleventh century, however, such a separation between the schools and the art of prose composition was still largely inconceivable. At the highest levels, especially, theory acquired in schools and practice employed in administrative courts remained closely conjoined. Take the case of Fulbert of Chartres, a figure famed for his learning and his administration, whose only authentic works are letters, poems, a treatise against the Jews and possibly some sermons. His first four letters, in Behrends' edition,³³ illustrate his rhetorical training. The first is to Abbo, the learned abbot of Fleury. In the *salutatio*, as instructed by rhetorical manuals, he began with a rich greeting befitting Abbo's fame (*Pleno uirtutis et gratia circumfuso patri Alboni*), followed by a simple designation of himself (*Fulbertus diaconus*). The *exordium* then spun out a page-long conceit on how worthily to repay the salutation of such a holy abbot and learned man (*Quanam te resalutatione digner, o sacer abba et o magne phylosophe*), wherein Behrends detected possible echoes from John the Scot. But the key concept was "friendship" (*quid rependam muneris sanctae amicitiae*), and the passage ended with a promise of fidelity as student (*ista fidelitas ut alumni* being the concluding words) to the benevolent friendship of this "lord". Then Fulbert turned to business (*Praeceptis itaque tuis*) – this division made plain by Fulbert's verbal signifiers, though not reflected in Behrends' paragraph divisions. The first item was dispatched in a sentence (ending "*facio*"), and the second, begun again with a clear verbal signal (*Queque tibi scribenda petisti*) required two pages of detailed and careful *narratio* to complete, introduced with an assurance of truth-telling (*omnia fere iuxta fidem exarta transmitto*). Fulbert then signalled the end of the *narratio* and the beginning of his next section with a rhetorical question: *Sed quid inter furentes ratio?* – which Behrends also failed to set off as a separate paragraph. This introduced a

³¹ William D. Patt, 'The Early 'Ars dictaminis' as Response to a Changing Society', in: *Viator* 9 (1978) 133–55 (with a good bibliography and survey of the older literature) argued that the emergence of the "art" was a general phenomenon based upon generations of established practice. Franz Joseph Worstbrock, 'Die Anfänge der mittelalterlichen Ars dictandi', in *FS* 23 (1989) 1–42 argues to the contrary that it originated with Alberic in Monte Cassino before 1087 and was transmitted more widely by way of Bolognese adaptations in the 1110's.

³² Thus in the Saxon *Summa prosarum dictaminis*: "Set quoniam huius artis sciencia deseruit usui plus quam arti, si quid magistris disputabile uisum fuerit in hac summa, hoc rationis obice sint contenti, quod in tota eius serie moderni tantum usus fit mencio et non artis..." *Rockinger* (n. 16 above) 1.211.

³³ Frederick Behrends, *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres* (Oxford 1976) 2–12.

page-long *lamentatio*, replete with rhetorical questions and exclamatory phrases, ending with the dramatic words *funditus cecedisti*. Only then did Fulbert confront Abbot Abbo with his *petitio*, again introduced with a clear verbal signal (*Unde iam ad te reuertens*), a request that concluded with the moving words *fusum sanguinem Christi*. There follows a simple “*vale*”. Quite apart from the quality of his language and the clarity of his presentation, Fulbert had represented his affairs and his person according to all the classical rhetorical requirements – whence his disciples judged it worth keeping as exemplary.

The next letter (2) was written to “thank” the archbishop of Sens for having consecrated him bishop. Its greeting achieved nearly perfect balance between the archbishop and the bishop; so too the two-sentence exordium emphasized the way in which their souls were now bound together in joy and in sorrow – the whole ending with the words *simili modo afficiat*. Then Fulbert went on more brusquely to three items of business, each signalled verbally (*congratulator itaque, Deinde uero, Simoniacum uero*) and each item filled out with the necessary amount of *narratio*. His valedictory underlined their new relationship as bishop and metropolitan: *Vale, pater optime, filii tui memor*. By contrast, the third and fourth letters in the collection, also addressed to the archbishop but with no formal thanks to deliver, represented pure business. They launched directly into the *narratio* with no formal exordium, and they concluded without any parting word. These briefer, more business-like letters, not excised entirely from the collection by Fulbert’s disciples, recall the numerous routine functions fulfilled by letters, in which word-play was reduced to a minimum and the main work effected by *narratio* and *petitio*, these too, however, requiring skill in rhetoric and dialectic.

Fulbert took for granted that letters performed a whole range of functions from rhetorical self-representation to routine communication. Modern scholars have yet to produce a satisfactory definition that successfully encompasses all the works medieval authors called “letters”. Giles Constable has cited the despairing reflections of a thirteenth-century *summa dictaminis* which labeled them a *genus* with an undefined number of *species*; “letters”, that is, represented a general term embracing an unspecified number of sorts or examples. This particular *summa*, for instance, took pains to distinguish them only from documents conferring legal rights (also called *litterae*).³⁴ Any effort to discern between letters (*litterae*) and letter-treatises (*epistolae*), as suggested by some earlier scholars, has proved wholly artificial, lacking support in the medieval sources. The best way to grope toward definition is to set the outer boundaries: A letter was not a legal document, whence the original was rarely preserved; and it was not a book (*liber*), either in the larger sense of volume or the narrower sense of chapter or treatise. Within

³⁴ Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter collections* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 17, Turnhout 1976) 12, together with his, *Forged Letters in the Middle Ages*, in: *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* (MGH Schriften 33,V, Hannover 1988) 5.11–37, here 13–17, which further specifies certain matters of definition and purpose; both touch upon several of the themes in this essay. In the earlier twentieth century, German scholars were foremost in the study of medieval epistolary literature; see especially Erdmann (n. 17 above).

those boundaries nearly all things were possible, from the simple personal or business communication to the extended letter-treatise, with everything in between including the “pamphlet” and the “essay”. Yet there was one critical condition or marker, as Constable also insisted in his definition: Any prose document called a letter was (in principle) sent from one person to another person suitably greeted. Alberic therefore instructed learners to think first about *personae*, that is, the person sending the letter and the person to whom it was sent (including his rank); then about *res*, the petition or purpose of the letter; and then about *intentio*, the moral purpose or sentiment guiding the letter.³⁵ The key trait distinguishing letters from treatises, documents, or books was therefore the intention to represent one self to another; or, following an antique image, to write as if two *personae* were speaking face to face, one voice personally addressing the other.³⁶ A very early “art”, the *Rationes dictandi*, said simply “an epistle or letter is a suitable arrangement of words set forth to express the intended meaning of its sender. Or in other words, a letter is a discourse (oration) composed of coherent yet distinct parts signifying fully the sentiments of its sender”.³⁷

Medieval authors accordingly distinguished prose missives according to their rhetorical ends, thus letters of persuasion, exhortation, congratulations, petition, consolation, and so on.³⁸ Readers took these categories, instilled in them by school exercises, entirely for granted. Peter of Celle alluded to them when he playfully described John of Salisbury as requesting letters containing several of these sentiments at once.³⁹ For medieval readers and writers, the *personae* of the sender and of the addressee, along with the *intentio* of the letter, framed the compositional work of the letter-writer. Letter-writers, therefore, like ancient orators, adopted a rhetorical style (high, middle, or low) appropriate to their intended ends or the person being addressed. The resultant letters could thence also be distinguished according to the persons to whom they were addressed. This set of cat-

³⁵ “In primis pensetur persona mittentis, persona cui mittitur, pensetur, inquam, uel sit sublimis uel humilis, amicus uel hostis, postremo cuiuscumque fortune sit. Altera manet consideratio, an iustam rem uel iniustam, an ingentem uel modicam exigit. Tercium est, ut, qua intentione quaerat, scriptor examinet, dico superbe uel humiliter, dure uel leniter, minis uel blanditiis, iustitia uel amicitie fiducia. Ubi personam, rem, intentionem examinaueris, unumquodque secundum se librabis.” Alberic, *Liber Radii* 2.5, ed. *Worstbrock* (n. 31 above) 22.

³⁶ *Constable*, *Forged Letters* (n. 34 above) 15–17; *Konrad Krautter*, *Acsi ore ad os... Eine mittelalterliche Theorie des Briefes und ihr antiker Hintergrund*, *Antike und Abendland* 28 (1982) 155–68.

³⁷ “Est igitur epistola congrua sermonum ordinatio ad exprimendam intentionem delegantis instituta. Vel aliter epistola est oratio ex constitutis sibi partibus congrue ac distincte composita, delegantis affectum plene significans.” *Rockinger* (n. 16 above) 10. There is an English translation in *James J. Murphy*, *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* (Berkeley 1971) 7.

³⁸ See *Peter von Moos*, *Hilbert von Lavardin 1056–1133* (*Pariser Historische Studien* 3, Stuttgart 1965) 38–52, 77–93.

³⁹ “Quaeris, frater, a me scripta exhortationis, parum pensans torrentes nostrae occupationis. Quaeris, inquam, consolationem, quia sentis desolationem. Postulas auxilium; imploras remedium, quia ploras discidium. Quis ergo ego sum, qui tibi scribere possum unde fovearis, unde conforteris, unde consoleris?” *Peter of Celle*, *Epistola* 71: PL. 202,517.

egories adhered more closely to the purposes served by letter-writing in social practice and was found more commonly in manuals of *dictamen*, thus model letters addressed to emperors, prelates, noblemen, friends, parents, children, and the like. Constable used this material to set forth the social world imagined or assumed by *dictatores*.⁴⁰ While such letters might be reducible to a social and literary formula, and often were in standard manuals, the larger purpose of letter-writing, the representing of one person to another, always shaped the work of those for whom letter-writing was a means to self-expression. And that literary end, with all its cultural and social implications, could be achieved only by art. Only those who had mastered the craft of composing, which presumed skill in thought (dialectic) and facility with language (grammar and rhetoric), could project their absent selves persuasively and cogently in prose – or, in the case of the professional letter-writer, the self and intentions of their patrons. On this matter medieval letter-writers appropriated the teachings of late antique authors who assumed the formative presence of dialectical distinctions and rhetorical intentions in the composition of letters.⁴¹

Modern historians, intent initially upon the materials or *res* found in letters, tended to focus upon their contents and thereby to create subject categories instead, thus theological letters⁴², mystical letters⁴³, crusade letters⁴⁴, schoolboy letters⁴⁵, letters of religious vocation⁴⁶, letters from Christ or the Devil, and so on. To redress the balance, other scholars emphasized the “literary”, even “fictive”, form in which letters were written or preserved.⁴⁷ Present-day scholars of medi-

⁴⁰ Giles Constable, *The Structure of Medieval Society according to the Dictatores of the Twelfth Century*, in: *Kenneth Pennington and Robert Somerville*, ed. *Law, Church, and Society: Essays in Honor of Stephan Kuttner* (Philadelphia 1977) 253–67.

⁴¹ Thus the *Excerpta rhetorica*, ed. Carolus Halm, *Rhetores latini minores* (Leipzig 1863), cited by *Worstbrock* (n. 31 above) 23: “In eo autem, quis ad quem scribat, personarum accidentia spectanda sunt, quae sunt decem: genus sexus aetas instructio ars officium mores affectus nomen dignitas. ... Quod ad totam epistolae formam attinet, ad hostes et inimicos libera et cauta esse debet, ad parentes sollicita, ad amicos affectu plenissima, ad superiores officiosa, ad humiliores moderata...”

⁴² Ludwig Ott, *Untersuchungen zur theologischen Briefliteratur der Frühscholastik* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 34, Münster 1937).

⁴³ Wilhelm Oehl, *Deutsche Mystikerbriefe des Mittelalters, 1100–1550* (München 1931).

⁴⁴ Heinrich Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100* (Innsbruck 1901; reprt 1973)

⁴⁵ Charles Homer Haskins, “The Life of Medieval Students as Illustrated by their Letters”, in his: *Studies in Medieval Culture* (Oxford 1929) 1–35.

⁴⁶ Jean Leclercq, *Lettres de vocation à la vie monastique*, in: *Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis* 7 (1951) 218–31

⁴⁷ This was particularly true for two of the figures most influential in the last generation: Erdmann (n. 17 above), who, for instance, challenged the authenticity of letters supposedly addressed by Gregory VII to Berengar of Tours, Gregor VII. und Berengar von Tours, in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 28 (1938) 48–74, thereby calling into question the more “historical” reading of these letters by Gerhart B. Ladner, *Theologie und Politik vor dem Investiturstreit* (Vienna 1936; rpt 1968); and Jean Leclercq, *Lettres de s. Bernard: histoire ou littérature?* in: *Studi Medievali* 12 (1971) 1–74,

eval letters have consequently inherited an unresolved tension between contents and form, letters read as historical sources for information or letters read as literary sources for rhetorical display, with disagreements persisting at every level about which category a particular letter might represent. This tension derives in part from medieval authors themselves, who recognized a distinction between rhetorical exercises in school and persuasive arguments at court, sometimes charging adversaries in the Investiture Struggle, for instance, with producing materials that sounded more like the “rhetoric of the schools” than the serious business of court or chancery.⁴⁸ The distinction, however, should not be construed as one between literary form and historical contents, but rather between the actual or the imaginative addressing of specific *personae* and situations, letters sent to achieve their ends or letters conceived as exercises. Scholars do well to distinguish at least four distinct activities: the writing of letters as school exercises, the writing of letters (presumably) sent, the collecting of exemplary letters (from either or both of the above), and the spread of letter-writing manuals. Yet most would also agree that all four have to do both with schools and with public life, instruction in rhetoric and work in chanceries. Historians can be deceived by epistolary materials precisely because medieval writers, both at school and at court, worked with an integral understanding of the *intentio* of letter-writing to represent one *persona* persuasively to another by means of the rhetorical and dialectical skills that went into their mental formation.

Schooling in rhetoric therefore marked indelibly the literary *persona* of the letter-writer. Recipients necessarily perceived the sender’s absent self through the language and logic of this artful prose. Abbot Peter of Celle, addressing as “his own” (*Suo suus*) Nicholas of Clairvaux, the able and ambitious secretary to Bernard later accused of “forging” letters in the Saint’s name, opened a long and ultimately critical letter with high praise for Nicholas’s “flowering eloquence.”⁴⁹ But Peter and Nicholas were at odds over a substantive matter, a theological point about how to treat the attributes of God, and Abbot Peter took offense that Nicholas, who should have possessed the power to triumph with his own (verbal) arms, had used against him the authority and words of great philosophers.⁵⁰ Ni-

who summarized his results under the rubric “littérature spirituelle à propos de faits historiques”. *Robinson* (n. 48 below) subsequently gathered extensive evidence of the “literary” character of epistolary production, and its close connection to school exercises.

⁴⁸ *Ian Robinson*, ‘The “Colores Rhetorici” in the Investiture Contest’, in: *Viator* 32 (1976) 209–38; drawing upon work begun by *Carl Erdmann*, *Die Anfänge der staatlichen Propaganda im Investiturstreit*, in: *HZ* 154 (1936) 491–512.

⁴⁹ “Satis namque superque quod mihi scripsisti dulce, utile, et honestum fuit. Quid enim dulcius amore? Quid utilius divinarum et humanarum rerum subtili et compendiosa descriptione? ... Quid honestius morum salubri informatione? His nostrum torpens ingenium excitasti... Decursis itaque et discussis uernantis eloquentiae tuae sermonibus et sensibus, iterum iterumque tua reuoluens et mea euoluere gestiens, timeo sub luce uideri. ... Vos uenator tam uerborum quam sensuum et conclusum retibus et percussus uenabulo credidistis.” *Epistola* 66: PL. 202,505, 506, 507.

⁵⁰ “Nam cum propria satis armatura triumphare posses, quorumcumque etiam potentissi-

cholas had also presumed to criticize Peter's earlier letter, and in return Peter charged him with misreading it (*O dulcissime, dormiebas quando epistolam nostram legebas?*) and falsifying language (*uerba quoque et sensus uerborum praesumis quandoque inuertere*). This dispute, the abbot insisted, was not a light matter, no urbane playing with words⁵¹; in concluding he ordered silence (*Deinceps itaque noli scribere*), the ultimate blow in a literary exchange. Undaunted, Nicholas took up exactly where Peter left off (*Anxietatem mihi generat et scribere et non scribere uobis*), praised Peter's own greater eloquence⁵², played ingeniously with phrases taken from Peter's letter, and finally initiated his formal response by commenting upon Peter's literary style, which he professed to find unctious and prickly at the same time, alternating nervously from one to the other until the latter emerged at the end.⁵³ The very art of these letters, in sum, had become inseparable from the personal relations of these two monks and the theological issue disputed between them.

To understand letters as the primary genre of literary expression for the school-trained down to the later twelfth century and to relate that to the mental formation effected in schools, it is necessary to place letters and letter-writing in their larger social context. Letters were essentially public, or quasi-public, communication. Yet they were also, by virtue of being written down in Latin, privileged communication in a period when most affairs were conducted orally and in the vernacular. Products of a written culture, letters were addressed, in all their sizes and with all their various intentions, by members of the literate elite to one another and to those, mostly the social elite, for whom they would be read aloud and translated. Letters were thus privileged and public at the same time.

Letters and letter-writing assumed this position in the early medieval world for several reasons. First, there was essentially a single form and forum for intellectual exchange. There were no magazines, no journals, no conferences, no editorial pages; there were only letters, personally addressed to other members of this literate society. Into those letters the schooled elite had to pour all that set them apart and all that they intended to effect. All the magnificent letter collections from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Peter Damian, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable, Hildegard of Bingen, and many others) arose out of that situation and were gathered as a testimony to it. To compile the "thought" and "deeds" of an individual, even the self-consciousness or inner spirit, was to gather that person's letters; to perpetuate that person's will or vision was to distribute for reading

morum arma mutuasti ut superuinceret? ... Nam plurimum intererit, utrum maiestate irrefragabili auctoritatis philosophorum an propriarum rationum et sententiarum conspiciuntur castra nostra poteris debellare. Tibi an illis deputetur uictoria?" Ibid. 506

⁵¹ "Vix patientiam persuadeo. Amicus est, inquit, facetus, lepido iocorum sermone urbanus." Ibid. 512

⁵² "A litteris uestris quae non modicum hospitauerunt apud me, quae floridioris eloquentiae et profundioris scientiae dotibus rutilantes..." Epistola 65: PL. 202,498.

⁵³ "Praetermitto igitur respondere proemio uestro, quod nunc ungens, nunc ictibus pungens, neruoso dictamine uires orationis alternat..." Ibid. 490.

copies of his or her letters. Once authors had achieved a certain written formulation of an issue, event, request, or thought, they were prepared to use it time and again in different letters sent to their lettered counterparts. While letter-collections tended to purge some redundancies, many remain evident in the preserved material; and authors freely admitted to the practice. Such formulations were not idle thoughts written at leisure; they were intentional, even labored productions, articulated with all the skill that language and logic would allow, with schoolmen and court prelates working together.⁵⁴ And they were sent, as written representations, to all those who shared in this privileged world of written communication.

The reality of these letters as rhetorical self-representations in a quasi-public forum may be illustrated just as well with "second-rung" figures. Adam of Perseigne (1145–1221), a secular cleric (and possibly a vernacular poet) in Marie de France's Champagne, and a friend to schoolmen in Peter the Chanter's Paris, gave up the world of the secular court to become a Cistercian monk and abbot. From him too, only letters (some 66) have survived. Those that were preserved – not, it appears, by Adam himself – treated primarily religious topics; his routine business correspondence has disappeared. But even a cursory glance at fifteen letters crafted by this man, once a skillful secular clerk, then a zealous Cistercian abbot, reveal how artfully he succeeded in representing himself and his convictions to his contemporaries.⁵⁵ He importuned the bishop of Ely as a "friend" (1) but subtly instructed him in his duties (this bishop had a bad reputation) and reminded him at the end (the details carried by the messenger) of some agreement they had struck, apparently about properties. He guided a master and canon at Tours (2), also addressed as a "friend", through the meaning of the *Magnificat*. For an abbot, with whom he was bound in soul by means of these letters (3),⁵⁶ he prepared in letter-form a meditation on the mysteries of Christ. He addressed a sister of the duke of Champagne (4) on the chastity expected of nuns, and Mathilda, daughter of Henry the Lion and wife to the duke's son (15), on the chastity expected of wives. He responded to a request for guidelines (5) on the training of novices, and then guided the same monk (6–9) through various other spiritual matters. Another, more public letter (10), addressed all who venerated Saint Martin, and de-

⁵⁴ Thus Meinhard reworking letters for his bishop: "Litteras illas binas, que patriarche mittende fuerant, unas que condicionem mutuam, alteras que vestram legationem continerent, utrasque ita, ut mandastis, emendandas et exigendas curavi, ut nec diligentiam nec elegantiam in iis quisquam desideret." Briefe Meinhards no. 62, ed. *Erdmann* (n. 25 above) 109.

⁵⁵ This follows the numbering in the edition by *Jean Bouvet*, Adam de Perseigne, *Lettres* (Sources chrétiennes 66, Paris 1960).

⁵⁶ "Sanctus amor, qui nos mutuo mentium nexu deuinxit arctius, non differt ulterius reddere quod promittere non neglexit. ...Erit sane tibi quidam modus experientiae tenor dulcioris epistolae, si tamen dulci prodierit de affectu. Affectus mei dulcedinem meis experire in litteris; quanquam de effectu et testimonio operum affectus soleat certius aestimari, uerum in affectu uis amoris intenditur, nec alium amoris mei tu quaeris effectum quam si in te totus transeam per affectum." Ibid. 70 (this addressed to an abbot who inquired about the mysteries of Christ).

fended the liturgical practice of calling him the “equal of the apostles”. He reproached the newly elected bishop of Paris, Odo of Sully (13), for laying a head tax upon his clergy, and he answered a request from a canon at Paris (14) for a treatise on the vices by making clerics his chief exemplars – a stunning piece of clerical anti-clericalism penned by this former cleric in the form of a letter. By firmly reminding bishops of their duties and agreements, instructing women in the religious life, helping a colleague in another abbey re-think his program for novices, publicly defending a prominent cult, excoriating secular clerics for their hypocritical behaviour – all this in the form of letters full of word-plays and rhetorical figures – this abbot aimed to re-shape the world around him, outside his own cloister, by way of the self-expression of his convictions in letters.

In Adam’s case, the gathering appears to have been done by others. Yet, because so few letters have come down to us in their original form, that is, as parchment sheets folded and sealed, scholars, reading these letters primarily through letter-collections, may risk overstating at times the literary intentions of their authors, and with it the formative influence of schooled learning.⁵⁷ Yet the connection was never far from the minds of these medieval letter-writers. Arnulf bishop of Lisieux (1141–81), associated vaguely with schools in Séz, Chartres, and Italy, offers a telling example. He claimed not to have kept copies of his letters nor to have even begun gathering them until twenty-five years into his reign as bishop (ca. 1166), by which time most of his early ones were forever lost. Those, he now claimed, had been better, more redolent still of his school exercises (*recentius exercitia scolaria redolebant*), when thoughts were handled still with a quicker mind (*sententie promptiore tractabantur ingenio*) and practice in writing prompted a goodly supply of accurate words (*usus accurati sermonis copiam ministrabat*). For then, he says, drawing pompously upon the language learned during his schooldays in rhetoric, a cheerful *oratio* ran together with a certain festive figure (*leta festiuo quodam scemate decurrebat oratio*), and *doctrina* drew upon genius to speed along invention in a fitting eloquence of fruitful speech (*cum ingenio doctrina concurrens rerum inuentiones commoda fecundi sermonis elocutione formabat*).⁵⁸ A full generation later, that is, Arnulf was able still to summon up all the technical language of his rhetorical education, and he matter-of-factly transferred the schoolboy work of shaping fictive orations to the adult work of writing letters. As bishop, he claimed to do this only when the person of the addressee or the amount of work required it (*quandoque me uel reuerentia persone uel negotii quantitas pertrahit ad scribendum*). For, he protested, he had become old and tired and now produced letters only with difficulty; moreover, his first concern (*instantia*) as bishop was the salvation of souls, not the figures of elocution (*non tam figuris elocutionum quam saluti prospicit animarum*). But, it must be noted, this entire letter, complete

⁵⁷ I acknowledge that fault with respect to this essay as well, partly in response to conversation with Rolf Köhn, one of the conference participants, who is planning a study of letters preserved still in the original form of their transmission.

⁵⁸ *Frank Barlow, The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux (Camden 3rd series, London 1939) 2.*

with its rhetorical inventions and supposed warnings against showing these letters to those who would find them inadequate, was written with the express intent of introducing a personal collection (*libellum*) of his letters, which he claimed to have worked hard to put together (*summo itaque studio congregavi quas potui*). So schools enabled and established the models of excellence; yet it was not schools ultimately that elicited these letters – most of them arising from Bishop Arnulf's episcopal affairs – or the letter-collection, but his own aspirations to represent himself, the lettered bishop, in the later twelfth-century world of courts and schools.

Second, in a world where distances were great and communications difficult, letters remained virtually the only means of holding together the activities and representations of the socially and intellectually privileged. This was self-evident to Abbot Peter the Venerable who had to “commit his place to letters” in order to represent his interests and responsibilities across Europe.⁵⁹ Most letters, including most letters of abbots and monks, handled affairs. By way of exception Peter praised an abbot, sickened by the preoccupations of his own order, who wrote letters full of talk about pastoral care and scriptural interpretation and spiritual growth rather than the usual legal affairs or complaints of loss or celebrations of gain.⁶⁰ In all those affairs, individual letters acted in place of the *persona*, and training in rhetoric was essential to an accurate self-representation. Abbot Peter chastised a priest-lawyer who violated the rules of the rhetorical art, making his approach with legal threats rather than persuasive prose, and who would therefore not get what he sought.⁶¹ Bishop Arnulf also pointed out that letters represented his person. Following the schism of 1160, a council in London was to judge between the claims of the rival popes on the basis of a letter sent by Alexander and a *scriptum* sent from the council of Pavia, which the king distributed to ecclesiastical

⁵⁹ “Unde frequentius in causis emergentibus uices meas litteris meis committo, ut per eas expleam quod per me non ualeo.” “Multa interpositorum terrarum longinquitas, quae multo spacio nos a uestra paternitate separat, cogit nos prolixiores quam aures uestrae pati consueuerunt quandoque litteras uobis dirigere. Nam si in proximo uos haberemus, frequens inquietudo negotiorum ad uos se sperans habere posse recursum, compendiosior in uerbis existeret.” Peter, Letter nn. 3, 46, ed. *Constable* (n. 15 above) 1.7, 142.

⁶⁰ “...nil eorum quae in frequentissimis aliorum litteris legere soleo, praetendebant. Non erat in eis quaestio de quaestu, non mentio de causis, non de dampnis depoloratio, non de lucris exultatio. Quicquid in illis a primo apice usque ad ultimum legere potui, totum aut tibi commissorum paternam curam, aut questiones de scripturis, aut de bonis ad meliora, gratia diuini spiritus tibi collatum proficiendi appetitum sonabant.” Peter, Letter no. 144, ed. *Constable* (n. 15 above) 1.353–54.

⁶¹ “Longam epistolam fecisti, sed non bene in ea, cum iurisperitus appelleris, rethoricam conseruasti. Quod si ignoranter, indulgendum; si scieris, contumaciae imputandum. Placandum, non exasperandum, iudicem in oratione artis regulae praecipunt. At contra litterae quas misisti impropria sonant, contumelias redolent, minas spirant. Tali suadela, nichil unquam nisi ab inuitis impetratum est. Precibus non minis, obsequiis non contumeliis, solet quod petitur impetrari. Nichil igitur a nobis tali remedio te consecuturum speres.” Peter, Letter no. 8, ed. *Constable* (n. 15 above) 1.14.

personages for comparative judgement.⁶² Because Arnulf could not attend the deliberations, he sent instead a letter rendering his judgement, so that "the page might take the place of his person and the letter might faithfully bring to life his voice".⁶³ The rest of this letter, incidentally, addressed to the cardinal-priest Henry of Pisa, mused about the difficult style of Ennodius and other authors, while the letters actually rendering his judgement were written out separately (nn. 28, 29) to serve that purpose alone. Fifteen years later, when Arnulf fell out with the king and illness (he claimed) prevented a personal appearance at court, he sent a letter and a messenger to make his plea for him (*uice mea...apud dominum meum negotia mea litterarum ueritas et nuntii sedulitas explicarent*). He intentionally and expressly couched it in sheerest humility and supplication (the voice he chose to project before the king); and then asked the vice-chancellor to make sure the letter reached the king and himself to attend the reading in order to put in a word for his person.⁶⁴

When such letters were read out to their intended recipients, the *salutatio* was crucial – and thus also an essential part of letter-writing manuals.⁶⁵ All that one intended to communicate, either for one's self or for one's patron, would achieve little effect if one did not enter properly into the presence of the person for whom it was intended. It was the literary equivalent of bodily etiquette at court; it was the first enunciation of the projected voice, and had to address the other person properly. Unless the necessary forms were used, however artificial in retrospect, the letter might receive no hearing at all. But letters were not only a means to represent one's self publicly in affairs, whether intellectual and ecclesiastical or political and economic. They were also, across these distances and among these isolated circles of literate persons, the means for extending one's self personally. Here it was the individual voice that was to be heard, not the mediated voice constructed by some other professional writer. The best of these letter-writers fully understood the distinction, thus Abbot Peter the Venerable. Apologizing to an episcopal friend addressed as "*intimo domino*" for not responding at once to his letter, Peter explained that he could have ordered something dictated by another but he wished to speak from heart to heart rather than through the mouth of another, for just as wines lose their strength and taste after frequent decanting, so do words and the truth passing through another; Peter resolved that he, who knew

⁶² "Et noster [rex] quidem ad ecclesiasticas personas regni sui legatos destinavit in Angliam cum litteris, quas a domino papa receperat, et scripto illo, quod a scismaticis est de Papiensi conuenticulo fabricatum, ut scilicet, utroque scripto tanquam allegationibus partium utrinque proposito, rectius possint quasi de iudicio formare consilium, et liquidius de contemplatione falsitatis oppositae cognoscere ueritatem." Arnulf, Letter no. 27, ed. Barlow (n. 58 above) 36–37.

⁶³ "Cui sane colloquio, quia corporaliter adesse non potui, per epistolam saltem interesse curavi, ut persone uicem pagina suppleat, et uiue uocis instantiam epistola fidelis instauret." Ibid. 37.

⁶⁴ Arnulf, Letter no. 105, ed. Barlow (n. 58 above) 165.

⁶⁵ See now Carol Lanham, *Salutatio Formulas in Latin Letters to 1200: Syntax, Style, and Theory* (München 1975).

his own heart best, should, whenever time permitted, speak from his own soul.⁶⁶ The abbot articulated in his own sophisticated rhetoric the aim of speaking from heart to heart for all those who did so themselves rather than leaving it to the artifice of words of another. This personal address could arouse a physical response. In another letter, Peter, protesting his love for Saint Bernard and excusing his delay in responding, related that after reading the letter he had felt warmed by the breath of Bernard's own bosom and so moved that he had kissed it, an act reserved otherwise only for holy books.⁶⁷ Peter's account may itself have intended some rhetorical manipulation – he was plainly worried about relations between them – but its meaning hinged on an understanding of written letters, and even their physical medium, as mediators of the human heart. The point was, as an anonymous *summa dictaminis* from Orleans, put it, for the person sending a letter to “signify fully the disposition or affection of his mind” (*affectum mentis plene significans*) to the person receiving it and thereby to disclose his intention, even his soul (*animum suum debet declarare*).⁶⁸ This signification, soul to soul, voice to voice, mouth to mouth, rested in part on the privileged character of epistolary relationships, of men communicating to one another in a language they alone could understand. Indeed in reading these Latin letters aloud they re-formed the words in their own mouths and in some sense re-embodied the absent self of the other. Peter of Celle described a letter from John of Salisbury as “a honeycomb dripping from his lips, milk and honey under his tongue”. For, he explained, “your voice is sweet in my ears, and your admonitions most agreeable in my jaws” [that is, while reading the letter aloud], something that will “remain with me throughout the night”. And he ended describing John as a “golden pillow for his head” and wishing that they were so “near to one another in body as they are in soul.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Potuissem quidem cuilibet dictanda ingerere, sed malui in cor uestrum ex corde meo quam ex ore alterius mandanda transfundere. Illud quare maluerim, haec causa est. Habent uina hunc morem, ut de uase in uas frequenter transfusa a uirtute naturali languescant, si recentia hauriantur uim saporemque integre seruare probantur. Sic uerba per aures alienarum cordibus commitenda, referentium inscitia, incuria, industria, aut non intellectam aut neglectam aut deprauatam quandoque augent, mutant, minuuntque ueritatem. Unde quia certius quisque cor suum quam alter agnoscit, uerius se ipsum quam alter exponit. Illud ut fugiam, istud ut assequar, proposui semper quando uacat, amico cui me totum debeo, non cuilibet sed michi ipsi me exponendum committere, ut et falsitatis suspicio tollatur, et dilecto prae ceteris remotis ceteris per se ipsum animus colloquatur.” Peter, Letter no. 69, ed. *Constable* (n. 15 above) 1.200.

⁶⁷ “. . . cum fere nichil unquam quantum ad litteras pertinet uel libentius susceperim uel studiosius legerim. . . . Suscepi tandem a subpriori cui traditae fuerant litteras illas uestras. Tractus est statim animus, et cum in affectum uestri multum ante caleret, longe amplius per easdem litteras flatu pectoris uestri succensus, nichil ultra frigidum tepidumue sibi inesse permisit. Tractus inquam sicque tractus est, ut quod nunquam, nisi sacrorum reuerentia librorum me fecisse memini, perlectam epistolam mox exosculatus sim.” Peter, Letter no. 111, ed. *Constable* (n. 15 above) 1.274–75.

⁶⁸ *Rockinger* (n. 16 above) 1.103.

⁶⁹ “Fauus distillans labia tua, mel et lac sub lingua. Ut vidi litteras tuas, cor meum iubilo, os meum impletum est risu. . . . mecum manebit et apud me tota nocte erit. Est namque vox tua dulcis in auribus meis, et monitus tui satis amabiles in faucibus meis. . . . Tu autem pars magna

These literate men, schoolmasters, courtiers, and prelates, considered their written expressions to rise above the exercises and trifles of the schools and to join the larger world of learning and affairs, at once public and exclusive. For the sense of community that bound together this relatively small elite – Gerbert and his correspondents at various courts, Peter Damian and his fellow reformers, Rupert and his monks, Adam of Perseigne and his contacts inside and outside Cistercian cloisters – expressions of “friendship”, found in so many of these letters, is key. Much has been written on the classical and spiritual foundations of this idea, and even on its erotic undertones.⁷⁰ But it should also be understood as the expression, among other things, of an insider’s group, a cipher for bonds uniting people set apart from others by their capacity for Latin expression in behalf of themselves and the powerful. Fulbert invoked “sacred friendship” in his letter to Abbo, and Adam of Perseigne addressed most of his correspondents as “friends” (n. 56 above). Surrounded by a much larger world of poverty and ignorance and violence, they built and maintained a sense of community by way of letters personally addressed to one another – or, as was frequently the case, also with Peter Damian – the same letter or essay addressed to several different persons. And for all this, one key concept was “friendship”, so key that it could itself become the subject of playful letters.

In a witty letter to a cardinal in Rome, who felt deceived because in the midst of the schism his letters had evoked no response beyond bland sentiments, Bishop Arnulf noted that it was counted great these days to compensate “friends” appropriately and equally for their good services, yet greater still to anticipate such meritorious service with a magnanimous soul; and so he concluded with a pledge hereafter to look out for opportunities to prove their mutual love with deeds.⁷¹ In another case, recommending to the precentor of Lincoln the bearer of a letter together with his request, he invoked their “mutual affection” and their willingness

deliciarum mearum, in te opes meae; tu capitis mei reclinatorium aureum; utinam corporum eadem semper mediante Christo propinquitatis esse quae animorum.” Peter, *Epistola* 69: PL. 202,515.

⁷⁰ *Brian Patrick McGuire*, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250* (Kalamazoo 1988), with extensive literature; *Jean Leclercq*, *L’amitié dans les lettres au moyen âge*, in: *Revue du moyen âge latin* 1 (1945) 391–410; and Constable (n. 34 above) 15–16. Many of these writers learned this theme, of course, from antique writers, especially by way of Cicero’s *De amicitia*.

⁷¹ “*Questus enim estis post aliquot epistolas uestras nullum uos a nobis accepisse rescriptum, et nos deuotionem uestram inter ceteros non nisi uerbis communibus salutasse. . . . Apud alios siquidem actus mere liberalitatis euanuit, sed ubique inter contrahentes animos negotium geritur, dum spes creditrix et debetrix gratia res compensant. Magnum tamen est hodie, si quis amicorum meritis pari premiorum compensatione respondeat; maius est omne meritum animi magnitudine preuenire. Preuenistis autem me. . . . Hoc igitur apud uos iudicium michi perseueret et gratia, uobis nichilominus apud me promisse deuotionis non tepescet affectus, ut scilicet alter in alterius oportunitatibus monitore non egeat, sed zelum caritatis alterne communicati officii probet effectus.*” Arnulf, *Letter* no. 25, ed. *Barlow* (n. 58 above) 33–34. One conference attendee suggested to me that such “friendship” was, in American idiom, little more than mutual “horse-trading” or “log-rolling”.

to look out for one another's wishes.⁷² Arnulf's literary rhetoric may have rendered especially manifest the mutual interests at work in the love between these friends or letter-writers. But already by the eleventh century, such friendship had become commonplace, and therefore capable of rhetorical ironies and wordplays. One of the Hildesheim letters began with the greeting of friendship: *Amicitiam, quam unanimis unanimi, quam amicus debet sibi alteri*. It then invoked the character of true friendship as embracing the other with heartfelt arms of fidelity, with regard only for pure love. He repudiated that friendship, so-called these days, which looked only to give and to receive; and then the letter-writer proceeded to seek a benefice for a nephew and to remind the addressee of past favors.⁷³ The irony here is so great that the letter may well have originated as a school exercise; yet it works only because it can assume some broad understanding of the character of "friendship" among letter-writers. This is not to preclude genuine friendship, a deep mutual love, as that between John of Salisbury and Peter of Celle. Even Peter of Blois, in a letter to his nephew, argued that expressions of the spirit through letters could be more efficacious than those of the embodied voice because the spirit was greater than the body.⁷⁴ But to distinguish rhetorical expressions of mutual interest from literary articulations of heartfelt sentiment is often nearly impossible, even within narrow circles such as the letters exchanged between student and teacher (n. 33 above), between Cistercian monks (n. 56 above), or between two abbots (n. 67 above): These letters revealed persons whose

⁷² "Licet pro latore presentium, A., uestre presens supplicauerim caritati, preces tamen censi litteris prosequendas, ut quantitatem desiderii mei tam uiue uocis alloquium quam litterarum instantia declararet. Sperat hic, impetratis a me litteris, a uobis impetrasse quod postulat, quia quasi certus est preces meas apud dilectionem uestram optato nullatenus frustrandas effectu. Cumque solus caritatis affectus omnem possit inter nos formasse fidutiam, accedit tamen quod utilitatis uestre detrimenta non quero, quamuis gratia me uestro iudicio quelibet plurimo prouentu dispendia recompenset. . . Semper diligentis animus ad alterius est quam ad sua uota propensior et, preueniri desidiā reputans, tota semper festinat diligentia preuenire." Arnulf, Letter no. 37, ed. Barlow (n. 58 above) 63–64.

⁷³ "...me animet pietas tibi domestica, que, cuiuscumque amicam se profitetur, eum fidei precordialibus brachiis amplexatur, eum solo purissimi amoris respectu ueneratur. . . Huic si dando respondere, si beneficiis aggredere certare, stultus uideri, insanus possem iudicari. Amicitia enim illa, que nunc usitatur et que id quod non est nominatur, scilicet dare et recipere, que creditoris immo uenditoris potius est quam amici, illa inquam amicitia apud te locum non obtinet. . . Hinc igitur, cum sciam tibi mecum esse idem uelle et idem nolle, meum est tibi non supplicare sed solummodo quid uelim insinuare. Beneficia ergo que fratris mei a te deposcit, cum necdum prestita, nulli promissa habeas, ipse uide, quid mihi debeas, cum id quod posco in promptu habeas." Hildesheimer Briefe no. 8, ed. Erdmann (n. 25 above) 27–28.

⁷⁴ "Licet, testimonio Hieronymi [Ep. 103], nescio quid latentis energie uiua uox habeat, et efficacior sit uox uiua quam scripta, illi tamen qui uirtutem charitatis experiuntur certi sunt, quod praestantior est praesentia spiritus quam corporis, et quanto spiritus est pars diligentis potior, tanto praesentia eius dignior est corporali. Nam si copula carnis efficit ut sint duo in carne una [Gen. 2], quanto fortius duos unit amoris compago, et unitas spiritus in uinculo pacis?" Peter of Blois, Letter no 132: PL. 207,391.

notions of friendship were both schooled in rhetoric and shaped in personal affection.

By setting out letters as the primary expression of written culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and as central to written communication between the literate and social elites, this essay may appear to have presupposed the essential link, that between schools and letter-writing. Letter-writing was taught, as Latin composition nearly always has been, by imitation and practice.⁷⁵ Peter of Blois, subsequently one of the most widely read of all models, claimed to have learned the art himself by memorizing certain of Hildebert's letters (n. 20 above). Many of the letters and libelli connected with the Investiture Struggle, especially those gathered by Udalrich, master at Bamberg, were preserved for their exemplary rhetorical qualities rather than their political contents – and in some instances may even have originated as exercises rather than as timely tractates (n. 48 above). But how and when were rhetoric and letter-writing taught? The formal reading and study of Roman rhetorical treatises on the making of juridical orations – Cassiodorus' summary or Cicero's *De inventione* or Pseudo-Cicero's *Ad Herennium* – is said to have prepared students, thus Haskins and Curtius, for the writing of letters.⁷⁶ Yet most modern editors have despaired of identifying formal models for a Hildebert of Lavardin, Bernard of Clairvaux, or John of Salisbury. Indeed, Meinhard of Bamberg, whose more labored style could be traced back into the grammatical and rhetorical precepts, expressed great astonishment (replete with paraphrases from Terence) when an acquaintance asked him for a grammar book. Was this fifty-year old man returning to his adolescence? Though agreeing to send the book, he would not guarantee its quality, for he had himself long since bid farewell to such childish trifles (*his neniis*).⁷⁷ It was of the essence that letters not become the mere display of grammatical, rhetorical, and dialectical exercises; they were to transform that mental formation into living speech.

And yet the connection seems manifest: Where letter-writing flourished, schools were present, and flourishing schools produced letter writers and letter-collections. From the earliest Carolingian authors, such as Boniface and Alcuin, to such late twelfth-century figures as Peter of Blois and even Pope Innocent III., the writing of eloquent letters can serve as an accurate measure of Latin culture in general and the quality of schools in particular. Leaving aside Carolingian authors and beginning in

⁷⁵ For more on this point, see *Lanham* (n. 65 above) 91 ff.; *Walther Bulst*, *Die ältere Wormser Briefsammlung* (MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 3, Weimar 1949) 4–7; *Worstbrock* (n. 31 above) 30–31.

⁷⁶ *Charles Homer Haskins*, *The Early Artes dictandi in Italy*, in: *Studies* (n. 45 above) 170–92; *Ernst Robert Curtius*, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York 1963) 480–84.

⁷⁷ “Unum erat in litteris vestris, quod me plane attonitum reddidit, videlicet quod regulas grammaticae ita studio flagitas. Nam quid homo parat, quid sibi vult? Numquidnam repuerescere conatur? Numquidman crepundia et infantiles salivas homo quinquagenarius meditatur? Dii boni, quid hoc monstri est? ...Morem ergo gessi vobis, sed vereor, ne depravata sint pleraque incuria scriptorum. Nam ego iam diu est quod his neniis valedixi.” *Briefe Meinhard's*, ed. *Erdmann* (n. 25 above) 205. See Terence, *Eun.* 804, 225.

the mid-tenth century, Ratherius comes first, representing Liège, Lobbes, and Verona; then Gerbert from Bobbio, Reims, and Rome; then collections from Worms and from Fulbert of Chartres and from Abbo of Fleury (among others); then those studied and edited by Erdmann and Fickermann illustrating the achievements of cathedral schools in eleventh-century imperial bishoprics; then those attributed to Berengar of Tours; and so on through a long list that has never been worked out in its entirety for the central middle ages.⁷⁸ Much more has been lost. That may be illustrated with a single case: Liège emerged as one of the leading schools of the age and as a point of transference between Carolingian and Saxon-Salian culture. Wazo, bishop and schoolmaster, wrote two important letters preserved in a chronicle, these presumably only fragments from a much larger corpus.⁷⁹ Gozechinus, master in Mainz but product of Liège, wrote a lengthy letter back to Liège in midcentury to reflect publicly and retrospectively on the state of schools and of culture⁸⁰ – as did Meinhard, schoolmaster at Bamberg (n. 100 below). Alger, master and canonist in Liège a half-century later, produced an extensive correspondence now lost, probably something like Ivo of Chartres' in its penchant for canonistic advice.⁸¹ For Liège, as for Bamberg and Hildesheim, a center of schooling and of administration meant a center of letter-writing.

The so-called "rhetorical letters of Regensburg", written in the later eleventh century at a collegiate church in Regensburg and the cathedral in Bamberg,⁸² help illumine the self-understanding of these few lettered men as well as the interdependence between schooling in the arts and self-conscious literary expression. Letters, one correspondent explains, are meant not only to "exercise" the soul but also to "delight" it; indeed those who fail thus to exercise their souls live as beasts⁸³ – a literary commonplace, but also a self-conscious jab at those, whether monks or peasants, who did not or could not so exercise their souls. For this exercise, the authors presumed, the main tools were dialectic and rhetoric: One correspondent complained that his counterpart had entangled and nearly strangled his poor mind

⁷⁸ But see *Carl Erdmann*, *Briefsammlungen*, in: *Wattenbach-Holtzmann*, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt 1967) 415–42.

⁷⁹ Anselm, *Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium* 41, 63: MGH SS 7.211–15. 227–28.

⁸⁰ Gozechini epistola ad Walcherum, ed. *R. B. C. Huygens*, *Duae apologiae* (CC CM 62, Turnhout 1985) 1–43.

⁸¹ This according to a report by Nicholas of Liege in a preface to Alger's works: "...usque ad obitum felicitis memoriae Frederici episcopi [1121], annis fere uiginti pro ecclesiasticis negotiis ad diuersas personas et ecclesias multas insignes conscripsit epistolas, quae a plerisque summo conseruantur et leguntur studio." PL. 180,737. Unfortunately, these letters have disappeared, with the exception of two preserved in the *Codex Udalrici*, ed. *Jaffé*, *Bibliotheca rerum germanicarum* V, nn. 146, 206; compare *Robert Kretzschmar*, *Alger von Lüttichs Traktat 'De misericordia et iustitia'* (*Quellen und Forschungen zum Recht im Mittelalter* 2, Sigmaringen 1985) 8–14.

⁸² See the introduction by *Norbert Fickermann*, in, *Briefsammlungen* (n. 25 above) 259–73.

⁸³ "Inuenio nanque in uerbis tuis non solum quod exercet, sed et quod delectat, ut alterum alteri succedens fastidium depellat, ut nil minus libeat quam torpere otio, quod est hominem bestialiter vivere. Si enim in exercitio animum agere honestum est, somnolentia otii occupari turpe est." *Regensburger Brief* no. 5, ed. *Fickermann* (n. 25 above) 282.

with “dialectical knots”, then attempted to sooth and heal it with rhetorical figures.⁸⁴ But these correspondents also feared, taking over another commonplace from Cicero, a great disjunction between the exercising of their minds in the schools or at leisure and the encumbering of their spirits with the cares of the world (presumably at court).⁸⁵ In this letter, and in many others, the exercises of the schools are called up as nostalgic memories, reminding them of skills once possessed and now lost through disuse. This theme, though partly mannered modesty, highlighted the self-consciousness of lettered men subsequently preoccupied with practical cares. Other letters (nn. 9, 31), too, described the times as venal, men serving only their stomachs and therefore becoming as beasts. Yet not all looked upon their present work in the world with the disdain or nostalgia of the leisured intellectual. In what appears to be a direct response (or the same writer presenting the other side of the question), a subsequent letter protested that much of the schooling remained in the memory, the stomach of the soul, that not all had been lost. The disciplines learned in those days – the memory of which brought forth animating delight rather than nostalgic depression – served life as well as learning. Thus he refused to hold secular courts in contempt as merely venal; he sought rather to bring reason and sound counsel to bear there as well.⁸⁶ Letter-writing was the literary means both to engage affairs and to lift the soul.

⁸⁴ “Si tu mei ingenioli tenuitatem intemperantiamque scires, non adeo multiplices commiseres sententias, illas coloribus mihi ignotas variare, ut modo dialecticis nodis mee strangulares penuriam inscientie, modo rethoricis coloribus indutus vulnera latenter inflicta sanares.” Ibid. 284.

⁸⁵ “Multo diversarum curarum pondere sarcinatus vellem aliquod, si facultas daretur, levamen invenire, ut aliquantulum exoneratus, etsi non ad perfectum, remissa tamen temporibus longo intervallo intermissa revocarem, ut ratione et disciplina ad recte vivendi viam [Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.1.1], quoquo modo possem, venirem, quod oportunius fieri non datur quam vacatione literatorie scientie, usu indefesse meditationis, tenaci exercitio querendi et invenendi. ... cum ad memoriam reduco inter quos et apud quos, quibuscum etiam, olim studio operam dedi, quam frequens in disputationibus, quam perspicax in qualitate propositionum, quam diligens in argumentis, in nodis complexionum quam cautus, in questionibus quam laboriose ingenium consumens, cui, quod arti defuit, natura subministravit et, quod natura minus habuit, industria adiecit. Horum cum tangor recordatione, non possum non affici anxietate, quoniam ad ea me recepi, quae velim nolim amitto; quae autem retinere potui, transfuga honestatis minus viriliter postposui; videor videri inter illos computari, qui Socraticum minime secuti sunt sensum.” Regensburger Briefe no. 11, ed. Fickermann (n. 25 above) 329–30.

⁸⁶ “Etsi diversarum negotiis rerum multa sint temporibus remissa non parvoque intervallo intermissa, restant tamen quedam animo minime amissa, quae tenax memoria, quod est venter animi, tanto obligatius includit quanto difficilior acquisivit. ... Huius exercitii tenui memoria attactus non potui ad id, unde digressum sum, non reverti. Fuit nanque magnum delectamentum, si, quae apud summe eruditos viros degustavi, quoad facultas tulit, revolverem, ut si aliud imminutium non haberem levamen curarum, vel hoc potiri daretur solatio, quod illorum interfuisse me memini doctrine, qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientie, sed legem vite putent [Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.4.11], quamvis tribula paleam cum tritico inveniat. ... Nemo mihi occurrat, nemo impropere, nemo obloquatur, nemo contentionem de lana caprina [Horace, *Epist.* 1.18.15] moveat, quasi in foro seculari omnia habeam venalia, cum potius curiam rationis deberem frequentare, ibique quid esse proferendum consulere.” Regensburger Briefe no. 22, ed. Fickermann (n. 25 above) 348–49.

What set people apart for this small world of literate communicators in the tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth centuries was precisely their schooling in Latin rhetoric and dialectic. This intellectual formation was not uniform, less so probably than that undergone in later years by religious within a monastic order or university schoolmen reared on Aristotle. Yet it drew from a remarkably common set of materials, the same essential works on the arts, the same *auctores*, the same snippets of great authors to be read and memorized, the same Bible which often provided the language or sayings of the *exordia*; and in time, though the details in earlier periods are frustratingly difficult to uncover, the same corpus of model letters, especially Hildebert and Peter of Blois. They absorbed this world of language and thought as young clerics, and they could play upon it throughout their lives in letters to their literate peers. Whatever transpired among them in oral repartee, doubtless more such language play, it achieved literary expression primarily, often exclusively, in letters, sometimes including letters they wrote on behalf of patrons.

The persistence of this language and logic into the adult letter-writing of these privileged people, its formative shaping of their thought and discourse, might best be illustrated by thoroughly studying a single author whose education can be reconstructed and whose letters survive (as Von Moos did with Hildebert); for much of the point lies precisely in the detailed mechanisms of thought and expression. For the purposes of this more general interpretive essay, a single example must suffice, a case where the letters have largely not survived and the author, ironically, attempted later to dismiss the role of the arts in forming his prose expression. Abbot Rupert of Deutz, an oblate at St. Lawrence in Liège, benefited from the quality of that city's schools. As an author, he consciously set out to "add a little something useful", as he put it, to what the fathers had written about Scripture. In one of his earlier commentaries he explained how the spiritual gift of *scientia*, by way of the liberal arts, was essential to the interpretation of Scripture, since Scripture was itself the paradigm illustration of those arts at work.⁸⁷ But as an abbot

⁸⁷ Rupert's argument begins somewhat defensively over against the schoolmasters: "Quid autem dicimus tunc artes istas in scholam illam esse intromissae? ... Nam reuera qui scienter scrutati sunt scripturas, ita inuenerunt, ita experti sunt et satis admirati, non solum quod illic essent, uerum etiam quod ita dominae sapientiae luce et maiestate subopertae laterent, ut non facile conspici posset quod illic essent.... Nimirum sic paene liberalis scientiae artes in sancta scriptura cum sapientia Dei quamuis simul assint, nitere uulgo non possunt, cum in aliis rationibus per se plurimum lucidae parere et splendere consueuerint. Maxime autem idcirco non parent cum ibi sint, quia uidelicet sic illis sancta scriptura utitur, ut tamen non dicat qualiter eisdem utendum sit. Per singulas artes ire et pauculis quod dictum est exemplis comprobare non pigeat." Then Rupert illustrated his point with scriptural examples for each of the seven liberal arts, with the largest sections by far treating rhetoric and dialectic, each introduced thus: "Rhetoricam, idest bene dicendi scientiam, quisquis umquam apertis alicubi uidit oculis, ut faciem eius ueraciter internoscere possit, ipse ad eandem de qua loquimur scripturam accedens, nisi forte dormitet aut maleuolentiae nubilo caecutiatur, dicere non fallitur, quia maxime illic est. Primae partis eius, idest inuentionis, hic exempla breuiter colligamus...." "Porro dialecticam numquid ostentari aut liberius efferri decebat coram sanctarum scripturarum opifice Dei sapientia? Attamen et ipsa illic est, et coram illa domina sua mandati

and a man of letters he also carried on correspondence with his contemporaries. Trithemius reports a manuscript at Deutz, long since lost, *epistolarum ad diuersos liber*.⁸⁸ One of those letters was appended as an exemplar to a twelfth-century school manual now in the archepiscopal library of Esztergom (often treated as the oldest school manual from Hungary).⁸⁹ In it Rupert defended his novel Marian interpretation of the Song of Songs against the complaints of fellow monks who were apparently also themselves schoolmasters, and employed the dialectic and rhetoric acquired in school to protect his avowedly innovative interpretations. In a heightened tone approaching indignation, whether feigned or genuine, he launched into his monkly critics as pseudo-learned, (*miratus sum cuiusmodi homines possent esse uestrates illi, docti ne an indocti, magistri an discipuli*). For if they were truly masters and learned, he says, they would better understand that what is said of a *genus* applies as well to the *species* – a fundamental mistake in elementary dialectic.⁹⁰ He pretended not to carry on any great battle over words; but he would explain briefly what these Scriptural words truly meant (something he then did, reiterating his disputed interpretation). The letter closed with a long paragraph addressed more intimately to his fellow monk (*tibi autem familiariter*), in which, through he had instinctively used dialectic to defend himself, Rupert reiterated his rhetorical claim to a “special gift” (*facultas*) for interpreting Scripture given by God himself.⁹¹ Not long after 1125, someone read this letter and excerpted it, without Rupert’s name, as a model – the only one in this brief manual reviewing grammatical divisions, *colores rhetorici*, and the like⁹² – of letter-writing as exemplifying the use of school rhetoric and dialectic.

Virtually all of Rupert’s other letters were preserved in conjunction with his works, mostly as introductions and dedications for his scriptural commentaries. They were remarkably successful in communicating Rupert’s mind and intentions

operis partes exsequens uigilantior assidet et ueritatem inuestigat. Numquid super hoc quisquam dialecticae artis alumnus sanctae scripturae parietes uel primam ianuam ingressus dubitat? Primum hoc asserere, licet quia genus et differentia, species et proprium atque accidens, quae sapientes saeculi pro magnis atque arduis habent, quasi prima incipientis huius scripturae elementa sunt.” Rupert, *De operibus spiritus sancti* 7.10, 12, 13: ed. *Hrabanus Haacke* (CC CM 24, Turnhout 1972) 2049–50, 2051, 2060.

⁸⁸ *Johannes Trithemius*, *Catalogus illustrium uirorum*, in: *Opera Historica* (Frankfurt 1601; rpt 1966) 136–37.

⁸⁹ Esztergom III.184. See *Lajos Csóka*, *Ein unbekannter Brief des Abtes Rupert von Deutz*, in: *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens* 84 (1973) 383–93.

⁹⁰ “Nam si doctos se magistros esse profitentur et cum hac estimatione sui beatam uirginem Mariam sic subiciunt uniuersali ecclesiae, tanquam speciem generi, quod absurdum est, ex ore suo statim possunt iudicari, quia uidelicet quod de genere praedicatur et speciei congruit. ...Hoc autem falsum est. Rationabilius dicerent tocius esse partem et hic indubitanter. Illis dicere poteras, dilectissime, quia quod congruit huic toti, scilicet ecclesiae, congruit et huic tocius parti eximiae.” *Csóka* (n. 89 above) 383.

⁹¹ “Dico ergo, frater, dico emulis meis: Ego bonis et benesonantibus non contraria dixi, sed aliquid supererogare curavi, confidens quod sacrarum ager scripturarum, in quo est absconditus thesaurus regni Dei, nobis omnibus communis est, quibus quaerendi uoluntas siue facultas a Deo data est.” *Ibid.* 385

⁹² I consulted the text, still unedited, in microfilm.

to his readers, indeed essential for the historical reconstruction of his life.⁹³ In nearly all of them Rupert wove together a declaration of his purpose and themes in writing his scriptural commentary, some element of autobiography (often an implicit defense of some recent attack on his works or his person), and elaborate scriptural metaphors which served as the rhetorical *leitmotifs*. These letters were not innocent introductory remarks or routine prefaces to the book that followed. They were carefully crafted statements, almost essay-like, about his own status as a man of letters and interpreter of Holy Scripture. He instinctively drew upon the basic structural divisions of dialectic and rhetoric to defend himself,⁹⁴ even as he insisted that his interpretations rested upon Scripture itself and a divinely-bestowed gift of interpretation. Rupert presumed the schools and the schoolmasters, even as he repudiated them in letters he first learned to write as a schoolboy in his abbey outside Liège.

What emerged from this small group of people who shared a certain basic mental formation and were capable of communicating by means of written letters was a sense of camaraderie, even, if you will, of an “old boys club.” Already in Carolingian times the correspondence of these figures can mislead the later reader into thinking of theirs as a very small world, tightly knit intellectually and socially. All the complexities of family and politics and agricultural incomes and political rivalries – except in those cases where a letter specifically addressed one of those issues – tended to melt away in correspondence which could be playful, or exhortatory, or religiously reflective. Renaissance humanists would speak of a “republic of letters.” Medieval authors between the ninth and twelfth centuries invented, to the best of my knowledge, no single such rubric; but they had a powerful group sense of belonging, nonetheless, and could on occasion claim a “concord of souls among friends” which made of them a “single republic” acting according to the “laws of friendship” with the resources of “discourse” (*oratio*).⁹⁵

Letter-writing, as the written presentation of the schooled self and as the means to shaping and re-shaping the world of affairs, went on both in schools and in courts. The work of schoolmasters in a cathedral chapter must be distinguished from that of chancellors or secretaries in a bishop’s court, and yet these worlds, down to the mid or later twelfth century, were never far apart. The literary conventions that sometimes appear to put the two at odds must be recognized for the rhetorical commonplaces they were. Most of the schools were located in or near courts, episcopal or abbatial, very occasionally princely, and most letters, especially most letter-collections, came from settings where learning, writing, and decision-making were closely intertwined. In a famous letter addressed to the

⁹³ See *John Van Engen*, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley 1983)

⁹⁴ Thus also in defending his disputed views on the eucharist in the letter prefacing his commentary on the Gospel of John: ed. *Hrabanus Haacke* (CC CM 9, Turnhout 1969) 3.

⁹⁵ Thus Hildebert: “Haec enim est inter amicos animorum concordia, ut nihil ab altero sit alienum, nihil alteri singulare. Omnia facit eis unam rem publicam uoluntas una. Hic amicitiae legibus actum noueris ut memoria reuenter ad te, compassione essem iuxta te, orationibus agerem pro te.” *Epistola* 10: PL. 171,289

abbot of Tours, which begins with an invocation of friendship, Gerbert had observed that in true philosophy the rationale or appointed end for good conduct and that for good speaking were inseparable, and that he had therefore always conjoined zeal for good living with zeal for good speaking. More crucially, as a person caught up in public affairs, he regarded both as necessary.⁹⁶ Behind this formulation lies Cicero, or Roman rhetoric in general, and its Christian reformulation by way Gregory's image of the good pastor. Transposed into the idiom of the eleventh-century schools, it meant that learning in letters and learning in morality, all that was necessary to live as clerics at court, came together. Thus Meinhard, the schoolmaster at Bamberg (1057–85), regularly linked letters (in the broad sense of learning and literacy) with moral conduct, both of which were said to be in decline in his age and in need of closer attention. A young cleric was sent to him precisely to learn both letters and moral discipline.⁹⁷ He happily received and fostered him, though the real purpose of the letter was not to discourse on learning but to request adequate support. In a letter recommending his nephew to another master, probably Franco of Liège, Meinhard flatteringly recalled a letter (*Memini enim litterarum vestrarum*) received two years earlier from this master complaining about the insolent stupidity of those who adopt the guise of learning and teaching when they have themselves barely progressed beyond basic literacy.⁹⁸ To signal their own companionship in learning, as one master to another, writing from one episcopal court to another, Meinhard paraphrased a passage on such pretentious beginners which he had taken over from Quintilian's *Institutes* (1.1.8). The real purpose of this letter, again, was otherwise, to entrust his nephew to Franco's *officina* at Liège, not so much for the learning (which could also be had at Bamberg), but for its moral discipline.⁹⁹ In another letter recommending a young cleric sent from Bamberg to Liège, the same vocabulary appears (*ut in of-*

⁹⁶ "Cum mei memoriam frequentem habeatis inter honesta, ut e plurimis accepi legatis, magnamque affinitatis iure amicitiam efferatis, existimatione vestra beatum me fore puto, si modo is sum, qui iudicio tanti viri inveniar dignus amari. Sed quia non is sum, qui cum Panetio interdum ab utili seiungam honestum, sed potius cum Tullio omni utili admisceam, has honestissimas atque sanctissimas amicitias nulla ex parte suo cuique utili vacare volo. Cumque ratio morum dicendique ratio a philosophia non separentur, cum studio bene vivendi semper coniuncti studium bene dicendi, quamvis solum bene vivere praestantius sit eo quod est bene dicere, curisque regiminis absoluto, alterum satis sit sine altero. At nobis in re publica occupatis utraque necessaria." Gerbert, Epistola 44: ed. Weigle (n. 23 above) 72–73.

⁹⁷ "Verum inter alia gravia et luctuosa hunc dolorem quasi capitalem deplorastis studium lumenque litterarum penitus apud vos occidisse nec minus disciplinam moralem egregie apud vos antiquitus institutam situ quodam et negligentia nunc dissolutam iam iamque obisse, immo sepultam esse. Quas ob res adolescentem vestrum officine nostre erudiendum informandumque tradidistis, ut duo pignora vestra, mores dico litterasque, per eum vobis Dei gratia aspirante resuscitentur." Briefe Meinhard's no. 19, ed. Erdmann (n. 25 above) 213.

⁹⁸ "...contra quorundam perditissimorum imperitissimam insolentiam vel insolentissimam imperitiam. Quid enim his peius, qui aliquid ultra primas litteras progressi falsam sibi scientie persuasionem induerunt?" Briefe Meinhard's no. 24, ed. Erdmann (n. 25 above) 221.

⁹⁹ "Non adeo fortassis domestica litterarum inopia merces peregrinas persequimur, sed discipline desiderium id nos sollicitat; que cum ubique fere sit extincta, non dubitem illam in vestra calere officina." Ibid.

ficina scolari tam moribus quam disciplina excocatus), along with acknowledgement that Bamberg owed its religious culture originally to men sent out from Liège.¹⁰⁰ And in a letter addressed to his bishop, Meinhard stated explicitly that schoolmasters were committed to a double function, to formation in morals and instruction in letters.¹⁰¹

Schools set out to form character as well as minds and letters. How these schooled people would express themselves in letters and what they would seek to effect through letters was not so neatly divisible as the rhetoric/history distinction might suggest. So too how they would live, what guidelines for conduct they would impose upon themselves – these were hardly separable from formation in how they would think and how they would express themselves in Latin letters. For the courts in which letter-writers did their work were at hardly any remove, physically, socially, or culturally, from the schools in which these men learned to write prose or themselves taught others. The place, the school, was likened to a “workshop” (*officina*) in which minds and characters were hammered into shape or “boiled” (n. 100) down to their substance. But it was the letter which had to serve as the main vehicle for the formal expression of that character’s intentions and deeds, the thought and language shaped in that workshop.

If letters were indeed a discourse of ordered parts signifying the sentiments of a sender to an addressee, and if it is conceded that a very large portion of what learned men and women wrote between the ninth and the twelfth centuries counted as letters, the skeptic may still ask – precisely in the context of courts and the exchange of letters between courts – whose mind or soul was being disclosed to whom. Were not these letters arrangements of set phrases and forms taken over from their authors’ rhetorical and dialectical formation? Were not these authors “hired pens”, so to speak, writing on behalf of patrons? In a letter John of Salisbury wrote to Thomas Becket he claimed to have composed letters written in a harsh tone (*sub ea austeritate conceperam*) on Archbishop Theobald’s behalf to the king and to Becket himself, but this at Becket’s own behest (*iuxta mandatum dilectionis uestrae*). He was then subsequently forced by the archbishop (*coactus sum, urgente mandato domini mei*) to temper his language, especially with a view to its public audience (*temperare rigorem et necessitati publicae aliquid indulgere*).¹⁰² Here John of Salisbury, the professional letter-writer, found himself caught between Becket and Theobald, the one urging him to strike a more severe tone, the other a less severe, and each with an eye to its effect upon the king and the public world of affairs. And yet the language was

¹⁰⁰ “...dilectum hunc ecclesie nostre filium in sinum benivolentie vestre non dubitavi transmittendum, ut in officina scolari tam moribus quam disciplina excocatus pro spe nostra, pro loci auctoritate Leodiensem manum intra nostre ecclesie ornamenta resplendeat. Fundamenta quippe religionis nostre ab ecclesie vestre primatibus viris iacta et instituta sunt.” Briefe Meinhards no. 36, ed. *Erdmann* (n. 25 above) 234–35.

¹⁰¹ “Verum nunc qui perfecti scholarum habentur, gemina pro ecclesiastico usu functione multantur: primas enim partes formandis moribus impendunt, secundas vero litterarum doctrine insumunt.” Briefe Meinhards 39, ed. *Erdmann* (n. 25 above) 239.

¹⁰² John of Salisbury, Epistola 128: ed. *Brooke-Millor* (n. 2 above) 221–23.

finally John's, whose own mental formation and verbal formulations thus influenced the course of events. The same kind of situation had occurred 175 years earlier when Gerbert wrote a letter on behalf of the archbishop of Reims to the archbishop of Trier, and then confessed in a subsequent letter that he had done so only under orders from the king (*Priorem epistolam pro solo imperio domini mei me uestrae paternitati misisse minime celare uolo*).¹⁰³ In still another case Gerbert got caught between the bishop of Metz and the Duke of Lotharingia when he drafted letters for each in the midst of a dispute and then found himself accused of being an unfaithful translator: He had not put into Latin the full wrath moving the duke's soul (*ubi infidi interpretis subisse ueremur, dum motibus animorum eius orationem non equauimus*) – in effect, failed to render in Latin discourse the sender's mind. Gerbert went on: If you so wish, henceforth I will set out more carefully the moods or intentions of both enemies and friends (*deinceps elaborabimus et amicorum atque inimicorum affectus diligentius exprimemus*), so as not in any way to mislead you.¹⁰⁴ More than two hundred years after Gerbert, Peter of Blois made the matter explicit in a letter presenting his letter-collection to King Henry II, in this case to apologize in false modesty for certain of the less happy formulations. He urged the king to remember that nearly all his letters were obliged to the will of another and that therefore sometimes he had to write less eloquently or less urbanely or contrariwise more verbosely or more simply, depending upon the persons or circumstances involved.¹⁰⁵ And yet Master Peter thought these letters worthy of presentation to the king (and to a larger public) as his own literary achievement.

Such letters should not be dismissed as feigned eloquence – though Peter of Blois's case, given his many revisions and rewritings, may stretch the limit. Letters written by schooled rhetoricians were expected to reflect the mind of the sender, even as the manuals taught and patrons insisted, and also to persuade others, especially in the realm of public affairs. The *exordia* or opening lines, moreover, were to capture the spirit of the sender. Increasingly writers adopted proverbial expressions, drawn either from Scripture or the fund of classical and common proverbs, and these catchy sayings, though done in elegant Latin, likewise reflected the minds of these elites, influencing in turn their perceptions of life and affairs. The crucial social factor was that letter-writers learned both this privileged form of expression and the world of public affairs in essentially the same place, around the cathedral or at court or in the abbey, where they also subsequently practiced it. The chancery, the court, and the school or chapel were evidently not

¹⁰³ Gerbert, Epistola 54, ed. Weigle (n. 23 above) 84.

¹⁰⁴ Gerbert, Letter no. 33, ed. Weigle (n. 23 above) 60–61.

¹⁰⁵ "Scitis equidem quod non semper ingenii vena [the self-display of the letter-writer] respondet ad voluntatem, et quandoque dicta laudabiliora casualiter scribenti se offerunt, quae per studii vehementiam et indaginem laboriosae meditationis inveniri non possunt. Illud etiam vestra, sicut reor, eminentia diligenter attendit, quod fere omnes epistolae meae de alieno pendebant arbitrio, et nunc propter ingruentium necessitatum urgentiam incultius, nunc propter materiae tenuitatem recisius, nunc propter insufficientiam personarum, quibus scribebantur aut quae scribebant, inurbanus aut diffusius aut simplicius me scribere oportebant." Peter of Blois, Epistola 1: PL. 207,2.

the same, even as the episcopal palace and the cathedral school were not; but the degree of overlap – in space, in people, in functions, and in ethos – was great, and the points of contact numerous. The person schooled in grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic in such a setting was prepared, implicitly, even if not all of them achieved it, for the public, privileged expression of what went on at court or in the abbey. This they were expected to do primarily by way of letters. While they might also choose to write sermons or commentaries or saints' lives, to join the current world of literate public affairs was to write letters – as is evidenced above all by abbots like Wibald of Stavelot, whose collection of letters, central to imperial affairs, has been preserved in the original manuscript.¹⁰⁶ In this world of privileged written communication, basic techniques or patterns of written rhetoric permeated the world of public events, in part, for instance, and as a final example, by way of the *narratio* or main body of a letter.

Letter-writers took the term over from ancient juridical orations. In commentaries, for instance, Thierry of Chartres' on Cicero's *De inventione*, students were taught that narrative should be brief, made easily intelligible (*aperta*) by sticking to an *ordo narrandi* and thus not becoming *obscura*, and also *probabilis* or having the appearance of truth (verisimilitude). The narrative was to set out the "circumstances" (*quis, quid, cur, quibus auxiliis*, and so on) surrounding a particular affair in such a way that the *argumentum* of the oration/letter be interwoven with the *narratio* itself.¹⁰⁷ These teachings, however much a matter of formal definition and of schoolboy memorization, were not lost upon the practitioners of letter-writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While it might be easier to detect the conjoining of life and speech in letters that aimed at persuasion or other particular sentiments, it is equally evident in the much more numerous letters which self-consciously constructed a narrative. It was here that the writer, in his own behalf or for his patron, set out the circumstances and thus in a certain sense created in words the reality upon which public and private affairs would be based. What letter-writers chose to put into writing was not only to be true – the assertion of verisimilitude was frequent and essential – but in some sense public; what could not be said about kingdoms or affairs in letters had to be entrusted to their carriers.¹⁰⁸ What was put down in writing was a part of that which shaped the reality of cultural and social affairs.

Modern historians, generally and increasingly sensitive to this literary – this

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Reuter, Gedankenüberlieferung und -praxis im Briefbuch Wibalds von Stablo, in: Karl Schmid/Joachim Wollasch, ed., *Der Liber vitae der Abtei Corvey* (Wiesbaden 1989) 161–77, which begins with an analysis of this collection.

¹⁰⁷ Karin Margareta Fredborg, *The Latin Rhetorical Commentaries by Thierry of Chartres* (Studies and Texts 84, Toronto 1988) 121–23, 128–31, 234–36.

¹⁰⁸ Thus in a letter Gerbert addressed to the bishop of Mainz: "Multa cartis non credimus, que legatis committimus, ut huic abbati Ayardo sibi intimo pater meus Adalbero Remorum archiepiscopus vobis per omnia fidus multa commisit de statu et pace regnorum vobiscum habenda. Insuper ea, quae per epistolam vobis significavit, sic se habere Deum testem invocavit. Ut sibi sic legato credite, et que vobis placeant, si non est aptum scriptis vel lineis, rependite verbis." Gerbert Letter no. 34, ed. Weigle (n. 23 above) 61–62.

mentally artficed – character of letters, accordingly press to get beyond or behind the narratives found in them sometimes by way of complementary accounts in other letters or chronicles, sometimes by way of documentary evidence. But contemporaries, it must be remembered, frequently found themselves in the same position. They could turn to rumors carried by word of mouth or to reports found in others' letters, but they too, finally, were forced to see the reality of events and personages through the language and logic that went into the construction of the narrative portions of these letters. The letters of Gilbert Foliot, to select only one example, are especially striking in their narrative sections, often long and carefully arranged. In one letter he recounts to the abbot and monks of Reading how a certain master had come to him with oral accounts of claims to a church, along with documents drawn up in support of those claims; but in this letter he ruled both out of court by outlining as a narrative older claims and the true legal situation, said to rest upon an earlier papal concession;¹⁰⁹ and it was this epistolary narrative that was to carry the day against an oral case and the presented documents. Gilbert also frequently served as a papal judge delegate, and though he ordinarily examined the situations in person (this was the point of the system) he necessarily recorded the outcomes and proceedings for the papacy and for posterity, blow by blow, in letters. Even in the case where one of the claimants eventually appealed his case personally to Rome, the man carried with him (*conquestus est apud nos presentium lator*) Gilbert's elaborate narrative account of the point at issue, describing what this one said and then what that one said, what this one had done and what that one could produce by way of witnesses or documents.¹¹⁰ His principle was clear, as he expressed it once in a letter to settle something with the powerful Bernard of Clairvaux: what seemed obscure or might be forgotten was to be set forth in the light by way of these written accounts.¹¹¹

The models for these narratives were two-fold: the narrative portion of charters or legal documents, which these letters often came close to emulating, and the narratives known to all these writers from both classical and contemporary literature. Yet these were not telling "stories" in the fictional sense; they were creating the reality upon which people based their lives and upon which events turned. In these letters current news also came mixed with accounts of the legal and social affairs affecting the life of the kingdom, further complicating the sense in which these rhetorical narratives shaped reality. Gilbert wrote, in one case, asking that

¹⁰⁹ "Asserit [magister] etiam (ut audimus) se quedam possidere que non possidet et ostensione quarundam cartarum quas pretendit uos in credulitate eorum que affirmat inducit. Unde uestram premonemus dilectionem ut sic dictis eius adquiescatis ne inconsiderata quedam commutatione dampnum quod facile reformari nequeat incurratis. Certum enim habeatis nos ecclesia... inuestitos esse..." *Adrian Morey/C. N. L. Brooke*, *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot* (Cambridge 1967) no. 107, p. 107.

¹¹⁰ Gilbert, Letter no. 150, ed. *Morey-Brooke* (n. 109 above) 196–97.

¹¹¹ "Unde quod apud nos nulli fere dubium est serenitati uestre significamus, ne forte in his que nouimus ueritatem in presentia uestra obscurari permittamus." Gilbert, Letter no. 72, ed. *Morey-Brooke* (n. 109 above) 106.

news of the archbishop and his impending affairs be sent by return letter¹¹²; but he then set out in detailed narrative for the archbishop's attention (possibly his singular source of information) a potentially serious fracas involving the earl of Hereford.

Narrative expression and self-expression, drawing upon all the resources of a rhetorical education, were essential to the world of affairs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Letters sent to and from judges-delegate, recounting events and persons, influenced the course of future judgements.¹¹³ The election of popes, particularly disputed elections, were presented to the world in the form of carefully crafted letters, thus Gregory VII's account of his "surprising spontaneous" election¹¹⁴ or Alexander III's detailed narrative account of his divided election, sent out to prelates across Christendom.¹¹⁵ When the abbot at Admont sought to follow the threatening events of the papal schism, he did so by way of compiling letters.¹¹⁶ The entire Becket Controversy became, among other things, a war of letters, each side carefully building up its picture of the "true" situation and the status of their claims by way of the narrations found in its letters and compiled in its letter-compilations.¹¹⁷ Only after Becket's death was the argument advanced by way of another genre of prose literature, namely, through differing *vitae* of the "saint". The reality upon which the various actors initially acted was in good part that presented to them in the narrative portions of letters. And many medieval chronicles, too, constructed their narratives by way of the narratives found in letters. So evident was this to teachers of rhetoric that one of them, Boncompagno, could construct a kind of "novel" by way of the narrations in a series of fictive letters.¹¹⁸

The production of letters might be construed, in sum, as a barometer of written culture generally and of ecclesiastical culture more particularly, Meinhard's and

¹¹² "Scire que circa uos sunt et ad posse nostrum uobis in omnibus obedire cupientes, ad uos presentium latorem dirigimus, ut de transfretatione uestra, de mora etiam citra uel trans mare rescripto uestro certum aliquid intelligamus. Adiuuante namque Domino non in incertum curemus cum de uobis certa nouerimus." Gilbert, Letter no. 94, ed. *Morey-Brooke* (n. 109 above) 131.

¹¹³ It is remarkable how little attention has been paid to this essentially literary aspect, the written expression of these judgements; see *Jane Sayers*, *Papal Judges Delegate in the Province of Canterbury 1198–1254* (Oxford 1971) 243 ff., under the rubric "documentary evidence."

¹¹⁴ For the official and revised versions, see *Erich Caspar*, ed. *Das Register Gregors VII.* (MGH epis. sel. 2, Berlin 1920) 1–7; for commentary, see *Christian Schneider*, *Prophetisches Sacerdotium und heilsgeschichtliches Regnum im Dialog 1073–1077* (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 9, München 1972).

¹¹⁵ PL. 200,69 ff. (various recipients); for its uses, see n. 62 above.

¹¹⁶ See *Günther Hodl/Peter Classen*, *Die Admonter Briefsammlung* (MGH, Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 6, München 1983)

¹¹⁷ *Anne Duggan*, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of His Letters* (Oxford 1980) provides initial orientation.

¹¹⁸ *Robert L. Benson*, *Proto-humanism and Narrative Technique in Early Thirteenth-Century Italy*, in: *Boccaccio: Secolo di Vita* (Ravenna 1977) 31–50.

Berengar's testifying thus to the eleventh-century cathedral schools, Humbert and Damian's to the work of the reformers, Hildebert of Le Mans to that of a secular cleric and bishop, Peter the Venerable's to the standing of Benedictines or Cluniacs, Saint Bernard's to the spiritual ambitions of the Cistercians, Hugh of St. Victor's to the place of canons regular, and so on. But what about Anselm? Do his letters attest to his early education in Northern Italy (like Peter Damian's), his years as a teacher in northern France (like Roscellinus's), his life as a Benedictine in Normandy (like Godfrey of Vendôme's¹¹⁹), or his rule as archbishop in Canterbury (like Lanfranc's)? Or to all of the above? Was it the schools or his larger ecclesiastical and cultural responsibilities, or indeed personal propensities, that generated his writing of letters?

For an argument could also be made to dissociate the new schoolmasters of eleventh- and twelfth century Europe from the writing of letters. Anselm of Besate, the pompous teacher of rhetoric in the mid-eleventh century, left behind his *Rhetorimachia* but no letter-collection. William of Champeaux and Thierry, the acclaimed teachers of rhetoric in Paris and Chartres, produced commentaries on rhetorical works but no letters. The greatest masters of the new age – Anselm of Laon, Gratian, Peter Lombard, Robert of Melun, Gilbert of Poitiers, Peter Comester, Peter the Chanter, and so on – left virtually no letters. Moreover, nearly all Lanfranc's and Anselm's letters – at least those preserved in collections – they wrote as monks and administrators. And Peter Abelard, as you choose, wrote few extant letters, or the most intriguing correspondence of the age. Were these merely accidents of transmission, secular masters for the most part with no religious house or institution to gather their letters? Or did their silence reflect something else, a shift in intellectual emphasis from the letter to the commentary, disputed question, or *summa*?

It is a commonplace among historians to say that letter-writing went into decline in the thirteenth century. No one has examined the truth of this in detail, and no one has provided any persuasive explanation. Giles Constable observed at the end of his introduction that the twelfth century had perhaps produced too much of a good thing. What seems clear is that with few exceptions before the coming of humanism – say a Petrus da Vineia or a Thomas of Capua – there were few great figures or great collections, though the great twelfth-century figures remained widely read. It is important to distinguish volume from quality and prominence. The volume of letter-writing only increased as the decades went by, in all likelihood right down to the nineteenth century. So historians must first ask whether the fundamental problem is simply that they have not even begun to inventory and analyze all the surviving letter-collections and letter-writers. But there was apparently a shift in prominence as well. Almost none of the great thinkers or writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are remembered for their letters,

¹¹⁹ André Wilmart, "La collection chronologique des écrits de Geoffroi abbé de Vendôme", RB 43 (1931) 239–45 (also a case where "treatises" and letters must all be understood as letters).

or even have surviving collections of letters to their names. And when teachers in later centuries established models, they regularly looked back to the figures mentioned so often in this essay, especially Hildebert and Peter of Blois and Bernard of Clairvaux. So while the volume of letters only increased, the prestige and quality of letter-writing generally decreased – at least until the time of the humanists.

One major difference must lie precisely in the numbers, both the numbers of letters written and the number of school-trained intellectuals writing letters. For all the dimensions of the twelfth-century production, barely manageable for a single scholar, it was nothing compared to the volume of epistolary exchange that must have gone on in succeeding decades. By the early thirteenth century already, more and more local courts, whether ecclesiastical or lay, had not only clerics but also masters; and they committed more and more items of routine communication or administration to writing. With volume there came a certain routine, basic models and serviceable prose. When dozens might be written in a week, or even a day, court clerics could scarcely labor over every construction, every *exordium*, the way John of Salisbury did. Indeed the twelfth-century masters established the basic means and standards for this routinization, whence the prominence of their own materials. After 1300, moreover, increased numbers of letters were written in the vernacular, putting to an end the monopoly on privileged communication and self-expression enjoyed earlier by those trained in Latin rhetoric and dialectic.

Second, after the year 1200 the places and institutions of schooling became ever further removed from the places of administration. *Studium* established itself independently of *regnum* and *sacerdotium*; scholars distanced themselves from the cathedral close and the palace court; and the *artes*, the letter-writing manuals put in place in the twelfth century, replaced a full training in grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. This must be qualified in certain respects of course. Learning archival forms and hands doubtless went on by way of apprenticeships both before and after the founding of the universities as distinct institutions. And university men were themselves only too anxious to gain entrance into princely and episcopal courts. And yet down to 1150 or so, the places where people were being schooled – whether cathedral close, abbey cloister, or royal court – were at hardly any remove, socially and intellectually, from the places where they would write letters as administrators, courtiers, or prominent ecclesiastical personages. So too their letter collections conjoined the worlds of thought and of administration – as is evident in nearly all of them from Gerbert to Saint Bernard and the abbots Peter of Cluny and Peter of Celle. John of Salisbury managed to bridge the world of the court and the world of the school, though he complained, as is well known, about the direction in which the world of learning was headed. And Peter of Blois illustrated the looming problem, a product of the schools writing as much to promote his own writing as to represent one *persona* to another. Intellectuals, products of the *studium*, would henceforth have different interests and different modes of expression than those of administrative courts, and those who grew up in courts to serve in archives would not have the literary resources provided by years spent in study.

This rested in turn, and thirdly, on a shift in the intellectual formation of the learned class. The triumph of the university form of the arts curriculum, culminating essentially in the study of philosophy with Aristotle's schematic and unliterary notes as its set texts, removed scholars ever farther from the study of the *auctores*, who were placed back in the center of the curriculum only by the humanists, themselves active and accomplished letter-writers. Put in terms of the question formulated by this conference, it required a different mental formation, and it acquired a different written expression. Given the disjunction between places of learning and places of administration together with the change in intellectual formation, the manner in which intellectuals chose to deploy and display their learning shifted. It was not the letter, for many the twelfth-century form of the essay. It was now the disputed question, with its review of authorities, its *sic et non* method, its *determinatio* at the end. Where earlier men of learning, from the ninth to the twelfth century, put that learning to work and on display by means of their letters, channeling into that form discourse on almost any subject imaginable and achieving nearly every conceivable rhetorical effect for nearly every possible public purpose, university-trained men of learning now poured everything into the *quaestio*, from law and theology to medicine and even sermons, and in its concluding *determinatio* called upon the full resources of their logical learning. The *consilium* or the *quodlibet* replaced the letter as a means for formulating ideas and addressing public realities. If a letter-writer thought some form of advanced preparation desirable for one of the more prestigious courts, something beyond the formularies of the twelfth-century manuals, that preparation more often entailed greater skill in law than reading and emulating Latin authors and letters.

To trace out the connections between mental formation and human action, historians must examine its written expressions, and during the eleventh and twelfth centuries those were to be found primarily in letters. If there was a "textual community" that formed among these "friends", among those schooled to express themselves by means of Latin rhetoric and dialectic, letters were certainly among its most important vehicles.¹²⁰ To move from these written expressions of their minds, of personal intelligence (*ingenium*) grounded in a relatively common formation in rhetoric and dialectic, to the sphere of human action is to follow out the uses to which letters were put in courts, schools, monasteries, and churches.

¹²⁰ This is not to contradict the insights of *Brian Stock*, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton 1983); but it is interesting to note that Stock's analysis rested largely upon a close reading of "treatises" (sermons, school texts, tractates, and the like), which were anonymous in their address, whereas letters represented the primary case in which one person addressed and signified his mind to another, often a "friend", by way of a written text, even a physical document.