

ANNA ADAMSKA

A BOOK IN ALL ROYAL HANDS: HOW MEDIEVAL RULERS READ THE PSALTER

The extraordinary place of the so-called Florian Psalter¹ in the cultural history of late medieval Poland² is the inspiration for a broader reflexion on the importance of the Psalter, both as a text and as a type of manuscript, within medieval *Latinitas*. From late Antiquity onwards, the Psalter was an important tool for the spiritual formation of lay elites, and it subsequently became royal reading matter. Some uses of the Psalter have been analysed in the scholarly literature on many occasions, especially in discussions of the omnipresence of the Bible in medieval culture, or of the development of so-called political theology.³ The history of the Psalter in medieval times is also highly interesting for scholars dealing with attitudes towards the written word and with the development of literate mentalities.

The dynamic growth of research in the field of literacy and social communication over the last twenty years has resulted in the refinement of the criteria we use to judge literacy and illiteracy. It becomes ever more clear that medieval communication was not a bipolar, static structure, but rather a tripartite dynamic phenomenon of orality, literacy and auralty in permanent interaction. Scholars become ever more determined to go beyond the comfort

1 In the scholarly literature the manuscript is known as “Florian Psalter”, “Saint Florian Psalter” or “Sankt Florian Psalter”. The last name refers to the Austrian monastery Sankt Florian where it was kept in early modern times.

2 See also the other contributions in this volume, and A. Adamska, *Latin and vernacular - Reading and meditation: Two Polish queens and their books*, in: *Cultures of Religious Reading in the Late Middle Ages. Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit, and Awakening the Passion*, ed. S. Corbellini, Turnhout 2013, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 25, p. 219-246.

3 The opinion, formulated fifty years ago by Walter Ullmann, that in all sorts of written texts and pieces of art, “in one form or another there was a biblical theme, a biblical quotation, a biblical reference, a biblical allegory,” remains valid today (W. Ullmann, *The Bible and principles of government in the Middle Ages*, in: *La Bibbia nell’alto medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo 10, Spoleto 1963, p. 181). Among the many publications on the history of the Psalter, see: *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, ed. E. Zenger, Freiburg-Basel 1998; *Meditations of the Heart: The Psalms in Early Christian Thought and Practice*, ed. A. Andreopoulos et al., Turnhout 2011. For Poland, see a.o.: E. Potkowski, *Kobiety a książka w średniowieczu - Wybrane problemy*, in: Idem, *Książka i pismo w średniowieczu. Studia z dziejów kultury pismiennej i komunikacji społecznej*, Warszawa-Pułtusk 2006, p. 320 ff. The abundant literature concerning medieval political theology is systematically registered by the International Medieval Bibliography 1- (Leeds 1968-), accessible online.

zone of certitudes based on the either/or distinctions between orality and literacy, being literate and being illiterate, possessing or not possessing basic literacy skills, knowing or not knowing Latin, etc.⁴ Today the realities of contact with the written word seem much more complex than we used to think until quite recently. They could go far beyond the act of reading in its modern sense, that is of an individual in silent activity performed by the human eye alone. From the perspective of the uses of the written word by medieval royalty, not only the possession of manuscripts of the Psalter by monarchs should be investigated, but also the ways in which these manuscripts were approached by their owners. In this way the study of the royal reading of the Psalter can bring us to the study of the nature of royal literacy, and of the ideas and myths surrounding it. However, to do this, other kinds of evidence will be needed besides the manuscripts of the Psalter or of the (later) *libri precum* themselves. Quite often narrative sources offer the possibility to take a look at the daily life of the book that was getting into all royal hands.⁵

I. THE READING OF THE PSALTER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PIETAS REGIA

There is no doubt that from the early Middle Ages onwards, piety was perceived as one of the most important royal virtues. It was the foundation of a successful reign and also a necessary condition of God's favour towards the realm. Royal devoutness to God could be expressed in many different ways, but first of all it had to be expressed in public. Pious foundations as well as protection of the Church, participation of the monarch in religious ceremonies, and his personal devotional practices (e.g. showing penitence), had to be seen by his subjects.⁶ In a sense, these activities expressed royal power and were a tool of communication between the ruler and his people. Maybe this is the main reason why in many cases modern historians cannot easily distinguish between official, 'State' monarchic piety, and private piety, although it seems that in the later Middle Ages a considerable personalisation of the *pietas regia* took place.⁷

A good example of this ambiguity is the phenomenon of royal prayer. The sight of the king praying in public meant much to his subjects, and not only as a good example which should be followed. It was perceived as a dialogue between the ruler and God, who was the source of his power – as the preambles of royal charters used to emphasise so often.⁸ The aim of conver-

4 The history and achievements in this domain of medieval studies were recently presented by M. Mostert, *Introduction*, in: Idem, *A Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication*, Turnhout 2012, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 2, p. 1-27.

5 The present article is accompanied by a small florilegium of accounts concerning the ways in which medieval monarchs approached the Psalter. It forms a part of a larger database under construction.

6 See a.o.: M. Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges*, Strasbourg 1924; U. Borkowska, *Pietas regia. Formy królewskiej pobożności w średniowiecznej Polsce*, in: *Król w Polsce XIV i XV wieku*, ed. A. Marzec, M. Wilamowski, Kraków 2006, p. 39; Z. Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics. Writing a History of a Dynastic Conflict in Medieval Poland*, Leiden 2008, esp. p. 85-134; M. de Jong, *The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840*, Cambridge 2009.

7 See: F. Mahilek, *Privatfrömmigkeit und Staatsfrömmigkeit*, in: *Kaiser Karl IV. Staatsmann und Mäzen*, ed. F. Seibt, München 1978, p. 87-94. The forms of devotional practice of the Polish kings and their families in the late Middle Ages were studied by U. Borkowska, *Pietas regia* ..., see above; Ead., *Polskie pielgrzymki Jagiellonów*, in: *Peregrinationes. Pielgrzymki w kulturze dawnej Europy*, ed. H. Manikowska, H. Zaremska, Warszawa 1995, p. 185-203; Ead., *Królewskie modlitewniki. Studium z kultury religijnej epoki Jagiellonów*, Lublin 1999; Ead. *Theatrum Ceremoniale at the Polish court as a system of social and political communication*, in: *The Development of Literate Mentalities in East Central Europe*, ed. A. Adamska, M. Mostert, Turnhout 2004, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 9, p. 431-450.

8 See a.o.: A. Adamska, *Słowo władzy i władza słowa. Język polskich dokumentów monarszych doby średniowiecza*, in: *Król w Polsce* ..., p. 68.

sation with the *sacrum* was, of course, the well-being of the community entrusted by God to the monarch. Nevertheless, as a consequence of evolutions of the model of kingship from the thirteenth century onwards, royal prayer started to move ever more into the area of personal devotional practices, and into the intimacy of the private royal chamber or the chapel.⁹

The special importance of monarchic prayer was emphasised in the Hungarian *Libellus de institutione morum* from the eleventh century. This was in fact the oldest prince's mirror in East Central Europe whose authorship was attributed to a royal author, Saint Stephen:

Observatio orationis maxima acquisitio est regalis salutis, et idoneo tonum in nonaria regie dignitatis canit regula. Contigua oratio is peccatorum ablutio et remissio. Tu autem fili mi, quotienscumque ad templum dei curris, ut deum adores cum Salomone, filio regis et ipse semper rex dicas: "Emitte domine sapientiam de sede magnitudinis tue, ut mecum sit et mecum laborer, ut sciam, quid acceptum sit coram te omni tempore (...)". Hac quidem oratione antiqui utebatur reges, tu quoque hac eadem utere, ut deus cuncta vitia a te auferre dignaretur, ut invictissimus rex a cunctis nomineris. Ora etiam, ut desideriam et ebetudinem a te depellat, et sublevamentum omnium tibi tribuat virtutum, quibus visibiles et invisibiles vincas inimicos. Ut securus et expeditus ab omni incursione adversariorum cum omnibus tibi subiectis cursum etatis tue vite cum pace possis finire.¹⁰

This text shows clearly the crucial role of Holy Scripture as an instrument in the formation of the moral and political attitudes of medieval rulers. From the Merovingian period onwards, it formed a frame of reference and was the ultimate prince's mirror, in which the prince could have a look at himself, and compare himself with the Old Testament kings of Israel. Even more, medieval rulers could imitate biblical rulers by praying in the ways Solomon and David had done.¹¹ The Bible provided not only models of behaviour, but also the language and the style of royal discourse. Already in the Carolingian period, crucial polemics were developed in the form of biblical commentaries.¹²

9 Jacques Le Goff's study of the prayer strategies of Saint Louis, King of France, makes this change quite clear (J. Le Goff, *Saint Louis et la prière*, in: *Horizons marins, itinéraires spirituels (Ve-XVIIIe siècles)*, vol. 1, Paris 1987, p. 85-94). See also: Ph. Buc, *L'Ambiguïté du Livre. Prince, pouvoir et peuple dans les commentaires de la Bible au Moyen Âge*, Paris 1994; J. Krynen, *Idéal du prince et pouvoir royal en France à la fin du Moyen Âge (1380-1440)*, Paris 1981.

10 "Observing prayer is the greatest way of acquiring royal salvation. ... Contiguous prayer is the washing away and remission of sins. And you, my son, whenever you run to the temple of God, to adore God, you ought to say with Solomon, the son of the king who himself is always king: 'Bring forth o Lord the wisdom from the seat of your greatness, that it be with me and work with me, so that I know what is acceptable before you at all times ...'. This prayer the kings of old used, and you, too, ought to use it, so that God may deign to take away all vices from you, so that you will be called an invincible king by all. Pray also, that He may chase away desire and inebriety from you, and may grant you the support of all virtues, by which you may conquer all visible and invisible enemies. So that you may safely and quickly from all inroads of your adversaries finish the course of your life in peace with all your subjects." (*Libellus de institutione morum*, ed. J. Balogh, in: *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, vol. 2, Budapest 1938, cap. IX, p. 626-627).

11 On the early origin of comparing medieval rulers to king David, see Y. Hen, *The uses of the Bible and the perception of kingship in Merovingian Gaul*, "Early Medieval Europe" 7, 1998, p. 277-289.

12 See especially: M. de Jong, *The Empire as Ecclesia: Hrabanus Maurus and biblical Historia for rulers*, in: *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen, M. Innes, Cambridge 2000, p. 191-226. About the use of biblical parables to 'picture' the history of young nations in early medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia, see: Cz. Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiografii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego*, Lublin 1990; *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery. Early History Writing in Northern*,

From this perspective, the extraordinary importance of the Psalter does not surprise us. The advice, directed to clergymen and lay people alike, to consider the Psalter as the basis for personal prayer, was taken so seriously that some scholars call early medieval spiritual culture “psalmodic culture.”¹³ Its prominent status was reinforced in the programme of the renewal of spiritual life and pastoral care in the eighth and ninth centuries. Recent research has shown clearly that at its core the Carolingian Renaissance was a programme aimed at the correction (*correctio*) of religious practices through the uniformity of the liturgy. It was meant to be facilitated by liturgical books – stripped of ‘corrupted’ Latin and copied with the use of a new, standardised and readable form of script, i.e. the so-called Carolingian minuscule.¹⁴ The engagement of lay elites, including Charlemagne himself, in this programme has been emphasised in the scholarly literature. That in this period the Psalter could definitively become “the textbook” of monarchic spirituality¹⁵ was brought about by many factors, but especially by the custom of comparing contemporary rulers to the Old Testament kings. It was understandable that a monarch called “a new David” would pray using the words of the biblical David, to whom the authorship of the Psalms was attributed. In this way he could express his own problems and dilemmas, and recognise them by meditating on the fortunes and misfortunes of his biblical ‘predecessor.’¹⁶

More or less at the same time, monarchic prayer started to be organised by the rhythm of the canonical hours, and, conversely, the hours came to be supported by the written word in the form of the Psalter or a personalised prayer book. According to Einhard, Charlemagne used to express his devotion by pious reading and the singing of Psalms,¹⁷ although none of the Psalter manuscripts from the time can be judged as having once been his own. Neither can we establish if the emperor ever obtained the personal prayer book which was created for him by Alcuin of York. It was to contain seven penitential Psalms and a suitable fragment from the letter of St. Jerome about the correct way to recite them.¹⁸ What has been

East-Central and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200), ed. I. Garipzanov, Turnhout 2011, see above.

- 13 See especially: M. de Jong, *The Empire as Ecclesia: Hrabanus Maurus and biblical Historia for rulers*, in: *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen, M. Innes, Cambridge 2000, p. 191–226. About the use of biblical parables to ‘picture’ the history of young nations in early medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia, see: Cz. Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiografii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego*, Lublin 1990; *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery. Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200)*, ed. I. Garipzanov, Turnhout 2011, see above.
- 14 For the detailed presentation of the state of research and an abundant bibliography, see: R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, Cambridge 2008.
- 15 J.L. Nelson, *Kingship and empire in the Carolingian world*, in: *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. R. McKitterick, Cambridge 1994, p. 61.
- 16 From the rich scholarly literature concerning the vivacity of the model of king David in medieval culture, and of a kind of rivalry with the model of Solomon, see a.o.: H. Steger, *David rex et propheta. König David als vorbildliche Verkörperung des Herrschers und Dichters im Mittelalter*, Nürnberg 1961; G. Klaniczay, *The ambivalent model of Solomon for royal sainthood and royal wisdom*, in: *The Biblical Models of Power and Law – Les modèles bibliques du pouvoir et du droit*, ed. I. Bibliarsky, R.G. Páun, Frankfurt a/M.-Berlin 2008, p. 75–92; E. Bakalova, *King David as a model for the Christian ruler. Some visual sources*, *Ibidem*, p. 93–125. An extraordinary example of presenting the early medieval ruler as the ‘new David’ is the full-page miniature in the Vivian Bible, one of the most splendid manuscripts of the Carolingian period (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 1), which was elaborated in Tours for Charles the Bald in 846. It represents the emperor as David, with ‘ancient’ garments, playing the harp somewhere between the earth and Heaven (see: G. Henderson, *Emulation and invention in Carolingian art*, in: *Carolingian Culture...*, p. 269).
- 17 Appendix, no. 1.
- 18 R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne ...*, p. 331. The only information about Charlemagne’s prayer book comes from Alcuin’s letter to him, but the same set of texts can be found in several royal prayer books from later periods until the end of the Middle Ages, designed a.o. for Alfred the Great, Emperor Otto III, and also for the eleventh-century Scottish

preserved, however, is a splendid manuscript produced most probably for Charlemagne's spouse Hildegard (the so-called Dagulf Psalter) and the Psalters for some of his descendants: Lothar, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German.¹⁹

We are paying so much attention to the Carolingian period for other reasons as well. It was then that the internal structure of the type of manuscript which today is called the Psalter was definitively established. It should be remembered that, apart from the Psalms themselves, its set of texts usually comprised the liturgical calendar, as well as individually chosen litanies to the saints and some prayers. Such collections of texts have caused scholarly doubts as to whether one is dealing with a psalter, or with a libellus precum. As a matter of fact, medieval terminology was not entirely consistent.

In Carolingian times we may also notice two other phenomena that would inform the piety of lay elites throughout the Middle Ages. First, there was the imitation of the religious behaviour of the rulers by members of the aristocracy. This concerned uses of the Psalter as well. A well-known example is of the family of Eberhard, Duke of Friuli, married to Gisela, the daughter of Louis the Pious. In their joint last will and testament (c. 876), the couple divided among their sons four manuscripts in their possession containing the Psalter (including two for daily use).²⁰ Secondly, there was the use of manuscripts containing the Psalter as an instrument for showing power. Carefully embellished, rich manuscripts, when offered as gifts to ecclesiastical institutions, were eloquent testimony to the magnificence of rulers who saw themselves as the successors of the Old Testament kings.²¹ Through the imperial court of the Ottonians, this function of the Psalter (and subsequently of other illuminated manuscripts as well) was transmitted to the peripheries of medieval *Latinitas*, together with a model of kingship.²²

It is not possible to present in this article a detailed history of the Psalter considered as a type of manuscript book. Many codicological studies have contributed to the knowledge

queen Margaret. See a.o.: S. Waldhoff, *Alcuin Gebetbuch für Karl den Großen. Seine Rekonstruktion und seine Stellung in der frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte der libelli precum*, Münster 2003; J. Black, *Psalm uses in Carolingian prayer books: Alcuin's Confessio Peccatorum pura and the seven Penitential Psalms*, "Medieval Studies" 65, 2003, p. 1-56; P. Kershaw, *Illness, power and prayer in Asser's 'Life of king Alfred'*, "Early Medieval Europe" 10, 2001, n. 2, p. 201-224; L.E. Saurma-Jeltsch, *Das Gebetbuch Ottos III*, "Frühmittelalterliche Studien" 38, 2004, p. 55-88; R. Gameson, *The Gospel of Margaret of Scotland and the literacy of an eleventh-century queen*, in: *Women and the Book. Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. J.H.M. Taylor, L. Smith, London-Toronto 1996, p. 149-171. According to the so-called *Legend of Christian*, the Bohemian prince Saint Venceslas also possessed a kind of little prayer book (*codicellulum*). See Appendix, no. 3.

19 See R. McKitterick, *Charlemagne* ..., p. 333 ff, for the bibliography concerning these manuscripts.

20 Their oldest son Unroch received a "*Psalterium duplum*," Berengarius got "*alium Psalterium (...) cum auro scriptum*." The third son, Adalardus, was satisfied with the "*tercium Psalterium, quod ad nostram opus habuimus*," while the youngest one, Rudolf got "*Psalterium cum sua expositione (...) quem Gisela ad opus suum habuit*." The edition of the will in: *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Cysoing*, ed. I. de Coussemaker, Lille 1885, p. 25-29. See also: Ch. La Rocca, *The dead and their gifts. The will of Eberhard of Friuli, and his wife Gisela, daughter of Louis the Pious (863-864)*, in: *Rituals of Power. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. F. Theuvs, J.L. Nelson, Leiden 2000, *The Transformation of the Roman World* 8, p. 225-280.

21 See a.o.: R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, Cambridge 1989, p. 155 ff; A. Gieysztor, *Symboles de la royauté en Pologne. Un groupe de manuscrits du XIe et du début du XIIe s.*, "Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres" 134, 1990, p. 128-137; R. Michałowski, *Princeps fundator: studium z dziejów kultury politycznej w Polsce X-XIII wieku*, 2 ed., Warszawa 1993.

22 Controversy around the imitation of the literate behaviour of the Carolingian rulers by the Ottonian dynasty was discussed a.o. by R. McKitterick, *Ottonian intellectual culture in the tenth century and the role of Theophanu*, "Early Medieval Europe" 2 (1993), p. 53-74. On the transfer of the concept of royal power to East Central Europe and Scandinavia, see a.o.: *Christianisation and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200*, ed. N. Berend, Cambridge 2007; Z. Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics* ..., see above.

of the royal owners of manuscripts containing the Psalter,²³ while work in the domain of art history has sketched the development of the Psalter's iconography.²⁴ Scholarly investigation allows us to conclude that the medieval history of the Psalter was in great part that of an artefact, very often produced on demand and endowed with high artistic, material, and emotional value, used as a precious gift or as an item fit to be mentioned in last wills and testaments as objects handed to the next generation.

One should emphasise the importance of one period in particular, in which the function of the Psalter as the reading matter of lay elites reached yet another dimension, that is the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. According to scholarly opinion, at this time the Psalter began to serve as a bridge between the written culture of court clerics (*litterati*) and lay court culture, embracing the values of feudal society.²⁵ On the one hand, one can see the development of the Psalter's monumental form in the luxurious and prestigious type of manuscript that even outdid the importance of the *evangelitaria* and *sacramentaria* as instruments for the display of royal power.²⁶ On the other hand, in the central Middle Ages a new type of Psalter manuscript became popular: small, suitable for daily use and for travel, carried everywhere by its – often female – owner. From the second half of the twelfth century onwards, the Psalter became the feminine reading matter *par excellence*, a phenomenon that left traces in some vernacular languages. For instance, in Middle High German the sarcastic expression *Salter vrouwen* became popular to denote certain exalted and falsely pious ladies.²⁷ From this period onwards, women primarily commissioned this kind of manuscript. Many of these surviving Psalters carry the names of their aristocratic female owners or commissioners, such as: Melissanda, the ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (c. 1135); French queens and princesses such as Ingeborg (c. 1200), Blanche of Castile (1223), Isabelle (1255), and Yolande of Soissons (1205); and, let us not forget, Elisabeth of Thüringen (early thirteenth c.), and Cristina, the Norwegian princess given in marriage to the Spanish infanta before 1269.²⁸

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- 23 As examples of lists of owners of Psalter manuscripts, see a.o.: V. Leroquais, *Les psautiers manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France*, 2 vols., Mâcon 1940-1941; T. Gad, Psalter, in: *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for nordisk middelalder* (Danish edition), ed. A. Karker, vol. XIII, København 1968, p. 583-595.
- 24 See especially: *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placement of Its Images*, red. F. Büttner, Turnhout 2004. Current bibliography is systematically registered in *Medioevo Latino*, vol. 1, Firenze 1980-.
- 25 On the relationship between these two streams within medieval court culture, see a.o.: S.C. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness. Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courty Ideals*, 939-1210, Philadelphia 1985.
- 26 J. Wolf, *Psalter and Gebetbuch am Hof. Bindeglieder zwischen klerikal-literater und laikal-mündlicher Welt*, in: *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Chinca, Ch. Young, Turnhout 2005, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 12, p. 140 ff.; F. Heinzer, *Über das Wort hinaus lesen? Der Psalter als Erstlesebuch und die Folgen für das mittelalterliche Verhältnis zum Text*, in: *Text and Text in lateinischer und volkssprachiger Überlieferung des Mittelalters. Freiburger Kolloquium 2004*, ed. E.C. Lutz, Berlin 2006: Wolfram-Studien 19, p. 158. Regarding special marks of 'court literacy,' see a.o.: J. Fleckenstein, "Miles and clericus am Königs- und Fürstenhof", in: *Curialitas. Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlicher Kultur*, ed. Idem, Göttingen 1990, p. 302-325; D.H. Green, "Vrume ritr and goute vrouwen/ and wise phaffen". *Court literature and its audience*, in: *German Narrative Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. W. Honemann et al., Tübingen 1994, p. 7-26; *Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich. Hof und Schrift*, ed. W. Paravicini et al., Ostfildern 2007: Residenzforschung 15.
- 27 J. Wolf, *Psalter und Gebetbuch ...*, p. 144.
- 28 See respectively: B. Zeitler, *The distorting mirror. Reflections on the Queen Melisende Psalter*, in: *Through the Looking Glass. Byzantium Through British Eyes. Papers From the Twenty-Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, London, March 1995*, ed. R. Cormack, E. Jeffreys, Farnham 2000, p. 69-83; A. Bennett, *The transformation of the Gothic Psalter in 13th century France*, in: *The Illuminated Psalter ...*, p. 211-223; K.D. Gould, *The Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons*, Austin 1975; H. Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, *Der Elisabethpsalter in Cividale di Friuli. Buchmalerei für den Thüringer Landgrafenhof zu Beginn des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2001; N. Damsholt, *Women and book culture*, in: *Living Words and Luminous Pictures. Medieval Book Culture in Denmark*, ed. E. Petersen Copenhagen 1999, p. 113. C.M. Meale, "... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, english, and frensch." *Laywomen and their books in late medieval*

The iconography of the period developed the image of a lady reading the Psalter,²⁹ while authors of German and French chivalric literature began to express the piety and innocence of the main heroine with the topos of reading the Psalms deep into the night.³⁰

The relationship between women readers and the Psalter was reinforced by its use as a primer. Already in Merovingian times, the practice of learning to read from the Psalter was adopted by lay people imitating monastic habits. In the Carolingian period, the term *psalteratus* indicated a person able to read.³¹ The common character of this practice throughout the Middle Ages can be explained by its efficacy: a pupil was gaining basic literacy skills while at the same time learning the rudiments of the Faith. For this reason, many manuscripts of the Psalter contain the Latin alphabet, often placed after the richly decorated initial 'B' ("Beatus vir"), as well as the Lord's Prayer ("Pater noster"). Also very popular was the custom of commissioning manuscripts of the Psalter (and later also of other prayer books) by royal mothers, who usually were responsible for the education of future monarchs. Sources from the whole of *Latinitas* (especially account books and letters)³² provide evidence for this, but rarely so directly as in the note in the so-called Leiden Psalter which belonged to the king of France, Saint Louis: "*Cist psaultiers fuit mon seigneur saint looys qui fu roys de france, ouquel il aprist en sance.*"³³

It seems that towards the end of the Middle Ages two changes in the use of the Psalter occurred. On the one hand, its role as a tool for the devotional practices of the social elites was gradually replaced by two affiliated types of manuscript, i.e. by Books of Hours and *libelli precum*.³⁴ On the other hand, however, the Psalter became ever more widespread. From the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries much evidence survives regarding town dwellers as pos-

England, in: *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. C.M. Meale, Cambridge 1993, p. 128-158.

- 29 Descriptions of the iconographical type can be found a.o. in: S.G. Bell, *Medieval women book owners. Arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture*, in: *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.M. Benneth et al., Chicago-London 1989, p. 155 ff.; J. Wolf, *Psalter und Gebetbuch*, p. 145 ff.; M. Clanchy, *Images of ladies with prayer books. What do they signify?*, in: *The Church and the Book*, ed. R.N. Swanson, Oxford 2004, p. 106-122; N. Damsholt, *Women and book culture ...*, p. 111. Scholars investigating the subject of female literacy gladly use the iconographical evidence. They emphasise that at the end of the Middle Ages the model of a lady reading a book (the Psalter) was gradually replaced by the image of the Virgin Mary busy in this way in the scene of the Annunciation, or teaching the baby Jesus to read. From the rich literature on this subject, see: K. Schreiner, *Die lesende und schreibende Maria als Symbolgestalt religiöser Frauenbildung*, in: *Die lesende Frau*, ed. G. Signori, Wiesbaden 2009, p. 119 ff.; M. Clanchy, *An icon of literacy. The depiction at Tuse of Jesus going to school*, in: *Literacy in Medieval and early Modern Scandinavian Culture*, ed. P. Hermann, Aarhus 2005, p. 47-73.
- 30 The French story of Floire et Blancheflor from the second half of the twelfth century may serve as an example. It was translated into Old High German, Middle Dutch, Old English and Old Norse, and also re-worked in Castilian and Italian (see: W.P. Gerritsen, A.G. van Melle, *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes. Characters in Medieval Narrative Traditions and Their Afterlife in Literature, Theatre and the Visual Arts*, Woodbridge 1998, p. 132 ff.).
- 31 P. Riché, *Le Psautier, livre de lecture élémentaire d'après les vies des saints mérovingiens*, in: *Études mérovingiennes. Actes des Journées de Poitiers, 1e-3e Mai 1952*, Paris 1953, p. 253-256; Idem, *Écoles et enseignement ...*, p. 223.
- 32 See some examples in: S.G. Bell, *Medieval women book owners ...*, p. 149 ff.; P. Stirnemann, *The Copenhagen Psalter*, in: *Living Words and Luminous Pictures*, p. 69 ff.; U. Borkowska, *Królewskie modlitewniki*, p. 44-45; M. Jones, *L'aptitude à lire et à écrire des ducs de Bretagne à la fin du Moyen Age et un usage précoce de l'imprimerie*, "Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de la Bretagne" 62, 1985, p. 38 ff.
- 33 Leiden, University Library, Mss. PPL 76a, fol. 30 and fol. 185r. Facsimile: *Miniatures du psautier de S. Louis. Manuscrit lat. 76 A de la Bibliothèque de l'Université de Leyde. Ed. phototypique*. Leiden 1902: Codices Graeci et Latini: Supplementum, 2. See also: L. Delisle, *Le Psautier de saint Louis*, in: Idem, *Mélanges de paléographie et de bibliographie*, Paris 1880, p. 167-172.
- 34 A good example of this switch is the personal book collection of Isabella the Catholic, Queen of Castile (d. 1504). Its inventory contains 24 manuscripts of Books of Hours and 'only' 8 Psalters (see: E. Ruiz García, *El imaginario de una reina. Páginas selectas del patrimonio escrito de Isabel la Católica*, Madrid 2008, p. 140); J.P. Harthan, *Books of Hours and Their Owners*, London 1977, see above; J.-L. Deuffic, *Notes de bibliologie. Livres d'heures et manuscrits identifiés (XIVe-XVIIe siècle)*, Turnhout 2009.

sessors of this type of manuscript, also in the periphery of *Latinitas*. In Cracow, for instance, a tailor, deceased in 1484, left a Psalter manuscript in German. A few years later, a printed Psalter was inventoried among the possessions of a townswoman of the same city.³⁵ Nevertheless, in general terms these shifts did not invalidate the idea that the Bible, and in it the Book of Psalms, remained the main instrument in shaping royal piety.

II. WAYS OF APPROACHING THE PSALTER

1. INTIMATE CONTACT WITH THE BOOK

Even a very short outline of the medieval history of the Psalter reveals its special marks as royal and at the same time gendered reading matter, and as a type of text and manuscript that was able to cross geographical and chronological barriers. It is a paradox that, although it is still difficult to reconstruct the origins and *curricula* of individual manuscripts (and the Polish Florian Psalter is no exception in this respect), this is nevertheless easier than establishing the real ways in which the Psalter was approached. Contact with the book was by no means limited to the reading of its text, as medieval people understood very well. A sixth-century colophon of a manuscript from Northern Italy enumerated the forms of contact carefully. Especially interesting is the distinction being made between its reader and its owner:

Scribtori vita aeterna
 Legenti pax perpetua
 Videnti felicitas perennis
 Habenti possessio cum salute.
 Amen. Deo gracias. Ora pro me.³⁶

The question of how the Psalter was approached can lead us in different directions. Scholars investigating ways of interpreting the Holy Scripture emphasise that readers were so used to the allegorical and typological reading of the Psalter that they could transfer this type of reading to other genres of texts, including courtly romances.³⁷ However, from our point of view another question is more relevant: did the reading of the Psalter really require the capability of reading in the modern sense, or was the act of 'reading' a different kind of cognitive process? To resolve this problem one can refer to biographical accounts, mainly contained in chronicles and hagiographical texts, while keeping in mind their limitations.³⁸

The evidence from these sources makes clear that the Psalter organised the private prayer of medieval rulers, and that it could be used so intensely that its manuscript could get worn al-

35 "sacculus cum libris infrascriptis: Oracionale in pergameno, Psalterium impressum in baprio (s), quinque libelli parvi in alchymia et preparacionis aquarum forcium." I am quoting from B. Wyrozumska, *Kancelaria miasta Krakowa w sredniowieczu*, Kraków 1995, p. 114. Cf. C.M. Meale, "... alle the bokes that I haue", p. 140 ff.

36 Paris BnF, Ms 9382, f. 91 v. I am quoting from the edition in: *Catalogue des manuscrits en écriture latine portant des indications de date, du lieu et de copiste*, ed. Ch. Samaran, R. Marichal, vol. 3, Paris 1965, p. 627.

37 F. Hainzer, *Über das Wort hinaus* ..., p. 159.

38 Besides the usual issues of source criticism, one should consider that the accounts of royal acts of reading could contain topical elements, and be composed according to certain narrative strategies. See a.o: *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. E. Tyler, R. Balzaretto, Turnhout 2006, see above.

most to destruction. The biography of Saint Otto of Bamberg, the missionary in West Pomerania in the early twelfth century, suggests that this happened to the emperor Henry IV. He used to read his Psalter twice a day. Otto, who at the time was his chaplain, carried the manuscript everywhere, strapping it to the saddle of his horse. The vivid and warm story of how Otto replaced the worn manuscript with a new one, testifying to his empathy and close relationship with his ruler, contains many precious details about the technique of reading the Psalter.³⁹

For medieval rulers, approaching the Psalter was a private occurrence, a part of the experience of private prayer. The accounts lead us to believe that this happened usually at night, in solitude or in the presence of one or a few trusted chaplains. Royal reading of the Psalter was often beyond public knowledge, and was like a secret, ascetic experience.⁴⁰ Sources from all over Europe emphasise that rulers began their reading only after having finished their duties – as if the fact that a king used his time to read a book needed explicit justification.⁴¹ In the dominant opinion of medieval authors, such literate behaviour was suitable more to clerics than to lay persons, and was therefore immediately seen as proof of exceptional devotion or even of holiness. The Hungarian king Coloman the Learned (d. 1116), presented by a chronicler as the wisest monarch of his time, appeared to behave “as a bishop,” praying on the books, following the rhythm of the canonical hours.⁴²

In many accounts, a special role is played by the opposition of darkness and light: the silence of the night seems a suitable time for intimate dialogue with the Lord. A candle, usually a small one that could be held in one’s hand, is a symbolic source of light where one is surrounded by darkness.⁴³

2. INTIMATE CONTACT WITH THE TEXT: THE ACT OF READING IN THE CONTEXT OF LITERACY

In general terms, the ways in which the Psalter was read by its royal owners depended on their practical literacy skills, in other words, on whether a ruler could or could not read.

At his point it should be emphasised that, in the light of the actual state of research on medieval literacy and communication, the modern, black-and-white opposition between ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’ how to read cannot be applied to medieval reality without some reservations. Practical skills depended on the context of the different levels and registers of literacy.⁴⁴ A lack of basic skills did not exclude an individual from written culture,

39 Appendix, no. 5. We will return to this account later on.

40 Appendix, nos. 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 18.

41 The author of the Bohemian *Chronicon Aulae Regiae* from the early fourteenth century expressed this fact with a series of *ablativi absoluti*. See Appendix, no. 16.

42 Appendix, no. 7. Cf. the opinion in the Polish chronicle, contemporary to Coloman’s reign: “... *cum rege Vnгарorum Colomanno, super reges universos suo tempore degentes litterali scientia erudito ...*” (Galli Anonymi, *Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. K. Maleczyński, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series nova*, vol. 2, Kraków 1952, lib. II, par. 29, p. 98). The Bohemian *Christian’s Legend* implies one of the reasons for the malevolence shown to prince Venceslas by his subjects was his solitary reading of the Psalter and meditation (“*princeps siquidem noster, qui a nobis in regni fastigio sublimatus est, peruersus a clericis et ceu monachus factus ...*”, see Appendix, no. 3). Cf. recently: A. Kuźmiuk-Ciekanowska, *Święty i historia. Dynastia Przemyślidów i jej bohaterowie w dziele mnicha Krystiana*, Warszawa 2007, p. 186 ff. (with rich bibliography concerning the source).

43 Appendix, nos. 11, 12. Saint Louis, King of France, according to his biographer Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, also used candles to measure the time spent in meditative reading (Appendix, no. 14).

44 The phenomenon of ‘royal literacy’ seems even more complex. The study of the attitudes of medieval rulers towards the written word, and of their gaining basic literacy skills, often suffers from the scholars’ (anachronistic) conviction

even if it could considerably change the route to the text. It seems that reading the Psalter did not have much to do with the intellectual operation of gleanig information from the written text, which is what we usually understand by reading. It was rather a part of devotion, in which *lectio* went together with the acts of *oratio* and *meditatio*.

It is well known that this reading practice had its origin in monastic spirituality. Its essence, explained in many pastoral treatises from the early Middle Ages onwards, was summarised by Bruno of Querfurt, who belonged to the spiritual elite of Western Christendom around the year 1000:

Sede in cella quasi in paradiso, proice post tergum de memoria totum mundum, cautus ad cogitationes quasi bonus piscator ad pisces. Una uia est in psalmis, hanc ne dimittas. Si non potes omnia, qui uenisti feruore nouicio, nunc in hoc, nunc illo loco psallere in spiritu et intelligere mente stude, et cum ceperis uagari legendo, ne desistas, sed festina intelligendo emendare; pone te ante omnia in presentia Dei cum timore et tremore, quasi qui stat in conspectu imperatoris, destrue te totum, ed sede quasi pullus contentus ad gratiam dei, qui nisi mater donet, nec sapit, nec habet quod commendat.⁴⁵

If we compare this admonition, arising straight from monastic culture, to fifteenth-century spiritual advice, the essence of the exercise has remained the same:

Trois manieres sont d'espirituel exercite. C'est leçons, meditations, et oraisons. Ces trois sont si conjointes que l'une ne puet valoir sans l'autre. Car leçons sans meditations tourne a negligence et a oociosité. Meditations sans leçons maine en erreur. Et meditations sans oraison engendre vanité. Et oraisons sans meditation est sans lumiere et sans fervour. Pour ce convient premiers le cuer enfourmer par leçon, et fermer par meditation, et puis refourmer par oraison.⁴⁶

The eye was not alone in being active during the act of pious reading: this type of reading gently passed into prayer and meditation. Terms like *psallere*, *psalmos dicere* (*recitare*), *ruminare* in Latin sources as well as *früme* (*frommen*) in Old High German, clearly suggest that the mouth was involved as well, maybe in the form of melorecitation.⁴⁷ Penetration of the text on the page was

that these skills of reading and writing were absolutely indispensable to participate in social life. In the scholarly literature, often focussed on the analysis of the model of the *rex litteratus*, the crucial concepts of the 'wise king' and 'educated king' permanently get mixed up (see a.o.: M.A. Rodríguez de la Peña, *Rex strenuus valde litteratus: Strength and Wisdom as Royal Virtues in Medieval Spain (1085-1284)*, in: *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages*, ed. I.P. Beyczy, C. J. Nederman, Turnhout 2007, pp. 33-50. Id., *Los Reyes Sabios. Cultura y poder en la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media*, Madrid 2008; K. Ratajczak, *The dynastic memory and the role of historical books in the education of the Piasts from the 10th to the 14th centuries*, in: *Culture of Memory in East Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*, ed. R. Wójcik, Poznań 2008, p. 167-177). Further study of the problem should embrace a consideration of the need and usefulness of writing and literacy skills for medieval rulers.

45 Bruno Querfurtensis, *Vita Quinque Fratrum Eremitarum [seu] Vita uel Passio Benedicti et Johannis Sociorumque suorum*, ed. J. Karvasińska, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series nova*, vol. IV, pars 3, Warszawa 1973, p. 83. The admonition was put in the mouth of Saint Romuald of Camaldoli.

46 This quotation comes from the text entitled *Li livres d'enfance Israel* (late fourteenth century), copied into a miscellanea manuscript which belonged to Charles of Orléans, the famous fifteenth-century aristocratic poet. I am quoting from S. Huot, *Polytextual reading. The meditative reading of real and metaphorical books*, in: *Orality and Literacy...*, p. 204.

47 See Appendix, nos. 1, 3, 5, and also J. Wolf, *wrowen phlegene ze lesene. Beobachtungen zur Typik von Büchern und*

quite slow, but the eye simultaneously registered additional information from the manuscript, transmitted by the illuminations.⁴⁸ Apart from sight and sound, this kind of reading engaged the memory of the reader, because if one approached time and time again the same (rather limited) number of texts, after a while they would be known by heart. The author of a thirteenth-century Polish chronicle emphasised that the pious prince of Great Poland Przemysł I “was reading some psalms and prayers, which he knew.”⁴⁹ This information suggests a special relationship between the reader and the text being read: the physically accessible text on the page is nothing more than a memory aid, because the reader already knows the text by heart anyhow. This way of approaching written texts, called ‘phonetic literacy’ or ‘meditative reading,’ can easily be traced in the later Middle Ages.⁵⁰ It means that the reading monarch knew which psalm or prayer could be found on which particular page. He could decode texts syllable by syllable and pronounce them, but little more was needed to trigger the full text of the psalm or prayer. This observation is quite important in the context of discussions about the education and possession of basic literacy skills by medieval rulers. Accounts of their personal contact with the written word do not necessarily mean that they were able to read in the modern sense.⁵¹

Reading the Psalter could engage the whole body of the reader, and not only his senses, because in many manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries directions (in paratexts) can be found on how to recite or chant individual Psalms, and which gestures and movements of the body (e.g. genuflexion or laying prostrate) should accompany them. The main idea behind such advice was to make prayer more effective.⁵²

3. LISTENING TO THE PSALTER BEING READ ALOUD

The question of how the Psalter was approached by monarchs who were themselves unable to read, opens a new set of issues. There are reasons to think that, until the end of the fourteenth century, royal illiteracy was still a common phenomenon, despite the opinion that the illiterate king was a crowned donkey (*“rex illiteratus est quasi asinus*

Texten für Frauen, in: *Text und Text in lateinischer und volkssprachiger Überlieferung des Mittelalters. Freiburger Kolloquium 2004*, ed. E.C. Lutz, Berlin 2006: Wolfram-Studien 19, p. 177.

- 48 The slow rhythm of pious reading is testified to by the sources. The account of the habits of Saint Hedwig of Silesia (d.1243) contains the testimony of a nun who saw Hedwig praying for so long that “in this time one could read half of the Psalter” (see Appendix, no. 11). The relationship between text and image was studied in detail in the case of the Psalter of Saint Louis. See: H. Stahl, *Picturing Kingship. History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis*, Pennsylvania 2008, see above.
- 49 Appendix, no. 12.
- 50 When the reader was able to analyse information coming from the illustrations on the page at the same time, we speak of ‘polysemic reading.’ Therefore, contact with the manuscript demanded also a certain level of visual and cultural literacy. See: S. Huot, *Polytextual reading ...*, p. 209 f.; P. Saenger, *Books of Hours and the reading habits of the later Middle Ages*, in: *The Culture of Print. Power and the uses of Print in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. R. Chartier, Cambridge 1989, p. 141-173; W.J. Diebold, *Verbal, visual and cultural literacy in medieval art. Word and image in the Psalter of Charles the Bald*, “Word and Image” 8, 1992, p. 89-99 On the relationship between reading and mechanisms of remembrance, see a.o. M. Carruthers, “In memoriae suae bibliotheca”. *Lecteurs et l’art de mémoire dans l’Occident médiéval*, in: *Des Alexandries. Les métamorphoses du lecteur*, ed. Ch. Jacob, Paris 2001, p. 221-232; Ead., *Mental images, memory storage and composition in the high Middle Ages*, “Das Mittelalter” 13, 2008, p. 63-79.
- 51 See the examples discussed by M. Clanchy, *Images of ladies ...*, p. 108.
- 52 The prayer technique of Saint Hedwig of Silesia may serve as a good example (see Appendix, no. 11, and G.F. Hamburger, *Representations of reading – reading representations. The female reader from the Hedwig Codex to Châtillon’s Léopoldine au Livre d’heures*, in: *Die lesende Frau*, p. 187). Interesting examples of paratexts from German manuscripts were analysed by J. Wolf, “vrowen phlegene ze lesene ...”, p. 176 ff. See also U. Borkowska, *Królewskie modlitewniki ...*, p. 255 ff.

coronatus”).⁵³ The popular solution to overcome illiteracy was to delegate the technical task of reading. A ruler might approach the Psalms by listening to their texts being read aloud by a competent reader.

This way of approaching a written text could be as effective as active, personal reading. We are told that, listening to the Bible read aloud in his presence, Balduin, the duke of Guines in Northern France, was able to explore not only the literal but also the mystical sense of the Scripture. And he was not the only one. The king of Bohemia, Venceslas II (d. 1305), acted in a comparable way.⁵⁴ According to the chronicler of his reign, with Divine grace he was capable of listening carefully to the texts read aloud, to reflect on them and memorise them. His mental abilities to penetrate the many meanings of the text (*intelligere*), as well as the strength of his memory, allowed him as a result to break through the barriers of both technical illiteracy and the Latin language.⁵⁵ It should be noted that, when discussing cases of rulers who knew the Bible *ex auditu*, medieval authors were often astonished that this was possible at all. Such amazement says as much about their heroes as it does about themselves. It shows the formation of these authors as professionals of the written word who, in a way, monopolised access to written knowledge.⁵⁶

The cases of rulers who approached the Psalter by ear lead us to reconsider the common opinion that, within the culture of the lay elites, reading aloud was only an instrument in the transmission of entertainment, of courtly literature, mainly in the vernacular.⁵⁷ Listening to Latin texts of a religious nature being read aloud formed an integral part of the medieval culture of aurality.⁵⁸

Rulers who most probably did possess basic literacy skills also used to participate in the collective reading of the Psalter. A well-known example is King Alfred, who became the British model of the *rex litteratus*. According to his biographer, even though he could read and write, on many occasions he asked his chaplains to read aloud for him the Holy Scriptures in Latin, and other texts in the vernacular.⁵⁹ In the late Middle Ages the same demands were made by a highly literate ruler, the emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg – who, in addition, used to correct mistakes made by the clerics once they started to read to him.⁶⁰

53 About the impact of this quotation, known especially thanks to the popularity of the works of John of Salisbury and William of Malmesbury, see a.o.: K. Ożóg, *Rex illiteratus est quasi asinus coronatus – Narodziny średniowiecznego ideału władcy wykształconego*, in: *Aetas media, aetas moderna. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Warszawa 2000, p. 699-712.

54 See A. Adamska, “Audire, intelligere, memorie commendare”. *Attitudes of the rulers of medieval Central Europe towards written texts*, in: *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. S. Ranković et al., Turnhout 2010, *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 20, p. 337-357.

55 According to the chronicler, Venceslas learned excellent Latin also *ex auditu*. See Appendix, no. 16, and A. Adamska, “Audire, intelligere ...” ..., p. 346 ff.

56 More about this problem in Ph. Buc, *L’ambiguïté du livre ...*, p. 194.

57 Cf. a.o.: D.H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading. The Primary Reception of German Literature, 800-1300*, Cambridge 1994; J. Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, Cambridge 1996.

58 On the tripartite structure of the medieval system of communication (orality-literacy-aurality), see a.o.: J. Coleman, *Interactive parchment. The theory and practice of medieval English aurality*, “Yearbook of English Studies” 25, 1995, p. 63-79; L. Melve, *Literacy – aurality – orality. A survey of recent research into the orality-literacy complex of the Latin Middle Ages (600-1500)*, “Symbolae Osloenses” 78, 2003, p. 143-197.

59 Appendix, no. 2. The state of research on Alfred’s textual and linguistic policy has been presented by R. Stanton, *King Alfred and early English translation*, in: *Idem, The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England*, Woodbridge 2002, p. 55-100.

60 Appendix, no. 17. The accounts of rulers who knew the Bible by heart so well that they were able to correct mistakes of their chaplains or notaries are numerous. However, further research is needed to establish if we are dealing with

The act of collective listening to a cleric reading the Psalms aloud could easily turn into prayer and meditation. According to a conviction popular in the period, listening facilitated the perception of the texts, because it was not necessary for the audience to struggle with the challenges posed by the script.⁶¹ Without a doubt it also created a desire for contact with the *sacrum* as experienced within a community. A monarch reciting the Psalter, praying and meditating with the clerics and lay members of his court, became a member of a very special spiritual and textual community.⁶²

During such an act of reading even miracles could take place, as happened to Saint Kinga, the thirteenth-century Polish princess who lived out her days in the convent of the Poor Clares south of Cracow. In her presence, a young illiterate girl miraculously gained the skill of reading in order to read aloud the beginning of Psalm 117, “*Laudate dominum omnes gentes ...*”.⁶³ Not infrequently we find stories of manuscripts, containing the Psalter or other religious texts, which escaped annihilation by fire or water in a supernatural way.⁶⁴ However, considering the standards of literate behaviour among the members of the lay elites, one could say that the taste for books and pious reading exhibited by some rulers was an even greater miracle.

III. LANGUAGES OF THE PSALTER: LATIN AND THE VERNACULAR

One further phenomenon should be mentioned here, because it makes the Psalter an even more interesting object of study concerning the literate behaviour of medieval lay elites. This is the successful transgression of the barriers of the Latin language. The usual assumption is that rulers who were taught to read learned their Latin at the same time, by using the Book of Psalms as a primer. But what did it mean to know Latin? In today’s research, scholars try to abandon another black-and-white opposition, that between ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’ a language. We realise that knowledge of Latin is an ambiguous concept, and that this knowledge can differ depending on different levels and registers in linguistic and tex-

a topos. See Appendix, nos. 16 and 17, and also: U. Borkowska, *The Jagiellonian model of education*, in: *Hofkultur der Jagiellonendynastie und verwandter Fürstenthäuser – The Culture of the Jagiellonian and Related Courts*, ed. U. Borkowska, M. Hörsch, Ostfildern 2010, *Studia Jagiellonica Lipsiensia* 6, p. 176.

- 61 H. Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter*, München 1995, p. 25 ff. Very interesting evidence in this respect comes from the funerary sermon about the virtues of the sixteenth-century Polish king Sigismund August, considered by scholars as a real Renaissance ruler, highly educated. When controlling the correctness of the charters produced by his chancery, he used to do so “... *omnia autem audiendo (nam legebat non aequae libenter)*...” (J. D. Solikowski, In funere Sigismundi Augusti Poloniae Regis, magni Ducis Lithuaniae, in: M. Kromer, *Polonia sive de origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX*, Köln 1589, p. 701). See also: A. Adamska, *The Jagiellonians and the written word. Some preliminary remarks about royal literacy in the later Middle Ages*, in: *Hofkultur der Jagiellonendynastie ...*, p. 157.
- 62 The search for collective spiritual experience also marked the activities of the Polish queen Hedwig of Anjou, who probably received the Florian Psalter. The sources have transmitted a.o. the name of her chaplain Welislaw: “*Welislaus ... noster capellanus et nobis et nostre curie in cantu necessarius et lectura*” (*Codex epostolaris saeculi XV*, vol. 1, Kraków 1876, n. 16. See also the contribution of Krzysztof Ożóg in this volume, and A. Adamska, *Latin and vernacular ...*, p. 228 ff). In general terms, we refer here, of course, to the classical concept of ‘textual communities,’ elaborated by B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Princeton 1983, see above. See also: J.L. Nelson, *Was Charlemagne’s court a courtly society?*, in: *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, ed. C. Cubitt, Turnhout 2003, p. 39-57.
- 63 Appendix, no. 15.
- 64 Appendix, no. 11. See also the account of the miraculous rescue from water of the personal *codicellum* of the Scottish queen Margaret (R. Gameson, *The Gospel of Margaret of Scotland ...*, p. 160). The subject of miracles involving hand-written books deserves more scholarly attention.

tual reality. Every single case should be judged very carefully, because there are four distinct linguistic competencies at stake (speaking, understanding, reading and writing), and the language abilities of a single person might refer to only one of these competencies or to all of them, but on different levels.⁶⁵ This means that a ruler educated on the basis of the Psalter was able to understand the sense of the text he was reading as well as to participate freely in the liturgy, but he was not necessarily capable of translating some fragments of texts on the spot, as Saint Louis of France was able to do.⁶⁶ As Dennis Green, an expert in the domain of medieval literature, put it with respect to female court literacy, "(...) this level of Latinity would still exclude them from an appreciation of Latin literature and its techniques."⁶⁷

This issue is important for our subject because it relates to one more interesting phenomenon in the social history of the Psalter, that is its translations into vernacular languages. Almost everywhere in medieval Europe, the Psalter was if not always the first, than at least one of the first books of the Bible translated into the vernacular. In the older scholarly literature one used to explain this by the low linguistic skills of the readers: lay people, especially women, did not know Latin and needed the Psalter to be translated. However, one might find another reason as well in the character of the text. As the *lectio* of the Psalter created room for an intimate dialogue between the reader and God, it seems natural that the reader would prefer to conduct this dialogue in his or her mother tongue rather than in Latin. The intensity of this desire is reflected by the chronology of the main translations. Already before the year 1000 two fundamental enterprises took place, i.e. the translation of the first fifty Psalms into Old English, and, on the other edge of Europe, the translation of the whole Book of Psalms into Old Church Slavonic.⁶⁸ These initiatives were continued after the turn of the millennium, among others with the first (of many) translations into German, *langue d'oïl*, and Anglo-Norman French during the twelfth century, into Czech and Old Norse in the thirteenth century, and finally into Middle Dutch and Polish in the fourteenth century.⁶⁹

It seems that, from the twelfth century onwards, multilingual manuscripts of the Psalter became quite common in the medieval West. They were realised in several ways. Manuscripts of British origin often contained the Latin Psalter in the body of the text, while the Anglo-Norman or Old English translation was put as an interlinear gloss. Another popular form of layout consisted of three parallel columns of text in three languages. An interesting example of a complex structure in a multilingual Psalter is the so-called Anglo-Catalan Psalter. It was produced in Canterbury in the late twelfth century, but illuminated only after 1340 in Barcelona, at the demand of the ruler of Aragon and Catalonia, Pedro Ceremonioso. The main body of

65 See a.o.: A. Adamska, *Latin and three vernaculars in East Central Europe from the point of view of the history of social communication*, in: *Spoken and Written language. Relations between Latin and the Vernacular Languages in the Earlier Middle Ages*, ed. M. Garrison et al., Turnhout 2013, p. 333 ff.

66 Appendix, no. 14.

67 D. Green, "Vrume ritr und goute vrouwen ...", p. 19. Regarding the difficulties of establishing the level of literacy skills of lay people, see a.o.: M. Clanchy, *Images of ladies* ..., p. 110, and M. Jones, *Aptitude à lire* ..., p. 42.

68 From the rich scholarly literature on both actions, see respectively: R. Stanton, *King Alfred and early English translation* ..., see above; D. Třeštík, *Slavische Liturgie und Schrifttum in Böhmen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Vorstellungen und Wirklichkeit*, in: *Language of Religion – Language of the People*, ed. E. Bremer et al., München 2006, p. 321-355.

69 See respectively: K.E. Schöndorf, *Die Tradition der deutschen Psalmenüberetzung*, Köln-Graz 1967; P.-M. Bogaert, *Adaptations et versions de la Bible en prose (langue d'oïl)*, in: *Les genres littéraires dans les sources théologiques et philosophiques médiévales*, ed. O. Weijers, Louvain-la-Neuve 1982, p. 259-277; J. Vintr, *Die älteste tschechische Psalmenübersetzung. Kritische Edition*, Wien 1986; I.J. Kirby, *Bible Translations in Old Norse*, Genève 1986; Y. Desplenter, *Middelnederlandse psaltervertalingen*. "Het is nergens voor nodig om veel meer boeken dan het psalter te bestudeeren", in: *Middelnederlandse bijbelvertalingen*, ed. A. den Hollander et al., Hilversum 2007, p. 77-86.

every page of this beautiful manuscript contains three columns with the three versions of the Latin Psalms recognised in the Middle Ages (the Jerusalem, Gallican and Roman versions), but to the Jerusalem version was added an interlinear gloss of a translation into Anglo-Norman.⁷⁰ It should be added that vernacular languages were often present also in manuscripts containing only the Latin text of the Psalter, manuscripts which were meant for users managing Latin in one way or another. For instance, in the Psalter belonging to Saint Louis of France, the meaning of the full-page illuminations was explained *in dorso*, in Middle French.⁷¹

The question of the translation of the Psalter is connected with other evidence for it being the reading matter of lay people, of women and of rulers especially, because on several occasions kings and queens appear as the patrons of these translations.⁷² Moreover, it happened that rulers participated in the work themselves or personally controlled the quality of the translation. According to many accounts, when doing so they were always able to find the right word. As a result, thanks to their involvement, a vernacular obtained the position of the ‘king’s’ language, and, subsequently, of the ‘national’ language. This kind of power of words was attributed to Alfred the Great, and, much later, to Alfonso X *el Sabio* in Castile, Saint Louis in France, to Venceslas II in Bohemia, and finally to that great fourteenth-century patron of translations, Charles V of France.⁷³

CLOSING REMARKS

There is no doubt that, for the scholar interested in medieval literacy, the role of the Psalter as the *materia legendi* of lay elites forms a fascinating subject of investigation. A study of the ways in which monarchs approached it allows us to enter, to some extent, into the zone of their private behaviour. We get an opportunity to see those rare moments when rulers could, usually for a short while only, “sit behind the curtain”⁷⁴ in their private rooms and escape the hustle and bustle of the court in favour of reading and contemplation.⁷⁵ However, from the point of view of the mechanisms of literacy, the reading of the Psalter by rulers is an ambiguous phenomenon, and its descriptions should be treated very carefully. The analysis of our series of the biographical and hagiographical accounts brings us to the conclusion that there was an established way to write about these situations. For further research this means that descriptions of monarchs dealing with the Psalter cannot be used as a conclusive argument that a ruler was actively literate, just as the simple fact of their *possessing* a manuscript containing the Psalms cannot prove this either.

On the other hand, thanks to the widespread practice of reading aloud, contact with the

70 See: *Anglo-Catalan Psalter*, ed. N. Morgan, Barcelona 2006, see above.

71 H. Stahl, *Picturing Kingship* ..., p. 110 ff.

72 The Polish Florian Psalter seems to fit very well into this outline.

73 Appendix, nos. 2, 14, 16. See also: E.S. Procter, *The scientific works of the court of Alfonso X of Castile. The king and his collaborators*. “The Modern Language Review” 40, 1945, p. 19 (an analysis of the interesting opinions of translators working for Alfonso, about his acting as the ‘master of the word’), and also Christine de Pisan, *Le livre des faits et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, Paris, 1977 lib. I, par. XXXII.

74 Appendix, no. 12.

75 According to some scholars, the popularity of private royal prayer and meditation results a.o. from the desire for privacy, difficult to achieve in other ways considering the increase of court ceremonial in the late Middle Ages. See a.o.: J. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, vol. 1, München 1986, chapter 3: “Sachkultur und Gesellschaftstil”, p. 137-275; A. Taylor, *Displaying privacy. Margaret of York as devotional reader*, in: *Cultures of Religious Reading*..., p. 275-296.

written word was possible also for technically illiterate individuals. Chaplains, confessors or even bishops who used to read to a ruler and accompany him in his prayer, were important mediators of literacy. Their role in the development of literacy deserves further scholarly attention.⁷⁶

The character of the multilingual Psalters inspires further questions as well. One keeps asking what actually happened when someone was reading a psalm in Latin, when the vernacular version was available as a gloss. Was the reader using the gloss only when he or she did not understand a particular word or expression in Latin, or was it other way around? Was it the vernacular text that was read, and was the Latin one only ‘watched’ out of respect? We must also keep asking what the practice of translation was like. We know that it was not necessarily a Latin version of the Psalter that was the starting point of a particular translation, but that it could also be a more ‘emancipated’ vernacular.⁷⁷ These and more general preoccupations with how mature a vernacular language should be to bear the weight of the Latin Psalms, must be left to specialists of the philology and history of the medieval vernaculars. But a historian always wants to look behind the texts for the people who commissioned the translations, and then used them, moved by the desire to praise the Lord in their mother tongue. How did a royal reader react to the chance to praise God with the words of king David, but in his own language? Did it make meditation and prayer a more profound experience? These questions remain open for further discussion, as does the entire subject of the literate behaviour of medieval monarchs. The Psalter provides very special evidence, because it was not a book kept in any royal treasury (*in thesauro*).⁷⁸ This book travelled with the rulers, and accompanied them to their chapel and to their bedroom. This book, and no other, was making medieval rulers cultivated readers – at least in one register of literacy.

76 The term *médiateurs de la plume* was introduced by the French scholar R. Chartier, *Culture écrite et la littérature à l'Age Moderne*, “Annales E.S.C.” 56, 2001, p. 789. On their role see a.o.: M. Kintzinger, *Viri religiosi et literati. Kleriker am Fürstenhof im späten Mittelalter*, in: *Vita religiosa im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Kaspar Elm zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Felten, N. Jaspert, Berlin 1999, p. 543-562, and: A.M. Voci, *La capella di corte dei primi sovrani angioini*, in: *L'État angevin*, Rome 1998, p. 447-474; K. Ożóg, *Uczni w monarchii Jadwigi Andegawieńskiej i Władysława Jagielly (1384-1434)*, Kraków 2004, chapter 5, p. 309-329.

77 The Florian Psalter presents a good object for this kind of analysis, as it is a collection of the Psalms in Latin, German and Polish, with the translation into Polish not made from Latin but from German, whereas the Latin text was probably ‘corrected’ in such a way as to suit the German and Polish texts grammatically (See a.o. M. Mejer, *Comments on the Latin of the text of Saint Florian psalter*, “Questiones Medii Aevii Novae” 14, 2009, p. 307-318).

78 Appendix, nos. 14, 18.

APPENDIX:

Some narratives concerning ways of reading the Psalter by medieval rulers

1 Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Emperor (d. 814)

Religionem Christianam, qua ab infantia fuerat inbutus, sanctissime et cum summa pietate coluit, ac propter hoc [...] privato habitu ministrare necesse fuisset. Legendi atque psallendi disciplinam diligentissime emendavit. Erat enim utriusque admodum eruditus, quamquam ipse nec publice legeret nec nisi submissim et in comune cantaret.

(Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover 1911, Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi 15, cap. 26, pp. 3-31)

2 Alfred the Great, King of Wessex (d. 899)

Post haec cursum diurnum, id est celebrationes horarum, ac deinde psalmos quosdam et orationes multas [didicit]; quos in libro uno congregatos in sinu suo die noctuque, sicut ipsi vidimus, secum inseparabiliter, orationis gratia, inter omnia praesentis vitae curricula ubique circumducebat .

(Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ed. W.H. Stevenson, Oxford 1904, cap. 24, p. 21.)

Divina quoque ministeria et missam scilicet cotidie audire, psalmos quosdam et orationes et horas diurnas et nocturnas celebrare, et ecclesias nocturno tempore, ut diximus, orandi causa clam a suis adire solebat et frequentabat. [...] Divinarum quoque scripturarum a recitantibus indigenis, aut etiam, si casu quodam aliunde adveniret, cum alienigenis pariter preces audire sedulus et sollicitus solebat.

(Ibid., cap. 76, pp. 59-60)

Nam die noctuque, quandocumque aliquam licentiam haberet, libros ante se recitare talibus imperabat - non enim unquam sine aliquo eorum se esse pateretur - quapropter pene omnium librorum notitiam habebat, quamvis per se ipsum aliquid adhuc de libris intelligere non posset. Non enim adhuc aliquid legere inceperat.

(Ibid., cap. 77, p. 63)

Nam hec est propria et usitatissima illius consuetudo die noctuque, inter omnia alia mentis et corporis impedimenta, aut per se ipsum libros recitare, aut aliis recitantibus audire.

(Ibid., cap. 81, p. 67)

Nam primo illo testimonio scripto, confestim legere et in Saxonica lingua interpretari, atque inde per plures instituere studuit, ac veluti de illo felici latrone cautum est,

Dominum Iesum Christum, Dominum suum, immoque omnium, iuxta se in uenerabili sanctae Crucis patibulo pendentem cognoscente; quo subnixis precibus, inclinatis solummodo corporalibus oculis, quia aliter non poterat, erat enim totus confixus clavis, submissa voce clamaret: "Memento mei, cum veneris in regnum tuum Christe", qui Christianae fidei rudimenta in gabulo primitus inchoavit discere. Hic autem aliter, quamvis dissimili modo, in regia potestate sanctae rudimenta scripturae, divinitus instinctus, praesumpsit incipere in venerabili Martini solemnitate. †Quos floscuos undecunque collectos a quibuslibet magistris discere et in corpore unius libelli, mixtim quamvis, sicut tunc suppetebat, redigere, usque adeo protelavit quousque propemodum ad magnitudinem unius psalterii perveniret. Quem enchiridion suum, id est manualementarium, nominari voluit, eo quod ad manum illum die noctuque solertissime habebat; in quo non mediocre, sicut tunc aiebat, habebat solatium.

(Ibid., cap. 89, p. 75)

3 St. Venceslas, Duke of Bohemia (d. 926):

Qui vero mirae claritatis ac amandae indolis, dum floridam iuventutis aetatem primum attingisset, patra adhuc vivo, ad litterarum disponi exercitia desiderans, paternumque crebro flagitamine deflectens animum, eius transmissu in ciuitate Budec litteris addiscendis est positus. Cuius itaque ingenio celeri capacitate divinitus instructo, brevi studio librum psalmodialem ceteraque compluria perdidicit, et solidus interiori memoriae conuixit.

(*Gumpoldův Život Václava knižete českého*, ed. J. Emler, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 1, Praha 1873, p. 149).

Noctibus autem serenissimo instans pervigilio, lenis inmemor soporis, primo quietis nocturnae conticinio, spreto fulgentis stratu cubilis, clam ceteris de thoro surgit, puerum cubicularem tacitus excitat, codicellum manuali frequentia rugosum eripit, palatium nesciis custodibus egressus, comite solum clientulo, aspera montium cacumina, vallium exitalia praecepita, diverticulorum ac semitarum lappillosa vel glacie horrentia inter civitates itinera, continua psallimorum ceterarumque precum recitatione nudipes singulatim aeclesias quaeritando perustrabat.

(Ibid., p. 152)

Ipsa vero cunctorum horum scius cum sibi fidelibus viris occulte posterulas agens, ruente sole ad occasum clancule clerico quolibet accersito cuncta, que sibi proficua erant, nocte addiscens, crepusculo illucescente didascalum seu sibi caruum clericum latenter abire sinebat, codicellumque suum oculens subque tegmine gestans ubicumque locum quietis reperiebat, eum cum diligentia lectitabat et cum gemitu interno de duricia cordis populi sui et cecitate vel in credulitate dolebat nimium.

(*Křesťanův Život sv. Ludmily a sv. Václava*, ed. J. Emler, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 1, Praga 1873, p. 210).

4 Ferdinand I, King of Castilia and León (d. 1065)

[Ferdinandus] ecclesiam mane, vespere, item nocturnis horis et sacrifici tempore inpiḡre frequentabat, interdum cum clericis voces modulando in Dey laude pol-lenter exultabat.

(*Historia Silense*, ed. J.Perez de Urbel, A.G. Ruiz-Zorrilla, Madrid 1959, p. 205)

5 Emperor Henry IV (d. 1106)

Imperator vero, primo in levibus eum rebus exercens, familiari eius servicio in multis bene usus, etiam psalmos et orationes privatas, si quando vacabat, cum eo ruminare solebat. Nam ideo litteratus erat imperator, ut per se breves legeret ac faceret. Videns igitur hoc placere imperatori psalmos et ymnos, capitula et orationes per totum annum, ut memoriter cursum dicere posset affirmare clericus elaborabat, aliisque capellanis alias intentis hic semper presto erat et psalterium, quo uti solebat imperator sub ascella sua iugiter ferens vel ad sellam suam dependens, quociens opus erat, requirenti obtulit imperatori. Nichil enim Ottonis sollerciam negligendum putabat, quo sibi gratiam domini conciliare valeret; unde mane vespere et omni tempore cum psalterio suo ad manum imperatoris presto se exhibuit. Ipsum etiam psalterium, usu et vetustate in extrinsecis lacerum, diligenter ligatum novis rebus induit. At princeps cum ex more librum posceret, Otto presto erat, offerens ei renovatum. At ille: Non hunc, ait, psalterium meum requiro. E contra clericus: Hoc est, inquit, domine, psalterium vestrum.

(Herbord, *Dialogus de vita s. Ottonis episcopi Babenbergensis*, ed. J. Wikariak, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series nova*, vol. 7, part 3, Warszawa 1974, pp. 200-201)

6 Olaf, King of Norway (d. 1093)

Pervenit et ad notitiam regis Olavi; qui quoniam valde religiosus erat, sacros codices inter manus tractare et litteras inter regni curas saepe consuevit eddiscere; saepe etiam sacerdoti ad altare assistere, et induentem vestimenta sacra adjuvare, aquam manibus fundere, et cetera huiusmodi devote peragere.

(*Symeonis Monachii Opera omnia*, vol. 2: *Historia regum*, ed. Th. Arnold, London 1885, p. 203)

7 Coloman the Learned (the Bookish), King of Hungary (d. 1116)

Qui ab Hungaris CUNUES Calman appellatur, eo quod libros habebat, in quibus horas canonicas ut episcopus persolvebat.

(*Chronici Hungarici Compositio saeculi XIV*, ed. A. Domanovszky, in: *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, vol. 1, Budapest 1937, pp. 432-433)

8 Boleslaw the Wrymouth, Duke of Poland (d. 1138)

[...] donec horas perpetue Virginis dieique canonicas, VIIque psalmos cum letania penitentiales adimplebat et plerumque cursum psalterii post defunctorum vigiliis adiungebat.

(Galli Anonymi *Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. K. Maleczyński, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series nova*, t. 2, Kraków 1952, lib. 3, cap. 25, p. 158)

9 St. David, King of Scots (d. 1153)

Similis illius principis in diebus nostris non fuit: divinis devotus officiis, singulis diebus omnes canonicas horas, etiam vigiliis defunctorum audire non praetermittens.

(*Symeonis Monachii Opera omnia*, t. 2: *Historia regum*, ed. Th. Arnold, London 1885, p. 330.)

10 Baudouin II, Duke of Guines (Northern France) (d. 1205)

Comes autem studiosissimus [...] licet omnino laicus esset et illiteratus [...] liberalium tamen, ut iam diximus, omnino ignarus artium, liberalibus saepe et sepius usus instrumentis, non refrænans linguam suam aut cohibens, contra artium doctores disputabat. Et quoniam theologicae scripturae non surdus est auditor, prophetarum oracula et historiarum divinarum et evangelicae doctrinae non solum superficiem, sed et mysticam virtutem patulo capessebat et avertebat auditu [...] E merito a clericis ultra quam necesse erat in multis edoctus, clericis in multis obiabat et contradicebat. Sic autem eos plerumque provocabat, et mirae calliditatis (qua in multis eminebat) eloquentia ludificabat, ut tamen eos post disputationis altercationem mira veneretur honoris magnificentia. Unde et multi eum audientes, et super objectionibus et responsis ejus in admirationem prorumpentes, saepe de eo dixerunt: "Quis et hic? Et laudabimus eum, dicit enim mirabilia. Sed quomodo scit litteras cum non didicerit?" Propter hoc secum magistros et clericos retinebat, et eos in multis interrogabat et diligenter eos audiebat.

(Lambert d'Ardres, *Chronicon Ghisnense et Ardense*, ed. Marquis de Godefroy Meilglaise, Paris 1855, pp. 171-172)

11 St. Hedwig, Duchess of Silesia (d. 1243)

Nam in etate puerili in claustrum Kicingo sacras litteras didicit, quarum studio et tempus in iuventute expendit utiliter ac in earum intellectu postmodum consolationis interne et devocionis hausit gratiam affluenter.

(*Vita sanctae Hedwigis*, ed. A. Semkowicz, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. 4, Lwów 1884, pp. 512-513)

Quadam vice soror Gaudentia [...] vidit eam toto prostratam corpore in oratione tam diu, quod ipsam sic expectando dimidium perfectit psalterium relegendo. Pro maiori quoque corporis sui fatigacione et propter divini amoris ammirandum fervorem

[...], quandoque dum orando solotenus prostrata iaceret, pectus et caput erigebat ad librum coram se positum, in quo scriptas oraciones legebat.

(Ibid., p. 534)

Accidit quadam nocte, ut ipsa beata Hedwigis ex vigiliis et oracionibus fatigata sompni violencia fuisset oppressa, et ecce lumen, quod accessum prope librum ad legendum tenuerat vigilans, dormitantis lapsum de manibus cecidit ardens totaliter super librum. Audite mirabile! Candela libro inherens ardebat et consumebatur ad totius libri longitudinem nec tamen consumebat neque corrumpibat volumen.

(Ibid., p. 557)

12 Przemysł I, Duke of Great Poland (d. 1257)

Devotissimus fuit. Nunquam carere voluit cum potuit divino officio. In cantu pulcro delectebatur. Horas de domina gloriosa cum potuit explevit et ipsam in maximo honore veneratus est. Et mirabile fuit de eo, cum deponebat se ad lectum nocturna hora et aliquantulum sompno recreabatur et cum nocte tota credebatur ab aliis dormire, ipse surgebat aliquando media nocte, aliquando ante, et sedens sub conopegio suo cum candela tenens psalterium legebat aliquos psalmos et orationes, quas sciebat vel habere poterat. Et hoc sepe et libenter faciebat.

(*Chronicon Poloniae maioris*, ed. B. Kürbis, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, series nova*, vol. 8, Warszawa 1970, p. 108)

13 St. Salomea, Queen of Halicz (in the Ruthenian lands) (d. 1268)

[...] quod in tantum in sacris litterarum scripturis beata Salomeas processisset, quod etiam requisita a magistro proprio ewangelium, quod de die audiebat, interpretabatur et exponebat [...]

(*Vita beatae Salomeae, reginae Haliciensis*, ed. A. Semkowicz, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. 4, Lwów 1884, p. 777)

14 St. Louis, King of France (d. 1270)

Considerans igitur pius Rex, quod filii tenebrarum prudentiores esse videntur filiis lucis, [...] concepit quod revertens in Franciam, omnes libros Sancte Scripture, quos utiles et authenticos in diversis armariis abbatiarum invenire valeret, transcribi sumptibus suis faceret, ut tam ipse quam viri litterati ac religiosi familiares sui in ipsis studere possent, ad utilitatem ipsorum et aedificationem proximorum. Sicut cogitavit, ita et reversus perfecit, et locum aptum et fortem ad hoc aedificari fecit, scilicet Parisiis in capellae suae thesauro, ubi plurima originalia tam Augustini, Ambrosii, Hieronymi, atque Gregorii, necnon aliorum orthodoxorum doctorum libros sedule congregavit: in quibus, quando sibi vacabat, valde libenter studebat, et aliis ad studendum libenter concedebat. Maxime autem, dum sibi vacare poterat ad studendum propter dormitionem diurnam, antequam prodiret in publicum, sive ad

loquendum cum advenientibus, sive ad vespervas audiendum. [...] Quando studebat in libris, et aliqui de familiaribus suis erant presentes, qui litteras ignorabant, quod intelligebat legendo, proprie et optime noverat coram illis transferre in gallicum de latino. Non libenter legebat in scriptis magistralibus, sed in sanctorum libris authenticis et probatis.

(Geoffroy de Beaulieu, *Vita et sancta conversatio piae memoriae Ludovici quondam regis Francorum*, in: *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 20, ed. P. Daunou, J. Naudet, Paris 1840, pp. 14-15)

Li benoiet Loys entendanz que l'en ne doit pas spendrele tens en choses oiseuses ne [en demandes] curieuses de cest monde, le quel tens doit estre employé en choses de pois et meilleures, s'estude il metoit a lire Sainte Escriture, car il avoit la Bible glosse et originaux de saint Augustin et d'autres sainz et autres livres de la sainte Escriture, es queux il lisoit et fesoit lire mout de foiz devant lui el tens d'entre disner et heure de dormir, c'est a savoir quant il dorroit de jour. - E fesoit es heure et es tens desus diz apeler aucuns religieux ou aucunes autres personnes honestes, a qui il parloit de Dieu, de ses sainz et de leur fez, a la fois des histoires de la Sainte esriture et des vies de Peres. Et avecques tout ce chascun jour, quant complie estoit dite de ses chapelains en la chapelle, il s'en raloit en sa chambre, et adonques estoit alumee une chandele de certaine longueur, c'est a savoir de iij piez ou environ, en endementieres que ele durroit, il lisoit en la Bible ou en un autre saint livre. Et quant la chandele estoit vers la fin, un de ses chapelains estoit apelé et lors il disoit complie avecques lui.

(Guillame de Saint-Pathus, *Vie de saint Louis (conservée dans sa version française)*, ed. H.-F. Delaborde, Paris 1889, pp. 52-53)

15 St. Kinga, Duchess of Cracow (d. 1292)

Soror Clara Iacobi cum sex annos etetis sue haberet, ad claustrum recepta abecedarium primo et "Credo" addiscens, venit ad felicem dominam, ubi ipsa habitabat. Quam felix domina videns, librum suum eidem tradidit deicens: "Lege in isto libro, filia". Signoque crucis super ipsam facto, puellula legere itaque cepit illum psalmum: "laudate dominum, omnes gentes", quem nunquam didicerat.

(*Vita sanctae Kunegundae, ducissae Cracoviensis*, ed. A. Semkowicz, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, vol. 4, Lwów 1884, p. 722)

16 Wenceslas II, King of Bohemia and Poland (d. 1305)

Inter hec mundane felicitatis primordia rex Wenceslaus in cunctis agendis Deo complacere studuit et ipsius experiretur malignaria, divine legis verba, que coram eo legebantur cotidie, cum summa diligencia auscultare consuevit. Ipse siquidem, quando salvo regni sui commodo se a strepitu terrenorum tractatum absentare potuit, exclusis ceteris abdita cubilis sui appecit, ubi nonnunquam ab episcopis vel aliis clericis sibi familiaribus sacre pagine verba sibi legi ceteris relegatis negociis procuravit, quatenus ex frequentia sacre lectionis in bonis actibus proficeret. [...]

Tantum denique gratiam divina virtus ei contulerat, quod licet elementa litterarum non nosceret, omnia tamen et singula, que de divina pagina, aliisque facultatibus ipsum audire contingit, ceteris sanius et limpidius intellexit, intellecta quoque iugi memorie commendavit.

In hoc etiam metam humane opinionis videbatur excedere, quod ipse, qui elementorum noticiam non habuit, latino utens eloquio a certis grammaticæ artis legibus rarissime diviavit. Ex hac igitur crebra audicione sacrorum voluminum ad tam claram totius sacre scripture devenit noticiam, quod non solum quarumlibet historiæ seriem veteris ac novi testamenti intelligeret, verum etiam lectorem quempiam, quem in eisdem in modico in modico oberrantem reperit, protinus emendaret.

(*Kronika Zbraslavská [Chronicon Aulae regiae]*, ed. J. Emler, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 4, Praha 1884, cap. 32, pp. 40-41)

Rex igitur, doctrinam confessoris sui sequens et monita, magis ac magis divino cultui operam studiosam adhibuit ac omni die horas beate Virginis usque ad extrema sue vite tempora cum capellano, quem sibi ad hoc elegerat, omni terrenarum rerum occupatione postposita cum summa reverentia devotissime decantavit, missam cum nota de presenti die frequenter et integraliter audire studuit. [...] communia Dei et sanctorum officia cordatenus ea ruminando didicit et cum sacerdotibus missas legentibus ipsa officia ex integro legendo persolvit. [...] Post ewangelium et post Agnus Dei, nisi ad missam pro defunctis, librum oblatum osculari consuevit. [...]

(Ibid., cap. 33, pp. 41-42)

17 Charles IV Luxembourg, King of Bohemia and Emperor (d. 1378)

Dilexitque me prefatus rex valde, et precepit capellano meo, ut me aliquantulum in litteris erudiret, quamvis rex predictus ignarus esse litterarum. Et ex hoc didici legere horas beate Marie virginis gloriose, et eas aliquantulum intelligens cottidie temporibus mee puericie libencius legi, quia preceptum erat custodiibus meis regis ex parte, ut me ad hoc instigarent.

(*Karoli IV Imperatoris Romanorum Vita ab Eo Ipso Conscripta*, ed. B. Nagy, F. Schaer, Budapest 2001, p. 24)

In biblia quoque tantam habeat ipse memoriam, ut si quando coram lecto suo, ut solitus erat, hec legerentur, ipse legentem in libro cordatenus corrigeret et emendaret.

(*Kronika Beneše z Weitmile*, ed. J. Emler, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 4, Praha 1884, p. 507)

18 Hedwig of Anjou, Queen of Poland (d. 1399)

Summa in ea devotio, immensus amor Dei, omnibus mundane pravitatis fastibus a se relegatis abdicatisque, tantummodo ad oracionem et leccionem librorum Divinorum,

videlicet Veteris et Novi Testamenti, omeliarum quatuor doctorum, Vitas patrum, sermonum et passionum de sanctis, meditationum et oracionum beati Bernhardi, sancti Ambrosii, revelacionum sancte Brigide et plurimorum aliorum de latino in polonicum translatorum animum et cogitacionem intenderat.

(Johannis Dlugossi, *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, lib. 10, Warszawa 1985, p. 232)